



# Helen

*Manna Francis*

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# **Helen**

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Another short story in The Administration series.

Helen was someone that Toreth interrogated 12 years before. But now she found him again. And she doesn't want to leave him.

## **Helen Details**

Date : Published May 20th 2009

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Author : Manna Francis

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## From Reader Review Helen for online ebook

### Dani says

So you read on, you dive in, you live with them, you feel with them.  
It's like you fall in step with Warrick, "Out of sight, out of mind."  
And it works, for a while.

And then baaaaaammm.  
And I mean  
**BAAAAAAAMMM.**

Manna Francis, in her ever so imperturbable, ever so understated, ever so brilliant way, will confront you with reality.

With what you are dealing with here. With who you have grown very close and attached with.  
And, if you're honest, it does make your toe-nails curl. It actually, seriously, chills you to your bones. It's pretty unbearable.

Yep, she absolutely refuses to make it easy for you. It might even disturb your sleep that night.

Warrick, you sick, sick fuck, how can you still look him in the eyes? And, Dani, you sick, sick fuck, how can you still feel for him?

Manna Francis, you are simply devious. And brilliant, always brilliant.

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All time favorite.

I can't recommend this series enough.  
 Fucking smart, the most nutritious mind food, intellectually stimulating, incredibly psychologically perceptive and astute, wise and full of weary empathy ... see my raving review of the whole series here.

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### Laura says

This Administration tale is a shocking, sad, brutal, no-holds-barred look at Toreth's work. While out and about with Warrick, Toreth bumps into Helen, a woman he interrogated early in his career. The ugly

confrontation forces both men to stop, think, and even talk about the off limits subject of Toreth's job. This time I&I can not and will not be ignored.

Once again I find myself praising Manna Francis here. She presents Helen's circumstances, condition, and case from two sides with hard, straight forward, brutal details and emotion. Helen's husband presents one side and Toreth tells the other. But the story truly allows readers to take in each chilling detail, digest, and decide for themselves how to feel. I never felt manipulated or hit over the head with sympathies or meaning. Was Helen a criminal or victim? Did Toreth feel remorse or regret for his actions? Does he care what Warrick thinks of his work?

Then we hear Warrick's voice and take on Toreth's job, Helen, and what his feelings and actions might make him. His thoughts packed quite a punch!

**"I know all that, and I don't care about it enough to give him up."**

Very powerful, thought provoking story that picked and poked at my head about Toreth, the Administration, and what we are willing to ignore or let go for love.

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### **Nina says**

Another heartbreakingly sad and disturbing one, because this woman likes to make me suffer.

It's pretty horrifying, and terribly insightful.

This is, basically, a story about the ugly side of Toreth's job and Toreth himself, and about how these affect his and Warrick's relationship.

And it's simply not normal that after a story like this one I just love them both even more than before.

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### **Kat says**

A few years ago my grandma died. I went over to her house to support my mum and family, and not much later had to open the door to two young men who would wash her body, dress her and do all the things to make her look appropriate for viewing. When I let them inside the house I couldn't help but notice that one of them was rather attractive. He offered his condolences and was very correct of course. But when they were finished I noticed him looking my way several times.

And that's when I asked myself if I could do it. If I could be in a relationship with someone who handles dead people - sometimes already in a state of decomposition - during the day and then would come home to me after work. And touch me.

Back then, I didn't think I could. And I still think that. No matter how much respect I have for people who are in this business, to actually be with someone who has a job like that would still freak me out.

Which brings me to Toreth...

Warrick states that he fucks Toreth and not his job and therefore doesn't want anything to do with The Administration. In the end, I don't think it works that way. Yet, I am very much like Warrick. I just pretend to be blissfully unaware of the more unpleasant aspects of Toreth's personality as well. It's not that hard a thing to do. Since Francis created such a ridiculously exciting character, it's really pretty easy to just gloss over his ugly profession and instead appreciate the convenience his expertise adds to those glorious sex scenes.

But of course Francis does nothing better than to fuck minds...so here we have *Helen and Friends in the Right Places*. Stories that make me feel like a hypocrite all over again. And still I wouldn't say no to Toreth. So, yeah... I'm with you Warrick!

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### **Ilhem says**

Manna Francis has a way to make you face the truth...Ouch.

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### **Rachel says**

Five stars for a 13 page installment in this series? Manna knows how to not mince prose. I am going to post my thoughts on the "Is Toreth a sociopath?" debate in this review. Because I feel it is this contribution to the series that tips scales in that debate. As always this addition to TA is extremely well written and intrical to the series as a whole and really delves into "Who Toreth is and what he is capable of?" Don't skip it because it is 13 pages.

### **Toreth, sociopath?**

I find the sociopath debate of a character a tough one. For one we all have to agree on how each participant is defining a sociopath - usually it comes down to demonstrating some form of antisocial behavior and then it is up for interpretation on how persistent that behavior is and if it is persistent enough to diagnose Anitsocial Personality Disorder. And then if there is some miraculous agreement amongst everyone, and agreement that the character does have ASPD, then discussion moves to which form? - Antisocial, Narcissistic, Borderline, Histrionic, etc. and then to what degree on the spectrum? And the arguments tend to go on forever, getting further and further away from the original topic of the character in question. So for the purposes of not wanting to hash that all out on yet another GR thread of - is the character in question a sociopath? - I am going to use the term "afflicted" as denoting that Toreth demonstrates some form of the clinically established diagnoses of antisocial behavior - without qualifying him as ASPD.

In my view, it is not alone someone's actions that denote if they are "afflicted," in some manner, but also their reaction to such actions. It is a matter of internal reactions not external actions. Of course throughout time one can cite military and paramilitary organizations as creating all kinds of atrocities and vile acts - and such actions being allowed and perpetuated if not full on accepted by a society. A sane, insane, afflicted, etc. human being is capable of a spectrum of unthinkable acts in any society, situation, career or circumstance. Though a sound mind is always questionable when a person partakes in abhorrent actions and so is the sanity of the society in which they exist. ("Just because you are well adjusted to a sick society doesn't mean you aren't sick." - type of thing). People do some bad shit out there.

For me what differentiates the afflicted individual from the non-afflicted individual isn't by the actions they are capable of, but rather their response after committing the actions (whether it be right after or come out years later). Soldiers come home and fall apart - the statistics for veterans are littered with PTSD and suicide, some drink, do drugs, continually justify their actions to their conscience, whatever their coping mechanism might be. Then there is the rarity whose conscience never chirps up and they are unaffected, if they even give two seconds of thought to their actions - this person to me is the one who should be slapped with some sort of ASPD label.

In the literary arena, I think a great example of characters committing the same "socially accepted crimes" but reacting to them differently is actually in the ICoS series, starting with Evenfall. Boyd, Hsin, Zachary, Kassian, Emilio - all Agency assassins, all successful professionals within the deranged microcosm of the Agency that they live. Boyd is young and struggles with his conscience, reconciling and justifying his actions for the greater good, Hsin is capable of shutting down and compartmentalizing his conscience and actions, Zachary sees what he does as a matter of survival, Kassian drinks - heavily and then there is Emilio. Though they all commit the same deeds without thinking twice, I don't see Boyd, Hsin, Zachary or Kassian as demonstrating any form of being afflicted with ASPD, but then there is Emilio - who I have to question.

Back to TA ... Within the walls of I&I and the context of Toreth's upbringing his actions and behavior may not be of extraordinary standard, but in Helen he makes the following comment:

"What else would you like me to say? I have nightmares about it? I'm sorry I did it? Well, I don't and I'm not. That's just the way it is. All inside the waiver, per the P&P. My first big case as a junior para—I got a commendation for the result."

And it is his sentiment in that statement that I perceive to inch over the line to some form of antisocial affliction. He expresses no remorse for his actions, he is unapologetic and even expresses some annoyance that Warrick might look down on his response.

I agree that Toreth's actions are not out of the social norm with in the walls of I&I, however, I think the society of New London / The Administration as a whole certainly has some qualms about his actions. (Enter Carnac ...) Toreth's actions are not accepted in the society that he is in they are just accepted in the industry he is in - the immediate society verse the larger society. Just as a soldier/NSA/CIA might have accepted practices with in their line of work, but this does not mean these practices are accepted by the society at large in which they exist. I&I is a microcosm with in the society that TA is set in - as the series continues you will find that globally what I&I does diverges from the accepted norms of the world they live. I liken it to the mafia - the mafia practices are not acceptable in society, but if you are in the mafia then the practices seem very normal and accepted by your peers. In New London it just happens "the mafia" is running the show - it doesn't mean it is accepted by the society it is running.

I would like to add that where I find the real brilliance in this series lies in a question that I believe Manna subtly poses to the reader throughout the series. Spoilers for Family Values (view spoiler)Posing this question to Toreth and the reader is where I find a large part of the enjoyment in Manna Francis's work.

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### **Mel says**

Oh Manna Francis, the original mind fucker, you. You keep having me question myself; my thoughts, my

perceptions on Toreth. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, coming back on it, then cutting him slack again. Seeing myself as a good judge of character, then naive, silly and stupid. And in denial.

*Helen* is a very poignant and disturbing story. It makes you reevaluate everything you thought on Toreth. And then, in my case, still giving him the benefit of the doubt. Because, in my case (as in Warrick's), I simply want to.

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## **Penny says**

Finally we get something more about the interrogation part of Toreth's job. Finally Warrick is forced to stop ignoring it and stare it in the eye. Warrick finally gave thoughts to his feelings about I&I. My problem with it is that I was left wanting more, it didn't fully satisfy me and so I hope they explore this again in the future with more depth. I think it is necessary for their relationship to continue advancing (although I am starting to wonder if it's ever going to get to a define place ).

My reviews of The Administration series' books:

Book 1: Mind Fuck - 3 Stars  
Book 2: Quid Pro Quo  
Book 2.1: Unlucky Break - 2 Stars  
Book 2.2: Friday - 3 Stars  
Book 2.3: Pancakes - 5 Stars  
Book 2.4: Surprises - 4 Stars  
Book 2.5: Family - 4 Stars  
Book 2.6: Mirror Mirror - 4 Stars  
Book 3: Games & Players - 5 Stars  
Book 3.1: Game, Set - 4 Stars  
Book 3.2: As Long As It Lasted - 3 Stars  
Book 3.3: Fuck of the Day - 3 Stars  
Book 3.4: Wine, Women and Cushions - 2 Stars  
Book 3.5: Playing with Fire - 5 Stars  
Book 3.6: All Work and no Play - 3 Stars  
Book 3.7: Gee - 2 Stars  
Book 3.8: Shopping & Fucking - 5 Stars  
Book 3.9: Pool School - 3 Stars  
Book 3.95: Without the Game - 4 Stars  
Book 4: Control - 4 Stars  
Book 4.2: Wait For It - 4 Stars  
Book 4.3: Caged - 5 Stars  
Book 4.4: Unaccustomed as I Am... - 3 Stars  
Book 4.5: Helen - 4 Stars  
Book 4.6: Shopping, No Fucking - 4 Stars  
Book 4.7: Losing It - 4 Stars  
Book 4.8: Coming from America  
Book 5: Quis Custodiet - 3.5 Stars  
Book 5.2: Gratuitous Kink - 4 Stars

Book 5.3: Then and Now - 4 Stars  
Book 5.4: Friends in the Right Places - 2 Stars  
Book 5.5: Smoke & Cameras - 4 Stars  
Book 5.6: Sunday - 3 Stars  
Book 6: First Against the Wall - 4 Stars  
Book 7: For Certain Values  
Book 7.1: Family Values  
Book 7.2: Boy's Toys - 3 Stars  
Book 7.3: Make it a Surprise  
Book 7.4: Prodigal  
Book 8: Blood & Circuses  
Book 9: Corpora Delicti  
Gratuitous Epilogue

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### **Susan says**

I have to admit that this one freaked me out!

It's been alluded to that Toreth's behavior past and present might come and bite him in the ass at some point. I hadn't, however, expected Helen. I felt a mix of being creeped out by her insanity yet sympathetic to what she's been through.

Getting details of what Toreth has done in his career, what he ordered, allowed, and watched done to Helen...I felt a bit like Warrick...I'd rather not know...

But, as all of you TA readers have said before in comments and threads, Warrick knows what he's involved with. His internal monologue at the end shows he realizes HIS choice...

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### **Lena♥Ribka says**

#### **2, 8 stars**

Toreth surprised me twice:  
the first time because of his reaction,  
the second time because of his reaction.

A touching story with a new view on some familiar things but this sequel doesn't belong to my favourites.

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### **Shelley says**

**Manna Francis really has way of freaking a person OUT. Consider me freaked....again!**

I admit, I am just like Warrick in my response to Helen and what she represents - all the ugly that is Val Toreth. I know it, but I don't want to see it, EVER.

I hurts to face the truth and even though a reminder is probably a good thing. But still...what am I going to do with you Val? What am I going to do?

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### **Lenore says**

Toreth, you're fifty kinds of fucked up. And what? Are we worried that Warrick might realize it, leave and never come back? Drowning ourselves in booze, are we?

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### **Lala says**

**First read on December 18, 2014.**

**Re-read on July 11, 2015.**

Here's the slap back to reality in case I managed to delude myself and forgot about Toreth's profession.

Creepy, sad, eye-opening..this story was fascinating and disturbing.

I still love Toreth, though.

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### **Marlobo says**

**October 18, 2014**

I re-read this story last night. It made me sick, again.

In no moment during my reading of TA until now I have forgotten what is Toreth, it's out of the question for me to simplify the issue here saying "it's his job". This story not only didn't allow me to forget what's Toreth but it rubbed it to me on the face.

In spite of my reaction to the story, I cannot be ignorant of the merits of a writer capable to create such havoc in the feelings of the readers; from there my rating, although I don't want nor I plan read it never again

**October 17, 2014**

I need to think about this... I can't rate or comment right now.

My state of mind was similar when I finished The Last Rebellion by Lisa Henry.

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## **DayDreamer says**

*"You could've told me we were only there to help make up the numbers. I'd have brought a blanket."*  
*Warrick decided to up the game. "Don't worry, I shall know not to ask you next time."*

*Cornered, Toreth shrugged. "I've had worse afternoons. Didn't you say they do evening performances in bars? That wouldn't be so bad. Something to drink..." His hand dropped below the table and Warrick felt a touch on his knee, then fingertips walking slowly up his thigh. "Nice dark seats at the back."*

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So Warrick cares just a bit more for it to not matter at all, but not enough for it to make a difference. Good to know. It isn't really a newsflash, though.

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