



Legacy

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

KATE BONHAM

legacy

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

KATE BONHAM

© Midnight Dreary Publishing 2023

All rights reserved.

This book is a work of fiction created by Kate Bonham.

Any references or likeness to real events, real people, or real places are coincidental.

This book is intended for the purchaser only. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the express written permission of the Kate Bonham.

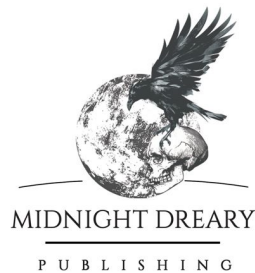
All songs, song titles and lyrics contained in this book are the property of the respective songwriters and copyright holders.

.

Authored by Kate Bonham

Book Cover Design by Temptation Creations

Edited by Ravenna Poe Edits



CONTENTS

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Did you love Legacy?](#)

[ABOUT KATE](#)

[OTHER BOOKS BY KATE](#)

This book is dedicated to anyone who loves October and the spooky season. Happy Halloween, my fellow ghouls and creatures of the night.



The car drove off and left me standing in front of the towering, dilapidated house that I grew up in. Just standing on the cracked path leading up to the front porch had a chill running down my spine. I lifted the phone up to my mouth.

“I still don’t understand why you had to go all the way down there,” my mother’s concerned voice came through on the loudspeaker. “It’ll take you over a week to go through that place.”

“If you’d come with me like I asked you to, it would go faster.”

“I will *never* return to that house,” she said, firmly. “You know I refuse to step foot in there.”

I rolled my eyes, thankful it wasn’t a FaceTime call. “The spirit of dad is not stuck in the house.”

My mother had been tortured with memories of my father after he’d been killed in this house. She hadn’t returned to the house after it had happened, leaving everything behind.

“Alyssa, how on earth would you know whether it is or not?” she asked, defensively. She’d always been one to believe in those things and I had been a staunch believer of if I

couldn't see it or touch it, it didn't exist. Two complete opposites, and yet, I loved the woman more than anything.

"I'll call you tomorrow and let you know how I'm getting along," I told her.

"Be careful," she issued. "There's a magic shop in town, you should get some sage."

"I'm hanging up now," I said. "I love you."

"Love you too."

I put my phone in my pocket and pulled the key from my other pocket to the front door. The loud creak had the blood in my veins running cold. Goosebumps bubbled up on my skin as I stepped into the old, musty house. The light switch was next to the door, and as I clicked it on, the large chandelier in the foyer made a weird sound as one of the lights turned on. The others must have blown, and my grandmother hadn't been able to fix it in her later years. Part of me was sad that no one had stuck around for her when it had all gone down. Being the scandalized family in this small town had destroyed my entire family and we'd all fled. I was fourteen when we left, but I remembered. I was bullied mercilessly for who my family were, so much so, that my mother, even more willing to leave the De Marco name behind, hightailed it with hardly any money to New York. When my grandmother found we were living in near squalor, she'd bought us a house to stay in, so long as her granddaughter was looked after. It wasn't long after that my cousins and I all changed our last names to Marino to escape the psychopathic presence of our grandfather and what he'd done to Black Hollow.

Who could pass up a serial killer in a small town who kills his own son and police shoot him dead before he can kill his

five-year-old granddaughter? That'd be me. The granddaughter.

So many people had said to me it would be impossible to remember what happened, I was only five, but I did. I wasn't remembering what I'd read, I remembered the look of fear in my daddy's eyes, the crazy and determined look in my granddad's eyes. I knew I was in trouble, but I didn't understand why. You can't read about that kind of memory, that had been something I lived.

Plus, nowhere did it say that my father told me to run as he died from his wounds from my grandfather. I still have bad dreams, even now, almost thirty years later, with my father's words in my ear to run.

I would never get past that.

My grandmother had decided to stay here, in this house, away from her family. She'd done it because she couldn't imagine living anywhere else and so she lived in isolation. No one visited her other than one friend, who died months earlier. These last few months she had been alone, and I felt so guilty about that. She'd been nothing but loving and sweet to us, my cousins, my mother, my aunts, and uncles, she supported us from afar.

But I was the only one she left this house to, which had angered my cousins to no end. I don't know why because no one actually wanted this murder house.

Other than the mayor of Black Hollow, who wanted to turn this murder house into a tourist attraction. The rise in true crime documentary popularity meant the mayor would try anything to get people to visit Black Hollow.

I stepped through the foyer, remembering how grand it used to be. Now, it had cracks through the walls, and broken windows from where kids had thrown rocks through them. I ascended the stairs, worried I'd fall through them at some point, but they were stable enough. This house was a wreck, they needed to do a lot to fix it if they wanted to turn it into a tourist attraction, but hell, that wasn't my problem once I signed the papers.

I'd say goodbye to Black Hollow for good.

There were things I would miss. Elijah, for example. My best friend from school. It was his face I missed most, and the fact that he could always cheer me up, was an added bonus. I made him come to New York to visit me, never wanting to come back here. He didn't mind much, because he loved the city at night, he loved how busy it was. Black Hollow was one of the oldest small towns in the state.

The doors were all closed on the second floor of the house, and I felt my entire body stiffen as I walked down the creaky floorboards toward the end of the hallway that would lead to the rope to pull down the attic's staircase.

The place my grandmother put everything after the events that led to us leaving. The scandal of the town, my grandfather and his crimes had caused a huge decline in this town. Once, our family were known as one of the founders of Black Hollow, so named for the sinkhole that has always been part of our history. It wasn't enough to bring the tourists anymore though. That much was clear.

Boxes and chests lined the sides of the attic, layered with dust. I cracked the window and let some fresh air in as I shielded my mouth with the bottom of my top. Where would I even begin with this crap?

A loud rap on the door echoed throughout the house, even up to the attic. I ran down the stairs and toward the door just as another loud rap landed on the door.

Opening it up, I saw the secretary to the town mayor, Chantelle, beaming up at me, with a glimmer of fear in those eyes.

“Ms. De Marco,” she said, slightly flustered, and trying to juggle a mountain of paperwork in her arms. “I’m Chantelle Morris, with the mayor’s office.”

“I recognize you, Ms. Morris,” I said. “I’m no longer a De Marco, it’s Marino. I hope it says that on the papers or I fear you’ve come all this way for no reason.”

She looked down at the top and groaned. “Oh no. No one told me.”

“Come in before your papers fly everywhere,” I said, moving to the side. Chantelle seemed a little hesitant but entered anyway. I led her to the dining room. She stood at the doorway, biting her bottom lip as she contemplates what could have happened in here.

“He never brought his victims here,” I said, realizing what the hesitation could be. “My grandmother never would have stood by and let that happen. He knew that. You’re safe here, I promise.”

Chantelle chuckled, nervously. “Sorry...it’s just...that your family’s scandal is a huge legend in this town.”

“I’m aware,” I said. “Come, let’s talk through the papers and see if there’s something that’s salvageable.”

“Your name is legally changed?”

I nodded. “Yes, my mother and aunt and uncle had all our names changed. My grandmother kept the name because she was a strong ass woman, and no one was going to force her into changing her name.”

“No kidding,” Chantelle said, putting the folders down on the table. “The mayor’s been trying to get this place for years.”

“I don’t see the appeal,” I said, looking through the papers. “But to each their own, I suppose.”

“It must have sucked to have been raised with that name,” she said. “Especially in this town.”

“The name didn’t cause the scandal, the man who gave us the name did,” I told her. “Anyway, it was a long time ago.”

Chantelle nodded. “My uncle was the cop who shot him.”

I looked up from the papers and over to her. She was surprised that she had said anything judging by the way her eyes were bugging out of her head.

“Good,” I said. “He was a bastard.”

“Did he...you know...do things to...”

My look silenced her. She looked down to her feet, instantly regretting her own voice.

“Did he do things to me?” I finished for her.

“Sorry,” she said. “I babble when I’m nervous.”

“And people spread rumors like wildfire in this town,” I said. “And that’s all that is, a rumor.”

“I’m sorry, Ms. Marino.”

“Do you know what it’s like to be five and asked by a policeman you’ve never seen before, after just watching your own grandfather kill your father, after which said grandfather

died in front of you after a hail of bullets entered his chest, one of which only just missed your own head, to be withheld from your own grandmother and mother, while being asked questions about the crimes that grandfather committed? Do you also know that when you say you don't know, they continue to ask the same question over and over again...even suggesting to you that your grandfather did things to other women because he couldn't have who he genuinely wanted... which was me. That's what rumor does to people. It drives people to do the unthinkable, to question children about things they shouldn't know about without a parent present. So no, Chantelle, I wasn't fiddled with as a child. I witnessed two horrific deaths, my family being torn apart, kids bullying me for being a De Marco to the point I wanted to hurt myself. I survived the family name, only to have to come back thirty years later to deal with it again."

Chantelle shrunk back and kept her eyes downcast. It did make me feel a little bad I'd unleashed, but I was sick to death of people asking about my family. *Did you know he was a psycho?* Now that was the most common question I got at school, especially from my arch nemesis Lidia Archer. God, I had hated her. She'd been popular, the one everyone adored, and she knew it. She had made my life a living misery in this damn town.

"Everything here is under my old name," I said to her. "You'll need to have it changed before I can sign them."

"Sure," she said, quietly. She made a move to grab the papers and hefted them up into her arms before she headed for the door. I beat her to it and held it open.

"Look, I know you didn't mean any harm, but you should know rumors can be damaging," I said to her. She finally

looked up at me and nodded, offering a slight smile.

“I am sorry, Ms. Marino,” she said. “I’ll know better than to mention it again.”

“Call me when the papers are fixed,” I told her.

“Oh, you can come in this afternoon,” she said. “It’s a simple name change on the documents. I’ll get them reprinted for you.”

“It’s Friday,” I told her. “Go and relax, I’ll come in on Monday.”

“That’s Halloween.”

“Ah, yeah, is that a problem?” I asked her.

“It’s just...this town kind of goes crazy on Halloween,” she said. “I would have thought you’d know that.”

“Right,” I said. “The Halloween fiesta. I forgot. I’ll come in on Tuesday before I head home.”

She nodded, but I could tell she was annoyed. “That’s fine.”

She turned on her heel and headed to her car, just as my oldest friend in the world, Elijah pulled up in his obnoxious hot pink Cadillac. I could see the visual exchange between Chantelle and Elijah, and I fought to stop myself from laughing as my so obviously gay best friend sashayed his way up the front steps in his tight leather pants and his skintight band t-shirt.

“Babe,” he said, kissing me on the cheek. “It’s been forever.”

“What’s that about?” I asked, motioning toward Chantelle’s departing vehicle.

“Oh, that,” he rolled his eyes. “She’s from one of those hoity toity families who moved here a few decades ago, you know the kind, they hide the family secrets and pretend to be better than everyone else.”

“It’s more than that, Lij.”

“Oh, yeah, nothing gets past you, Lys,” he said. “I may have also outed his gayer than the color pink uncle Laurie.”

I rolled my eyes. “You are a threat to society, you know that.”

“I had to find some form of fun since you decided to up and leave town, little lady,” he said, pushing his way past me and heading inside. He was gawking at the place and turning around on the spot as he took it all in.

“Man, this place has turned itself on its head, hasn’t it?” he said, finally looking back at me.

“Well, that’s what happens when your husband turns the town on you,” I said. “Why are you here?”

“I told you, I’d come and relieve you of some of this morbid familial responsibility you’ve put on yourself.”

I rolled my eyes and crossed my arms over my chest, waiting for him to continue. He relented.

“Fine,” he said in his usual dramatic flourish. “I want you to come out tomorrow night. We’ve got this huge Halloween Bash on.”

“Halloween isn’t until Monday.”

“Sure, but we all know how much of a humdrum town this is. We like to celebrate on weekends, and only weekends. Come on, I need my girl and you definitely need to have some fun.”

“I need to clear out this house, Lij, and I don’t have forever. I am more than happy to be leaving this town as soon as I can.”

“It’s one fucking night,” he grunted. “Just be a fun loving single like we all know you can be.”

“Nice,” I replied. “I’m not exactly single by choice.”

He sighed. “Nothing wrong with being single, baby. It gives you more chances to have as much fun as you can while you’re still young enough to shake that ass.”

“Fine,” I replied. “I’ll come, but only if you come tomorrow to help me.”

“I’ll come on Sunday to help you,” he said. “I have to work tomorrow.”

“Work?”

“Yes, some of us need to still appease our overbearing grandparents and play nice with the rich folk,” he said.

Elijah hadn’t worked a solid day in his life mainly because he was from the rich elite of this town, just like we had been before my grandfather had been outed as a serial killer. My grandmother had used most of our family money to pay the families of the victims, not because money would replace what they lost, but because she hated to live in riches when they struggled through their loss.

“You have to attend a social event,” I answered. “Now that’d be something I’d love to see.”

“Quiet you,” he barked at me. “It’s under duress, and maybe because I don’t want them to cut me off completely.”

“You being gay really put a dampener on their plans, hey?”

“You’ve no idea,” he replied. “My dad had to find one of his many illegitimate children to put his faith in to continue his family line.”

“Jesus, Lij.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “All families have drama, babe. The elite just happen to have a few more skeletons they don’t want people to uncover.”

I sighed. “Tell me about it. I’m a little worried there may be an actual skeleton upstairs.”

“Make the fuckers in the mayor’s office go through them,” he said. “They want this house so bad, they can deal with it.”

“I’m sure there’s something here I’d left and want to keep,” I said. “I need to do this, for my grandma. She didn’t see me in her later years, and I feel guilty enough for it.”

Elijah nodded. “I get it, babe. All good, I’ll come by after the party but only *if* you come.”

“A true friend, indeed.”

“It goes both ways, girl.”

I hugged him tight and watched as he headed back to his barbie funhouse car and waved as he took off, blasting his music. I loved that he’d not changed a bit. The best kind of guy to have as a friend, especially when the town turned against your family.

I turned back to the staircase and ascended, back to the eternity that would be going through the most private things that my grandmother hid from the world.

This was not going to be a fun weekend.

Maybe a night out tomorrow would be exactly what I needed after I toiled over this shit all night.



Elijah sighed blissfully next to me as he entered the haunted house themed bar. We got people jumping at us as we entered. Little did they know I was prepared, otherwise they would have ended up on the floor, bleeding.

“You need to get that sourpuss off your face,” he said. “You’ll scare away the dicks wanting to invade that forest you got going on down there.”

“It is *not* a forest,” I said through gritted teeth. “Shut up, go and find yourself a hottie.”

“I can’t leave you alone so soon,” he said.

“Come on,” I said. “We both know if you don’t get your dick wet in the next hour, you’ll explode.”

Elijah laughed. “You know me so well.”

“Go,” I ordered as he located someone eager and willing on the other side. I turned to the bar and ordered what I could only imagine was pure alcohol in a cocktail glass. The bar workers all had costumes on, and everyone was dressed up. I had been forced into putting on heels and wearing a tiny, bloodied nurse outfit that Elijah had bought me knowing full well I wouldn’t dress up without his insistence.

The music was pumping loudly with remixes of the Monster Mash and mixing it with Goo Goo Muck, Michael Jackson, and horror themes. I didn't mind it at all, it took away from the commercialized holiday they were celebrating. It was barely celebrated in my neighborhood in New York, so I almost forgot it was on around this time.

The smoking concoction was handed over the bar before the bar worker moved off to serve someone else. It almost looked like I would be illuminated from the inside as I slid the liquid to my mouth. No drink should be neon or look like it glowed in the dark. It didn't taste so bad, but I could tell it was loaded with sugar and most definitely had at least four different liqueurs in it.

It wouldn't take many of these and I'd need to be carried home.

Elijah was getting on with the guy who hadn't taken his eyes off him since we arrived, so much so, they were grinding against each other as the theme of Ghostbusters blasted through the air. I shook my head, unsure of where to look.

Everyone was staring at me, knowing full well who I was and the history of my family here. Just freakin' perfect.

I couldn't wait to get home to New York and be a nobody, able to move on with my life and have someone actually come up to me to talk to me without knowing my entire history.

I ordered another drink and downed it quickly, having it refilled quickly.

"Careful," the guy warned behind the bar in a skeleton outfit. "These are potent as fuck."

"Don't worry," I told him. "I am looking to forget."

He nodded. "No problem."

It was around my fifth cocktail that I turned to look over for Elijah only to see he'd disappeared. Oh great.

I pushed off my chair and headed toward the exit, only to find myself turned around. My eyes were failing on me as I looked around at the darkened room, the music pumping through me as I tried not to stumble out of this place.

"Oh my god," I heard a familiar shrill voice of someone I was desperate not to run into. "Alyssa De Marco."

"Alyssa Marino," I corrected as I turned to face the one person I was hoping had moved from here.

Lidia Archer.

She looked exactly like she had in high school when she'd made my life a living hell.

"Lidia."

"I can't believe you're back here," she said. "You look... different."

I looked down at my slutty outfit and realized just how ridiculous I looked. Perfect. Fucking Elijah. How had I let him talk me into this?

"I can't believe you're still stuck in this town, Lidia," I shot back. "I always thought you'd make something of yourself."

The dig did what I wanted it to. Her fake smile shifted slightly to anger.

"Hm," she replied. "Like you did?"

"Sure," I said. "I mean...I did get out of this dead-end town, after all."

“Only because your family were run out,” she said, coming closer. “You’re probably a serial killer in your own right. I think I read an article saying it was a genetic trait.”

“No, Lidia, that’s been disproven,” I said. “But it’s clear that once you graduated, you obviously stopped reading.”

My retort did what it had intended, and she was about ready to smack the shit out of me. In my current state, I knew I wouldn’t be able to defend myself but having her lose control would be absolutely amazing right now.

“Lidia,” I heard a familiar voice say from behind me, my body tensing immediately. “It’s time to move on.”

She did as she was asked just as I turned to see my ex-boyfriend Jordan standing behind me. He was in the sheriff’s uniform, and I knew instantly it wasn’t a costume.

“Jordan,” I said, hoping I wasn’t slurring my words. “I see you took after your father.”

He looked down at his uniform and sighed. “I think we all knew that was on the cards, Lys.”

“Well, thanks for pushing Lidia aside. I see she hasn’t changed since school.”

“Unfortunately, it does appear neither have you,” he replied. “You two always did have a weird rivalry thing going on, but for the life of me, I have no idea why.”

“Yeah, she’s a cold-hearted bitch, that’s why.”

“She won’t bother you again,” he said. “I’m sorry to hear about your grandmother. She was always such a warm and sweet lady.”

I nodded. “Yeah, she was. Thanks.”

He moved off and left me reeling. Lidia had already put me in a deep and depressed mood and given how much I'd consumed, I knew it wouldn't be long before I started to break down. I hated being here. Going through the stuff in the house all day had brought up some very unwelcome thoughts.

It was time to go. This whole night had been a bad idea. Screw Elijah...well, he was getting screwed right now, so maybe it was the best time to call it quits and head back to my horror house.

I headed for the door which I could clearly see now. Once the fresh air hit me, I felt myself become a little dizzy. Closing my eyes and leaning against the railing of the stairs, I tried to steady my breathing, calming the beating of my heart so I didn't pass out.

Fuck this damn town to hell.

I opened my eyes just as I felt the heel of my shoe get caught on the edge of the step. I couldn't help but came next as I fell down the other two steps and landed on the cement pathway.

Goddamn it.

Just freakin' perfect.

I pulled myself up, the skin on my arm and leg burning from where I had fallen. I knew I'd scratched myself to hell as I struggled to grab onto something to break my fall.

Heading down the street, I crossed over the parking lot and into the car park that led to the strip mall. My arm really burned as I looked down at it, heading through the walkway, I saw the blood spilling from the cut on my wrist.

"Oh, even better," I said to no one.

“Hey,” I heard someone protest from beside me. I turned to see two teenage boys looking down at my feet. They’d been drawing something on the ground, and I’d walked all through it, dripping blood all over it.

“Oh shit,” I said. “I’m sorry, guys.”

“Come on,” the blond one said. “We’ll go do it over by the cafe.”

The design had been completed from what I could see, marked up in paint, my blood coating the middle of it.

Fuck, I felt so bad. It was hard to find fun in this town. I remembered just how many stupid times I’d been caught vandalizing this town.

By Jordan’s dad.

When I’d been with Jordan.

The bad influence girlfriend that I had been, always convincing Jordan to do the things all the kids did. I didn’t ever tell Jordan’s dad that it had been him convincing *me* to do the things we were getting caught for.

No one would have believed me anyway. Jordan wasn’t the granddaughter of a psycho, after all.

I headed back to the street that would lead me to my old family house, calling tonight a bust, and reminding me of just how horrific this time had been to me.

The good thing – I was almost done. I only had the shit in the attic to go through now and then I’d be done.

Once that was complete, I could say sayonara to Black Hollow once and for all.



The sun hit my eyes right as I rolled over in bed. I immediately shut my eyes again and groaned as I pulled myself out of the bed. My head rolled about, my brain felt like it was swishing from side to side, as the ache began to throb near my temples. I walked over to the curtains and pulled them closed before I opened my eyes again.

The cocktails from last night were still doing damage.

Ugh, fucking Elijah.

I pulled my towel from the hamper and headed into the shower to try and wake myself up, and maybe make myself feel even half decent. As I showered, I tried to will some strength to get through the rest of today and finish so I could hopefully get out of here no later than Tuesday.

Once I was done, I got out, dried off and got dressed before I headed down to the foyer. On the table I'd cleared off yesterday, I saw a large coffee and a dozen donuts.

A small note sat atop the pink pastry box.

Lys,

I'm sorry I abandoned you.

He wasn't even that good.

Forgive me?

Lij xo

*PS I'll be by later. I need to
see my uncle.*

He probably wouldn't but I couldn't be mad when there were donuts in front of me and they were warm. I opened the package quickly and grabbed one of the cinnamon ones. The soft doughy goodness was a dream on my tongue.

Okay, he was redeemed.

I picked up the coffee and sipped the heavenly product, the sweet swirls of vanilla and caramel hitting every sense in my mouth. I moaned even though no one was around to hear it. I looked back up at the staircase that would lead to my doom, otherwise known as cleaning out the attic. A creaking sound had a chill run up and down my spine as I turned around to see where it had come from. I couldn't shake the feeling that I was being watched or that I had someone else in the house. There was nothing there.

Being in this house was bad enough, but having freaky feelings like this was another. I quickly checked the door and could see it was locked. The only way Elijah got in here was by his lockpicking skills which still to this day amazes me.

I was losing it, I thought as I headed up the stairs. I had got to the top when I heard something move downstairs. Goosebumps appeared up and down my arms as I turned back to see if there was a cat or something that had gotten in but there was no movement down there. I was *not* going to be that dumb bitch who calls out to whoever was in the house.

I pulled my phone from my pocket and dialed the police station. Slowly walking back into my bedroom, I tried not to panic as the operator was slow to answer.

“Hello Black Hollow police station,” the woman said. “How may I help you?”

“I need someone to come to my house, I think someone’s broken in.”

“Who is this?” the woman asked.

I had to remember how small this town was when I realized they just knew everyone’s voices from the call.

“It’s Alyssa Marino,” I said, a little annoyed at how nonchalant she was being.

“Oh, Lyssa,” the shrill voice of someone I really didn’t want to speak to repeated. Of course, *she* worked for the police. “I haven’t seen you in forever. Lidia told me she ran into you last night.”

“Maggie-”

I was cut off when I heard her talking to someone while still on the phone to me.

“Maggie,” I called out a little louder.

“Hold on,” she said into the receiver. So much for this being a goddamn emergency. I’ve never wanted New York’s restless nights and siren filled airways more in my life.

“Alyssa?” Jordan’s deep voice traveled down the line.
“What’s up?”

“I need someone to come out here and look around. I think someone’s in the locked house with me.”

“Are you sure? Did you see anyone?” he asked me.

“No,” I said. “But I...can you just send someone please?”

He was quiet for a moment, and I thought maybe the phone had been cut out but before I hung up, he said he’d be over soon.

I didn’t mean the goddamn sheriff, I wanted to say but he’d hung up before I had the chance. Great.

I finished my coffee and headed down the stairs slowly to look around, grabbing the broom to defend myself with if someone were in here.

It didn’t take long for Jordan to arrive. I heard his car pull up outside just as a door slammed shut behind me. I screamed out, as I turned, with the broom out in front of me.

Jordan knocked on the door and called out my name. I ran over to it and unlocked it.

“Are you alright?” he asked me, removing his hat, and stepping inside.

“No, a door just slammed and scared the shit out of me.”

“It’s probably just the wind,” he said. “This house is draughty and old.”

I looked outside to see if he was right but there was no wind to speak of. Not one movement of the goddamn trees at all. I was *not* losing my mind.

“I’m serious, I know the sounds of this house. I can *feel* something.”

“Alyssa, this house has a bad history. It’s probably just you not wanting to be here, and your mind is playing tricks on you.”

“Jordan, please...you know I’m not the scared kind of girl like most girls in this town. I’ve endured a lot. I know when there is something off.”

He nodded. “Okay, I’ll have a look around.”

He set about looking through the house as I stayed close to the donuts for comfort. I’d been rattled before, but not this rattled. Something was *in* this house.

Could my mother be right? Could a spirit be trapped inside this house? My grandmother had sworn not one of the girls had been killed here. She never would have allowed that, so how could a spirit be caught here?

Jordan came back downstairs and looked through the cupboards and down the hall to make double sure, but I was already feeling stupid.

“Sorry, Alyssa, I think it’s probably just the house sounds that frightened you,” he said. “There’s no one here.”

“Thanks for checking, Jordan.”

“It’s all right,” he said. “Sometimes kids come up here on dares. If they give you any trouble, call me again.”

I nodded and thanked him again. The second I shut the door, I felt the sensation of being watched again.

I couldn’t shake the feeling and it made me feel ill. I needed to get to work so I could get out of this house and Black Hollow as soon as possible.



I HEFTED the large chest down the stairs from the attic and puffed my way down the other set of stairs to the foyer. This chest was so heavy, I was making track marks all the way down the hall. Whatever the hell had been in here was locked heavier than my little ol' hands could handle. I knew my grandmother kept a bolt cutter in the kitchen somewhere. I'd never understood why, and the answer may scare me more than my imagination could handle so I never asked.

As the chest hit the last step, I heard the telltale sound of it breaking underneath the weight of the chest.

Oh well, that was the mayor's problem.

The door swung open, and I jumped up, gasping as I looked over at Elijah's equally surprised face.

"Bitch, you scared me," he pronounced, holding his hand to his chest.

"I scared you?" I replied. "Are you kidding me? It's called fucking knocking."

My heart rate was so fast I could barely speak.

"Well, I see you didn't find it so horrific when I left you a little present earlier," he spat back. I looked him up and down and noted how refined he looked. There were no glaringly obvious gay man vibes coming off him. He was in jeans and a normal-looking T-shirt.

"What the fuck happened to you?" I asked him once my breathing returned to normal. He grabbed a donut and bit into it, rolling his eyes.

“Family drama,” he said. “You wouldn’t be interested. What in god’s good graces is that?”

I looked down at the chest I was still clutching onto and groaned. “I need to cut the lock with bolt cutters and thought it might be nice to come down for some fresh air while I went through it.”

“That old thing could only spell disaster for you, chuck it out, baby cakes.”

He had a point, but I also didn’t want to throw something out that could have been left when we fled.

“Stop being such a baby and go and get the bolt cutters.”

“Where are they?” he asked.

“In the kitchen, bottom drawer close to the sink,” I called out as he headed down the hall to the kitchen. I looked it over, the intricate designs on the top and sides reminded me of some of the old chests my dad used to have. It must be a family thing.

That’s when I saw it.

The fancy D carved into the side. The family crest behind it. It was the same design on every tombstone for my ancestors, including my dad. He’d had it on his, much to my mother’s hatred. She had wanted it changed, just like we’d changed our names to Marino to extricate ourselves from the De Marco scandal.

Then again, it was our legacy in this town. There was no way anyone would forget in our lifetime.

Lucky me.

Elijah finally made his way out to me with the bolt cutters in his hand. “Girl, there’s some serious bad mojo in this bitch.”

“What did you expect?” I shot back. “My dad died upstairs, and my grandfather died out on the front porch.”

“Yeah, but there’s just something off about this place right now. I can feel something in the air or whatever.”

I knew what he was referring to, but I needed his help if I was going to get out of here on time. I positioned the bolt cutters on the lock and squeezed the handles. Elijah helped, adding on some strength and finally the lock fell away, landing with a loud thunk on the wooden floor beneath my feet. Elijah helped me to open the chest, an old musty smell escaped, causing me to hold my shirt over my mouth. Elijah stepped back, his face twisted in agony as he tried to evade the smell.

“That shit is rank,” he said, fanning himself. “What’s in there?”

“I thought you wanted me to throw it out?” I shot over at him. Elijah rolled his eyes and came over to see what was inside.

I pulled out a large photo album and opened it. The spine creaked with age as I flipped through the happy snaps of our family before our grandfather’s twisted desires were outed. There were photos of beach days when we visited California as a family, and photos of me on my dad’s shoulders as he ran down the sandy hills. My grandfather even looked to be enjoying himself in these photos.

“Wow,” Elijah said. “You guys look so...normal.”

“We were,” I said, flipping to the back. “Well, we thought we were.”

“Do you remember much of what it was like before?”

“Not a great deal,” I said. “Just bits and pieces.”

I pulled the photo of my dad and me, standing outside this house. He looked worried, as if he had the weight of the world on his shoulders. Flipping the photo over, I saw the date.

This was before people found out about my grandfather.

Did he know?

“Your dad looks so dapper.”

I smiled at Elijah’s words. “Yeah, he was always put together. He loved dressing up and going out. One memory I have is just before all the shit went down, and he got us all dolled up for a night out. We headed into the city and had dinner. I remember he was twirling me around in my big frou-frou dress, way too many layers for a kid of five, but I loved it. I felt like a princess.”

Elijah smiled. “That’s a cool memory to have, chica.”

“I know. I’m glad I remember it.”

“Your mother never remarried, did she?”

“No,” I said. “She’s still very much in love with my dad. She told me once that she could never love another man, it wouldn’t be fair to them because they’d never be what my dad was to her. I think that’s why I never want to settle down. I don’t want to have something great and for it to be ripped away.”

“But what if you miss out on something so amazing as love?” he asked me. “Babe, do you know how fucking rare a love like that is? How fucking amazing would it be to love someone so completely that you could never love another?”

“Where the fuck has my fuckboy best friend gone?” I asked, slamming the album shut and putting it down on the table next to the chest.

“I can be deep sometimes,” he said. “It’s not like I want to live this life of a different guy every half an hour forever. I mean, I will get old and wrinkly eventually.”

“I’d very much like to see that,” I laughed. He stuck his tongue out at me as I lifted up a folder full of paperwork. Flicking through it, I could see this was just old birth certificates and marriage certificates. I put it on top of the photo album and dove back in.

“Imagine if you have a legit skeleton in there.”

I rolled my eyes, but the thought had occurred to me. I wouldn’t put anything past my grandfather at this point. But, going through the rest of the house, I hadn’t seen anything of his. My grandmother must have gotten rid of anything that reminded her of him, which just made me sad. I couldn’t imagine the betrayal she must have felt when she found out, and then to lose her son to the maniac she had loved.

That had to do something to your psyche.

I picked up what looked like another album, but it was lighter than the other one. Opening the first page, I wanted to drop the book and run. It wasn’t a fun family album, it was my grandfather’s sick and twisted murder book.

I flicked through the pages only to realize it was his memories of his kills, photos of the girls he stalked, and tied up. There were photos of them in weird positions and then photos of them dead and where he left them. Etchings of his demented mind were written beside each photo.

“I think I’m going to throw up,” I said, slamming the book shut.

“Why would your grandmother keep that?” Elijah asked.

“She probably didn’t know. It was at the bottom of this chest. She probably just threw this shit in here and left it up there,” I said. “He really was a sick fuck.”

“Give it to the police maybe,” Elijah said. “They could probably make do with it better than the mayor.”

“Mayor isn’t getting his hands on this. Those poor women,” I said. “I think they’ve been exploited enough for one lifetime.”

“Amen, sister.”

I moved to put the murder book back in the chest when a photo slid out. I groaned as I picked it up and looked down at the beautiful girl in the photo.

“Wait,” I said. “This is wrong. She wasn’t one of his victims.”

“He murdered a dozen women, Lys. How can you possibly know that?”

“He murdered fourteen,” I said. “But I’ve got all of their faces emblazoned on my memory. I looked them up. I’ll never forget what they look like. This girl was never one of them.”

Elijah frowned. “Why would he have her photo then?”

“Maybe she was going to be number fifteen.”

“That just gave me fucking chills, Lys.”

I opened the book up, flipped to the back, and saw the empty pages. He would have just kept killing if he’d never been caught. The mere thought had my stomach rolling in on itself, my chest burning with anxiety.

I flipped to the last page and saw where it had fallen. Thankfully, there were no death photos of this girl. Maybe

she's gotten away before he could kill her.

I couldn't shake the feeling that maybe I knew her. There was something about her eyes that made me think I knew her, a recognition I couldn't place.

"Are you okay?" Elijah asked.

"I just...I don't know why but I feel like I know her."

"Maybe you met her?" Elijah offered. "Like your grandfather used you as a ploy to meet her."

That thought sent shivers down my spine but scary as that was, I wouldn't put it past him.

"It's not complete...this page. I think maybe she did get away," I said. "Do you know her? Is she from here?"

"Were all his victims from here?" Elijah asked, looking at the girl before shaking his head.

"Yeah, they were all young girls who lived in town."

"She doesn't look familiar," he said.

Something about it felt bad, like I needed to know if she was still alive or if she was a victim of him. I couldn't understand it. I didn't want anything to do with my family scandal and hadn't ever wanted anything to do with it and yet here I was, eager to start an investigation to find this poor girl.

I closed the book. I'd almost dropped it in the chest when a door slammed to the side of the kitchen and the lights flickered over us.

"Oh fuck," Elijah screamed.

When the lights stabilized, I dropped the book into the chest. "It's just the weather."

“Bitch, you and I both know that was no fucking weather,” he said. “You have a spirit stuck in the house.”

I rolled my eyes, even though I could see he was being serious. “You know that shit doesn’t exist.”

“Alyssa, you can tell yourself all you want that spirits don’t exist, but I can tell you, they do. And in the presence of a house that a crime happened in, you’re going to get nasty spirits. You need to get out before your grandfather locks you in forever.”

“Elijah, do you know how crazy you sound?” I said. “This house is old, it’s going to make sounds.”

“Girl, you’re in denial if you think this house isn’t riddled with spirits wanting revenge,” Elijah said. “Go into town, my cousin Zander can help you out.”

Elijah was out the door before I could say anything else. I knew Elijah’s family had a little tourist magic shop out by the town hall. It was always full of herbs and little rocks that the signs said would heal a broken heart and shit. Elijah hadn’t ever shown that he was into that stuff, and I think we all knew that little shop was for tourists rather than actual readings and shit, but he was proper spooked and that made me incredibly uneasy.

Hell, if a little sage was going to help me overcome my fear, I’d pay this cousin a little visit.

Maybe Zander could tell Elijah he was being a little bitch too.



The shop front looked a little too tacky for me to take it seriously. I was beating myself up for letting Elijah talk me into this, but I was already here, so I had to do something. I almost walked myself back to the house, but fuck it, if I burnt some sage, I should be good. The little bell chimed to announce my arrival as I stepped inside the incense infested little shop. I couldn't take a breath without inhaling the Nag Champa scent heavy in the air. As I looked around at the tiny shop full of shelves of rocks and gems, I had to fight the urge to leave. If Elijah had been this freaked out, enough to tell me to come here, I would try it. I'd try anything to get through the next couple of days.

“Can I help y-” the man said, appearing from a crystal curtain. He looked at me as if he knew me, but I couldn't recognize him. He didn't look like Elijah at all.

“Uh, hi, my friend told me to come here,” I said. “He thinks you can help me with a problem I'm having.”

“Your friend being Elijah?”

“How did you know?” I asked, immediately, suspicious.

“Because I know who you are, and I know my cousin. I also know he's your only friend in this town.”

He didn't seem happy to see me. Was he like everyone else in this town and thinking I'm cursed?

"Right," I said, feeling a little defensive. "This was a mistake, I'll leave."

"Wait," he said. "If Elijah sent you here, there would be a good reason. Tell me how I can help."

I slowly turned back around. "I think I just need some sage. Elijah seems to think I have a malevolent spirit in my house."

"The De Marco house?" he queried.

"Yes," I replied. "I'm sure you know the story."

He nodded. "Yes, I do. You don't remember me from school, do you?"

I tried to remember back but his face didn't look familiar. I had blocked out a lot from my days here in town, as much as I could anyway.

"I'm sorry, I don't remember much about my childhood. I wasn't exactly a star student."

He nodded. "That's true. Anyway, if you have an evil spirit in your house, sage can help but it won't fix the issue."

"Any of this stuff help?" I asked, looking around at the overstuffed shelves and limited walking space.

"This stuff is for the tourists," he admitted. "Most of it won't do shit unless it's been ritualized or charged with magick but hell, it pays the bills. Most people are willing to believe just about anything."

"Why?"

"Why do they believe anything?" he asked.

I nodded.

“Because reality is harsh. They want to believe that there is something that is beyond the veil of death.”

“Are you telling me you don’t believe this stuff?” I asked him. “Why would Elijah think you could help?”

Zander smiled, as if he didn’t expect the conversation to go this way. “I can help you. Just because the stuff around us doesn’t really work, doesn’t mean I don’t know what can help. There’s no point in wasting the good stuff on people who have no idea how to utilize it. I can spot a real witch a mile away.”

“A real witch?” I felt the chuckle before I could stop it.

“You don’t believe in witches?” he asked.

“No, I don’t, I’m sorry if that offends you.”

Zander shrugged his shoulders. “It doesn’t, but you have to believe in something or else you wouldn’t have come here. You’re scared of something.”

“Look,” I said. “I am here under duress, I didn’t want to come back to this cesspit of a town, but I am the only descendant of my grandmother who would do this when she died. I am trying to work my way through all of the shit she left behind, and some of it was my evil grandfather’s. I don’t want to be here, and the people of this town don’t want me here. It’s a fucking mutual thing and I don’t like being in that fucking house. If you wave some smelly shit around, it may stop my overactive imagination from going crazy and sending me batty.”

Zander smirked at me. He actually smirked and it annoyed the fuck out of me and oddly enough turned me the fuck on. “Okay, well, I can’t leave the shop unattended, but I can swing past the house later.”

“Thank you,” I said, turning on my heel and leaving. The fresh air hit me like a mack truck. Lidia was sitting across from the shop, at the cafe, talking to her friends as she spotted me.

Just freakin’ perfect. Could this day get any more fucking worse than it already had?

I headed in the opposite direction, so I didn’t have to come up against her again. Most people grew out of their bullshit ways from school, but she seemed to hang on to every mean girl behavior that she could.

She was the motherfucking Queen bitch of Black Hollow.

I really couldn’t wait to leave this cesspit.



ELIJAH

Did you speak to Zan?

ALYSSA

Yes. He said he’ll drop by later.

ELIJAH

Good. I’m worried about you in that house all by yourself.

ALYSSA

You could come and stay with me.

ELIJAH

Fuck that to all hell and back. Message me after he leaves.

I rolled my eyes at my phone. Elijah had been my saving grace while I was stuck in this town, even when he came to visit me in New York. He was just a good friend to have. I have no idea how I would have coped in this town without him.

I put my phone down and flipped to the back of the murder book again, looking at the girl again. I knew her face. It was almost as if the answer was on the tip of my tongue, but I just couldn't get to it.

I must have known her or seen her from somewhere.

Picking up the old family album again, I flipped through the photos. Maybe she was a friend of the family. None of the other victims had been, but I couldn't get past her face.

A loud knock on the door startled me. I took a second to calm my breathing and headed over to the double doors. Opening it up, I saw Zander standing on the doorstep. He was wearing a button-down shirt that he hadn't had on before with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, revealing tanned skin and the ends of what looked like a half sleeve of tattoo.

Instantly I felt my womanly bits spark to life.

"I brought your sage, and some other things that may help. Can I come in?"

"Shit, yeah, sorry," I said, moving to the side. He stepped inside and put the items down on the table.

He was looking around the foyer, and up the stairs. I wondered what he was searching for.

“I haven’t heard anything in the last couple of hours, so maybe it was just a cat or something.”

“Elijah told me what he felt,” he said. “He’s usually right so I’ll just take a look around.”

I went back to my album and kept flicking through it. I settled on a page with a photo of me as a little girl and the girl in the photo. She was holding me and smiling.

What the hell?

“What’s wrong?” he asked me. I turned to see him looking over at me.

“Oh, nothing, I just...think I knew this girl when I was a little.”

He came over to me, and I got a whiff of his cologne which almost sent my knees crashing to the ground. How could someone smell so utterly masculine and delicious all at the same time?

“Who is she?”

“I don’t know...I have a theory, but this throws a spanner in the works.”

“Why?”

“I think this may be a victim of my grandfathers, but he only murdered fourteen, or so I thought, this would be fifteen. There’s an unfinished page in his fucking murder book and her photo was in it. I thought she looked familiar...so I looked through our family album. Nicky never killed anyone we knew personally.”

“He would have been caught earlier if he had,” Zander said. “He was probably feeling invincible at that point and thought he could do it with anyone. She looks like she’s a babysitter.”

“Yeah, he did like them that age,” I said, feeling the revulsion rising through me. “I just wish I knew if she got away before he could hurt her or if she’s out there somewhere.”

“Wait...so you don’t know if he killed her or not?” he asked.

“No, with the others, there are death photos, but not with her.”

Zander grunted, as if he were in pain. I wondered if he was having some kind of headache and was about to offer him painkillers when he turned to me.

“I hate to break it to you, princess, but there’s definitely some kind of presence here and it’s unsettled. It’s probably trying to get your attention.”

“I don’t have the heart to be a bitch to you right now,” I told him. “Can you just wave your sage shit around and cleanse the house or whatever it is you do?”

Zander’s smirk appeared on that Roman God looking face and I wanted to kiss the hell out of that smirk. Fuck, Alyssa, now was not the time to think about your underused pussy. I *definitely* needed to get laid.

“What?” I grunted as he just watched me with that little smirk.

“You know there’s something here, otherwise, you would have kicked me out by now. Do you want to see?”

“See?” I repeated. “You want to show me a ghost?”

“Turn around.”

I did, waiting to see his little magic trick that worked on the gullible tourists who visited this hellhole. He waved his hands in the air, but instead of nothing happening, I saw a shimmer in the air and suddenly, I felt like the air was dividing.

“What the hell?”

“Not hell,” he said. “This is the spiritual realm, it’s everywhere around us, but not everyone can see it. I’ve just lifted the veil a little.”

“This is real?” My voice was breaking as I looked at the movement in the split of the air. I could see things moving. My heart was hammering in my chest, as I looked at the shimmer in the air right in front of me.

“Yes, it’s real,” he said. “And you do have a spirit in the house, but she’s stuck and can’t move on.”

“She? It’s not my grandfather?”

“No,” Zander said quickly. “She seems young, it may be that girl you had the photo of. She seems to be pushing me, like she’s trying to tell me something.”

“Like what?”

Zander shook his head, the shimmery veil disappearing as he stumbled back a bit. His ass hit the table in the foyer, making it wobble. He looked like he just had the life sucked out of him.

“She was warning me,” he said, finally, straightening himself. “Something’s not right...something...is coming.”

“Correction,” a deep, dark voice said from the shadows. I turned around, the familiar voice sending chills down my spine. “Something is already here.”

I looked over, in disbelief, as I saw my grandfather coming out from the shadows. The cocky grin he always had on his face made my blood run cold.

“Hello, darling,” he said to me. “I’m home.”



“How can he be here?” I asked Zander, not taking my eyes off Nicky.

“He’s not a spirit,” Zander offered. “Come with me, Alyssa. We need to go.”

“What?” I replied. “He can’t hurt me, can he?”

Nicky chuckled, and instantly I regretted my words. He got off on fear.

“Yeah, he can,” Zander said, taking my hand and dragging me to the door. “He’s in human form.”

“What?” I finally whipped around to face Zander as he pushed me over the threshold and toward his car. “How is that even possible?”

“There’s a way but we don’t have the time to discuss it right now,” he said. “Get in.”

“But...my stuff.”

“Do you want to face off with him?” Zander yelled.

I shook my head and grabbed the handle of the passenger side door and jumped into his car. He took off at the speed of light and headed into the town, to the car park behind his shop. He took out his keys and unlocked the back door. He ushered

me inside to a large room. This room was bigger than the actual shop itself. The walls were lined with bookshelves and old-looking books that had been opened more times than I had ever opened a book in my life. A desk sat underneath a stack of papers and a laptop on its last legs was off to the side.

“So...you read much?” I asked, trying to ease the tension in his shoulders.

“There’s a spell that can bring the dead back around Samhain,” he said, ignoring my sarcasm. “I just...can’t remember what you have to do to send them back.”

“I don’t know anyone who would want to bring him back, especially in this town.”

“It was probably just a kid using a spell book they found online without knowing the true meaning. I mean, this town does go crazy for Halloween, if you hadn’t noticed.”

“Business must be good for you around this time,” I remarked.

“It is, hence, the messy desk,” he replied. He pulled a book from the shelf and started to flip through the pages. All I saw were fancy designs all over the pages. Almost as if I were transported back to the other night, I gasped when I looked down at my wrist where a band aid was hiding my nasty cut.

“What is it?” he asked me.

“The other night, Elijah forced me into going to a Halloween Bash. I left early and tripped, cutting my wrist on something. I dripped my blood onto some chalk, these kids were drawing designs on the ground.”

“You dripped your blood onto one of the designs?”

I nodded. "I just remembered as you flipped through the pages."

"Do you remember what it looked like?"

"Uh, yeah I think so, do you have a piece of paper?"

He scrounged around for a pad of paper and a pen. I took it off him and quickly sketched the design from memory and handed it back to him.

Zander quickly flicked through the book and landed on a page, moving it around to show me. "Was this it?"

I nodded as I recognized the design. "What is it?"

"It's a binding spell," he said, leaning back in his chair. "You bound it to your blood which means inadvertently you brought your grandfather back from the spirit world."

"What?"

"He's immortal," Zander said. "Well, kind of, there's an expiry on it, but if he happens to kill again in this form, he won't ever be stopped. He'll have supernatural powers. No one will be safe."

"So how do I get him back in the spirit world?"

"Well, this spell is bound by the magicks in the air surrounding Halloween, so if we can stop him from killing anyone before midnight on Halloween, we should be good. He'll be returned."

"I don't understand any of this," I said, wondering if I was dreaming. This couldn't be real. He couldn't be back.

My worst nightmare was coming true.

"How could this happen?"

“Well, he’s your blood, and it’s probably a fear of yours. This design is a spell to bring forth your worst fear.”

“Well, that’s fucking happened,” I said, running my hands through my hair. “You don’t know how crazy he is, Zander. He’s going to kill again and then it’ll be my fault for bringing him forth.”

“It’s not like you drew the fucking design,” he said. I could tell he was frustrated. If he was frustrated, then it had to be bad. He had fucking magical powers. I’d seen it with my own eyes.

“So today is the day before Halloween, so we have less than 2 days to stop him? How do we stop an immortal man?”

“Keep him away from women,” Zander said. “He liked young girls, right?”

“Yeah, like late teen, early twenties.”

“Well, we just need to recruit some friends and keep an eye out around town. Destroy his fun. I don’t think he’ll have a motive to hurt us for it, he’ll just move on.”

“Problem,” I said. “I don’t have any friends. Elijah is my only friend here.”

“I know.”

“Imagine that, no one wanted to be friends with the psychopath’s granddaughter.”

Zander sighed. “I get that. I just figured it was because you were such a rebel in school.”

“Because teachers didn’t want to teach me. They all figured I’d be some serial killer in waiting. My science teacher called my mother to the school because I was *looking* at my

dissected frog *wrong*. Apparently, that means I'm going to kill in the future."

Zander let out a chuckle. "Wow."

"You remember me from school, right?" I asked him.

He nodded. "Yeah, actually, I tried to ask you out and you shot me down in front of everyone."

I had no recollection of that at all.

"When?"

He smirked at me. "I didn't look like this back then. I was the fat kid, with glasses and next to no confidence."

I realized that turning him down would have been the ultimate embarrassment and I probably destroyed his confidence.

"I'm sorry, Zander, I wasn't a good kid back then. Bitter about this town and what happened, you know. Try having that scandal and then facing puberty."

Zander shrugged his shoulders. "It doesn't matter. We need to recruit some people. I know a few who may help. One in particular likes me so she'll do whatever I ask."

A sudden dread shot right through me. "Please don't be Lidia Archer."

Zander's head cocked to the side, and a slow smirk spread over his face. That immediately confirmed it.

"Why don't you like Lidia?"

"Because she tormented me and continues to do so, she's a bitch."

Zander chuckled. "Yeah, I know, so maybe she's perfect for scaring away your psycho grandpa."

He had a point there.

“Well, you can do the talking and I’ll go back to the house.”

“Are you sure you want to do that?” he asked, suddenly serious.

“I have to,” I told him. “Can I borrow your car?”

He nodded. “Wait, let me give you a protection talisman.”

“I don’t believe in this stuff, Zander. Isn’t it worthless to me?”

“No,” he said. “Whether you believe it or not, it will work.”

He pulled something out of a drawer and placed it in my palm before closing my fingers over it and making a fist. He wrapped his hands around my fist and began to whisper something. My palm started to get warm, and I saw a light smoke wrap around our hands. As if I’d imagined it, the smoke dissipated, and the warmth was gone. He took his hands back and I looked down at the pendant with little stones wired through the middle.

“How is this meant to protect me?”

“It will, hold it out to the threat and it will protect you, but hopefully it won’t come to that.”

I nodded and took his keys and headed for the car. My heart was racing as I got behind the wheel and drove back to my house.

I hoped like hell that Nicky was gone but I knew that was probably not likely. I put my foot down and came to a halt outside the house.

Gathering my strength, I got out and headed inside. I listened for footsteps or anything to tell me that someone was with me here. The only sounds I heard was the blood rushing through my ears. I grabbed the murder book and the family album and piled them up on the table and ran up to my room. I grabbed my bag and put my things in it quickly before I ran down the stairs. I came to a stop at the bottom of them when I saw him standing there, flipping through his murder book.

I tried to hold back the fear that was growing in me as he looked up at me, a cocky little grin on his face.

“I almost forgot how prolific I was,” he said with pride.

“There have been worse than you,” I replied. “And there are still formulating psychos were will probably top you in the future. If we’d grown up in a city, no one would know your name.”

“Ah, but perhaps that is why I’m back.”

“You’re back because a stupid kid brought you back by accident but we’re going to send you back to your hell hole.”

He put the book down. “You can try. It is nice to smell the fresh air once again, little princess. Fall, if I’m not mistaken.”

“You aren’t staying here Nicky. We will send you back to the abyss of death.”

“Abyss?” he remarked. “Do you believe there is nothing after death? I can tell you now, there’s so much more than you can imagine.”

I didn’t want to dwell on it. “We will find you.”

“You can try.”

He moved down the hallway, deeper into the house, and out of view. This was the time to leave. I ran for the album and

the murder book and headed for the car. Tossing everything into the back seat, I opened the driver's door as the door to the house opened and Nicky ran down the stairs. I scrambled to get in the car, but I couldn't close the door quick enough, and I felt his cool hands on my skin and in my hair as he pulled me from the car. I fell into a heap on the gravel, my skin burning from the friction.

He laughed as he tried to grab the items from my back seat, but I shoved him away and closed the door again. There was something in those things that he wanted and there was no way in hell I was going to let him have them.

"You'll join me soon, Alyssa," he growled at me, frustrated. He made a move to come back for me. I pulled the talisman from my pocket and held it out in front of me. I heard a loud smashing sound, realizing I'd closed my eyes in the hope that I wouldn't see what he was about to do to me.

I opened them and looked over to see Nicky lying down on the front door of the house which had come off its hinges as he landed on it. The talisman was smoking in my palm as I realized what must have happened.

Shit.

I didn't want to tempt fate, so I got up quickly and jumped in the car, tearing out of the driveway and toward the shop again. My heart was hammering, as if it were in my throat, as I tried to comprehend what had just happened and what he had said to me. What's in that photo album that he doesn't want me to see or is it that murder book?



“Oh, this is just perfect,” I said as I looked over at Lidia. “**O**draped over the desk, flirting with Zander.”

“Alyssa.”

“Lidia,” I mocked her ignorant voice. I threw the murder book and album down on the desk. “We need to figure out what he doesn’t want me to know from here.”

“What do you mean?” Zander asked.

“Nicky just tried to kill me for this stuff. There’s got to be a clue in there somewhere.”

“Are you okay?” Zander asked, concern filling his expression.

“Nicky?” Lidia queried. “As in Slippery Nicky? He’s dead. Has she gone totally bonkers?”

“I told you we needed your help with a malevolent being,” Zander told her. “Slippery Nicky is back, caused by a spell, and we need to keep him from continuing his murderous intent.”

“Wait,” Lidia said, shoving off the desk. “You brought your psychopath grandfather back from the dead?”

“Are you really that fucking stupid, Lidia?” I yelled over at her, my frustration reaching boiling point. I was ready to punch on with the bitch and after what just happened with Nicky, I was going to enjoy every moment of it.

Zander jumped up and stood between us. “Whoa, okay, you weren’t kidding when you said you didn’t like each other.”

“That’s a nice way to put it,” Lidia said, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Okay, so maybe we need to separate you two for the time being. We’re all here to rid this world of Nicky De Marco, okay? Let’s focus on that and put our childish feud away for a few minutes, yeah?”

I shrugged my shoulders and saw the tension leave Lidia’s before she nodded. “Fine.”

“Okay, Lidia, to catch you up. Nicky was brought back from the spirit world by a spell, which was not cast by Alyssa, but the fact is, he’s back. We need to kick him back to where he belongs, so we need to work together.”

“These girls...work together?” Elijah said from behind me. “Now that isn’t going to happen.”

I rolled my eyes at my best friend and leaned against the door jamb, the furthest I could get away from bitchface.

“Okay, Elijah, take Alyssa and go and try to find Nicky. I’ll go with Lidia, and we’ll take the North side of town, you guys take the South.”

“Sounds good to me,” Lidia said, sliding up on Zander’s arm like a horndog.

“Oh please.”

“Jealous much?” Lidia barked at me. I was about to run up to her when Elijah grabbed me around the waist and hauled me back.

“Wow,” Zander said. “You’d think we were still in high school and not in our mid-thirties.”

I rolled my eyes and headed out the door with Elijah, and into his car. He drove down to the school and parked in the teacher’s spot.

As we headed inside, I could feel Elijah was wanting to say something, but I really didn’t want to talk about my bullshit with Lidia. After we looked through the empty school, I saw him watching me with eagle eyes. It was infuriating.

“Jesus, just fucking say what you want to say,” I screamed at him. Nicky being back had taken all my calm and turned me into a fucking wreck.

“What’s the deal with you and my cousin?” he asked.

“Nothing, you sent me to him, remember.”

“I saw the way he looked at you, and the steam coming off you when Lidia grabbed his arm,” Elijah said. “He’s never willingly wanted to help anyone in this town before and yet you walk in there with a spirit problem and he’s willing to recruit Lidia fucking Archer to help us. He’s been dodging her advances for years.”

“I don’t know what to tell you, Elijah. Maybe you should be directing your enquiry in his direction.”

“So, there’s nothing going on with you guys?”

“How would we have time for that? I literally met the guy today,” I said with frustration. “I have more important things to think about than bedding your cousin. Not to mention, I

don't live here, and he does. What would we even do with each other?"

Elijah shrugged. "I just...think it's better if you steer clear."

"Now I'm intrigued. What the fuck is up with Zander for you to warn me off him? Weren't you telling me yesterday that I needed to get some?"

Elijah sighed, his usual playful tone gone and a serious look on his face that had me at odds with even myself.

"He's struggled with his power, as you may have noticed, he's powerful," Elijah said.

I nodded.

"Well, after school he left Black Hollow, and he went to California to make something of himself. He flirted with dark magicks he shouldn't have, and he became addicted, lured to the magick and it got hard for him to choose the light or the dark side. He still grapples with it, that's why he was forced back here by his dad – to ground him."

"What kind of dark magicks?" I asked, finding myself even more intrigued.

"There's two sides to magick. Always has to be, the good and the bad. The good side can get powerful, but the dark can pull from evil. It can overtake your soul and end up killing you. Zander has had to really separate himself from the dark side but this thing with your grandfather...it's going to make him skate on the edge again."

"I get it but why did you send me to him if you were so worried?" I asked. "You told me to seek him out."

Elijah sighed. “I know, and truth be told, he is the best choice to handle this. I just...haven’t seen him interested in a woman in a long time. Then there was the whole crush on you when you were in school.”

“You knew about that?” I asked. “Why didn’t you tell me? Why don’t I remember him?”

“You don’t remember anyone that wasn’t breaking the law back then,” Elijah laughed. “Jordan was pretty much the center of your universe until he stopped paying attention to you.”

Jordan’s father had hated me. He’d never thought I was good enough for Jordy and so he’d broken up with me just a few days before a school dance.

That had been the final straw. I’d begged my mother to let us leave and she’d not needed much prodding. I hadn’t even said goodbye to Elijah back then.

“I feel bad,” I said.

Elijah shrugged his shoulders. “You weren’t a bad person. I mean, we are still friends after all.”

“Did you hate me for leaving?” I asked him.

“For leaving an obnoxiously gay kid in a small town full of homophobes and without a friend in the world?” he replied, sarcastically. “No, I was fine with it.”

I walked over to him and pulled him into a hug. He hesitated at first, we weren’t hugging people, but he soon leaned into it and hugged me back.

I think he needed it because he didn’t let me go for a few moments.

“I’m sorry.” I said into his ear.

He finally let me go. “Let’s just kick your grandfather back to hell, yeah?”

I nodded and followed his lead, back toward the car. My mind was on Zander, and this supposed dark magick that lured him to the wrong side. He didn’t seem the type to be evil, but you never knew about people.

After all, no one suspected my grandfather of evil deeds until he was found out.

“How come you aren’t a witch?” I asked.

“It’s only passed down to the first son of the first son in each family. That was my uncle.”

“Do you ever wish you had powers?” I asked.

“I thought you didn’t believe in this shit.”

“I didn’t...until my dead grandfather came back to life and is motivated in trying to murder every woman in the vicinity so he can be immortal. Plus, I saw firsthand what kind of power Zander has. It’s kind of cool.”

“Yeah, there are some things that are cool about it.”

I realized he didn’t want to talk about it, I could see the firm set of his shoulders that told me he was uncomfortable. He had nothing to worry about, it’s not like I could do anything with Zander anyway, I was on my way out of town after this mess. Although, that devilish smirk and those strong forearms were doing things to my body that could only be sexual tension.

For the sake of my friendship, and probably my own sanity, Zander had to be off limits.



I LOOKED over at Lidia as she scoped out the back rooms of the town hall. She held her torch up as if she knew what she was doing. When Zander and Elijah had told us they needed to consult the grimoires of their family from the crypt, and that we'd need to work together, we'd both groaned. Zander had gotten a kick out of it, but Elijah had put us in our place. He was as serious as me in wanting to get me out of here. I tried not to think of the hurt, it was starting to make me feel at knowing my own best friend wanted me gone.

Then again, I didn't exactly want to stick around in the town who had turned me away so many years ago.

She hadn't said one word to me the entire past hour we'd been stuck together. I was starting to wish Nicky would show himself just so the time would pass quicker.

It was windy tonight, I could hear the wind howling away outside, the old windowpanes in this building rattling away.

"I doubt he'd come in here," I told her.

"Well, we've checked everywhere else in town. Where else could he be hiding?" she asked, just as exasperated as I was. "He's your kin, where the hell would he go?"

"You don't have to be such a bitch, Lidia," I spat. "I'm the one who had to live with having such a freak of a family member, not you."

She rolled her eyes. I could only just tell that's what she did through the glimmer of light coming in through the windows.

“I don’t even know why you hate me so much,” I offered. “I didn’t try to be your friend, I didn’t try to be anyone’s friend because I knew no one would want to be mine.”

Lidia sighed, just as a large gust of wind blew against the windows. A loud crashing sound vibrated around us just as shards of glass rained down around us. Lidia grabbed my arm and tugged me into the back room to get away from the branches of trees flying through the cracked glass.

Another large gust of wind and I was almost transported into the back of the room. The door slammed shut behind us. Lidia ran over to it, shrieking and trying to open it but it had one of those old school deadlocks on it.

“Please tell me you have a key.”

“Of course, I don’t, no one does. It went missing fifty years ago.”

Oh, you have got to be kidding me!

“The night watchman comes by every couple of hours. He’ll see the damage and call it in.”

I sat down on the ground and rethought all my life choices. I was stuck in a room with Lidia fucking Archer for God knew how long while my psychopath grandfather was lurking around town looking for a young girl to kill to ultimately turn himself immortal where no woman would ever be safe again.

Lidia sat down on her ass and sighed, putting the torch so that the light part was aimed to the ceiling, casting the room in some form of light.

“You know, even now as an adult, I know the reason why I hated you in school was stupid,” Lidia admitted after a long pause. “But you just irk me. Even now, you always wanted to start a fight instead of being civil.”

“Lidia, you approach me every time for laughs. You just want to be mean to me because of the history.”

“No, that wasn’t it. You just always got your way. People were scared of you, so you got things given to you. You had the hottest boyfriend in school, you always got away with things with the sheriff, teachers gave you good grades because they were scared to ask your grandmother to come in for an interview. You just thought you were better than everyone else.”

“You think I thought that of myself? Really? Do you know what it’s like or what it was like for me? Not only was I going through being a hormonal teenager, but I had the stigma of my grandfather’s crimes hanging over me. Everyone looked at me funny, as if I were going to cut up a kid at any time. No one gave me passes. In fact, I had to work extra hard for everything I got due to everyone being scared of me. Add onto that, I was dumped just before the winter ball because the sheriff was scared of me and my family...and then add to that, having no friends. I didn’t think I was better, I rebelled because I was angry and hurt.”

“Oh,” Lidia said, softly. “I guess we never really know what’s going on with people.”

“The hurt started long before high school, let me tell you. You just added to it.”

“I can’t imagine having to face what you did,” Lidia said. “I get why you’re so pissed off now, but I kind of like pissing you off.”

I chuckled. “Yeah, at least it kept school interesting.”

Lidia giggled. “Yeah, I had no one pushing my buttons after you left.”

“I went from being the town outcast to being a nobody in New York,” I said. “It was great, especially for my wounded hormonal soul.”

“Then you came back, and everyone treated you the same way,” Lidia admitted. “I’m sorry for my part in that.”

“It’s not going to be long before I go back,” I said. “Then you can have Black Hollow to yourself.”

“Really?” she asked me. “I thought you may stay.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Well...I saw the way Zander was looking at you...I just assumed you had a thing.”

Again, with this Zander looking at me thing. How could I have not noticed it if everyone else seemed to?

“Don’t you like him?” I queried.

“As women, we know when we’re not the object of desire for a guy, right?” she said. I could hear the sadness in her voice. “I guess I just liked him because he was nice to me in school, and he still treats me with respect. Few others do.”

“So, you don’t like him?”

“Alyssa, he doesn’t like me in that way,” Lidia said. “I’m not chasing after someone and begging them. I’m hot as shit, and I know it. I just flirt every now and then. It keeps me young.”

I felt myself laugh, and wished I had her confidence.

“I think you should give him a go, though,” she said, as I heard the sounds of someone coming into the hall and calling out to us. We called out back to them and told them what had happened. It was Jordan. I heard his voice through the door.

“Stand back,” he called out to us. “I’ll shoot at the lock.”

Lidia came over to me and we pushed up against the far wall as far as we could.

“Block your ears,” I told her quickly. She didn’t hesitate before we both shoved our hands over our ears right in time. The gunshot was loud, but it hadn’t pierced through my hair that I’d held over my ears. He came into the room, his torch shining on us.

“Jesus, I never thought I’d see you two together and both of you still alive. Don’t tell me this is some enemies to lovers’ lesbian thing because if it is, I’ll just grab my phone for some pics.”

I rolled my eyes and pushed off the wall. “Thank you for coming to our rescue, Jordan, you perve.”

“Hold up,” he said, as I tried to exit the building. I slowly turned around to face him. “Why were you two sneaking around in here anyway? The hall is off limits after dark.”

Lidia looked like a deer caught in headlights. She’d never been good at lying.

“Lidia followed me in here to tell me off,” I said. “She was trying to get me to leave when the wind blew the door closed.”

“And you’re both still unscathed? No fists or scratches?”

He thought this was extremely funny, I could hear it in his voice. Lidia had realized he was making fun of us too and was looking at him with what I could only describe as annoyance.

“No, sorry, we also couldn’t find any pillows to throw at each other as we screamed in delight,” Lidia spat as she pushed past him and out the building. I could barely contain

my laughter as Jordan stood there, looking surprised. I followed Lidia out of the hall and toward the car.

“We should get back to the shop. I don’t think Nicky is going to show himself anymore tonight.”

“Maybe he knows about what we are planning, and he’s gone to stop the boys.”

Fear shot through me. What if she was right?

“We just have to hope he shows himself sooner or later and that the boys found something in their big old family books.”



I watched the clock tick over to 12:01 am. Zander and I were in the house, looking for some kind of item of Nicky's that could be used in a spell to send him back into the depths of Hell.

"Where did your grandmother hide his stuff?" Zander asked after we closed the lid on yet another chest in the attic. "Or did she throw it all out?"

"She loved him," I said. "Even after everything happened, I knew she still loved him. It hurt her to think of him as a monster. It was why my mother and her never got along after. I doubt she would have gotten rid of everything that reminded her of him."

I pulled out the last chest from the corner of the room and opened it. It was filled with clothing from when I was a baby and baby books.

"Shit," I said, slamming the lid closed. "She must have gotten rid of everything other than the photos."

"Would there be somewhere else? You said she still loved him even after he'd done all those things. She would have kept something, surely."

I racked my brain to think of anywhere she could have hidden something. “The bedroom, maybe.”

I headed down the stairs into the house and down the long hall to where she slept. I hadn’t been in that room since I got back. It held far too many memories of my grandfather, and I didn’t like that feeling. The door opened with a creak, setting my nerves on fire with anxiety. Zander was behind me, urging me on. Stepping inside, I looked at the bed, perfectly made as my grandmother always did. It even still smelled of her perfume. Memories flooded to the surface as I stepped around the room, looking at every bit of furniture I knew so well.

“She was tidy,” Zander said, breaking me from the memories.

“Yeah, always. Drove all of us mad.”

“Do you know where she would hide anything?”

“Maybe her dresser,” I said. “You look in there and I’ll look in her vanity.”

He opened the dresser drawer and started going through her clothes. I sat down at her vanity, looking down at her jewelry and her perfumes.

“Are you okay?” Zander asked me. I jumped at the sound of his voice and laughed at myself.

“Yeah, I’m sorry. It’s just...hard, you know?”

“I get it,” he said. “When my grandma died, I couldn’t bear to go through her things. She all but raised me, I wasn’t exactly a good kid when I was younger. She understood me somehow and she raised me the right way.”

Elijah had touched on Zander as a kid, or a young adult, but never really told me what happened. I wondered what he

meant by the right way. Didn't he grapple with dark forces?

"When did she die?"

"When I was eighteen," he replied. "It was hard."

"I bet," I replied. "I know how hard eighteen is."

I opened the drawer of the vanity and pulled out a stack of letters tied with a ribbon. That was weird. Underneath, I saw the ring that I remembered well.

It was his ring.

His wedding ring.

She kept it all these years?

"What's that?"

"His wedding ring."

"She kept it?" he asked. "That's good. We can use it."

I nodded, getting up from the vanity and heading out. "Let's go. I can't stand to be in this house anymore."

"I don't blame you," Zander said. As we headed for the door. Zander stopped me by holding his hand out to catch my arm. I wheeled around, looking up at him, only to follow his line of sight.

Standing at the top of the stairs, was my grandfather.

"Fancy seeing you here again, little Lyssie."

I stumbled back into Zander, but I held my ground. "You're not going to stay here, Nicky. You'll find a way to send you back there."

"Your friend may have power, Lyssie, but he will never succeed in sending me back there."

He looked down at my hand and frowned. "What is that?"

I tucked the ring into my pocket and shrugged. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Nicky wasn’t impressed.

“You know ol’ Slippery Nicky can slip out of any noose you try to hang him with,” he said, his cocky self was bubbling to the surface.

“You speak in the third person?” Zander mocked.

Nicky turned his devilish gaze on him, and I felt protective all of a sudden. A burst of anger pummeled its way to the surface.

“Get out,” I told him. “This hasn’t been your home for a long time.”

“I’m not a spirit,” he laughed. “You can’t command me out. Whatever witchy spell he’s found will not send me back. I’m stronger than that. I know what I need to do to stay here.”

Zander moved his head to the side, as if he were having a conversation with someone but there was no one there. Slowly, he turned back to Nicky and smiled.

“I know where she is,” he said. Nicky’s face turned from confusion to fear.

I still had no idea what he was talking about when Nicky came for us. I ran back, grabbing Zander and running into the closest room. Zander slammed the door and twisted the knob to lock it. I realized which room we were in and made a run to stop him, but it was too late. I heard Nicky’s sick laugh from behind the door.

“Good luck, kids,” he yelled before I heard his footsteps disappearing.

“What the hell was that?” Zander turned to me.

“This door locks from the inside, but you have to be outside to open it. It was one of his sick inventions. He never used it for the purpose he built it for, of course, but that’s only because he was found out before he could.”

“So, we can’t get out?”

“No,” I replied, angry at myself. “I should have realized which room this was, but I just wanted to get away from him.”

“It’s not your fault,” Zander said, moving the hair from my face. “We’ll find a way out.”

I looked up into his deep, dark eyes and instantly found myself getting lost in them. He’d gone out of his way for me. Helped me when he didn’t have to.

One moment we were just inches from each other and the next, his mouth was crushing mine as he pushed me against that rock hard body. His tongue tasted like cherries. Not real cherries, but those candied cherries you got in cocktails. I moaned into his mouth as he pushed me back against the wall. His tongue plunged into my mouth as his hand moved up under my shirt. I was loathe to stop, and well, we were stuck here until someone came looking for us.

And since only Elijah knew we had come back here, that could be a while.

I moved my hand down to his jeans and unbuckled his belt causing his fingers to dig into my skin, eliciting a sweet friction over my skin. Zander grunted as he pulled his pants down and broke away from my lips to pull his shirt off. I looked down at his tanned and ripped body, his entire pectoral region was covered in symbols of tattoos, and he had a half sleeve running down one arm.

“You sure you want this?” he asked me. His voice was deeper, darker than before. All I could do was bite my bottom lip and nod my head.

His mouth was back on mine, with his tongue tangling with mine. I wrapped my arms around his neck, and he pushed me up against a desk, shoving all the items on it to the ground. My pussy was throbbing for him to touch her, but he was taking his damn time. I moved one hand down and grabbed his cock with my hands and began to squeeze. Zander moaned into my mouth as he grabbed at my jeans and undid the fly, pulling them down over my ass and down my legs. I reached out for his cock again, pumping it slowly. He groaned, his head falling back in pleasure as I worked his cock. I could see the head of him becoming bulbous and red, precum pooling at the tip.

“You keep it up,” he growled. “This’ll be over before it starts.”

“Then get on with it,” I surprised myself by commanding. Zander pulled my top off and released my bra in one swift move. I shoved the bra down my arms and watched as his eyes glazed over my naked body. I’d never been a body confident woman but with the way he was checking me out right now, I could get used to this.

Zander nudged my knees apart and moved in between my legs, pulling me up by my neck. His fingers squeezed on my soft flesh as he pulled my face to his and sealed our lips in a kiss. I hadn’t the time to react before I felt his cock nudging my lips apart. I moaned into his mouth again, my hands were holding me up on the desk behind me as he pulled my ass to the edge of the desk so he could slide into me in one move. I threw my head back and moaned out loud as I felt his girth

widen me. Zander slowly moved out of me and then slammed back into me again. I screamed out as his cock punished my pussy in the best way possible. I pulled myself back up, draped one arm around his neck and met his thrusts with my own. Zander groaned into my ear, as he fucked me senseless. I felt weightless, as if I were floating on cloud nine as his cock slammed into me over and over again. His fingers digging into the skin of my thighs. It took me a while to realize my eyes were closed. When I opened them, I instantly felt different. Zander was still fucking me, but he was on top of me. I was no longer on the desk. In fact, I was truly weightless and floating in the goddamn air.

What the fuck?

If I weren't in heaven right now, I would have probably freaked the fuck out, but I didn't want his cock to stop. His mouth closed over mine again and he kissed the hell out of me. I forgot who I was or where I was, the only thing I could think of was Zander. He moved a hand between us, sliding in between my pussy lips and slowly running circles over my clit. I screamed into his mouth which only increased the movement of his finger on my sensitive little bud. My fingers dug into his neck as I felt my pussy come to life. The familiar spasms that I knew would signal my release began to intensify as my pussy and my clit spoke to each other and organized my climax.

I was still floating in the air, being fucked by a hot guy who knew how to use his fingers and his cock. I was winning right fucking now. Questions could come later as I leaned into his finger and rode him. Somehow, I managed to twirl us around in the air, my legs spreading further as I rode him. He smiled up at me, knowing exactly what I was doing, and he was here for it. With his free hand, he held onto my hip to keep me upright. I pushed my hands down on his chest and

rode him for all he was worth. Zander's mouth formed into the O I knew would lead to him exploding. I'd never wanted to see a man cum so much in my entire life. The power I had over him was exhilarating. The waves came at me quickly as I rode him. My pussy gripping onto his cock for dear life as I screamed out my climax. It didn't take Zander long before he grabbed me by the hips once my spasms settled a little and he flipped me so that I was on my stomach, in the air, looking directly down at the floor beneath me. I didn't have time to react before I felt him slide in between my legs from behind and enter me. I had never been a fan of the doggy style, but damn did it feel good when you were in the mother fucking air. His fingers tangled in my hair and pulled my head up, so he could kiss me from the side. He pumped into me hard, and fast. It took four pumps before I felt him cum into me with a roar that made the windows rattle in the room. He spun us around in the air, and then we fell. I fell onto his stomach once he hit the ground. He groaned in pain as I laughed.

“That was amazing,” I breathed out. “How did you do that?”

“You still doubt my mad skills?” he asked. “How many go rounds will it take before you have some faith in me?”

“I do have faith in you, but if pretending I don't means I get a few more go rounds with you, I may just put on the act of my lifetime.”

Zander smirked at me, a funny sensation shooting down my legs and straight to my pussy. “Oh, you're on.”



ZANDER HANDED me my bra with a devilish grin on his face. I snatched it off him as I stuck my tongue out at him. Looping it over my arms and over my boobs, I did it up quickly, before I pulled my shirt back on. He stood over by the side of the room, shirtless still. I was glad because it gave me a reason to check out the tattoos over the entire surface of his back. I saw a huge dream catcher looking circle with symbols all over the outside. The inside was a woven type of spider. It screamed darkness. Not at all what I saw from him. Elijah wouldn't lie to me, there had to be truth to the story he told me, but my curious mind was crazy enough to want to know from Zander himself.

I was about to ask him what they meant when I heard the lock in the door twist and the door open.

Elijah stood there, his eyes travelled from me to a shirtless Zander and back to me.

Disappointment was immediate.

“Were you even trapped?” he asked me.

“Obviously,” I answered.

Elijah left without another word. I quickly located my shoes, looking over at Zander who was only now pulling his shirt on.

“Why's he so mad?” He asked me. “He's fucking gay, it can't be jealousy.”

“He warned me about you,” I admitted. “Said I had to be careful because you were dark.”

Zander's expression held no humor at all. It was like he didn't want me to know that about him. “Do you believe that?”

“Well, he’s never lied to me,” I told him. “Do you struggle with the dark side of magick?”

“Define dark.”

I rolled my eyes at him. The frustration was real, and we really didn’t have time for this shit.

I made a move to leave, but Zander grabbed my elbow and pulled me back. I slammed against his chest and instantly my body was reacting to him.

He lifted my chin with his finger, and he kissed me. It wasn’t a passionate hard kiss, rather it was one that had a purpose. Once he pulled back, I felt my head flutter with possibilities.

“I don’t care what Elijah thinks, and you shouldn’t either, think for yourself, Alyssa.”

He moved past me and left me reeling, unsure of what to feel or even what to think. I finally got the last shoe on and followed, making sure the ring was still in my pocket. Elijah had taken off, Zander was waiting in the car, blasting music.

This really wasn’t what I had wanted to happen. I didn’t have time to delve into a romance that was doomed. I didn’t have any time to think about what happens after Halloween, we had to stop Nicky.

I climbed in the passenger seat and waited for Zander to take off.



9:39pm - Halloween

Elijah was still not talking to me, and Lidia was acting like everything was peachy. It was like the complete opposite world right now. My pussy was still aching from the assault on it from Zander's delicious cock. Zander was sitting in his car outside, alone. I had a feeling he was still upset by what I admitted earlier. Elijah really wasn't happy about this situation. He knew I was leaving, he knew it was just tension relief. I had no idea why he was being such a bitch about it. I waited until Elijah was busy with one of his family's grimoires before I slipped outside and found Zander standing over the front of his car, a map spread over it.

"What are you doing?" I asked him.

He looked over at me, as if I had caught him in the middle of a thought process. It took a moment for recognition to hit his face.

"Uh...looking for somewhere forest-like in this damn town."

"Why?"

That's when I remembered the encounter with Nicky. He'd scared Nicky with one sentence.

“What did you say to Nicky? That changed his expression to fear?”

Zander sighed. “You know I can see into the spirit world already, right?”

I nodded.

“You know the spirit of that fifteenth victim is stuck in that house,” he continued. “She told me where to find her body.”

I realized what that meant. “So, if we find her body, we can kill him?”

“It weakens the spell that brought him back. The reason he could have been resurrected so easily was because one of his crimes was unsolved. Her grief at not being able to move on made the spell stronger, especially considering your blood opened the portal to this realm.”

Guilt washed over me as I realized just how crazy this was that I had done this. I had brought him here – my own worst nightmare was back because of me.

“We don’t really have many forests here in Black Hollow, back when he was alive, there was one area. It’s kind of hidden from view now. It’s behind the new police station.”

“You’re kidding, right?” he said.

“No,” I replied, looking down at the map. “It covers this area here.”

“How big would it be?”

“It’s fairly big, but a lot of the area was uninhabitable back then. He wouldn’t have gone all the way in to bury someone. He hated nature, he hated dirt.”

“We should go and see if we can see anything. I might be able to find it.”

“How? It won’t look the same as it did back then, and most likely, it would be bulldozed or overgrown.”

“If they bulldozed it, they would have found her body. When spirits show me things, they show me what they remember, things around them, things they saw or things they saw as spirits. If she wasn’t dead until she got to the burial ground, she could have shown me something significant. I need to get there to tap into what she showed me.”

“We’ll get the others and go there, eight eyes are better than four.”

Zander nodded and folded up the map before starting the car. I called out to Elijah and Lidia who both came running out.

“We’re going to the old forest, I’ll explain in the car. Just get in.”

We raced to the old forest as I relayed to the others what we were looking for. I could see the fear on Lidia’s face, but she was in this. It kind of amazed me that she’d stuck around as long as she had.

“Do we know the girl’s name?” I asked Zander. “Did she tell you that?”

He shook his head as we pulled into the area behind the sheriff’s office. Jordan would probably be in there. He couldn’t know what we were doing here because he’d probably lock us up.

“There has to be some kind of missing notice for her, right?” Lidia asked as Zander cut the engine. “Why don’t we

break into the sheriff's office and look for her name. Maybe we can give her family some peace in all this too?"

"It doesn't hurt," I said. "But how could we possibly sneak in there?"

"Doesn't Jordan think you hate each other?" Elijah offered. "He doesn't know you made amends over the past. Why don't you go create a diversion and I'll creep in the back and look for the missing files."

It was the best thing we could do.

"We're running out of time," Lidia argued. "We have to get this sorted and if this means we can defeat Slippery Nicky before he becomes immortal, than shouldn't we give it a go?"

"You're right," I said. "Why don't we go in and start fighting just like the old days and Elijah can sneak in and steal the file."

Elijah looked like he wanted to fight about his role in it, but he stayed silent.

"Do you think he'll buy it?" Zander asked me.

"Well, we did cause a ruckus or two in school, I'm sure we could call on whatever past issues we had for this."

Lidia smirked at me, remembering the amount of times Jordan's dad was called to the school because of us.

We could laugh about it now, but it had been a genuine problem. Especially for the teachers who had caught a slap or two while keeping us apart.

I headed into the police station, my heart a flutter with what we needed to do in an extremely limited time. Only Jordan sat behind the desk, his deputies were nowhere in sight.

“Busy night?” I asked.

“It’s Halloween in Black Hollow, you know it is,” he replied. “What are you doing here? I thought you hated Halloween?”

“Oh, I do,” I told him. “You know that, but better to be in here than out there with the De Marco haters.”

Jordan’s expression softened slightly. He had always hated the way I was treated growing up. It was also why he was so happy to break the law with me, so I could get my anger out in a way that didn’t involve punching a kid’s nose in.

“Do you want to come in?” he asked. That was when Lidia waltzed in behind me. I could see the change in Jordan’s expression immediately. It wasn’t what I expected.

It wasn’t annoyance. It was...desire.

We could have easily had him tempted by Lidia while I snuck in and checked for the files. If only I had known.

“What are you doing in here?” I turned to her. “Do you have to follow me everywhere?”

“I wasn’t following you, psycho,” she spat.

“Here we go,” I heard Jordan say. “Ladies, please, tonight is busy enough, I don’t have the energy to break up a cat fight.”

I wanted to hit him just for calling it a cat fight, but this needed to serve a higher purpose.

“If she wasn’t so full of herself, this wouldn’t be a problem,” she said, shoving me. “Why don’t you just leave?”

I could see Elijah sneaking in from the back door and creeping through the station behind Jordan. We had to keep

Jordan focused on us.

“I’ll leave when I’m good and ready, bitch,” I spat back. Lidia looked frozen as if she thought it was real for a brief moment before she grabbed at my hair and started to pull. Jordan ran from behind the desk and swiped his pass to exit the security door to break us up. He pushed us apart. My scalp hurt from the hair pulling, and she looked ready to rumble with me again.

“Ladies, please,” Jordan said, holding his hands out to keep us in our corners. “Halloween is fucked up enough, I don’t need to arrest you two. My cells are already half full.”

My phone buzzed in my pocket. I pulled it out to see Zander had left me a message of a thumbs up. That was it. Elijah had gotten what we needed, and we could go.

“Whatever, I’m out.”

I put my phone back in my pocket and offered Lidia one last look of fake anger before I headed back to the car. Zander and Elijah were sitting in the car, flipping through the file when Lidia finally moved out of the sheriff’s office and headed toward us. She got in beside me and giggled.

“He sure bought that,” she said, reapplying her lip gloss.

“Well yeah, you actually pulled hair out of my head,” I said. “It still fucking hurts.”

“Oh damn,” Elijah said. “We’re going to see a revisit of Alyssa and Lidia going at it like back in school. I knew I should have brought popcorn.”

“Shut it,” Lidia said before I had the chance. “Get to reading. We don’t have much time.”

Elijah shifted in his seat, and I glanced over at the name on the top.

“Wait,” I said. “Show me that.”

He handed the file over to me as Zander peeled out of the parking lot and toward the entrance to the forest behind the sheriff’s station.

“What is it?”

“The name...Tammy Calby. I know that name. I think so, anyway, her face was familiar before when I saw her face, but the name is even more familiar. I think she was my babysitter or neighbor. She was in heaps of my childhood photos.”

“Why would he attack so close to home?”

“I have no idea,” I replied. “It doesn’t make sense. He never did that before.”

Zander was looking through the overgrown forest, no pathway existed anymore. I was trying to remember what it looked like when I would go hiking through here but even my memory was failing me.

Lidia and Elijah were still in the car looking over the file as I tried to pull the overgrown vines from where I thought the path used to be.

“Can you see where she showed you?” I asked him.

“No, but I feel like this might be the way.”

I looked to see where he was heading. “That can’t be right, that leads down to the lake.”

“There’s a fucking lake here?” he asked me.

“Yeah, a man made one. It was meant to bring in the tourists, but it was a lost cause after my grandfather went loco

on the town.”

Zander smirked a little before he moved back to the area. “It definitely feels like this is the way to go.”

I helped him to pull the weeds and the overhanging ivy from the fence. Elijah and Lidia joined us, helping us to clear an area where we could get through.

“I think there’s bolt cutters in the trunk,” Zander said to Elijah. “Can you get them?”

Elijah ran off to retrieve them as I felt the bushes cutting into my skin. Zander pulled me back and wiped my blood off my arms.

“What?”

“Can’t be too careful, after all, you did start all this.”

I could see the bitterness in his eyes. He was upset about what Elijah had said about him and that I believed my best friend over Zander.

Maybe I should have given him a break. He was helping me after all.

He moved the bottom of his shirt from my skin. I noticed the blood had stopped pooling and was drying.

“Just...maybe stand back, yeah?”

I nodded, a little hurt, but we had bigger things to worry about than my emotions. I don’t even know why I cared, I was leaving this goddamn town the second Nicky was in the ground...again.

It didn’t take Lidia, Elijah, and Zander long before they were through the brush, and we could get down to the old lake. It was mostly overgrown with trees, and yet oddly enough, the

lake didn't look as bad as the forest around it. In fact, you could almost swim in it, if you wanted.

Zander was drawn to an area by the east of the lake, near a tree. I suddenly felt a wave of recognition as I looked at the large willow tree. I ran up to it, almost tripping on the roots of it pushing up from under the ground. I circled it and saw what I knew would be there.

Zander joined me as I felt nauseous.

"Is that your initials?" he asked me.

I traced the carving in the tree. "He did this. I was here with him. I vaguely remember it, but I was so happy. That was before I knew what he was."

"He liked this tree?" Elijah asked, his tone wary.

"He marked it for a reason," Zander told me. "He did it so he could return, and he put his own sick twist on it. That's why you two are connected and why your blood brought him back. You're his weakness, the one person he couldn't kill because he loved you. I was wrong. He's not back to kill another girl, he's back to take you, to turn you into him. That's why he hasn't left Black Hollow."

"He loved my dad too," I said. "Yet he easily killed him."

"No, he saw something in you, Alyssa. He thought he could make you into what he was. He was grooming you to become a serial killer, even at five years old."

The sheer thought of it sent a chill down my spine. There had been moments, growing up, after he'd died, where I thought I could kill someone. I held so much anger inside that I didn't know how to deal with it. It was one of the main reasons I begged my mother to leave this town. I didn't want to be known. I didn't want to be angry anymore.

“This motherfucker needs to die,” I said, feeling angry again. “She must be buried here.”

Zander had brought a shovel with him. I’d not even seen him get it out of the car, that’s how fucked up my mind was, and he started to dig.

It wasn’t long before I saw the hair sticking out of the mud. Tears began to well in my eyes. If I hadn’t come home, she’d never have been found. No one would be looking for her.

“One of you,” Zander shot over at Elijah and Lidia. “Go and get the sheriff.”

Lidia and Elijah both took off toward the sheriff’s station to get Jordan.

“How the hell are we going to explain this to him?” I asked Zander. “He’ll never believe us.”

“Hopefully with Elijah and Lidia backing our story up, he may give us the benefit of doubt.”

“Why didn’t anyone piece together that he’d killed Tammy?”

“He didn’t want anyone to know,” Zander offered. “She was close to your family, the first one, which meant it was probably a loss of control on his part. He needed to make sure she was never found.”

Zander carefully smoothed away the dirt from her skull so Jordan would be able to see it was a body immediately.

I heard Lidia’s voice talking, getting louder and louder the closer they got. She was trying to explain to Jordan what was going on. The second he saw me with Zander, his expression became grim.

“You used a ruse to break into my station?” he aimed at me. That’s when his eyes travelled down, and he saw the skull. “What the hell, Lys?”

“This was Nicky’s fifteenth victim,” I told him. “She needs to be recognized as that. Her spirit is stuck in this world.”

“What has this fucking idiot been filling your head with?” Jordan shot at me. That’s when I felt Zander tense beside me. Did they have beef? “His shop isn’t real, he’s not an actual witch or warlock or whatever the male equivalent is.”

“He is,” Elijah offered. “Trust me. He can do things, and he can also tell you that this woman was killed by Nicky De Marco, and her name was Tammy Calby.”

He turned on Elijah then. “Tammy Calby ran away from home. Her parents got a note from her.”

“But it wasn’t in her handwriting,” I said. “I saw it in the file, it was typed.”

“I didn’t think you would stoop this low to bring the memory of your grandfather back like this, Lys. You tried to escape this and now you’re believing anything. Zander probably killed this girl years ago and you’re all believing his crap.”

“Do your little lab shit on the corpse and see if I was in town when this happened or even how old I was,” Zander said, throwing the shovel at Jordan. He caught it in one hand. “I didn’t kill anybody.”

“Not for lack of trying though, right Zand?”

If looks could kill, Jordan would have been killed instantly.

“Now, now,” we all heard his deep voice coming from the thicket of brush around us. “You’re not all quibbling over little

Tammy, are you?"

Zander backed up, blocking me from view. Elijah and Lidia were backing up too, trying to get to cover as he came into clear view. Jordan dropped the shovel and drew his gun.

"What the fuck is this?" he asked, his eyes wide with horror.

"So...we may have missed a thing or two," I said, keeping my eye on my grandfather. "But well, my grandfather is back and we're trying to solve his last crime before the stroke of midnight before he becomes immortal and goes on a killing spree."

"Alyssa, now is not the time for fiction," he shouted at me. "Surely this is a cousin or something."

"Fraid not, sheriff," he sneered. "You sure do look familiar. You couldn't possibly be the sheriff when I was alive?"

"His son," Jordan said, in disbelief.

"Ah, a chip off the old block," Nicky said with a smirk. "He was always a softie too, never would have pulled a trigger, even to kill me when he had the chance."

"Well, I'm not like him," Jordan said, unloading his clip into Nicky. I could see the blood trickling from his wounds, but he didn't fall. Instead, he looked down at his wounds with a sick smile before he looked back up at us.

"Looks like you may be running out of time, kids."

Nicky made a move to come toward me, but Zander blocked my view.

"Get back," he ordered him.

“She’s mine,” he barked at him. “Move away.”

“She isn’t yours, and she never will be,” Zander replied.

“Blood will always find blood,” he sneered at Zander. I could just see him holding his hand out to me from beside Zander. He was looking at me like he used to. The way he looked at me when he would show me things, like folding paper so I could throw it through the air like a plane, or how to catch a frisbee one handed.

He looked like my grandfather again.

I was tempted to take his hand, and although I knew I shouldn’t, I couldn’t help but reach out to take it. Zander blocked my hand and shot a neon blue ball through the air. Nicky flew through the air, into the forest. I felt like the blue ball shook some sense into me and the feeling I had when Nicky was looking at me was broken.

“What the hell was that hold he had on me?” I asked him.

“I don’t know,” Zander said. “It’s not natural. I think it’s some kind of blood magic. The only way we can break that hold on you, is to kill him, once and for all.”

I nodded. “Then we need to do it now, I think we only have an hour before midnight.”

“What the ever-loving fuck was that?” Jordan screamed. Lidia and Elijah reappeared from the forest as I tried to get my head around the fact that Jordan was now losing his mind.

“Look,” Zander said. “Supernatural shit is real. That is a fact. You’ve seen it with your own eyes. We can stand here and talk about it a little more or we can find a way to kill Nicky, so he doesn’t become immortal and keep killing women forever.”

Jordan wasn't sure what to do, the gun in his hand was shaking as he tried to process what he'd just seen.

"Look, Jordan, we can help you to process all of this, but right now, we need you to hold a press conference."

"It's Halloween," he said, snapping out of it, putting his gun back in its holster. "No one is going to care about a press conference tonight."

"If you don't," I said. "Nicky could gain immortality. Tammy's death needs to be solved now."

"Fine, I'll call Terra at the news station and have her come out."

"Please."

He nodded and pulled his phone out.

"You should go now," he said. "I need to call some deputies down here for the photos and to dig her up. I don't exactly want to explain to them why you were out here."



11:47pm

I checked the time on my phone anxiously, waiting for the press conference to start. Jordan was standing in front of the news reporter and a few film crews.

“Come on,” I urged.

“It’s not live,” Zander said. He was looking down at his phone. “It needs to hit airwaves. People need to see it. His memory lives on because no one knows what happened to Tammy.”

“How is it based on that? I don’t understand.”

“No one does. The spirit world doesn’t want us to know. Some spirits come through and try to help us, but ultimately, the thing tying Nicky here is her. If we free her, allow her soul to be carried away, then his legacy dies.”

Time was wasting. Why the hell wouldn’t they go live?

“What is on the news channel right now?” I asked him.

He looked down at his phone and snorted in amusement. I looked over at it and saw that they were at a pumpkin carving challenge. My anger was rising.

“That’s it,” I said. “Go and get him. I know a way to get this out over the airwaves without the media.”

Zander didn’t question it, he crossed the street to where the conference was ending. I pulled up the group I knew would push my Facebook Live out in.

I clicked the record button and started to talk, pushing my nerves away.

“Hey True Crime Buffs, I’ve been in this group for a while but never said anything. My real name is Alyssa De Marco, and I am the granddaughter of Slippery Nicky De Marco. It is something I’ve wanted to keep hidden my entire life, a legacy I never wanted. I’m coming to you live now, from Black Hollow, where I grew up because upon packing up my grandmother’s house, I found his stuff. I found his murder book where he kept records of everyone he killed. Imagine to my surprise when I found an unfinished page at the end. One of a woman he was never accused of killing. A woman everyone thought had simply run away. No one was looking for her. No one even tried. Tonight, I have with me Sheriff Jordan Peckham who can confirm with you the name of his fifteenth and final victim.”

Jordan came into view. I could see he was nervous, but he knew we needed to do this.

“As of 10:30 pm this evening, the body of previously thought missing teen Tammy Calby was found in an abandoned forest in Black Hollow. Evidence from the De Marco home and with witness interviews from the time she had gone missing, we can confirm this is indeed the last crime of Nicholas De Marco. Family or friends of Tammy are urged to come forward to collect and lay her to rest in the respect she deserves.”

Jordan moved out of the view, and I aimed the camera back at me.

“My grandfather’s legacy should die here and now. I only came on here to tell you all because Tammy deserves the respect of being found. She deserves peace.”

I ended the live. It took a few minutes before I found the chat bar and saw that it was blowing up. When I hit post so that anyone who hadn’t been online at the time could find it, and the news could spread, I put my phone down.

“Nice try,” I heard Nicky’s sick voice from the shadows around us. Zander tensed up and Jordan pulled his gun out. “But time’s almost up, kid. It’s time for you to pick a side.”

He held his hand out for me again and immediately I felt the strange pull I had had earlier. I had no control as my hand came up to reach out for his. Zander turned to face me, and took my head in his hands, his lips crashing down on mine.

It broke whatever spell my grandfather seemed to have over me and I leaned into it. I could hear how angry Nicky was, as we broke apart, he looked set to kill Zander.

“Thank you,” I whispered to him.

“You’re scared of what you could become with me,” Nicky said. “But he has a darkened soul, my dear. He will lead you down a darker path than I ever could.”

I had no idea what he was saying, but I knew he meant Zander. How could Zander lead me down a darker path than my grandfather who was a legitimate serial killer.

My phone pinged and I looked at it to see my post was going viral and a news article had been posted. I opened it up and smiled, knowing this was exactly what I needed.

“What are you smiling at?” he barked. I turned my phone around to show him. He winced and jerked violently just as the clock tower started to chime to announce it was midnight. His skin began to crack and shatter in front of us, until finally he let out a blood curdling scream and exploded into thin air.

Jordan stumbled back, his gun going off, the bullet grazing the pathway and shooting onto the curb. “What the fuck?”

Zander put his arm around my shoulders and held me tight. “Are you okay?”

I nodded. “Yeah, but I need a fucking stiff drink.”

He chuckled as he pulled away from me to check on Jordan.

“Dude, you okay?” he asked.

Jordan put his gun in the holster and nodded but he was really shaken.

“Come on,” he said to Jordan. “We all need a fucking drink after this.”



ZANDER LED US down onto the football fields at the school and we sat down on the fifty-yard line. Zander opened the box he had carried from the car, and we all laughed as we looked down at the assortment of drinks, he'd brought with him. Lidia, Elijah, Jordan, Zander, and I all sat down and watched as the sun rose.

“Here's to the biggest fuck you to Slippery Nicky,” Jordan raised his beer. We all clinked our bottles together as the sun shone down on us. Last night had been the longest I'd ever felt. It almost felt like the sun would never rise again. Slowly,

one by one, everyone dispersed until it was just me and Zander.

There was so much unspoken between us, and now, we didn't have a psychopath to dispatch back to Hell.

"What did he mean when he said you were darker than he was?" I asked him.

Zander sighed. "I should have known this would come up. I can't run forever, I guess."

"Just tell me," I said. "What's the worst that I could think? I mean...you did just help me end my family legacy."

He chuckled, before sighing and downing the rest of his last beer. "You know I went to L.A., right? Well, that fucking place has a seedy underbelly of covens, most of them wanting fame and fortune which means they dabble in the dark arts. I was lured by it. It's a power you can't imagine. When that power sources through your veins, you feel invincible. You can fucking cheat death with the dark arts. Once you've had a taste, it's really hard to stop. I still feel the allure of wanting to tap into it, that's what has darkened my soul. I came back here to get some grounding to make my life easier so I could steer away from it, but it still haunts me."

"Well, you didn't hesitate to help me," I said. "So, your soul can't be that dark."

Zander smiled over at me, and instantly I could feel that pang of arousal. I could get lost in that smile.

"We should go," he said, picking up the bottles from everyone else and putting them back in the box. "They have a celebration here for the town to celebrate All Saints Day."

I helped him to pick everything up and we headed up to the car. My mind was still everywhere. Why would I have

started something with him when I knew he was rooted here?
This town was hell for me. I couldn't stay here.



“Are you sure?” Zander asked me as I stood in front of the house. I looked at my childhood home, the place I held so many memories of my father, memories of happier times. But it also held memories of the worst time of my life.

“I’m more than sure,” I told him. “Did you make sure her soul wasn’t still in the house?”

Zander nodded. “She’s moved on.”

Zander lit the end of the fuel line that he had poured out to where we stood. It would lead to the house where we had spent an hour filling with fuel. I watched as the fire ignited and led up to the house quickly. Zander held me back, toward the car, as I saw my house go up in flames. Tears ran down my eyes as my past was burning away. Jordan turned up and looked at the fiery mess that was the De Marco mansion.

“The mayor isn’t going to be happy about this,” he said, putting his hands on his hips. “Personally, I’m glad this place is gone.”

“Are you going to arrest me?”

“No,” he said. “As far as I’m concerned, you guys weren’t here. I drove by and saw it on fire. Now get out of here before I have to call the fire department.”

I kissed him on the cheek and got in Zander's car. We got out of there before the fire engines could be heard. Zander drove me to the town square, my bag in the back.

The rental car my mother had sent for me was waiting outside Zander's shop. I had so many things I could say right now but the reality was my life was in New York. I had wanted it that way, and I still wanted to return. I didn't want to come back here.

Even Zander couldn't be enough for me to stay.

He pulled my bag from the back seat and put it in the trunk of the car. I opened the driver door and started the engine, music offering a little mood for this goodbye. My heart was racing.

I wanted him to pull me into his arms and give me every reason to stay.

But that was asking a bit much, we only met a few days ago. Funny how it felt longer.

"So, this is it. You have no reason to come back to this town anymore."

I felt the pain in his voice. He was struggling with this as much as I was, "That's true. But you don't have to stay either."

He groaned, looking over at the doors of his shop before he looked back at me. "I think I do."

I got up on my tip toes and kissed him softly, not enough for him to want to take me on the back seat but enough to show him there could be something here if he wanted it. He wrapped his arms around my waist, and I felt my feet leave the ground. I gasped a little and looked down. We were hovering just above the ground.

“Just a little something to give you a reason to come back.”

I cleared my throat and got in the car, pushing the button for the window to move down. “If you ever change your mind about Black Hollow, I’ll be waiting for you in New York.”

He looked at me with that devilish smirk and I felt weak in the knees. Thank God, I was already sitting. A thrill shot up and down my legs, heading directly to crotch at what that smirk could do to me.

“I might just take you up on that offer one day.”

He pushed off the side of the car and I smiled at him one last time before I pulled out of the car space and headed toward the highway. I kept an eye on him as I left Black Hollow, he was becoming smaller and smaller the further I got away from him.

Somehow...I knew he’d find his way back to me. I was a patient woman. I’d be there, waiting for him to come and find me.

The End...or is it?

DID YOU LOVE LEGACY?

I had so much fun writing it, so much so, that even I don't know if Alyssa and Zander will make an appearance again. What do you think? Do you think he come to visit her? Or do you think she goes back to Black Hollow?

Not done with Halloween? I do have one other Halloween themed novella available called [Elemental](#) which is about a witch who goes home to New Orleans only for things to go terribly wrong.

ABOUT KATE



Kate grew up in Western Sydney, in Australia, and remains there today. She has always loved the written word, being influenced by the likes of Edgar Allan Poe, JR Ward and Anne Rice, she ventured into writing at a young age. You

Finally taking the plunge in 2016 and publishing for the first time. Ever since, she's been trying to bring the worlds she's created in her head to the page for everyone else to enjoy as much as she does.

When she's not writing, she's looking after her bevvvy of pets including snakes, lizards, axolotls, birds, a turtle and a dog with her husband Kyle.

Facebook Author Page: www.facebook.com/AuthorKateBonham

Instagram: www.instagram.com/kbonhamauthor

Tiktok: www.tiktok.com/@kbonhamauthor

Bookbub: www.bookbub.com/profile/kate-bonham

OTHER BOOKS BY KATE

Paranormal Titles

Fallen from Grace Series

Fate

Uprising

Destined

Craving Crimson Series

Revelations

Redemption

Sacrifice

Broken

Craving Crimson World

Forbidden

Blood & Amber Eyes

Blood Mated

A Touch of Magick

Brianne

Standalones

Stormblaze

Elemental

Becoming Santa

A Tale of the Pirate and His Siren

From the Depths

Contemporary Romance Titles

Rise Above

Change of Plans

When Love Takes Over

Dark Romance Titles

A Woman Scorned Series

Mine, Forever

Havoc

The O'Farrell Brothers

Conor

Killian

Standalones

Deny Thy Name

King