

K.T. DADY

# Emerald Tree Farm



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By K.T. DADY

Emerald Tree Farm  
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Always believe in magic.

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*About the Author*

*Acknowledgments*

*Cameron*

Cameron Hart took the shortcut home from his sister's pub, crossing over the shallow part of Honeydale River. The stepping stones were slimy and damp, and the water was as cold as the late November air. His legs were long and strong and easily made the large strides needed to reach each old brown stone. He'd been taking that route for as long as he could remember. Even before Winnie owned The Black Hat Inn, his family would pop over there for something to eat or drink.

It was his grandfather, Angus, who taught him how to cross the river safely. Not once in Cameron's thirty-six years had he ever slipped, tumbled, skidded, or fell, unlike his three siblings, who had all taken a turn at least once ending up straight in the drink, as Angus called it.

Cameron was halfway across when he glanced up from his feet to see a woman around his age jumping onto the third stone from the other side. The first thing he noticed was the silver high heels she was wearing.

*What in the name... Oh, she is so going to fall in, and what the hell is she doing trying to cross while someone else is already on the stones? Can she not see me?*

Cameron was a broad man, with some obvious muscles. Plus, he was pretty sure the open space around them gave him away.

‘Oi!’ he called, slamming his fists into his coat pockets.

The woman wobbled as she looked up, giving the impression it was the first time she had noticed him. One slim hand lifted slightly, and Cameron wondered why on earth she felt it was the right time for a polite wave.

His mouth gaped as she took another step towards him.

*Does she actually expect me to move backwards?*

Cameron was adamant he wasn’t going anywhere but forward. She could move. He was there first. He remained on his stone whilst an icy gust of wind blew up around them, almost knocking her clean off. His stomach even flipped for her, and he was amazed she kept her balance. The tight blonde bun on top of her head didn’t so much as lose a strand. It was quite impressive to watch but still annoying that she was showing clear signs she wasn’t going back.

‘You can’t be on here at the same time as someone else,’ he yelled, thinking he shouldn’t have to point out the obvious.

That irritating slight wave was back. Cameron shook his head and breathed out a puff of cold air.

*She’s not even wearing a coat. I bet she’s from down south. City, I bet.*

Cameron’s gaze shifted to her grey trouser suit. Every shiver rattling through her could be seen as clear as day. He couldn’t believe what he was witnessing. There was no way she had any thermals on under that outfit, he was sure. Blue

ankles were on show, peeking out between her cropped trousers and those four-inch shoes.

*God give me strength.*

Cameron stood in the middle of the river until she met the stepping stone before him. He raised his brow beneath his woolly hat whilst widening his eyes.

‘Have you noticed the snow?’ was his sarcastic greeting.

Dark brown eyes moved to his side to take in the white fields and snow-covered trees. She looked back at him.

‘Did you see me at all?’ was his second question.

She thumbed behind her. ‘I wondered if you might be able to help me.’

*Irish. Huh! Figured her for London.*

‘In the middle of the river?’

‘Hmm? Oh, no. You’re the first person I’ve seen all morning.’ She pointed behind her again. ‘Nobody came by, you see. So I got out and walked. I got a bit lost, and I did call out to you, but I guess you didn’t hear me over this wind.’

‘Well, you’re in the Scottish Highlands. Honeydale, to be precise. Does that help you?’

She clung to her body as though that would warm her shivering bones. ‘Hmm?’

*Christ almighty, why me!*

‘You’re going to catch your death.’ Cameron whipped off his large coat and quickly flopped it over her shoulders.



The wide smile that filled her pale face told him just how grateful she was for the kindness offered. No words were needed as she snuggled into his leftover body heat, but she obviously felt the need.

‘Oh, thank you so much. I have a coat, but it’s in the car.’ That slim finger was wagging behind her again. ‘It’s stuck in the snow. Somewhere over there on a country lane. It’s quite narrow, you know. The lane, not the car. The car is small. I have all my things inside it. I’ve just moved here. I have a new job. I—’

Cameron raised one gloved hand. ‘Do you really think this is the best place to get acquainted with the locals?’

Her perfectly shaded eyebrows lifted a touch. ‘What?’

‘In case you haven’t noticed, we’re in the middle of a river. It’s freezing, and if I had a mirror, I would show you just how much you resemble Smurfette right now.’

She reached up with a trembling hand and touched her nose. ‘I’m very cold.’

‘You don’t say.’

She attempted to turn on her high heels to once more point behind her. ‘I think I can show you where... Whoa!’ She wobbled, and Cameron caught her elbows, causing her to turn back his way. Then she stumbled forward onto his stepping stone, and they both slipped straight into the icy liquid.

More swear words than he’d ever said in his life came out of his mouth as soon as his soaked head bobbed up above the water level. He could see his coat puffed out, floating with the

woman still attached, so he used what little body heat he had left to grab her and drag her to the riverbank.

Her teeth were chattering even more than they were before the fall. She couldn't speak due to the numbness that had full ownership of her bright red lipstick.

Cameron stood, slumping her to his side, knowing he had to get them warm immediately. His sister's inn was just through the trees, so it was best to head straight there. It wasn't the easiest of tasks, as high-heels, soaked clothing, and her deadweight slowed him down at every step.

Enough was enough. With one quick movement, he scooped her up like a bride and ran all the way to The Black Hat Inn.

Winnie slapped a hand to her mouth as Cameron burst through the back door, entering the pub's kitchen as though a wild animal was close behind. 'Goodness, what's happened, Cam?'

He tried to chatter out that they had fallen in the river, but his lips refused to help. 'Warm,' he managed.

Winnie called to her partner, Tom, and together they quickly moved the frozen couple upstairs to the rooms Winnie rented out at her inn. She took the woman into one room, and Tom led Cameron to another to get him dry and warm.

*Faye*

Faye Turner had it all figured out. A fresh start in another country. A new job, and her own little flat that she was renting above a shop along Wishing Well Lane, wherever that was. She'd been driving for hours with her worldly goods, which consisted of two suitcases, one black holdall, her large brown handbag, and her favourite pillow, which wouldn't fit into any of her bags. All she wanted was to get settled, put her PJs on, and have a nice cup of tea.

But no.

Thanks to a dodgy satnav system, the ferry ride from hell that took her over the Irish Sea, two snow showers, more country lanes than she'd seen in her life, and a flat tyre, Faye had never felt so cold, lost, and ill in her life.

One moment, she was driving along, humming 'Jingle Bells' whilst concentrating on the road, and the next, she was stuck in a ditch in the middle of nowhere.

As each minute ticked by, so did her dream of having a happy idyllic life far, far away from the miserable one she had left behind in Dublin.

Honeydale sounded like a nice place to live, and a lot cheaper than the town where her new job was situated. It

didn't look too far away on the map from her rented flat. She had been feeling okay about the possible half-hour commute each day back and forth.

There had been nothing but excitement about her new adventure. That was until she had to trudge through snow in high heels, trying to find at least one person who could help her. Leaving for Scotland straight from popping in at her old job just to stick two fingers up wasn't the best plan, seeing how her other footwear was packed away, but Faye was so determined to dress as smart as she could to show her old colleagues she was on top of the world, and even more excited to head off as quickly as she could, not much else consumed her mind.

Hypothermia was the only thing on her mind now. Some woman, who introduced herself as Winnie Hart, had undressed her, wrapped her up in a quilt, dried her hair, and settled her in front of an open fireplace that was crackling away nicely.

Faye huddled over, staring at the flickering flames coming from the burning logs. She sipped the sweet tea handed her way, grimacing at the taste, but it was warming her, so she drank it. Finally, she was starting to feel life return to her body.

Winnie sat to her side, rubbing one hand down Faye's back. 'Have you defrosted yet?'

'Getting there. Thank you so much for your help.'

'It's Cam you want to thank. How on earth did you manage to fall in the river?'

Faye glanced at the woman, who looked close to her own age. She had kind eyes. Blue like the summer sky. 'My car is

stuck somewhere in the snow. I was looking for someone to help me. He was the only person I'd seen in ages, but he couldn't hear me call out, so I went to meet him in case he turned back. I couldn't risk it, you see. I didn't mean to make him fall.' She peeked over the quilt, towards the door. 'Is he all right?'

Winnie breathed out a laugh. 'Oh, he'll be fine. He won't be happy with you though. I can tell you that for nothing. My big brother has never fallen in Honeydale River. Not once. And he's quite proud about that fact. Nope! He won't be a happy bunny right now. Best to avoid him for a while if you can. He can be a bit moody at the best of times.'

Faye lowered her head into her shoulders. 'I'm really sorry,' she mumbled onto the floral quilt.

'Never mind that,' said Winnie softly. 'How about you tell me who you are and what you're doing around these parts. I won't lie, the silver heels have got me curious no end.'

'I've just moved here. Well, I was heading to my new home. I got a bit lost and ended up in a ditch. I have a new job starting after the weekend.'

'Ooh, lovely. I can help with all your problems. Don't you worry about any of that. I'll make a call and have someone sort your car. Now, tell me, where is your new home?'

'Wishing Well Lane. It's in Honeydale, so I know it must be around here somewhere.'

'This pub is on Wishing Well Lane, so you're close. There are some shops further down. I'm guessing you were supposed to be heading that way.'

‘I’m renting a flat above a shop.’

‘Oh, that’ll be from Butters. He owns the hardware shop. Said he was going to rent out the flat above it now he’s moved into Peanut Cottage with Bree. That relationship was a long time coming. They were friends for years. I’ll give you a laugh. They started out as enemies. Hated each other at first. Not sure how that started, but then they became friends, and now, well, they seem happy enough. Love can be a funny affair. So, what’s your name, my lovely.’

‘Faye. Faye Turner.’

‘And what job will you be taking up around here? Please don’t tell me Butters has got you lifting and carrying for him.’

Faye was so much warmer. She let the cover slip enough to reveal her bare shoulder. ‘I’m a reporter. I got a job with a newspaper in Angelmeade.’

‘Oh, the one-trick pony.’ Winnie laughed as she stood to go over to a chest of drawers. She pulled out a pair of pink PJs. ‘That’s what we locals call it. It’s a terrible paper. Always repeating itself on the news. I swear, they’ve only got one story to tell each year. Ooh, sorry. I mean no offence to you, Faye.’

*My day is just getting better and better.*

Winnie handed over the pyjamas. ‘These belong to my little sister, Ava. I have clothes here for all my siblings in case they ever stay over. Our Ava is around your size. My clothes would be too short for your lovely height.’

‘I’m only five-seven.’

Winnie laughed. ‘Well, I guess you’re shorter without the heels. Very Christmassy, by the way.’

Faye couldn’t be bothered explaining her footwear. She headed for the en suite that Winnie gestured towards and got changed into the flannel nightclothes, wishing she could just slip into bed.

‘Are you hungry?’ called Winnie.

A warm strawberry jam sandwich and a bottle of water were all Faye had consumed that morning. She was sure she could eat a whole buffet. ‘Starving.’ She stepped back into the bedroom, tying her long blonde hair into a loose ponytail. ‘Do you serve food here?’

‘Yes. Come on. Follow me. I’ll dry your clothes, and we can have lunch in the kitchen out the back. I’m guessing you won’t want to sit in the bar in Ava’s nightwear.’

Faye smiled softly as she shook her head. She double-checked the top button on the pyjama shirt was fastened, then followed Winnie to the warm kitchen.

Winnie plonked her on a wooden bench in front of a matching table and placed a bowl of potato and leek soup in front of her with some doorstep farmhouse bread slices. ‘I’ll just call about your car, then join you. Won’t be a sec.’

Food had never tasted so good. It was creamy and hot and all kinds of wonderful, and the soft bread crumbled over the steam wafting from her large white bowl. She released a low moan as the first mouthful hit her stomach.

*I could get used to this. I’m definitely eating here most nights after work.*

She stopped mid-spoonful as Cameron entered the kitchen, wearing red plaid pyjama bottoms with a red tee-shirt.

‘Hello,’ was all she could think to say. He served himself some soup from the cauldron-style pot on the stove, and she went back to quietly eating, trying hard not to ogle his solid chest and large biceps.

Cameron sat opposite her and grabbed some bread to dunk into his soup. He didn’t make eye contact nor did he utter a word. It was as though she wasn’t even in the room.

Faye felt the need to say something. ‘Thank you for saving me in the river.’ She had said the words so softly, it was quite possible she didn’t speak at all.

Light-brown eyes slowly lifted to stare blankly at her thawed face. She wasn’t sure if he was thinking of something to say or was simply too angry to speak. She swallowed hard and returned to her food as he started eating again.

Muffled noises came from the front of the building, where the customers sat enjoying their own pub lunch. She wished she was out there with them. Always the people person, Faye loved chatting and listening to others. The large man in front of her clearly preferred peace and quiet.

Faye never could do silence very well. She always had to fill the emptiness. ‘I’m Faye Turner.’ She paused, waiting, but got no response. ‘I’m from Dublin.’ Another pause. ‘It’s in Ireland.’ She wasn’t sure why she added that part.

His eyes met hers for a second.

She took another mouthful of the delicious soup and smiled to herself at how cosy she felt in Winnie’s kitchen, even if the



company was a grump. In some ways, she couldn't blame him. It was her fault they had ended up nearly freezing to death in the river.

'How are you feeling?' she asked, using her best polite voice.

'Warmer.'

She jumped slightly, as she wasn't expecting him to reply. 'That's good.'

*Goodness, Faye. You write for a living, but you can't find words better than that.*

Her brain didn't have any more time to chastise herself or think up something else to say, because Cameron scraped back his chair and took his empty bowl over to the dishwasher. She glanced at the dregs in her bowl, knowing they wouldn't go to waste, and continued to eat her lunch, hoping Winnie would hurry back.

Cameron came to a halt in the doorway. He looked over his shoulder and a loud breath left his nose, causing Faye to look his way. 'You look okay. Are you okay?'

She offered a small nod. 'Yes. Thanks to you.'

He grumbled something she couldn't make out, held one hand up, then left.

*Good chat.*

*Cameron*

Heading upstairs to his bedroom, Cameron stopped on the middle landing to adjust the Christmas decorations. They always went up early at home because the Hart family had way too many jobs to do over the festive season, what with owning a Christmas tree farm.

Emerald Tree Farm was the only home Cameron knew. He was born there, raised there, and was the only Hart grandchild who wanted to run the business with Angus. Once Cameron lost his parents, he was determined to help his grandfather as much as possible. Being the eldest of four, he felt responsible for everyone. It wasn't long before tree farming became his whole world.

Cameron smiled at the garland hanging over the framed picture of his parents. The greenery had way more pink baubles that it could handle, but his youngest sibling, Ava, always made it that way.

Knowing Angus was fast asleep in a makeshift bedroom downstairs, due to recovering from a broken leg, Cameron could bed down for the night. Everything was locked up, and his phone was left on in case his grandfather woke in the night and needed to call him for anything.

Snow was falling again, giving the farm another fresh coat. Cameron sighed deeply as he looked out the window. He'd only just cleared pathways early that morning.

'What a day,' he mumbled, leaving a foggy patch on the pane.

Winnie had filled him in on Faye Turner's story on his way out her door, but as he still had the right hump about falling in the river, he didn't care.

The bitter chill cutting through Faye as he carried her to his sister's place was fresh in his mind. Her big dark eyes blinking his way and those quivering lips trying to tell him something.

Cameron mentally shook his head and climbed into bed. He never did find out if she made it to her new home. Not that he was interested. He was happy to never hear from her again. With just one look, he could tell she was trouble.

Complications weren't a part of Cameron's life. He had a routine, a happy family, and a steady income. There wasn't room for anything getting in the way.

He flopped onto his pillow and sighed heavily again. It was bugging him that he didn't do a follow-up on the new kid on the block, not that he ever bothered with anyone else new to Honeydale. Why should she be any different?

He picked up his phone and stared defiantly at the screen for a moment.

*Just go to sleep.*

Another part of his brain didn't comply. It rang Winnie instead. He knew she'd be up, because, unlike him, she went to bed late, due to having to close a pub restaurant.

‘Don’t tell me, you’ve got questions about Faye,’ said Winnie, chuckling down the phone.

Cameron frowned, agitation bouncing around his body. ‘No.’

‘Oh. Is it Angus?’

‘No.’

‘Cam?’

‘Okay, so maybe I was going to ask if that woman got home in the end.’

Winnie’s muffled laugh caused some static in his phone. ‘You know, it would have been polite of you to have helped with the situation.’

‘I pulled her out of the river, didn’t I?’

‘Cam, you hardly said two words to her, then left as soon as you were warm again.’

‘Well, yeah. I had to get back to work. She lost me a couple of hours today.’

‘I’m sure she didn’t do that on purpose.’

Cameron huffed to himself as he sat up. Squashing his shoulders into the soft headboard behind him, he glared at his phone for a moment as though looking straight at his sister. ‘She walked on stepping stones across Honeydale River in high heels whilst shivering to the point she was unable to stand still.’ He paused, waiting for Winnie to say something, but she didn’t respond, so he added, ‘So, how is she?’

‘I got Declan to find her car. He sorted the tyre and took it up the road. I drove her to see Butters. She’s renting his flat. I

helped her with her bags once the car arrived and got her settled with some groceries, as she didn't have anything much. Anyway, by the time I left, she seemed okay. I told her I'd get Ava to pop by in the morning with some pastries for breakfast. She didn't want any fuss, but once she discovered Ava ran the bakery along the lane, she didn't mind. So, that's that.'

'Right, well, goodnight.' Cameron hung up before Winnie could say anything else. He had his information. He didn't need small details. Faye Turner was settled. She had food, a roof over her head, and, according to Winnie, seemed happy.

He settled back down, turned off the light, and tapped his fingers on top of the duvet. The light from outside gave his bedroom a dull blue hue until the porch light flicked on for a few minutes, no doubt triggered by a mooching nocturnal animal.

The sound of the blustery wind filled the silence, and, normally, Cameron would fall fast asleep rather quickly, as he worked long days and went to bed early.

*I wonder why she chose here of all places to live. She's a long way from home, and all alone. I hope she's not running away from anything.*

He closed his eyes, willing himself to sleep. It was no good. He tossed and turned, huffed and puffed, and got into a tangle with his pyjama bottoms more than once, which only irritated him some more. Thinking about Faye was getting on his nerves. He couldn't understand why she was still in his head. Fair enough, it wasn't his average day, so it was bound to sit with him for a while, but not whilst he was trying to sleep.

'Bloody hell!'

The light was switched back on and the covers flung off Cameron's agitated body. He decided to head to the kitchen to make some hot milk to help with his abnormal sleep problem. He just hoped it would only last for one night, and Faye Turner from Dublin, which he knew full well was in Ireland, thank you very much, wouldn't bother him ever again.

*Faye*

The smell of sawdust filled Faye's nostrils as she entered her new place of work. She wrinkled her nose, wondering why on earth an office would hold such a scent. There were two people within eyeshot at the far end of the room. A middle-aged woman with puffy blonde hair was giving a large printing machine a few kicks to its side, and an elderly gentleman in a tweed suit was bent over beneath his cluttered desk.

Faye wobbled back as a goat trotted by. She had to have a second look, just to be sure.

*Yep! Definitely a goat.*

The man banged his head on the desk as he clambered out, and Faye felt his pain. 'Oof!' He rubbed one hand over his wiry grey mop, then turned her way whilst curling his already curled moustache. 'Ooh, hello there, young miss. And what story have you brought my way?'

Faye shuffled closer, then jumped when a parrot squawked. She looked over her shoulder at the colourful bird perched on a thick branch screwed to the magnolia wall. 'Erm, I'm not sure I'm in the right place.' She glanced around the room, then over at the three arched windows by the printer.

‘We’re the Town Crier.’ He circled a finger in the air. ‘Local rag. Where are you supposed to be?’

‘Here. I guess. I’m Faye Turner. New reporter, reporting for duty, sir.’ She giggled to herself whilst happily rocking her hips from side to side.

‘Do you need the toilet?’ he asked, frowning at her odd movements.

Faye stopped jiggling about. ‘Erm, so, I am in the right place?’ Confirmation was most certainly needed, as something felt more than off.

‘Faye Turner,’ said the woman. Her hair reminded Faye of a dandelion seed head. ‘Yep, she’s starting today, Arnold.’ She waved a green-painted fingernail Faye’s way. ‘Your desk is the one by Cuthbert.’

It only took a second for Faye to realise Cuthbert was the parrot.

*Joy!*

Arnold clapped his hands together, creating one loud bang. ‘Splendid. Faye, did you say?’

Both women nodded.

‘Come. Come.’ Arnold led her over to another cluttered desk. ‘This is you.’ He waved off the mess. ‘Make it your own, dear. We all do.’ He pulled a bright orange sticky note off the computer screen and stuck it on her arm. ‘Your log-in details. Don’t lose it.’

Faye sat in the wobbly chair Arnold pulled out for her. She plopped her handbag onto her lap and twisted her lips to one



side, unsure what to do first.

‘Did you bring any stories with you?’ asked Arnold, finding the smallest space on the crowded desk to squeeze his backside onto.

‘No. I only arrived the other day. Between then and now, I’ve nothing to write about.’ She let out that same weird giggle as before, then pulled herself together.

Arnold’s frail shoulders slumped as he stood. ‘Oh, that’s a shame. Never mind. We’ll send you out as soon as you’ve popped to the loo. You can mix with the locals. Let them know you’re new in town and see if anyone tells you their secrets.’

Faye was confused. ‘Why would they tell me?’

‘People are strange like that, young Faye. Talk to strangers, so they do. Isn’t that right, Bree?’

Bree nodded, then headed over to a brown cupboard, where an old kettle sat, awaiting its retirement. ‘If you can’t get anything out of that lot, try Mrs Nesbit, over at Summer Valley. She’s got more news than us. Ooh, have you got a car? You’ll need one around these parts. Buses are slow.’

‘Yes, I have my own car.’

‘Where are you staying?’ asked Arnold, offering Cuthbert something from his pocket that Faye couldn’t quite see.

‘Wishing Well Lane, in the next town.’

He nodded and ate the remainder of whatever it was Cuthbert had had enough of. ‘Honeydale.’

Faye chose to ignore the sharing of food with her new feathered friend and hoped Cuthbert wouldn’t expect the same

low level of hygiene from her. ‘That’s right.’

Arnold gestured at the door. ‘Biz won’t be back until lunchtime. He’s our photographer, for now.’ He didn’t look best pleased about that fact.

‘Biz?’

Bree wagged a cracked floral mug at Faye. ‘That’s his rap name. Reckons he’ll be a big star one day. Meanwhile, he’s here, taking pictures.’

‘You can potter around without him today, Faye,’ said Arnold. ‘Just grab your pad and pen and find your feet.’ The way he stood there, tapping one foot, told Faye perhaps he meant right now. She widened her eyes at him, and he nodded.

‘Oh, okay.’ Faye looked at the mess on her desk, peeled the sticky note off her arm and placed it on the monitor, then headed for the door, still unsure what was expected of her.

*Surely they don’t want me to just wander around town.*

‘Just wander around town for a bit,’ said Arnold. ‘Ooh, and bring back lunch.’

‘Chicken sandwich for me,’ said Bree, before disappearing through another doorway.

Arnold smiled widely. ‘Just bring that back for everyone. We don’t make much fuss here. Just make sure there’s salad in mine, but not in Bree’s. Unless it’s tomato. She doesn’t mind that. And Biz won’t eat meat. So maybe something veggie for him. Oh, and if you happen to come across some apple juice, that would be brilliant.’

Faye was taking mental notes, which was a solid trait she had that came in handy in her line of work. She headed for the door, and Arnold placed a thin piece of rope in her hand.

‘Drop Cupcake back to Mr Shankly, will you?’ Faye went to speak, but Arnold wasn’t finished. ‘Ooh, young Faye, you’re going to fit in so well at the Town Crier. I can tell straight away. What a little gift you are. I’ve always loved the Irish. My grandmother was from there.’ He went to walk off, but Faye called after him.

‘Erm, who is Cupcake?’

*Please don't say the goat. He is so going to say the goat.*

‘The goat.’

*Oh, crumbs!*

‘And where might I find Mr Shankly?’

Arnold checked his pocket watch. ‘The Black Hat Inn is your best bet.’

Cupcake trotted by again, and Faye made a grab for her, but the old goat was a lot faster than she seemed. After a tangle and a knee drop, Faye managed to rope the old girl and drag her outside to the car. Her very small car.

*Oh, you have got to be kidding me!*

Cupcake bleated as though laughing, and, just for a second, Faye considered letting her out of the noose.

‘Oh, come on, Cupcake. Get in the bloody car.’ Even with half the roof folded back, fitting Cupcake in was beyond awkward, but not as awkward as Faye felt driving back to Honeydale with an old grey goat poking out of her tiny

convertible car. The weirdest part was, not one person batted an eyelid at the sight.

*Cameron*

There had been many strange things Cameron had witnessed during his life, but none as funny as watching Faye trying to drag a goat out of her car. The ruffled, angry animal had its teeth deeply embedded into part of the roof, its back legs were entangled in her large handbag straps, and it had one front leg flopped over its nearest seat. There were some curse words floating in the air, and Faye's tight bun looked as though lightning had struck it somewhere along Wishing Well Lane.

‘Well, you can just bloody well stay there then,’ she shouted at the goat.

Cameron leaned on the doorway of The Black Hat Inn and grinned as Faye stormed his way. She tripped on her black heels, balanced herself, brushed her hands over her hips, then offered him a curt nod as she passed him by to enter the premises.

*Now this I have to see.*

He stood behind her as she perused the pub.

Faye stepped into the middle of the floor and shouted, ‘Who owns Cupcake?’ She didn't hide the annoyance in her tone.

Cameron glanced over at Mr Shankly's shiny bald head dipped low, as the elderly man was reading his newspaper. He already knew the man wouldn't respond. Mr Shankly rarely wore his hearing aids, as he was perfectly fine without them, which was what he told everyone.

'The goat,' snapped Faye, pointing out the window.

Most of the customers went back to their food and drink, and Winnie was behind the bar frowning over at her brother.

Cameron walked around Faye, revealing a lazy smile. 'Spot of bother?'

'No.'

'Need help once again?'

'No.'

Cameron leaned a little closer, lowering his voice. 'Are you sure?'

Faye's jaw was clenched and her eyebrows knitted tightly. 'I'm fine. Just looking for a goat owner.'

'Oh, well, if that's your type.'

She huffed and walked away.

Cameron caught his sister shaking her head at him. He ignored her and pulled up a stool at the bar and carried on watching Faye. She was now approaching people individually to ask them if they owned a goat. All she got in return were a few sympathetic smiles and a lot of shaking heads.

Faye slumped into a chair, and Cameron couldn't help but feel a tiny bit sorry for the fish out of water. He waited until she glanced his way, then he gestured towards Mr Shankly.

That seemed to perk her up. She marched over to the old man and led with a whole heap of complaints, none of which he heard. She banged her hand on the table, and Mr Shankly looked up. He stared blankly at her as she rambled on with flapping arms.

Cameron headed for the car park. Cupcake had stopped eating the car and was staring out of the opened roof. He picked up the rope dangling around her neck and leaned in to pick her up.

‘Got to say, I’m wondering how you and the new girl met.’

Cupcake bleated and tried to nibble his ear.

‘That’s enough of that. Come on.’ Cameron placed her down and led her to the pub.

Mr Shankly was still staring blankly at Faye, and she looked one breath away from killing him, which amused Cameron no end.

Cameron approached them and handed over the rope. Mr Shankly grinned, looped the rope around the base of the table, then went back to his paper.

Faye slapped her hands on her hips and huffed. ‘How rude is he?’

Cameron thumbed towards the old man. ‘He’s deaf.’

‘Oh!’ She turned back to face Mr Shankly, tapped him on the shoulder, then started circling her fist over her chest.

Mr Shankly sniffed and went back to reading.

Cameron shook his head. ‘What was that, sign language?’

Faye seemed rather pleased with herself. ‘Yes.’

‘I hope you didn’t swear at him.’

‘No. I told him I was sorry.’

Cameron went back to the bar. ‘So, you know sign language?’

‘I only know how to say I’m sorry.’

He tried so hard not to laugh. ‘Oh, well, that came in handy.’

She tapped his elbow, and he looked at his arm. ‘You could have told me he was deaf.’

Cameron nodded. ‘Yep.’

Winnie came over and waved Faye closer to the bar. ‘What’s going on? I thought your new job started today.’

‘It does. I’m working right now.’

Both Winnie and Cameron frowned at that statement.

Faye sighed heavily. ‘I’m off to meet some locals to see if I can find my first story, but Arnold wanted me to return Cupcake.’

Winnie blew out a laugh as she tossed her head back. ‘Oh, Faye. Don’t let Arnold give you all the crummy jobs. He just wants you out the way in case a big story comes along. He’s known over there to hog the lot. Check the paper. His name is stamped all over it.’

‘Thank you for telling me. Anyway, I have to get back. I’m supposed to bring lunch in with me.’

Winnie leaned on the bar and lifted her fingers. ‘I’ll sort that for you, and you can tell him I’ve added it to his tab.’



‘Oh, okay. Thank you. I’m just going to pop outside to check on what’s left of my car.’

Cameron followed her, knowing he should be getting back to work himself. It was close to Christmas, and the tree farm was at its busiest.

The poor little car had scratch marks and bite marks and smelled like sawdust. Faye couldn’t get her roof to close, and one headrest was tilted and covered in sticky white goo.

‘I’m guessing it has seen better days,’ said Cameron, trying not to laugh.

Faye went to reply but stopped when she noticed a local lad mooching around by some trees with a metal detector. She waved him over.

‘Hey, Cam,’ said the lad as he approached.

‘You found anything yet, Kirk?’

Kirk removed the headphones from his ears and wriggled his large backpack into a better position on his back, as it was slipping off. He poked his glasses back up to the top of his nose and sniffed. ‘Not along here, but—’

Faye interrupted him, tossing out her neatly manicured fingers. ‘Faye Turner. The Town Crier. Well, not me. The newspaper. I’m a reporter.’ She rummaged around in her handbag and pulled out a small card. ‘Here’s my number. Call me straight away if you do find anything. I’ll write your story, Kirk.’

‘He can write his own story. He has a website.’

Kirk nodded happily at Cameron.

Faye was still smiling away at the lad as though he were the best thing since sliced bread. ‘Nothing quite like going wide though, eh, Kirk?’ She nudged his arm, and he wobbled.

‘I was thinking of telling the news,’ said Kirk, reaching for his notepad.

Cameron watched Faye’s eyes widen more than his own.

‘Telling the news what?’ she asked.

‘What I found yesterday.’ Kirk flipped his pages over until he found what he wanted to show her. ‘See, here. I wrote this, but it needs work. I also have...’ He struggled to free himself of his luggage, then pulled out an electronic tablet.

Faye squatted to the ground with Kirk, and Cameron leaned over their backs to see what was on the screen.

*Looks like he’s found a couple of old coins. Well, that’ll keep her busy.*

He went to turn away and leave them to their treasure story, when he heard the name of his farm mentioned.

‘Emerald Tree Farm, you say?’ said Faye, closing in on the notes.

Kirk nodded. ‘I’m thinking these coins could be 1600s, possibly.’

‘Ooh, Kirk. This will be an amazing story. Will you let me cover it exclusively?’

The lad shrugged whilst nodding.

Faye stood, taking him with her. ‘I’ll get our photographer to meet us up at the farm. You can show us whereabouts you found the coins.’

‘I know Biz. He’s my cousin,’ said Kirk, putting his things away.

‘Great. It’ll just be the three of us for now. I can write what we’ve got so far, then add on the juicy facts once we know more about the coins.’ She gave him the once over. ‘Erm, you might want to get changed for the photos, Kirk.’

Kirk glanced at his jumpsuit. ‘Why?’

‘You look like a Ghostbuster.’

‘I like this look.’

Faye helped him replace his bag onto his back. ‘Well, okay then. Shall we head off now?’

Kirk nodded and warily looked over her car.

‘Erm, excuse me,’ snapped Cameron. ‘I’m right here, in case you haven’t noticed.’

Faye and Kirk stared at him.

‘Yes?’ said Faye.

Cameron tapped his chest. ‘That’s my property you’re discussing, and I never said you could go up there... probing the area.’

Kirk’s dark eyebrows furrowed. ‘You’ve always said I can go up there.’

Cameron flapped one hand at the teenager. ‘Yes, you. Not her.’

Faye crossed her arms in a huff. ‘What’s wrong with me?’

‘I don’t want reporters wandering all over my farm. We work up there. I’m busy.’

‘Oh, yes, I can see that.’

He rested his gaze on her ruby lips for a moment as she smirked. ‘I’m going back to work right now, not that it’s any of your business, nor is my farm the Town Crier’s business.’

Kirk swallowed hard and attempted a relaxed lean on the car, but the weight on his back tilted him sideways, and he had to rebalance. ‘Medieval coins found on your farm could put the place on the historical map. It could be good for your business, Cam.’

Cameron was about to mull that fact over, but then Faye spoke.

‘Ooh, archaeologists will want to come here.’ She clasped her hands together in front of her chest. Her bright lips curling like the Cheshire Cat’s. ‘This story could make the headlines around here.’ She squealed, making Cameron’s eardrums shudder. ‘Just think, Kirk. Your name will be everywhere. This could really help you if you want a future in that kind of work.’

Kirk nodded with excitement. ‘I do.’

‘Fantastic,’ said Faye, gesturing at her car. ‘Let’s get started.’

Cameron grabbed the door she had just swung open. ‘Let’s not,’ he snapped.

Fiery dark eyes shot his way. ‘Oh, what’s your problem? This is for Kirk’s future.’

*She’s kidding me!*

He leaned closer as she clambered into the driver's seat. 'No one is coming up to my farm, and they sure as hell won't be digging it up, I can tell you that for nothing.'

'It's history, Mr Hart,' she snapped back.

'It's a Christmas tree farm, Miss Turner.'

'It can be an excavation site,' said Kirk, tossing his backpack into the back of the car.

Cameron's blood was starting to boil. 'No, it bloody well can't.'

'Come on, Kirk. Let's go. This is so exciting, isn't it?' sang out Faye's merry voice, annoying the life out of Cameron.

Kirk got in the car, and Faye started the engine. Cameron slammed her door and stepped back, wagging one finger forward.

'Tell Winnie I'll be back for the lunch in a bit,' she hollered through her broken opened roof.

Cameron's fists tightened. 'I swear to... If you...' She was off, so he ran to his truck. 'If she tries to dig up my land, I'll...' he told the steering wheel as he screeched out the car park.

*Faye*

With the buzz of excitement running through Faye, she pulled up on the driveway of Emerald Tree Farm. She had already instructed Kirk to call Biz, so her photographer would be there when they arrived.

Biz was fiddling with his wide-angle lens and only looked up to say a quick grunt of a hello.

Faye quickly organised her small team, placing Kirk with his back to the large red farmhouse close by. ‘Hold your metal detector as though you’re searching.’

Biz shuffled towards his little cousin, giving him the once over. ‘Finally found something, Kirk?’ He raked one hand over his buzzcut, then shook his head slightly. ‘Do you really want me to take your picture while you’re dressed like that?’

Kirk gave a lopsided smile as he nodded.

Biz stepped back and sighed. ‘Fine.’

Spinning slowly in a circle, with her arms spread wide, Faye asked Kirk whereabouts he had found the treasure. Her happy dance was brought to an abrupt halt, as Cameron’s truck crunched onto the top end of the drive, unable to go any further, due to her car blocking the way.

He jumped out, nostrils flaring, and marched straight over to a wide-eyed Biz. ‘Get off my land. Now!’

Biz showed one palm as he lowered his camera. ‘Calm down, Cam. We’re not doing any harm.’

‘No harm!’ shouted Cameron. He shot a finger out towards Faye. ‘She’s going to spread the word that medieval bits and pieces can be found up here. That’s the harm. Now, move.’

Biz walked back to his motorbike to put his equipment away, but Faye waved at him.

‘Don’t listen to him, Biz. This is my story. You work for the Town Crier, not him.’

Biz clearly didn’t know what to do for the best, so he just remained standing by his bike.

Cameron approached Faye. ‘I don’t care about your stupid story. I care about my land. And you’re trespassing. Stick that in your notes.’

Faye poked him in the chest, then took a moment to appreciate the solid muscle beneath her fingertip. The smallest fizz woke her butterflies, then froze them when she glanced up to meet his light-brown eyes glaring at her. She swallowed hard, hoping he didn’t notice, then slowly lowered her hand. She opened her mouth to speak, but a voice in the distance beat her to it.

‘What’s going on out here?’ Angus was being pushed along in his wheelchair by a tall man with golden hair.

Faye glanced at the old man’s frail legs and instantly felt sorry for him, knowing full well how it felt to be in a wheelchair, due to breaking her leg back when she was fifteen.

She gave a slight wave accompanied by a warm smile. ‘Hello. I’m Faye Turner. Town Crier. Well, not me. The paper.’

*I’ve got to stop saying that.*

‘Yes, I’ve heard about you already, lass,’ said Angus, waving her closer.

She approached the beady blue eyes boring into her soul and bent over slightly to be more at his level.

Angus tapped her hand. ‘Why is my grandson shouting out here? That’s what I want to know.’ He glanced over his shoulder at the man holding the handles of his chair. ‘Me and Carter heard him all the way from the kitchen.’

Carter pulled in his lips and nodded.

Faye gestured at Kirk. ‘That lad over there found a couple of old coins on your farm. I’m going to do a story on it for the local paper. I—’

Cameron scoffed loudly. ‘It won’t just be the local paper though, will it?’ He turned to his grandfather. ‘We’ll have all sorts up here, trying to get on our land with their metal detectors.’

‘Aye, I see,’ mumbled Angus, scratching his mop of wiry grey hair. He looked up at Faye. ‘Here’s the thing. We farm Christmas trees here, and it’s almost Christmas. So this is our busiest time. So best you come back in the springtime. Maybe we can sort a story for the local rag then.’

*He’s kidding me!*

Faye leaned closer, lowering her voice in an attempt to sound sweet, rather than patronising. ‘I’m afraid stories don’t



work that way.'

'Pfft!' Angus flapped an arm. 'I'll speak to Arnold. Don't you worry. I'll sort it.'

Faye straightened and slumped her shoulders. 'I don't need you to speak to my boss. I'm perfectly capable of running a story, and this story takes place here and now.'

Angus shook his head. 'Well, it doesn't have to.' He waved Kirk over. 'Kirk, you be a good lad and pretend you found your stash in the springtime, okay? Not much anyone can do around here in all this snow anyway. I'll sort you out your story then. But just know, I won't be allowing anyone else up here.'

Kirk mulled it over for all but a second, then nodded his reply, much to Faye's agitation.

She crossed her arms in a silent huff, wondering how to get through to them all. 'You do realise this will be good publicity for your tree farm. Think of the exposure. And all for free.'

*Who wouldn't want that?*

Cameron raised both hands. 'This is why I was shouting, Angus. She doesn't listen.'

Carter stepped away from the back of the wheelchair. 'I'm sure we can sort something, Miss Turner. We're just really busy right now. We're not trying to be awkward. It's just, we've got a lot on, and as you can see, we're one man down around here this year.' He gestured at Angus, who frowned at his healing leg.

'I'll be up and running soon enough,' grumbled Angus, shuffling in his seat, clearly annoyed.

*They're trying to make me feel guilty. Well, I won't be pushed around on my first day.*

Faye raised herself to her full height. 'I'm a reporter. I report the news. This is news. I'm not prepared to put it off till the flowers start blooming again. That's not how the news works.' She tugged Kirk away. 'Show me where you found the coins, and we can get started.'

Kirk chewed his bottom lip as he glanced nervously at Angus, who was pointing to a field off his land. 'Erm, my mum won't be pleased if I upset the Hart family. They're our friends.'

Faye knew everyone on the driveway heard the lad. Cameron's smirk wasn't needed. She tried hard to ignore him. 'Kirk, think of your website. You're about to become a name. A face. People will want to interview you. After me, that is.'

Kirk's body lowered into his jumpsuit. 'I'm sorry, Miss Turner, but I don't want to get into a war with Angus.' He leaned closer, lowering his voice. 'He's well-loved around here. Don't make the locals hate you.' He straightened and walked away, placing his headphones on.

'Kirk. Come back.' Faye knew there was no point continuing her fight. She needed to regroup. Go back to the office and tell Arnold how the Hart family was covering up a story. Surely the Town Crier wouldn't stand for that. She went to turn to the eyes she could feel burning into her back, but Cameron leaned over her shoulder.

'You're not making a very good first impression around here, Faye.'

The warmth of his breath wafting onto her cold ear caused a stirring in her stomach. There was something about the way he said her name that sounded nice, even though he wasn't being friendly at all.

Biz's bike roared, and that told Faye he was off as well.

Without looking at anyone, she made her way back to her car and clambered inside, thankful she didn't slip on any ice patches. Just as her door slammed to a close, a rapping came at her window.

Angus had pulled up alongside her. 'Listen, lass. We're a small community here. If you want to fit in, you can't go around hassling folk. Doesn't go down too well.'

'I'm not trying to upset anyone. It's a good story, and I'm going to write about it whether you like it or not.' She raised her window and tightened her grip on the steering wheel.

*I cannot believe I just said that. What did I sound like? I need to get out of here before...*

Too late.

Cameron stood in front of her car, showing one gloved hand. He slowly came around to her window, but she refused to open it back up, even though her roof was open, allowing him access to her.

Keeping her focus forward, Faye braced herself for more shouting, but Cameron shook his head and walked away. That annoyed her even more for some reason. She opened the window and called to him, but he kept on walking back to the farmhouse.

Carter approached instead. ‘Hey, we’re not a bad bunch around here. Just float with the snowflakes,’ he said, glancing up at the light snow gently sprinkling down.

*Oh, great! It’s snowing again.*

Carter gestured at the truck. ‘I’ll just move that out your way.’

Faye pulled away carefully, worried she’d end up in another ditch, and sniffed back the tears threatening to roll down her cheeks.

*I wasn’t trying to upset anyone. I just want a story.*

‘Is that so bad?’ she asked the radio, just as her satnav died.

She pulled over and rested her head on the wheel, allowing some tears to escape. Not once during her big dreams of starting afresh somewhere so different from home did she think she would be so unhappy. Her past was filled with misery. All she wanted was a new beginning. She sighed heavily. Tired, lonely, and feeling colder by the second. The snowflakes turned to clumps as the icy wind picked up, and her car decided to take that moment to suddenly die.

‘Oh, that’s just bloody fantastic!’

## Cameron

Still fuming from the lunchtime events at the farm, Cameron vehemently shook his head at his phone. ‘No, Winnie. Call someone else.’

Winnie’s voice sighed down the mouthpiece. ‘She called me for help, but I can’t get along the roads in my car in this blizzard. You’ve got a truck, Cam. Go help the woman.’

‘Tell her to call Rooster or someone. Give her Declan’s number. He’s got a tow truck at his garage.’

‘Cam. Faye is stuck somewhere just outside the farm. Go and get her. She must be freezing by now. That’s if she hasn’t decided to wander off again like she did last time.’

‘Why the bloody hell me?’ Cameron mumbled to his warm bedroom as he hung up on his sister.

The snow was visible through the window, as the dark curtain was pulled back. It was coming down thick and fast, covering the pathways Cameron had cleared that morning. It wasn’t something he grumbled about much, as it was part of the job, having a farm in the Scottish Highlands. He got on with the same chore each winter.

Cameron sat back on his bed and put his feet up for a moment. He’d only popped in to change his soaked top, as

Carter thought it was funny to have a snowball fight during the blizzard. He huffed to himself, jumped up, pulled a waterproof jacket over his head, then headed for the kitchen to make some lunch, seeing how he still hadn't had any.

*Ooh, lovely hot soup, I'm thinking. Some for me. Some for Carter, and some for Angus. She can sit there and freeze.*

He started chopping vegetables to place in the roasting tray, adding some spices and a drizzle of oil. The kettle boiled, ready to pour on some stock cubes, and Cameron scalded his hand on the hot water, as his mind was elsewhere. Shaking off his thoughts of a cold and alone reporter stranded not far from his farm, he continued to make a hearty lunch.

The phone in his pocket started to ring again. He figured it was Winnie so placed it on the worktop when he saw he was right.

'I'm not answering, Win,' he told the phone.

It rang off, and a message bleeped. There was no way he was looking at that. He would just go about the rest of his day, pretending Faye Turner didn't exist.

*Simple!*

Cameron turned the phone over and read the text that told him Faye's phone was now off. He huffed loudly and switched the oven on low, ready to roast the vegetables before blending them with the stock. 'I swear to God this woman will be the death of me.'

The pickup truck was cold and at the side of the driveway, where Carter had left it earlier.

Over and over, Cameron told himself not to go to her aid, but his body seemed to ignore his brain and got on with the task.

It didn't take long to find her car along the snow-filled road, which was getting deeper by the hour.

Cameron peered through Faye's half-opened roof to see her huddled on the front seat, shivering, with no coat, and partially covered in snow. Her eyes were closed, and a small part of him felt sorry for her. But she still wanted to dig up his farm, so maybe that small part vanished quite quickly. He banged on the window, knowing it would make her jump.

Faye's eyes shot open, but her arms cuddling her body remained in position as though stuck.

Cameron shook his head and opened her door. 'You planning on staying here long? Only, I'm in the middle of making soup.'

'Soup?' Her teeth chattered so badly, he just about made out what she said.

He sighed quietly to himself and pointed over to his purring truck. 'Come on.'

Faye didn't move or speak, and Cameron wasn't entirely sure if she could.

He reached inside the car and took her arm. 'Let's get you in the warm before you kill yourself.'

Her body untangled, and she fell into his side as she got out of the car. Then she stayed there, huddled into him, which he wasn't too bothered about.

Those stupid heels of hers were annoying Cameron, and he made a mental note to see if there was any suitable footwear back at his she could have. With two sisters who used to live at the farm, he knew some of their belongings were still in their old bedrooms.

Cameron kept their heads low as they fought the wind and snow to get back to his truck.

‘My car,’ whispered Faye, placing her hands in front of the warm air vents.

‘Someone will sort that once the snow dies down. Meanwhile...’ He turned the truck and headed home.

Faye stood quietly in the hallway, and Cameron could see her awkwardness shining through her frozen pale face.

‘Follow me.’ He led her upstairs to Ava’s old room, which was cluttered with her things, as she hadn’t fully moved in with Carter yet.

‘Why am I in here?’ asked Faye meekly, still shivering.

Cameron moved around the room as fast as he could. ‘You can take these,’ he said, plonking some of Ava’s clothes into her arms. ‘My sister’s hardly here anymore, so she won’t mind you borrowing the clothes she’s left behind. I’ll show you the bathroom. You take a warm bath, put these on, then head to the kitchen. There’ll be soup waiting for you.’

Faye followed him to a large bathroom, where he closed her in before heading back downstairs.

Carter was in the kitchen. ‘Winnie just called. Said—’

‘I know. Faye Turner.’



Carter breathed out a laugh. ‘Did you go and get her?’

Cameron nodded up at the ceiling. ‘She’s taking a bath.’

‘Why is she in the bath?’

‘She wouldn’t stop shivering. I figured a warm bath, one of Ava’s jumpers, and a hot lunch will do the trick.’

Carter placed his hand over his heart, adding a mock swoon. ‘My hero.’

Cameron tossed a tea towel at him. ‘Shut up. I’m just being nice, which is more than I can say for her.’

‘She’s okay. She’s new. Probably wanted to make a good impression at work.’

Cameron watched Carter walk out the back door. He figured his friend was right, and maybe it wouldn’t hurt to hold out an olive branch.

*At least we can talk properly when she comes down. I’ll apologise. Wait! No, I won’t. I haven’t done anything wrong. I’ll see if she says sorry.*

By the time Cameron finished his soup, Faye still hadn’t made an appearance. He wondered if she’d fallen asleep in the bath. With the time ticking on, he knew he had to get back to work. So he scribbled on a sticky note and stuck it on the soup maker, then headed out the back door.

The Christmas shop’s door was wide open, so Cameron popped his head inside the old cabin to see how Angus was getting on.

‘Ooh, Cam. Did you save the wee thing?’

Cameron's broad shoulders slumped slightly. Winnie must have called everyone in the family, in hope they would get on his back about Faye. 'Yes. She's safe.'

'Did you feed her, son?'

'I left some lunch for her. Did you eat yours?'

'Aye. Carter brought me some. You just caught me about to have some choccies.'

Cameron grinned and pointed at the small tree on the counter by the till. 'Are those the ones you're supposed to be hanging on the tree for when the kids come in?'

Angus unwrapped one and popped it straight into his mouth. 'Mmm. There's plenty more.' He tossed one over.

Cameron caught the small square chocolate and made light work of it, enjoying the creamy flavour. 'Don't eat any more. Remember your cholesterol.'

Angus grumbled something as Cameron went out into the cold to get back to work, because snow or no snow, the farm carried on.

Cameron threw a large snowball straight at Carter's head before entering the barn. He grinned to himself, picked up a chainsaw, and wondered if Faye was still in the bath.

*Faye*

Wearing someone else's tracksuit bottoms and jumper whilst sitting in a stranger's kitchen eating their homemade soup was quite a surreal feeling. Faye took out her notebook and wrote about her day. She glanced at the sticky note Cameron had left, telling her he was out on the fields with Carter, and that Angus was in the shop. The last part telling her she could watch telly or something made her smile.

Faye went over to the window to peer out at the snow. Its white sheets looked so beautiful and clean. She made a mental note to buy warmer clothes. The sheepskin slippers covering her feet were definitely Cameron's, judging by the size. At least, she hoped they were, because they made her feel warmer than anything else in the farmhouse.

The old building looked cosy and family friendly, and Faye could tell it held many a story of its own. There was something about the rustic home that made her feel welcome even without anyone else around.

She wandered into the living room and had a look at the family photographs lining the bookcase, windowsill, and mantelpiece.

*This is a happy home.*

The fire hadn't been lit, and she wasn't sure if she should attempt to build one. She thought better of it, even though there was so much of her wanting to snuggle in one of the comfy chairs and watch the flickering flames.

The brown sofa and cream blanket folded over its back looked inviting, and there were quite a few books to choose from. But something else was calling her.

Faye's bones were warm, her belly was full, and the wellies and puffy coat by the back door fitted like a glove. She desperately wanted to check out the shop that Angus was apparently in. Being on a Christmas tree farm so close to Christmas was making her feel something she hadn't felt in a long time.

Christmas back home was only a wonderful time when Faye was little. As a grown-up, not much about the time of year excited her. No family left. A toxic relationship in her past. Many sad memories.

She sniffed, pulled the hat attached to the coat over her head, and headed outside, pleased to see the blizzard had eased.

A line of twinkling trees paved the way to the Christmas shop that looked as though it belonged inside a fairy tale.

Blinking back snow, she trudged her way inside and beamed with delight at the sight before her. 'Wow! It's like Santa lives here.'

Angus chuckled, revealing himself from behind the counter. He balanced on his walking cane, then flopped into a chair.

Faye hung her coat up on a nearby stand. 'Do you need any help?' she asked, closing in on him.

'I'm fine, lass. How are you feeling? I heard you were stuck in the cold for a wee bit.'

Faye hugged herself. 'Nice and cosy now, thank you.'

'Good, good. Now, why have you come back out in this weather, hmm?'

'I wanted to check out your shop.' She slowly spun in a circle. 'It's incredible in here.'

'Thank you. We do try.'

She stopped spinning and faced him. 'Have you been here long?'

'Oh, all my life. This farm has been in the family for years. Wasn't as big as it is now, but a farm all the same.'

Faye indicated to the door. 'I saw some trees in the distance, but even though the snow has eased, it's still a bit heavy out there.'

'You wait till it clears, then Cam can take you around for a proper look.'

Just the thought made her stomach flip. She wasn't on best terms with the muscular tree farmer. A grand tour was hardly on the cards, but the old man seemed happy, so she simply smiled.

'Here,' said Angus, waving her to the counter. 'Come and have a choccy off the tree.'

Faye wasn't about to argue with that. She snaffled one quickly. 'Mmm, thank you.'

‘Now, sit on that chair there and tell me all about yourself.’

Faye pulled the chair to the side of the counter and sat down. ‘Not much to say, really. Came here for a new life. Nothing to add to that.’

Angus scratched his cheek. ‘Hmm. In my experience, most people needing a new life are normally running away from something.’

‘I’m not running. I fixed all my problems before I left. I just didn’t want to stay there, that’s all.’

‘Too many bad memories?’

Faye simply shrugged. ‘Something like that.’

Angus leaned closer. ‘Did someone hurt you, lass?’ he whispered.

She wasn’t quite sure how to answer that. The past was left behind.

Angus sat back and wriggled his fingers. ‘Never mind. Don’t answer that. I shouldn’t have asked. Besides, your face told me your truth. But just you know, my girl, you are safe here on my land.’ He glanced over at the shopfront. ‘Let me tell you a story that will warm your heart, because you and me are going to become firm friends.’ He winked, making Faye laugh.

*Oh, he’s a shrewd one.*

‘What story do you have that Arnold hasn’t already put in the Town Crier?’

Angus shuffled on his chair, getting comfortable. ‘Well, seeing how I know your truth, how about you know mine?’

‘Okay. Now I’m intrigued.’

Angus held a mischievous glint in his eye. ‘I’ve not told this to anyone outside the family. So, are you ready for a family tale?’

Faye wasn’t taking him seriously, but she entertained him anyway, thinking him sweet. ‘Oh, go on then.’

‘Grab another chocolate, and I’ll begin.’

She did as she was told and wolfed that one just as quickly as the first.

Angus dramatically cleared his throat. ‘My late wife had the most beautiful engagement ring. Everyone thought I had it made by some professional somewhere fancy. I sort of did, but it was the stone that was special. You see, we found it together, right here on this land. We weren’t silly, lass, we knew it was old and probably worth something, but we kept quiet, in case someone came up to collect all the treasure from around here.’

Faye narrowed her eyes. ‘Are you trying to tell me this land you own has more beneath it than old coins?’

‘Aye.’ Angus placed a finger over his lips. ‘Emerald Tree Farm is more enchanted than Christmas.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘She has a mind of her own, does our Emerald. I think she only unearths some of her treasure when she feels the time is right. Once upon a time, Emerald gave my grandfather the money to keep this place. Another time, she helped my aunt buy the local pub. The one our Winnie owns now. Emerald presented me with an engagement stone on the same day I’d decided to propose to my lady.’

Faye muffled her laugh. ‘And the coins? What does *she* have in mind for those?’

Angus beamed her way and winked. ‘And you call yourself a reporter.’

‘You expect me to have it figured out by now? I’ve only just been told your land holds magic.’

‘Oh, you’ll figure it out soon enough, lass. Emerald is on another mission. She knows what she’s doing. I think she likes you.’

Faye scoffed. ‘I doubt that, after today.’

Angus took another chocolate off the tree. ‘You’ll see.’

Faye was loving the fairy tale coming her way. Angus could easily read her to sleep every night, his voice was that soothing. He told a good tale, and she was sure there was a book in him. She went to ask some more questions about the land he so affectionally called Emerald, feeling the magic take hold, but the door to the shop opened and there stood a snow-covered Cameron.

He stomped his feet on the mat under the small porch and closed the door. It wasn’t until he unwrapped himself that he noticed Faye sitting there.

A moment of silence filled the air that not even Angus bothered to interrupt.

*I should say something.*

‘Thank you for helping me.’ Faye swallowed hard, wishing she was a tortoise that could slip her head away.

‘Why are you back in the cold?’



Angus spoke before she had a chance. ‘She’s warm in here, my boy. Now, I need you both to help me shut up shop for the day and wheel me back to the house. I’m getting tired, and I want to keep my strength up for once the snow has cleared and our Christmas customers start pouring in.’

Faye went behind the counter to help guide him over to his wheelchair. ‘When will that be?’

‘End of this week, depending on the weather. We sell stuff online as well though,’ said Cameron, putting his coat back on.

Faye put her own coat on and opened the door so Cameron could wheel Angus out.

‘Just close the door. I’ll come back in a bit and sort everything,’ said Cameron.

Faye did as she was instructed and followed him to the farmhouse, where Cameron wheeled Angus off to a downstairs room to get settled. She snuggled her feet back into the slippers and headed for the living room to get comfy with a book and a large chair.

Two chapters later, Cameron appeared.

‘Angus is sleeping. He won’t wake till dinner time. Erm, I’m not sure if you’ve already figured it out, but you’ll have to sleep here tonight. I’ve still got work to do, but I can get you back to yours first thing. Hopefully, by then, Declan will have your car.’ He glanced at the window. ‘The backroads are tricky when the snow is this deep, so best handled in the day.’

Faye looked at her book, unsure how to respond.

‘You can bed down in Ava’s room. There’s a lock on the door, not that you need it, but, you know, it might make you

feel safe, even though you are. Safe, that is. You are perfectly safe here.’ Cameron cleared his throat and knelt by the fire. ‘I’ll get this lit for you, then I’ll head back outside.’

‘Oh, you don’t have to. I’m okay. There’s not much light left of the day. You’d best get on.’

Cameron glanced over his shoulder, then lit the fire.

Faye appreciated the kindness. ‘I noticed there was a chicken in the fridge. If you like, I can cook that for dinner. I make a mean roast. I won’t lie. I’m not the best cook in town, but I do know how to roast a bird.’

He nodded. ‘Sure. Thanks.’

‘Least I can do.’ She stood at the same time as him, as she figured she’d prep the veggies.

Their bodies were so close, she could feel the heat coming through his jumper. He tipped his head to hers, and, just for a moment, it seemed as though he was going to kiss her.

Faye waited. Her eyes locked with his. She daren’t move, and her heart had missed so many beats, it had given up the ghost. Her lips parted slightly. ‘Cam, I...’

He moved away, thumbing at the door. ‘Better get back.’

Faye flopped into the chair and sighed.

*Oh, Emerald, what’s the story with him?*

*Cameron*

Dinner was a quiet affair, as Angus had asked for his food to be placed on a tray and taken to his bedroom. He said he was tired and just wanted to settle in bed. Seeing how Cameron's grandfather was eighty-five, he could hardly argue with him, even though he suspected Angus was leaving him alone with Faye on purpose.

Faye had made a lovely roast dinner, and Cameron had eaten everything on his plate in record time, mostly because he wanted to hurry and get out of the kitchen. Away from her.

*I can't leave. I have to clean the dishes. I can't expect her to do that.*

Cameron approached the sink, but Faye got there first.

'I'll wash up,' she said, not making eye contact as their hands accidentally brushed.

'No, it's fine. You cooked. Besides, I was just going to put them in the dishwasher.'

Faye helped clear the table instead, then sat back down, twiddling with her fingertips. 'So, I take it it's just you and Angus who live here.'

Cameron glanced over his shoulder. ‘Now, yes. Winnie moved out a few years back, my brother moved out this year, and Ava says she hasn’t moved in with Carter, but she pretty much has. She’s always there. He’s sleeping in Blake’s room tonight. Carter crashes quickly, so you won’t even know he’s here.’

‘Have you always lived here?’

‘Yes. I don’t want to move. The farm belongs to Angus, but I’m the one who will take over once he retires, which won’t be until he meets his maker, as he always says.’ He laughed quietly and sat opposite her, handing over a large biscuit tin that housed a fruit cake. ‘Ava made this. You want some?’

Faye gave a slight shrug as she smiled. ‘Ooh, looks lovely. I think I can manage a small sliver.’

Cameron cut up some slices as he told himself to relax.

Faye prodded her fork into her cake. ‘Have you ever been...’ Her words faded, and he wondered why. She wagged her fork. ‘Sorry. I was about to ask personal questions. Habit of being a reporter.’

He swallowed his mouthful of cake, crinkling the corners of his eyes with amusement. ‘What do you want to know?’

‘Oh, you know, the usual. Married. Kids. That sort of thing.’

Shaking his head, Cameron breathed out a laugh. ‘Nope. No wife or kids. Just work.’

‘Surely you must have had relationships, especially when you look like...’ Her words had drifted off again.

‘Look like what?’ It amused him that her cheeks flushed.

She ate some cake, and he figured she was either stalling or too embarrassed to say.

Cameron let her off the hook. ‘What about yourself? Why here? You look more the London type.’

Faye glanced up from her plate, causing his love-starved butterflies to open their eyes. ‘I just wanted a fresh start somewhere different. I saw the job advertised for the Town Crier and thought, why not?’

‘How different is it around here to what you’re used to?’

She laughed. ‘Very.’

Cameron narrowed his eyes as he lost his smile. ‘You hear about people running away from their old life.’ He noticed her swallow hard.

*Yeah, you’re one, aren’t you?*

The smile Faye offered his way was weak. ‘Honestly, I didn’t have a happy life back home the last few years, but I sorted myself out, moved forward, and knew my life would be better if I started over somewhere else.’

‘Brave move, Faye.’

‘I don’t feel brave, but I do feel happier, and that’s a good sign.’

Cameron laughed. ‘Even if your time here has been... How should I put this?’

‘Adventurous?’

‘Well, that’s one word for it.’

Faye ate some more cake and licked her lips whilst humming, and Cameron tried not to stare at her mouth.

‘So, Faye. You think you’ll stick around?’

Her eyes twinkled a touch. ‘I’m going to give it my best shot.’

‘Good.’

*Why did I say that? Shut up.*

‘Tell me some more about you, Cameron Hart, Christmas tree farmer.’

He tilted his head to one side as a lazy smile crept onto his face. ‘I think you know everything. There’s not much to add.’

‘How old are you?’

‘Thirty-six.’

‘And you’re single, why?’

‘I told you. I work all the time.’ He shook his head a little. ‘I’ve been out with a few women over the years. I’m not a monk. It’s not really the life they’re looking for. No one wants someone who is hardly around.’

Faye glanced around the kitchen, fixing her eyes on the back door. ‘I believe there is someone for everyone. I’m sure if you put yourself out there a bit more, you could find someone who doesn’t mind farm life.’

‘What do you suggest, speed-dating? Because that’s all I’ll have time for.’

Faye burst out laughing. ‘I tried that once, years back, before I was with my...’ And there it was again. Sentences left

hanging seemed to be her theme for the evening.

‘Husband?’

‘No,’ she replied quietly. ‘But we were together for a long time.’

‘It didn’t end well?’

Faye scoffed. ‘It didn’t start well, and the middle wasn’t great either.’

‘So, all in all, a crappy relationship.’

She gave a curt nod. ‘Sums that up.’

‘Okay. We’ll leave that alone then.’

Faye took another bite of the fruit cake, which he was pleased about, as he wasn’t sure if his probing had made her lose her appetite. It was obvious that life with her ex was an area she was glad to be away from.

‘The cake is nice, isn’t it, Faye? Perhaps you could do an article on Ava’s new bakery. It’s not been open long.’

‘I don’t normally write about food, but I’ll have a chat with her and see if there’s an angle, seeing how you won’t let me do Kirk’s story.’

Cameron frowned, trying not to get annoyed. ‘I thought that was dealt with.’

Faye lowered her fork and crossed her arms. ‘You know, you don’t actually get a say in it. If a reporter wants to report, there’s nothing you can do about it.’

‘Is that your way of telling me you’re going to run the story?’

‘No. I’ve spoken to Angus. I’ll keep his secret about his magical land. It means a lot to him.’ She hesitated, then added, ‘He’s way politer than you.’

The corner of Cameron’s mouth twitched. ‘Oh, I know.’

‘We’ll have to work on that if we’re to get you a date.’

‘Who says I want a date?’

Faye settled back into her chair and sighed. ‘Don’t you get lonely?’ she asked softly.

Cameron leaned forward, resting his arms on the table, staring directly at her. ‘I’m too busy to think, let alone feel. Are you lonely?’

‘No. I’m happier than I’ve ever been.’ She muffled her laugh by slapping one hand over her mouth. ‘I’m the coldest I’ve ever been, but happy.’

‘Yeah, you definitely need warmer clothes.’ He glanced at his slippers on her feet and smiled inwardly.

Faye gestured at the window. ‘It looks fun, your job. I’d like to live somewhere like this. I bet it’s never boring.’

‘It’s not Christmas all year round, you know.’

‘I know, but it kind of is here. I’d like to see the farm in the summer.’ She held her hands up, then spread them wide. ‘A summer wonderland.’

Cameron nodded at the wall. ‘Have you been next door to my brother’s holiday park? Blake runs Honeydale Lodge. Now, there’s your wonderland. Each home is shaped like an old boot, but nice. Colourful. There are lots of winding pathways through the trees and ornamental animals placed



everywhere, along with fairy lights, giving off an enchanted vibe.’ He smiled as her brown eyes sparkled with glee.

‘Ooh, I’ll pop over there.’ She picked at some crumbs on her plate. ‘Your family never moved far.’

‘We like it here. Plus, Angus needs us close. Not that he’d ever admit that. We want to be here for him, like he has always been there for us. Our parents died when we were young. He took us all on. He’s a good man.’

Faye nodded. ‘I like him.’

‘He likes you too.’

‘You can tell that already? I’m guessing not many like me around here. I shouted at Mr Shankly in the pub, I made an enemy of you, and I haven’t done a full day’s work at my new job yet. Not the best first impression.’

Cameron bit his bottom lip, then softened. ‘I’m not your enemy, Faye,’ he said gently.

Their eyes locked, and a moment of silence sat between them before Faye looked back at her plate.

Cameron cleared his throat as he stood. ‘I’ll finish clearing up, then I’m off to bed. Feel free to watch TV or read any of the books in the living room. I don’t mind. You know where to find me if you need me. My bedroom’s next to yours. Not that you’ll need me. But, if you do, bang on the wall or something.’ He cleared his throat again, then turned his back on her as thoughts of her sleeping on the other side of the wall to him made his cheeks warm, and he couldn’t quite look her in the eye.

Faye's soft voice saying goodnight as she wandered out of the kitchen left him clutching the sink tightly.

*Get a bloody grip, man. She's city at heart. She's not for the likes of you.*

*Faye*

The winter sun was shining brightly through the bedroom window, twinkling on the glass pane, making the morning at Emerald Tree Farm even more glorious than Faye thought possible.

Ava's double bed had been a dream to sleep in, and Faye woke refreshed and ready for her day, whatever that may hold.

She stretched and yawned, heading straight for the window to glance outside at the carpet of fresh white snow covering as far as the eye could see.

'Ooh, I love this place so much.'

She gave herself a mental pat on the back for changing her life, then went off to the bathroom before heading to the kitchen.

A bright sticky note was attached to the kettle, letting her know she was alone in the house.

Snuggling into Ava's dressing gown, Faye slipped into the wellies by the back door and stepped outside into the crisp air, inhaling deeply. The biggest smile lit up her face and heart.

The sound of a humming chainsaw could be heard in the distance, and little else. No one was around, just a few birds

flying over in the clear blue sky.

Faye walked along the narrow pathway, ignoring the chill setting into her cheeks. The farm was so beautiful, she couldn't stop looking.

'Picture perfect,' she whispered, releasing a visible puff of air.

Out the corner of her eye she spotted an old copper bath, and the wildest thought sprung to mind. There was a photo she had seen of a bath outdoors in the middle of a picturesque countryside setting. Everything about it looked tranquil and highly attractive, and the copper bath sitting before her would make a grand photo of her own.

The hosepipe was easily attached to the hot tap through the kitchen window, so she washed away the snow in the bath, then filled it with warm water and someone's bubble bath, making the most gorgeous soak ever.

Faye double-checked her surroundings for any sign of morning life before slipping out of her nightclothes and climbing into the bath.

'Oh, dear Lord, thanking you,' she whispered, lowering herself till her chin hit the water.

*I have myself the sweetest dream.*

She closed her eyes, absorbing each and every soothing second.

Some sort of chewing sound, followed by a bleat, caused Faye to snap open her relaxed eyes.

'Oh, you have got to be kidding me!'

Cupcake was happily munching away on Faye's clothing, without any consideration for the woman's need for the items.

Faye leaned out of the bath in an attempt to snatch the clothing away from the goat, but Cupcake's strong jaw action gave the game of tug-of-war a good go.

'Give that back.'

Cupcake was clearly a champion chewer, as there wasn't much in the way of nightclothes left. Large gaping holes, smaller bite marks, rips, and muddy hoof prints just about finished the job.

Faye growled loudly as Cupcake won the game and legged it with the loot. 'I'm going to put you in a curry,' she shouted.

A muffled laugh made her jump and slide back beneath the bubbles.

'Sorry,' said the man, holding up both palms. 'Erm, I'm Blake.' He gestured to the pathway behind him. 'I own Honeydale Lodge over there. I'm guessing you're Faye. Cameron mentioned you.'

'Yes,' was all she could manage, as she was still in shock at seeing him.

Blake was clearly trying to bite back his growing grin that looked an awful lot like Cameron's lazy smile. The one she favoured out of all his smiles. 'Erm... You do know this pathway goes between the farm and the holiday park, right?'

*Nope.*

His brow crinkled, showing a mixture of amusement and confusion. 'We're fully booked at the moment, and the guests

often pass through this way to wander around the trees or pop to the shop.'

Faye was about to ask God to take her now, but then Cameron and Carter walked around the corner. They both came to an abrupt halt as their smiling eyes left Blake to meet with Faye's outdoor bath adventure.

It hadn't taken the warm water long to turn cold, and Faye could feel her bones seizing already. Mortification would have to wait, as the journey towards becoming frozen was well on its way. There was no way she could just hop out the tub and head for the house. Not with three men all staring at her.

Cameron spoke as Carter laughed. 'What are you doing there, Faye? Not that I'm asking a stupid question. I mean, I can see what...' He turned to Carter and shoved him. 'Go make yourself busy.'

Carter pulled in his lips, shook his head, then left the awkward scene.

Cameron's stern eyes turned towards his little brother. 'Aren't you supposed to be somewhere as well?'

Blake nodded. 'Yep. Just heading to the shop to see Angus.'

'Off you go then.'

Blake gave Faye a slight wave as he walked away, laughing to himself, but she heard.

She gazed sheepishly at the big man left behind. 'It seemed like a good idea at the time,' she said quietly, with chattering teeth.

'Hmm. Well, we're not used to nudists around these parts.'

Faye went to shoot up out of the water but remembered she was naked so stayed put. 'I'm not a nudist. I thought it was charming. I didn't know this was a public footpath.'

Cameron breathed out a laugh as he shook his head slightly. 'You know, ever since I met you, I've been at a bit of a loss for words. But this situation here holds the trophy for word loss, without a doubt.'

She knew how he felt. There wasn't much of a conversation to be had anyway. All that was needed was warmth and a bit of privacy, then the whole one-minute blissful moment would be over.

*Great! I can't feel my toes, and he's still standing there, grinning like an eejit.*

Cameron lost his smile as he looked around the ground. 'Didn't you bring a towel out with you?'

'I had clothing, but Cupcake came along and ate them.'

Cameron burst out laughing, then stopped when voices came from the end of the pathway. 'Guests are coming.'

'Oh, help!' She went to quickly clamber out but remembered her lack of Lady Godiva hair. Her blonde rat-tails had darkened in the water and were stuck to her shoulders like spaghetti. Her teeth were chattering even louder, and the bubbles on top of the water were dissolving fast.

Cameron whipped off his coat and sprinted towards her, holding it open whilst closing his eyes. 'Hurry.'

There was only a one-second hesitation, then Faye leapt out of the water and into his waiting arms that wrapped the thick wad of material around her.

Cameron opened his eyes and scooped her up like a bride and ran to the farmhouse before anyone saw them. He gently placed her on the floor in the kitchen and stood back. 'I'll grab another coat and head off to find Carter. We were about to have our breakfast. You should go warm up before you catch your death. Although, I'm starting to think if anyone around here could survive extreme weathers, it might just be you.'

Even whilst cold and embarrassed, Faye managed a smile. 'Thank you.'

Cameron waved off the gratitude.

'I'll have breakfast ready for you all by the time you come back.'

'Don't worry about us. Just go and get dressed. Your car will be here in a couple of hours. I'm sure you'll want to head home. Rooster's been out clearing roads with his snowplough. You'll get home all right.'

Faye didn't want to go back to her dull little flat. But she did need to get to work at some point. 'I can still make breakfast. I'm hungry too. You're hungry, right?'

Cameron slowly scanned her body, then he quickly headed for the cloakroom to grab a coat before hurrying out the back door.

Faye's shoulders slumped beneath the warmth of his coat. She inhaled his woody scent as she made her way upstairs to sort herself out. A small laugh left her mouth as she entered the hot shower.

'Oh, Faye Turner. What are you like!'



*Cameron*

Three days had passed by, and Cameron hadn't seen or heard from Faye. He knew she was busy with work. Everyone knew everyone's business in Honeydale. Plus, Ava had told him Faye was writing a story about the bakery. He was pleased Faye was settling in to her new job. But not seeing her around was starting to make his heart ache just a touch, which was annoying, especially with so much work on.

Christmas was on his doorstep and so were many customers all wanting to pick out their own tree. There wasn't any time to stop and think about Faye Turner, but his heart had its own agenda.

Carter was outside the barn, netting trees for a small queue of people, and Cameron had just brought over one more. He helped an elderly couple to their car and secured a six-footer to their trailer. Mr and Mrs Crabtree had been regulars at the farm for years, and Cameron always had time for a natter with them. He loved how their eyes still smiled at each other after all those years, and how they always held hands when walking back to their car.

Faye entered his mind. Everything she had said about there being someone for everyone.

Enough was enough. He wanted to see her, and if she wasn't going to make the first move, then he would.

Cameron pulled out his phone, a rarity at work, waved goodbye to his customers, then called Faye.

*Just say hello. How are you, maybe. No, just say—*

‘Erm, hello, Faye. It’s Cam. Cameron.’

‘Oh, that’s so strange you called today. I was going to ring you tonight.’ She sounded happy enough. Maybe he’d just imagined the three-days radio silence.

‘You were?’ he asked warily. ‘What for?’

‘Nothing in particular. I just thought it would be nice to have a catch-up, that’s all. It’s been—’

‘Three days.’

‘Yeah.’ Her tone lost its lively edge. ‘I’ve been really snowed under at work.’ She laughed, her breath making a crackling sound in the phone. ‘I guess I shouldn’t use that term around here. I’ve definitely been snowed-in a couple of times.’ She snorted, making him smile. ‘Anyway, I thought it would be nice to pop over one night to see how Angus is getting on.’

Cameron’s stiff posture slumped. ‘Angus. Right. Yeah. Come up and see him whenever you want.’

There was a long silence down the phone, and Cameron wondered for a moment if she had hung up. He went to speak, but she got there first.

‘I could bring dinner tonight,’ she said quietly.

‘For Angus?’

‘For all of us. If you like.’

*I like.*

‘Erm, sure.’

*Get a grip. Tell the girl.*

‘Faye, I was wondering. You know when you said about me dating? Well, would you like to?’ He widened his eyes, anxiously awaiting her response.

‘You want me to go speed-dating with you?’

‘What? No. That’s not what I meant.’ He quickly moved the phone away from his ear as a loud squawk shot through his eardrum.

‘Would you stop!’ she yelled, making Cameron unsure what to say next. ‘Sorry about that. I have a parrot on my monitor, which isn’t a sentence I ever thought I’d say. Anyway, what were you saying?’

Cameron inhaled cold air in one huge gulp. ‘Will you have dinner with me, Faye?’

‘I thought we’d already established that. I’m going to grab some bits from Winnie on my way up tonight.’

‘I mean just you and me. On a date. Just to clarify. It’s you and me who will be on the date, dating each other.’ The silence unnerved him, and Carter shouting out his name in the near distance was making him lose patience.

‘Okay,’ said Faye, finally, not sounding as chipper as he had hoped.

‘Don’t feel obligated.’

‘I want to,’ she said quickly. ‘I’m just confused.’

*That makes two of us.*

‘What are you confused about, Faye?’

‘Should I not come over for dinner with you and Angus tonight?’

Cameron nodded, even though he knew she couldn’t see him. He waved Carter away and turned to face the driveway. ‘You should still come. Angus will want to see you.’

‘If you like, we can double up. We can eat dinner with Angus, then take our dessert out to the barn and have our date there.’

He couldn’t help but laugh at that idea. ‘You want to eat in the barn?’

‘It’s different, isn’t it?’

‘Well, you do seem to like different. Okay. I’m game if you are.’

‘That’s sorted then. I’m looking forward to tonight.’

‘So am I,’ he said softly. ‘And don’t worry about the food. I’ll sort that with my sister. You just bring yourself.’

\* \* \*

The last time Cameron went on a date, it was to a local restaurant, where he sat at a table and ate dinner like a normal person. Looking at the inside of his largest barn, he wasn’t entirely sure how dessert would go down in amongst a floor

strewn with tree needles, a large blue tractor taking up a lot of space, all sorts of farming equipment, and the smell of the forest in the air.

He glanced at the back-left corner. It was clean enough, housed only a few wooden boxes, and a red check blanket someone had left there, which gave him an idea.

*If Faye wants a barn date, then that's what I'll give her.*

He pulled out his phone, did a quick search to check out some pictures, smiled to himself, then got busy making that section of the barn date ready.

It wasn't anything Cameron had done before, and if someone had told him last year that he'd be doing it now, he would have laughed in their face. He wouldn't peg himself as the romantic type nor would he normally make such a fuss for someone, but he enjoyed decorating the barn, knowing Faye's eyes would light up along with that gorgeous smile of hers that had grown on him rather quickly.

Angus was chuffed to pieces that Faye had brought him some of Ethel's handmade chocolates from Ava's bakery. He snaffled two before tucking into the beef casserole Winnie had made for them.

'How's it working out for you, lass? You feel settled here now?' Angus asked, wiping his mouth.

Faye's red lips were as bright as Rudolph's nose. She smiled widely as she finished her food. 'Hmm, yes. I've just finished the story on the bakery, and I have another one lined up about the local primary school's nativity play. Arnold assures me the drama will come from the parents, so now I'm

intrigued. Erm, Angus, I was wondering, would it be okay if I came and helped you out in the shop on Sunday? I'd like to. I haven't got many happy Christmas memories stored these last few years.' She tapped her temple and looked at her bowl.

Cameron sat quietly eating, watching the exchange between the two of them. He was just as surprised as his grandfather to hear the request. It wasn't something he saw coming.

Angus cheered with delight. 'Of course. Oh, what a help you will be, lass. My leg is a bit stiff. I have to do exercises that hurt, so you'll save me getting up and down every five minutes. Shame you can't work with me every day.'

Cameron studied her eyes for her reaction. She didn't seem put off.

'Wouldn't that be something, but I love my job at the Town Crier. Saying that, I could help out every weekend. Arnold says there isn't enough news for five days a week, let alone seven. I've been persuading him to set up an online paper. It's a work in progress. Even Kirk came in to show Arnold some example websites.'

Angus clasped his hands together in front of him. 'Fantastic. What do you think, Cam?'

Cameron could see the curiosity sitting in her eyes. He smiled her way, then replied, 'I don't mind.'

Faye and Angus beamed at each other like a couple kids.

Angus reached over and tapped her knuckles. 'You know that makes you a Hart now.' He grabbed his walking cane and stood.

Faye went to help, but he waved her away, stating that he was going to settle in the living room for a bit.

‘That’s code for take a nap,’ Cameron told her.

She smiled sweetly, melting every part of him he didn’t know could melt. ‘I’ll clear this, then we’re hitting the barn.’

He liked her laugh and quickly got up to help, feeling more excited than she looked. The barn-date was all he’d had on his mind all day, and now was the moment of truth.

*Please, let her like what I’ve done.*

*Faye*

‘Whoa!’ Every part of Faye smiled at Cameron’s little sparkly nook in the barn. ‘You did this?’

‘Don’t sound so surprised. I can be creative.’

Faye walked towards the fairy lights draped over a wooden pergola and brushed one hand along the soft red check blanket spread out over large crates and puffy cushions. She knelt to the dark rug and lifted the lid on the biscuit tin that was on a wide log stump. ‘Ooh, chocolate cake.’

‘Thought you might appreciate that.’

She looked up at him and nodded. ‘Yes, definitely.’ Patting the ground, she asked him to join her side.

Cameron held up a green plaid flask. ‘I got mulled wine.’

‘With the blanket and the drink, I think it’s safe to say I’ll be warm in here tonight. Thank you.’

‘Hey, I put the heating on, so you should be.’

Faye laughed as she looked around. ‘You have heating in here?’

Cameron gave a cheeky wink. ‘We have all the mod-cons here, but you’re privileged, because it doesn’t get switched on often.’



She leaned into his arm to gently rest her head on his shoulder for all but a moment. ‘Thank you. I love this, Cam.’ She glanced up at his face, stayed a second, then turned towards the cake. ‘Shall we start with a small slice?’

‘Sounds like a good plan.’

Faye went up on her knees, then let out a strangled scream that made Cameron jump. She nervously pointed at the opened doorway. ‘Wolf,’ she just about managed to say.

Cameron frowned, then followed her eyes. He blew out a laugh, then patted his hip. ‘That’s Pine. He’s all right.’

The huge animal padded his way over to them, watching Faye all the way.

‘Pine?’ she questioned warily. ‘You have a pet wolf?’

‘He’s not ours. Just comes by every so often. Angus probably put out some beef for him. Pine doesn’t belong to anyone, you see. Seems to like it that way.’

‘It’s a wolf.’ Faye moved back as Pine sniffed round by her ear.

Cameron pulled the dog away. ‘He’s not a wolf. Maybe got some in him. Who knows?’

‘Well, he looks like a wolf.’

Cameron started to ruffle the animal’s grey-and-white fur. ‘He’s a good boy, aren’t you, lad?’

Faye’s racing heart was just starting to settle. The dog/wolf seemed friendly enough, thankfully. She was sure the chocolate cake wasn’t the only thing on the menu at one point.

Cameron stood, tapping Pine's head. 'I'll take him outside, then close the door. You're okay, Faye. I promise.'

She placed a hand over her chest and took a calming breath as Cameron led the beast away.

He laughed as he approached. 'A wolf. Really! Although, his presence does go down really well next door in fairy-tale land. The kids love seeing him. We put up notices to let people know that he's safe.'

'Wish I'd seen one.'

Cameron plated up a slice of cake and handed it over. 'Here, eat that. It'll calm your nerves.'

Faye took a tiny morsel, checking the barn door. 'Do you get bears up here?'

'Bears?' Cameron chewed his lip, looking deep in thought. 'It's the panthers you have to watch out for.'

Faye's palpitations came back. 'Panthers?'

'Uh-huh. They like to climb the trees and watch their prey. Not too keen when the chainsaw comes out though.'

She saw the corners of his mouth twitch into a smile. 'Oh, you bloody liar.'

Cameron leaned away as she whacked his arm with a small cushion to her side. He laughed and pulled her closer.

Faye's heart was feeling something else altogether, as dangerous animals disappeared from her thoughts. Soft eyes were gazing into hers, and full lips parted as they approached her mouth. She closed her eyes and melted into his kiss, and, just for that moment, time stood still.

Cameron slowly lowered her back onto a pile of cushions on the rug, raking one hand through her locks whilst the other hand cupped her warm cheek.

Never mind the enchanted village next door, Faye was ever so lost in his dreamy realm. Inhibitions didn't exist as she wrapped herself around him, pulling him further over her.

Cameron let out a faint groan of pleasure and deepened their kiss.

Faye was having a surreal moment. It was her first kiss with the man, but it didn't feel that way. Everything about their connection felt comfortable. So much so, she reached for the zip on his jeans as though that wasn't their first time either.

He glanced up, meeting her eyes. 'You sure, Faye?' He asked so softly, she fell for him even more.

'Yes. Are you?'

'Yeah.' He pulled the blanket over, covering them, and Faye made a grab for his jeans again. 'I'll take you to my room.'

'I like it here,' she whispered close to his ear, then peppered kisses along his jaw for good measure.

'I have protection in my room.'

Faye giggled. 'You should have brought some with you.'

Cameron raised himself away from her wandering lips. 'I wasn't expecting this.'

She felt the need to explain. 'I didn't plan it.'

'I don't care.' His mouth was back on hers, and she started to undress them both, stopping when he took over.

The woody scent in the air and on his body transported Faye away to the trees outside, with snowflakes falling, and stars twinkling in the sky as brightly as the artificial ones above her head. For the first time since arriving in Honeydale, she felt so incredibly warm.

‘I’ve fallen for you, Faye,’ his husky voice whispered, causing her to come undone beneath him.

She wanted to speak, but his touch was rendering her useless. All she could do was surrender to him. That was all she wanted.

Cameron took her with him as he stood, wrapped them both in the blanket, and guided her outside.

Faye took a moment to pause under the star-filled sky. Every part of her smiled from the most incredible feeling. Home. She glanced his way whilst he was looking up.

*You feel like home.*

Cameron tipped his head and met her mouth with his own whilst taking her feet from the ground. He carried her to his room, where he gently placed her on his bed.

‘I want to stay, Cam,’ she said quietly.

He leaned over, snuggling her into his arms. ‘Stay all night, Faye. I want that too.’

*No. I want to stay here with you forever.*

She didn’t get to speak her thoughts, because the kiss he planted on her heated quickly, and all she could think about was how much she wanted their bodies to be as close as possible.

Cameron obviously shared the thought, because he made it happen for them, and Faye closed her eyes once more, absorbing every moment with him, wishing it would never end.

*Cameron*

With only a couple of days left before Christmas Eve, the farm had quietened down from visitors. A few stragglers wandered around, wanting a small tree to put up just for a week, so Cameron left Carter to that task whilst he boxed up some decorations the customers had already picked out in the shop.

Since the first night he'd held Faye in his arms, he hadn't stopped smiling. Everyone had noticed, as comments had been made, but only in jest, and Cameron wasn't fussed. He had never felt so relaxed and at peace within himself.

Faye had been helping out in the Christmas shop and loving every moment. She was learning about the trees, which made Cameron smile from the inside. He had no idea she was in his future. That someone would be interested in his line of work and want to be part of it as well.

He stopped fiddling with the sticky tape and stared straight through the large Nutcracker facing his way.

*I need to speak with her. Let her know how much I like her being around. What if she's not as serious about us? Oh, come on, stop overthinking. Everything is going great. Don't make waves.*

He laughed to himself at the memory of them falling in the river. Even on that day, he'd felt something towards her. Not that he allowed the feeling to surface.

The door opened, jolting him out of his thoughts. He shifted his gaze from the Nutcracker to Biz taking photographs of some of the festive teddy bears stacked on a shelf.

‘What you up to, Biz?’

Biz kept his eye on his camera. ‘Arnold’s got me taking pics of the old couple outside, so I thought some of in here might add to the story.’ He shrugged, then snapped some photos of the small tree on the counter. ‘Plus, it’s warmer in here.’

Cameron frowned over at the doorway Biz had left wide open. ‘What old couple? What are you going on about?’

Biz thumbed over his shoulder. ‘You know, the Waldens. It’s their ruby anniversary. Arnold thought it would make a nice Crimbo story.’

Some muffled laughter was coming from outside, and Cameron recognised his grandfather’s laugh.

‘Is that Angus out there as well?’

Biz nodded as he swiped a chocolate off the tree to pop into his mouth. ‘Yeah. We have his permission.’

Cameron approached the door to see the old couple in question chatting away merrily with his grandfather and Arnold. He glanced over his shoulder at Biz, busy snaffling another chocolate from the tree. ‘What’s their anniversary got to do with our farm?’

Biz joined his side. 'It's where they met all those years ago. It's also where they shared their first kiss.' He took a picture from the doorway. 'It's a good story. All sweetness and candy canes. Angus said we wouldn't be in anyone's way, seeing how we're only taking a few pictures outside the shop.'

'Hmm.' Cameron glanced at the photographer. 'Faye not covering it then?'

'No. Arnold wanted it. Besides, she's being interviewed by some bigshot from Glasgow.'

*What?*

It was obvious Biz could clearly see the confusion in Cameron's eyes. 'You know, that reporter from the City Express. He was over visiting his sister or someone. Anyway, he thought he'd pop in to see how our local rag was getting on. More like sneer at us, but we've been ignoring him all day, then we got to come here. Last I heard, he was talking to Faye about joining him at his paper.' He went back to taking pictures. 'She has a good CV, apparently.'

Cameron's mouth gaped as Biz stepped outside. An icy wind blew in his face, sweeping back his dark hair and numbing his lips. He closed the door and turned to the counter, not knowing what to think about the news he'd just heard about Faye.

*Glasgow. She can't leave. She just can't.*

He sat on the chair by the till and stared lifelessly at his clenched hands.

Carter came in the shop with a young woman and handed her one of the wrapped boxes. He took the money whilst



Cameron stayed silent, not knowing how to feel, let alone think.

The customer left, and Carter nudged Cameron's foot with his own. 'You okay?'

'Hmm?'

'You look like someone stole your truck.'

Cameron looked up slowly to see his friend's raised brow. 'I... erm. It's just...' He jumped up, grabbed his keys, and dashed to the car park, ignoring anyone who spoke to him.

The drive over to Angelmeade seemed to take forever. He must have hit every bit of traffic and every stop sign along the way, but he didn't care. The only thought racing through his mind was finding Faye and begging her not to leave Honeydale, or rather him.

Her office was empty, except for the parrot, so Cameron called out, hoping she was just in the back room.

Bree's puffy blonde hair was what he saw first as the woman popped up from behind some cabinets. 'Ooh, you made me jump.' She straightened and flashed a smile. 'How can I help?'

'I'm looking for Faye Turner.'

Bree gestured to the door. 'She left a little while ago.'

'Do you know where she went?'

'I think she was taking Brendan to The Black Hat Inn.'

He heard her add something about not being sure as he rushed back outside to his truck.

*Don't listen to him, Faye. He'll be all big city talk and flashy apartments.*

Cameron took a calming breath and slowed his driving as another thought sprung to mind.

*Oh, what are you doing, Hart? You've got no control over this. If she wants to chase her dreams of being a big city reporter, then you can't get in her way.*

'No,' he whispered to the front window screen. 'It's not for me to say.'

His whole being felt deflated by the time he pulled up outside Winnie's. Even more so when he didn't see Faye's car anywhere. He quickly perused the pub, but there was no sign of her, so he gave up and headed back to his truck to drive to Faye's flat.

Wishing Well Lane was covered in light snow on the road and pavement whilst the field opposite the shops was a bright white carpet.

Faye wasn't home, and Cameron started to worry she'd jumped at the chance to head off to Glasgow, so much so, she'd already left.

*No. She'd say goodbye. I'm sure. Wouldn't she?*

He sat in his heated truck for a moment, not knowing which way to turn for the best. Part of him wanted to beg her not to leave him, and the other didn't want to stand in the way of her career.

Cameron had never been a selfish person, so why should he put his needs before hers now? He mentally shook his head at himself before heading home.

Emerald Tree Farm was his happiness, and he would hate for anyone to make him choose between his joy and theirs. So, right there and then, he decided he would back Faye no matter what she chose to do.

‘It’s your life, Faye Turner. Make it a good one,’ he said quietly.

*Faye*

The last thing Faye had expected that morning when she went to work was to have a reporter from Glasgow offer her a position with the City Express. Had it been the year before, she would have bitten his arm off. Now, she felt like a different person to the woman she knew back in Dublin.

Faye glanced around the Christmas trees surrounding her up at Emerald Tree Farm. Their balsam scent and the twinkly lights hanging from wooden posts made her smile on the inside. She snuggled further into her warm coat as she mooched about, imagining her life on a tree farm.

A waft of cold air left her parted lips as she breathed out a laugh. Her life had changed so much, and she finally felt as though she belonged somewhere again.

Ever since her mother died, Faye became lost in the world. It took every ounce of strength she could muster to rebuild her life, to leave behind all she knew, and to believe in herself once more.

Honeydale hadn't been quite what she'd expected, and her new job was something else altogether, but all in all, she was happy, and that was all that mattered.

Faye looked at the earthy ground. ‘What do you say, Emerald?’

A gust of icy wind whipped through Faye’s hair, causing her to lower her chin into her dark-red scarf. The one that belonged to Cameron.

Faye smiled and lowered to all fours. The ground was damp and smelled it too, but she didn’t care. She’d been nothing but wet, cold, and covered in snow pretty much since she arrived in Scotland. She was used to feeling that way. Besides, there was someone she needed to talk to for advice.

With her mouth close to the soil, she mumbled, ‘Give me a sign, Emerald.’

Angus had said his land held magic, so there was no harm in asking for help.

Faye knew she looked odd but needs must. ‘Tell me, Emerald. Do you think I should stay here? Is this where I’m meant to be?’

‘Are you talking to the ground there, Faye?’ asked Cameron, making her jump.

She grinned up at him but stayed put. ‘I’m having a conversation with Emerald.’

Cameron’s eyes were warm with amusement. ‘Is that right? And what’s she saying?’

Faye rested back on her heels, glancing at her muddy gloves. ‘She didn’t get a chance to reply because you interrupted.’

He laughed out loud, then pointed at her. 'You're starting to sound like Angus.'

'There's nothing wrong with that.'

'No. There's nothing wrong with that. Now, are you planning on staying down there long?'

Faye was already feeling the wetness seeping into her jeans. 'At least I'm more prepared for the cold.'

He gave her the once over as she stood. 'That you are, miss.'

'I thought you might appreciate this look.'

'Oh, I don't know. I kind of miss those silver heels of yours.'

Faye laughed as she closed in on him. 'It was the river that brought us together, but I think Angus wants me to believe it was the medieval coins on this land. What do you think?'

Cameron gave a slight shake of the head. 'I don't care what it was.' He slipped her damp gloves off and replaced them with his own. 'I'm just happy we met.'

Faye smiled warmly. 'Me too.'

'Really?'

She playfully nudged his arm. 'Don't say it like that. Of course I am.'

Cameron rested on his back foot, leaning away from her. He scratched his nose and sniffed. 'Well, I heard about your job offer in the city. Figured that's a bit of a dream come true for those in your line of work.'

‘I won’t lie, Cam. It did excite me for a moment.’ She could see the sadness in his eyes he was trying hard to hide.

‘Oh.’ His head lowered, and his foot started to tap the ground.

‘I came up here to ask Emerald for her magical advice, but —’

‘You need to think it over, Faye?’

She shook her head and took his hand in hers. ‘Not really. I realised within five minutes of talking to Brendan, the reporter from Glasgow, I wasn’t chasing that dream anymore. That’s why I came here in the first place. I wanted something different. Quiet.’

*To find a home.*

Cameron’s brow crinkled. ‘So why were you seeking advice?’ He pointed at the ground. ‘And from the farm, of all places?’

Faye shrugged and snuggled into his side, never wanting to let go. ‘Because I wanted to see if Emerald really did hold magic, I guess. Angus said she likes me. I was checking she really was happy about me sticking around.’

Cameron pulled her closer. ‘She doesn’t get a say in it.’

Faye looked up at him. ‘What’s your take on it, Cam? On us?’

‘I want you to stay, but I won’t get in your way if you decide you want to be somewhere else.’

‘I don’t want to be anywhere else. I love it here. It’s the first place that’s felt like home since the one I lived in with my

mother. I'm happy here. Honeydale makes me smile, my job makes me laugh, and you... Well, you're the one who makes me feel warm.'

'So, not my copper bath then?'

Faye laughed and leaned up to kiss his cheek. 'When I asked Emerald for a sign, I was expecting something to appear in the ground, like another coin or something, but you showed up at that exact moment. You see, Cameron Hart. You are the sign she sent me. Your land wants us to be together.'

'Forget my land. I want us to be together. I love you, Faye.'

Every part of Faye's body melted into him as he gazed softly into her eyes. 'I love you too,' she whispered.

'Does that mean we're settled?'

She nodded as she smiled, then leaned over to snog his face off, but something grabbed her gloved hand, tugging her downwards. 'Ouch!'

Cupcake bleated, swiped Faye's glove, then trotted off.

'Oi!' yelled Faye, chasing after her.

Cameron's laugh echoed through the trees as Faye dashed in and out, trying to capture the cheeky goat.

Faye leapt forward into her best rugby tackle, landing flat on her face in a large splodge of mud. She groaned as she sat up and clawed her soggy hand through the earth, grazing over something with her knuckles.

The dull jewelled ring was caked in mud, but Faye swiped away most of it, holding it high for Cameron to see.



He placed it in his palm. ‘That looks a lot like my grandmother’s engagement ring.’

‘Angus told me about that. What’s it doing out here though?’

Cameron was examining the old stone. ‘She lost it years back while working on the farm. Oh, wow! Could it actually be her ring?’

‘Angus will be so pleased if it is. He didn’t tell me she’d lost it.’

Cameron offered his hand and his lazy smile. ‘You know what, Faye Turner. I think old Emerald here really does like you if she’s offering you an engagement ring.’

Faye matched his smile, then raised herself to one knee. ‘Will you marry me, Cameron?’

He laughed for a moment, then dropped to his knees in front of her. ‘Are you serious?’

‘I am.’

He twisted his lips to one side, showing her he was mulling it over. ‘Well, seeing how you’re everywhere I turn, I might as well.’

She playfully pushed on his solid chest before leaning forward for a kiss. ‘I’m thinking there are signs all around us.’

He thumbed behind him. ‘Yeah. There’s one over there telling you where the shop is at.’

‘I mean it, Cam. I think you’re my destiny.’

‘Don’t think I’ve ever been that before. I like it. It could work.’ He kissed her before she could laugh at him again.

‘What should we do now?’

‘I’m thinking, a hot shower, then we’ll announce our engagement to everyone and give Angus the ring.’

Faye straightened her shoulders, puffing out her coat. ‘But you haven’t said yes yet.’

‘Yes, Faye Turner from Dublin. A yes for every Christmas tree that exists on this planet.’ Cameron wrapped her up in his big arms, joined their mouths, and held on whilst light snowflakes dissolved into their hair.

‘This is real magic, Cam,’ she mumbled on his lips.

‘You’re my magic, Faye.’

She pulled back a touch and smiled. ‘And you’re my home.’

\* \* \*

If you enjoyed this story, come back and visit Honeydale again with Jack and Mae.

### [New Beginnings in Honeydale](#)

Jack finally gets settled in his new home, not expecting a woman to move into the cabin at the bottom of his garden. She's in Honeydale to right the wrongs told about her ancestor who supposedly haunts the local tavern. He really doesn't care about ghost stories or the annual witch festival held in his hometown, but the newcomer is hell-bent on ending the tradition for good, and that brings nothing but trouble to his door.

## About the Author

Hello, I'm K.T. Dady. I'm the bestselling author of the Pepper Bay series. I'm also a chocolate lover, mum to a grown-up daughter, and a huge fan of a HEA. I was born and raised in the East End of London, and I've been happily writing stories since I was a little girl. When I'm not writing, I'm mostly reading, baking cakes, or pottering around in my little garden in Essex, trying hard not to kill the flowers.

I love hearing from readers, so please get in touch over at my website or sign up for my [newsletter](#) and receive a free Pepper Bay short story that you won't find anywhere else.

Newsletters go out once a month and often contain free gifts, previews, and writing tips amongst the news. Head over to my website at [ktdady.com](http://ktdady.com)

If you enjoyed reading my book, please leave a rating or review on Amazon or Goodreads. It really helps to bring the story to more readers. Thank you so much.

You'll also find me on my social media accounts.

Instagram – @kt\_dady

Twitter – @kt\_dady

Facebook – @ktdady

\* \* \*

Honeydale is a spin-off from the Pepper Bay series:

[Starlight Cottage](#)

[Honeybee Cottage](#)

[Pepper Pot Farm](#)

[Lemon Drop Cottage](#)

[The Post Office Shop](#)

[Pepper River Inn](#)

[Silver Blooms Flower Shop](#)

[The Old Boat Clubhouse](#)

[Castle on the Mead](#)

[Christmas Memories at Waterside Cottage](#)

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone reading the Honeydale stories. So many readers are a constant support to this series, and I want you to know that I am so completely and utterly grateful to each and every one of you.

\* \* \*

I also want to thank author Margaret Amatt for her kindness, knowledge, and being my extra set of eyes on this story.

\* \* \*

As always, sending lots of love and light your way. Keep reading. It's good for the soul.

\* \* \*

