



Dear Reader,

I am very excited to share a taste of Soho Teen's Fall 2014 list. True to our dual mission of introducing fabulous new talent and nurturing acclaimed authors' careers (including some who are new to our stable), you'll find amazing debuts, first-time Soho Teen offerings, and sequels you've been waiting for.

The season launches with Elizabeth Kiem's follow-up to the hit *Dancer, Daughter, Traitor, Spy*, an August 2013 Amazon Best Book of the Month and Indies Introduce Winner. *Hide, Secret, Secret Keeper* picks up the Cold War mystery of Kiem's unforgettable heroine, Marina Dukovskaya, in the present day—from the point of view of her rebellious ballerina daughter, Lana. Poised for a break-out moment in America with the infamous Bolshoi, Lana must navigate an unlikely romance and avoid traps at every turn in order to defend her family's honor and learn the truth about her past.

Next comes Margaux Froy's *Hero Complex: A Keaton School Novel*, the sequel to the thrilling *Escape Theory*, which received a starred review from *Publishers Weekly*, as well as adulation from YA icons Cecily von Ziegesar and Sara Shepard.

Then, there's *Stone Cove Island* by debut author Suzanne Myers. Part YA Stephen King, part Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," this mystery delivers delicious twist upon twist with an ending impossible to see coming. After a catastrophic hurricane devastates a quaint summer resort community, a seventeen-year-old girl leads the recovery effort—and in the wreckage, she stumbles upon the apparent confession to a thirty-year-old unsolved murder. In the ensuing quest for the truth, she uncovers a centuries-old conspiracy that upends everything she believes about her hometown.

December 2014 is a fitting month for *Boundary*, the second installment of Heather Terrell's epic series *The Books of Eva*—set in a

frozen world on the verge of a new beginning. As Eva trains to become Archon, preparing to lead the New North with her newly betrothed Jasper, she struggles with a secret born of her forbidden time in the Boundary land: Lukas's belief that war is imminent and that Eva is ordained to lead the long-oppressed Boundary people to victory over her beloved Aerie. But when she uncovers the identity of her brother's murderer, she no longer knows whom can she trust or what she can call the truth.

Finally, in February comes debut author and songwriting icon Cynthia Weil's *I'm Glad I Did* is in part "YA *Mad Men* with murder, set in the legendary Brill Building." (In quotes because I've used that pitch verbatim to convey the novel's glamour and authenticity.) It is also a startlingly personal coming-of-age story inspired by Weil's own experience in the early 1960s as a songwriter-for-hire, one that spawned countless Grammys and such hits as "You Lost That Lovin' Feeling," "On Broadway," and "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

As always, we look forward to your feedback! If you'd like to see the full text for any of the titles in the sampler, please contact me at [dehrenhaft@sohopress.com](mailto:dehrenhaft@sohopress.com) or (212) 260-1900.

Enjoy!

Sincerely,  
Daniel Ehrenhaft  
Editorial Director

---

# Soho Teen Sampler

---

FALL 2014



Excerpt from *Hide, Seeker, Secret Keeper*  
Copyright © 2014 by Soho Press, Inc. and Elizabeth Kiem

Excerpt from *Hero Complex: A Keaton School Novel*  
Copyright © 2014 by Soho Press, Inc. and Margaux Froleay

Excerpt from *Stone Cove Island*  
Copyright © 2014 by Soho Press, Inc. and Suzanne Myers

Excerpt from *Boundary: The Books of Eva #2*  
Copyright © 2014 by Heather Terrell

Excerpt from *I'm Glad I Did*  
Copyright © 2015 by Soho Press, Inc. and Cynthia Weil

Published by  
Soho Press, Inc.  
853 Broadway  
New York, NY 10003

[www.sohopress.com](http://www.sohopress.com)  
[www.sohoteen.com](http://www.sohoteen.com)

## Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Excerpt from <i>Hide, Seeker, Secret Keeper</i><br>by Elizabeth Kiem          | 1   |
| 2. Excerpt from <i>Hero Complex: A Keaton School Novel</i><br>by Margaux Froleay | 29  |
| 3. Excerpt from <i>Stone Cove Island</i><br>by Suzanne Myers                     | 65  |
| 4. Excerpt from <i>Boundary: The Books of Eva #2</i><br>by Heather Terrell       | 97  |
| 5. Excerpt from <i>I'm Glad I Did</i><br>by Cynthia Weil                         | 127 |



---

# Hider, Seeker, Secret Keeper

---

Elizabeth Kiem

September 2014

LANA DUKOVSKAYA has never felt particularly close to her mother, who moved back to Moscow from Brighton Beach under mysterious circumstances before Lana was born—and who refuses to discuss her past, including the identity of Lana’s father. Yet, like her mother, Lana is an extraordinarily talented ballerina with the Bolshoi. A rebellious streak thwarts Lana’s dream of traveling with the Bolshoi to America, until her friend and chief rival, Danyella, is brutally attacked. Suddenly, Lana has the opportunity to leave Moscow and her mother behind and step into the spotlight . . . as a chief suspect.

Once in New York, Lana meets a mysterious old Russian named Gosha, who offers to protect her. When another Bolshoi dancer is attacked in Manhattan, Lana not only finds herself trusting Gosha, but falling for his young bodyguard, a Brighton Beach local named Lev. Soon she’s plunged into a deadly game of cat-and-mouse where strained loyalties force contact with the father she never knew. With

Lev's help, she saves herself and her estranged parents by exposing the truth behind a shadowy Russian elite and its blood feud with three generations of Duvoskaya dancers.

ELIZABETH KIEM studied Russian language and literature at Columbia University and lived in Russia immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Her nonfiction work can be read all over the World Wide Web. *Hider, Seeker, Secret Keeper*, the sequel to *Dancer, Daughter, Traitor, Spy*, is her second novel. She lives in New York.

Pub Date: September 2014

YA \* Hardcover

5.5 X 8.25 \* 288 Pages

ISBN: 978-1-61695-412-3

Rights: All

---

## Chapter One: Blood Diamond

---

THE NIGHT that Danyella almost died, I wanted to kill her myself.

That sounds terrible. Not because I wanted to kill my friend but because, you know, who cares what I wanted. She's the one who will never dance again.

I can actually hear her voice. Hear her scolding: *Lana, why's it always got to be about you? Can't you just see it for what it is? Do you have to make everything personal?*

Well, no. I guess I don't. I guess I could just hold the poor girl's hand at her hospital bed and meet these suspicious glances with big, dumb eyes. I could tell myself, *this has nothing to do with you, Lana.*

But I would be wrong.

Call me a narcissist if you like, but when my friend Danyella was nearly killed—and not by me—I knew I should take it personally.

We were just out larking, me and Stas.

I was supposed to be in repertoire class but to hell with that. A warm spring day; the streets tickled with pollen and the sky blown by clouds the size of small Siberian lakes. A glorious late May afternoon like that and you've got no business locking yourself in a windowless practice room. Not when you've put heart and soul into windowless practice for four months, broken a toe, and skipped almost all of the

Vesnaya Night music festival in order to rehearse more . . . only to be passed over.

*We're sending Danyella on the New York tour. She's the more reliable performer.*

No reason, after that, to nod graciously, splint that broken toe and head back into a studio full of abuse. Not when you're in Moscow and you're staying in Moscow, and the sun dapples the city like a celestial chandelier.

*To hell with the Bolshoi, I thought, I'm taking my show on the road.*

The city was empty, the traffic sucked from its center through the western drain of Rublevskoe Highway and oozing toward the *dachas* on steroids and the "rustic" shopping malls where the wealthy people summer behind electric gates.

We had lunched, loitered, and even sunbathed on the banks of the Patriarch's Pond and now Stas wanted to head that way too. Out Rublevskoe. A boxholder, one of those odious types who bring their own Chivas Regal to the performances and an entourage backstage during intermission, was throwing a party at his country estate and had invited Stas and half the theatre. I said I wouldn't be caught dead at a party like that. Anybody with enough money for season tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet is automatically disqualified from my list of respectable fans. Anybody who calls his dacha a "country estate" is a grade-A douchebag. This guy Strelets, in particular, was a perv, as well as a philistine.

I tried shaming Stas, reminding him how Strelets had once defaced one of *The Nutcracker* sets by painting testicles on the Grandfather Clock. I figured that, as a scene painter, Stas would be more outraged by that insult than the ones regularly endured by us ballerinas. But he just revved the engine of his bike and tried a new tactic.

"If I take the back way, through Dmitrovka, we can fly.

There won't be a car on those narrow roads. Six minutes and we'll be in the country. Down tree-lined runways. Asphalt liftoff. Top speed."

He saw me waver. I'm a speed demon.

"C'mon, Lana. It's Friday night. The river is full. The tiki torches are fuller." Stas handed me the spare helmet. "We don't have to stay long. Just long enough for you to charm Mr. Boxholder into weighing in on your behalf. All you have to do is feed him strawberries and sniffle sadly. Tomorrow he'll call the Theatre, indignant that you've been robbed of your place on the tour."

"How'd you know?" I asked.

"Could see it on your face. They made New York assignments yesterday right?"

I nodded. I thought about my face. What exactly did it show? I'm not a sullen girl. And my face doesn't know how to sniffle.

"Let's see your pout, my lovely ill-used muse."

"Cute," I said. "You're real cute."

I grabbed the helmet from him. Swung it around like it was my wrecking ball.

"Ok, listen. I will go and I will take a swim in his lapis-lined pool and I will drink two glasses of wine—one to Danyella's success and one to our corpulent host's imminent cardiac arrest. And then we leave. Got it?"

Stas curled his lip over a smile.

"And if that fat bugger gets close to me, you are to shout, 'There's not a man here who can shoot a bigger machine gun than me!'"

"How about 'There's not a man here who can piss farther than me!'" Stas suggested.

"No—better—'There's not a man here who can put more ballerina toes in his mouth than me!'"

“Got it,” said Stas. “That will certainly divert his attentions.” He looked down at my feet. “Good girl. Motorcycle boots. Good for joyrides and discouraging foot fetishes alike.”

Stas had been right. It was a grand ride. We crossed the river and crossed it again and scattered crows on the side of the road disoriented by the lengthening days. Once the city was behind us, it felt as if we were in another era. An era when Moscow stopped after three rings and didn’t impose itself further. I closed my eyes and wished that the road would not end, or that when it did, it would end at a lopsided wooden dacha with wide verandahs and hand-carved window sills and paint faded to the color of afternoon shade. At a place where wealth was measured in books. Or letters. Or teacups chipped with time. Or best . . . acres of woods and fields.

Instead, after about forty-five minutes of escapism and a final undulate stretch on which we caught air, Stas turned left and then right and then right again, and we joined the inching parade of weekenders on the Rublevskoe Highway. We hadn’t really left Moscow after all. Just made a ruckus down her underarm and got caught in her fist. We weaved between the sudden reality of gridlock, our reflections everywhere. There’s a lot of tinted window glass on the Rublevskoe Highway. There’s a lot of money on Rublevskoe Highway. We arrived at a hot mess of both ten minutes later.

The guard sprawled in front of the high metal gates stood when Stas pulled up. I could see him checking me out. In my jeans, boots, and helmet, I didn’t exactly exude ballerina. But Stas dropped the right name and the guard nodded. He opened the gates and let us pass, but I could feel him searching me for my supple, slender calling card. *Sorry champ*, I thought. *I left my wings and tiara backstage tonight.*

Roman Strelets, president of Krylatskoe Bank, trustee of the Bolshoi Ballet and member of the parliamentary committee on cultural investment, was walking his greyhounds down the driveway as we pulled in. He wore tight black jeans that looked terrifically uncomfortable and a silk shirt unbuttoned to his navel. He reminded me of whatever you call a squirmy slow thing coming out of its wrappings. A chrysalis maybe. A grub. With gold and cellulite markings.

I groaned. But Stas was already striding toward our host, hand outstretched. Strelets looked up, bored, at this lanky young artisan scattering his fine gravel. I saw him crane his neck, looking for the young company Stas might have brought. I quickly sidestepped into a grove of palm trees. Grateful, by god, for fake imported palm trees where once stood native alders, gooseberry bushes, and I suppose, an outhouse. I heard the crackle of a sound system on overdrive. Then the cackle of Julia Zemphira, the most coveted dance DJ in Moscow.

*“Rebyata—kakaya okhuitelnaya vecherka nas zhdet!”* Oh yes, Julia. A fucktastic evening indeed. I was already sick of this party. And it wasn’t even dark yet.

Look. I gave it my best shot. I drank the wine and I swam in the pool. I even accepted a warm white robe from one of Strelets’s associates who had scooped up my clothes the minute I stripped them off and refused to give them back unless I danced with him. “Sure I’ll dance with you,” I said, and then I pulled up the robe and turned thirty fouettés in a row around him while he tried to groove to Rihanna. (Okay, that was a little arrogant, I’ll grant you. Carla sneered at me. *Showy bitch*. But Regina applauded. And Regina is better billed than Carla, for the record.) Whatever—I got my clothes back and the guy moved on to more pleasant partners.

After an hour I was done. Done with the overly loud laughter, the bad dance music, the manic staccato *New York, New York, New York*, coming from all quarters like crickets.

I found Stas in the billiard room, holding his own with two tight-lipped oligarchs and a half-dozen drunk dancers who thought it terribly funny to snatch the billiard balls before they dropped in the pockets. He squeezed my shoulder. "As soon as this game's over, 'kay? I think I got these guys." I was about to point out that the game was not going to end as long the ball-snatcher brigade held court, when the mean crack of wood on skin cut through the giggles and the languid roll of a perfectly balanced bank shot.

Silence reigned as I took in the tableau: One of the men—an oil executive maybe or maybe that guy who owns all the foreign car dealerships—stood frozen, his face a rictus, his pool cue extended down the cool green gutter. My eyes followed the cue to its tip. To the splayed white hand trapped under it. Up the thin wrist and tapered arm to the soft shoulder topped by a face flickering with shock and pain. Tatiana Ribakova bit her lip and, after an endless moment, let out a small wounded protest.

"Touch my balls once more, my pigeon," hissed the man.

And then one of the ugliest threats I have ever heard out of the mouth of one of our Bolshoi patrons. And that's saying something.

Stas stepped in and handled it. Soon Tatiana had her hand in an ice bucket and the offended billiard player had an iced bottle in his. By the time we made our exit Tatiana was pleading for forgiveness: "Nu vas . . . please sweetheart, it was just in fun. Did you have money on it? Because you know I can make it up to you. You know I'm your balls' biggest fan."

So you see what I'm saying, here? I was sick to my stomach when we left. But it still wasn't over.

As we made our way back to the city, dusk trailing us like a cape, we saw them: Danyella and Vartukh. They were at one of those roadside strips where you can buy sushi, sauvignon blanc, and hothouse roses. Danyella had a bouquet in her arms and Vartukh had Danyella's waist in his. I thought I saw discomfort flash across my friend's face. A visceral reaction to bodies out of alignment. This, after all, was not rehearsal. This was Friday night on Rublevskoe Highway. This was the artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet in a very public display of close relations with a junior dancer who until one month ago was still a minor. Not that it was a first. Not for Pasha Vartukh. For Danyella, maybe. But not for Vartukh.

I tapped Stas on the shoulder and he nodded. He saw too. He knew what it meant that Danyella was going to New York and now was in Vartukh's arms. Once upon a time, Stas and Danyella were a thing, and even though that ended a while ago, he's probably a better friend to her than I am. That's just how it is. Stas is an ex; I am a rival. I mean, I thought we were more than that. I thought we were two-thirds of a tight triangle—Danyella, Nina, and I. Anyone will tell you we're the *boykaya troika*, the "sassy lassies" (which incidentally does not sound nearly as dumb in Russian). We are the closest friends you will find in the Theatre, I'd wager.

But the bottom line? No friendship at the Bolshoi outweighs aspiration.

I know that now. I knew it the moment I saw Danyella on Vartukh's arm. Saw her glance up at the sound of Stas's bike. Saw her toss her head in fake laughter and turn her back to the road.

With that, she broke my heart harder than she ever hurt Stas.

“Run them down?” he asked over his shoulder.

“With glee,” I said.

Stas lowered his visor, revved his engine, and we leaped toward the shallow roadside pull-off like it was dinner. We were ten meters from them when I panicked and gripped his forearm, just where a partner in a *pas de deux* would touch mine to signal a turn. But Stas had already adjusted, and with a squeal we swerved into a service road parallel to the highway and sped past the tarted-up sushi lounge. Stas stopped at the next traffic light, though it was only just yellow. We didn’t say a word. We didn’t say a word all the way into town, and Stas drove at a respectable speed.

Then I was home, lying on the couch watching a bad crime series on TV. I had purged my nausea and ignored my heartsick. But I felt this residue. These freaked-out goosebumps like a light sheen of mental sweat. Like I had had a close call.

Not that any of it had anything to do with me, mind you.

That was three nights ago. A million years ago. And now I am at Danyella’s bedside. Holding her hand. Wishing she could say it: *Lana, why’s it always got to be about you? You had nothing to do with this.* But Danyella’s not talking. Not yet. The motorcycle that ran her down outside that suhsi bar, (a Ducati, say the investigators) broke her back and ruined her face on the asphalt. The doctors say that she will recover. In time she might walk, they say. She won’t dance. Not ever.

My phone rings. It’s my mother.

She delivered the news that night, waking me from a deep sleep on the couch to tell me that Vartukh and Danyella were both in the hospital. At first, it didn’t register—the

part about “hit and run.” It sounded like some sort of new choreography I hadn’t learned, that’s how groggy I was from too-early sleep. But the more she talked, the more I prayed I was still asleep. In the middle of a bad dream.

“Imagine—a motorcyclist! There’s no way you can jump the curb on a motorcycle, hit two people, and not even know it,” she had said. “It must have been intentional. Imagine—someone deliberately ran them down. On a motorcycle.”

My mother has a gift for stating the obvious.

I have that gift too. But for me it has mostly been a curse. Like when I told a journalist that I thought most of the money for the Theatre’s billion dollar renovation went to the publicity campaigns about the Theatre’s billion dollar renovation. Or when I told my trainer, Anna Kirilovna, that she’s a sadist. Or when I told Vartukh himself that he’s a misogynist. Or when I announced to the entire cafeteria that if they put *Spartacus* on the spring schedule again I would organize a boycott against bare-chested ballets.

“*Pochemu s toboi vseгда skandaly?*” my mother asks. “Why must you always make a scene?”

I don’t have an answer. I can see pretty clearly where my big mouth has gotten me: third-tier status and a world of suspicion. But I can’t help it. It’s hard for me to bite my tongue. As some old dissident (or maybe it was Tolstoy) once declared: “*Ne mogu molchat’!*” Maybe it’s because my mother can. And does. *Molchat’*, that is: remain silent. Oh, the untold injustices that she has silently endured, Marina Dukovskaya. And I say untold because, well, she’s never told me about them. She states the obvious, sure. But she won’t say a word about the secrets. And she has many. My mother, Marina Dukovskaya, is a cipher. A riddle. A mystery she refuses to help me solve.

So what have I become? A spectacle.

Danyella used to say so, too: *It does you no good, Lana. These spectacles of yours. Save it for the stage.*

I step away from Danyella's bed and answer the call.

"Da, mama . . ."

"Lana. I went to the Theatre and spoke with Anastasia Volshebnikova."

"You what?"

"I had too. They know. You were on the highway, you were with Stas. You left the party on a motorcycle . . . I had to cover for you. I said you met me at eight thirty. We were at the Novodevichy Cemetery. It was All Saints' Day on Friday, Lana."

"Are you insane?" I ask. But it sounds like a statement. "Are. You. Insane. 'Cover for me?' That's what you said, ma, that you 'covered for me?' What's this, you suspect me too?"

"I didn't say that. I used the wrong word."

I can hear the defense lock elbows in my mother's voice.

"I meant that you need a better alibi. It looks bad."

"Of course it looks bad, ma. And everyone at Roman Strelets's place saw us. Looking bad. Leaving, as a matter of fact, around nine p.m. Not looking like we were on our way to an evening All Saints' Day service."

There's a long silence. Neither of us can think of something more obvious to say.

"Novodevichy?" I ask eventually. "We don't even have family in Novodevichy Cemetery."

"Everyone has family in Novodevichy," says my mother.

I lift a dusty slat in the plastic blind. From Danyella's hospital room, I can see the golden domes of the Novodevichy convent grounds. I repeat my mother's words silently but don't bother to ask. Who, among the tortured artists laid to rest under the crenellated whitewashed walls, does my mother consider family? Does she mean Galina Ulanova,

Joseph Stalin's pet ballerina? Or the cellist, Rostropovich? Is it the novelist who threw his unfinished masterpiece in the flames rather than die the author of an unfinished masterpiece? The poet who figured suicide was better than censorship?

I'm not surprised that my mother, a woman who once left Russia for America and buried her father there before returning to her homeland to dance, feels a kinship with the legends lying deep under carpets of pine needles. They are resting even deeper in the false nostalgia of Marina's generation. The Soviet Union's last youth—disenchanted, disassociated, and orphaned (literally, in my mother's case) by a swift current of change.

Still, it galls me that she could say something like that: "everyone has family," when I, in fact, don't. I have only Marina and her secrets.

"How is she? Danyella?" asks Marina.

"Still unconscious. She looks dreadful. They really messed her up, ma."

I turn and look again at Danyella's bruised face. Her eyes are slits of pain. There are lacerations down her neck and a terrible burn on her left cheek. I have a sudden, unbidden thought that I'm looking at a professional make-up job.

"But Vartukh is already discharged," I say. "Nothing but a dislocated shoulder."

My mother mumbles platitudes: *Thank God for that.*

I wonder. It seems unlikely that God had much to do with it. Danyella is maimed and Pasha Vartukh, artistic genius and serial womanizer, will wave at the paparazzi and go back to work. That doesn't strike me as divine will.

"Is there anything you aren't telling me, Lana? Anything that could explain . . ."

And that's when I know: That yes, there might be

something. Something I haven't told my mother that might explain why Danyella is lying in a hospital bed and why I feel as though it's not just about her. It might also be about me. And the reason I know this is because when she asks if there is something I'm not telling her, it doesn't even occur to me to lash out with a retort about the things she has not told me. Things that might explain . . .

Instead I tell Marina we should talk when I'm home. She understands this. She grew up in a world of paranoia. To this day, she distrusts the phone. I'm not a fan of it myself. For such a critical tool, it's strangely limited. Like an instrument you can only play one-handed. There's no body language option on a phone, even if you have the latest textually enhanced, visually optimized, vocally commanded device. I'm rarely at a loss for words . . . but still, I can't fully explain myself if I am not moving. So I hang up and resolve to go straight from the hospital to the Theatre. To explain.

I move back to the bed and lean over my friend's disfigured face. "Danyella, I'll be back tomorrow. I'll be back with Nina. So try to make yourself presentable, girl. *Devushka, derzhi's*. Hang on."

It's a long walk from the hospital to the Bolshoi, but the sun is out and it feels healing, antiseptic. Every step of the way I am replaying the events of seventy-two hours ago.

I think again of the pain I felt when Anastasia Volsheb-nikova delivered her verdict: *Danyella is the more reliable dancer*. And there was more—Nina had been chosen as the *corps* understudy. Our *troika* divided, and I was the odd girl out.

It hurts again. But not just because I was passed over. I know I am the better dancer; and also not the most reliable dancer. This is something else. I think it hurts because

(and now I stop dead in the middle of the sidewalk so that the woman behind me, an enormous specimen attired in a florid dress and various bundled accessories, runs smack into me and drops the first of her many errands) because I suspect that Danyella sold me out.

The woman who ran into me is sputtering abuse, so I bend down to help her collect the leaflets that have spilled from one of her half-dozen shopping bags. I apologize and turn to go on my way but she stops me and, recovering a shard of civility, thrusts a flyer in my hand. "*Devushka khudaya*," she entreats, "you are much too skinny. You need to consider the healthful benefits of organic, homeopathic supplements. Call the number. They are made of the finest herbs and natural chemicals."

I nod and carry on, fanning myself with the promise of natural chemicals.

Falsity on all fronts.

Here's the truth: as much as I want to be a soloist, a prima, an international star—I'm no longer sure that I want it from the Bolshoi. Because the Bolshoi, with its prestige and pedigree, its fat budget and fatter trustees, its gilded front, corrupt guts, moldering foundation and scalped tickets . . . the Bolshoi is as fake as "natural chemicals." I'm not alone in thinking it. Plenty of our best dancers have defected—to Covent Garden, to Berlin, to American Ballet Theater in New York. The corruption, the cynicism, the god-awful public—who wants to perform for a swinish crowd who only come to wear their Italian shoes and French silk and then leave at intermission for some other "event?"

Okay, maybe the junior dancers without contracts do.

I'm the only one of us who isn't afraid to state the obvious. But I know others agree. Danyella did. She said as much, but only to me. As often as she admonished my outbursts,

she still had my back. *Lana's gonna run this show one day*, she sometimes joked.

Look, I knew we were in direct competition—that is as natural a state for a ballerina as first position *en face*. But I thought that we were both flirting with another possibility: we could be partners. We could be pioneers. We could be the first to leave the Bolshoi for something better but not flat-out traitorous. We could join a new, independent dance troupe here in Moscow. A clean stage. With no money. And no baggage. No Vartukh. No *Spartacus*.

“We could dance to music from the twenty-first century!” Danyella used to giggle.

“Goodbye, limp dicks and hardened arteries!” I would cheer.

We even brought Ninochka in on it, dropping hints, feeling her out. And she surprised us both by saying she had already had a few exchanges with the director of Dolgoruk, a four-year-old company that got excellent reviews last year for its a capella ballet *Vox Pop*. We went together, the three of us, to a few other recitals—small theater affairs—and tried to convince ourselves that we didn’t need union representation or dressing rooms with heated floors. I thought, *Maybe this could happen*. Sort of. Because assignments for the New York tour were also happening.

I don’t mean to say I expected Danyella or Nina to turn down the opportunity to go to New York. Of course not. I certainly wouldn’t, in their position.

But there was something about the way she turned her back. The way the driver held the door outside the roadside sushi bar. The way I could feel all the way across the lanes of self-absorbed traffic a whisper campaign starring Danyella Mitrokin, with Pasha Vartukh as her confessor: *You do know, don’t you, that Lana Dukovskaya is arranging meetings*

*with Dolgoruk? I'm not even sure she could find time in her schedule to accompany the corps to New York.*

That's why I wanted to kill her. Because I took her about-face personally.

And it's what I had not told Marina. Because my mother would too. If I left the Bolshoi, she would take it personally. Because for Marina, the Bolshoi is a crown jewel.

For me, it's a blood diamond.

---

## Chapter Two: Danse Sacrale

---

It's hard to recognize the accomplished ballerina that Anastasia Dmitrivna once was. That is, it's hard to recognize the ballerina. The accomplishment is every bit as bright as her platinum hair, as outlined as her fuchsia lips and scapular brows, as enhanced as . . . well, everything in Anastasia's well-appointed office in the Bolshoi Theatre overlooking the very heart of Moscow.

She had me wait, as usual, outside in the corridor. I looked out over the fountain and the Kremlin walls beyond, and, not for the first time, imagined myself a surgeon surveying my patient, ready to perform a bypass. A single incision through the congested plain that once served as a pedestal for the city's most vaunted landmarks would reveal an underground mall. Not that it's a particularly bad one. I've been known to shop there myself. It's just interesting that you can find commercialism literally everywhere in this city. When just a generation ago, all that was considered criminal—capitalist rot, speculative parasitism, an attack on the working class, a cancer. I guess there was some truth to that communist propaganda, for consumer fever is malignant in this town.

"So. You have seen Danyella?" asks Anastasia once I am seated across from her. "Poor darling. What a tragedy. An absolute tragedy. And I can only hope and pray that such a personal, heartbreaking tragedy for our sweet Danya does not bring even more tragedy in tow. Your mother came to see me."

"Yes, Anastasia Dmitrievna, I wanted to explain that," I begin with formality. But she puts an expensively manicured halt to my testimony.

"Your mother is overexcited," she says. "Of course. All mothers would be and yours, *nu* . . . let's just say that I welcome her involvement. We have waited a long time."

There is something barbed here. My mother's ambivalence, her precipitous yet incomplete severance from the Bolshoi after three years as its prima ballerina—well, it is one of those things that is too troublesome to be a conversation. It is more like a specter, emerging from the wings at set times in the performance. A wrong entrance throws everyone off. My mother, I feel, has made a miscue.

I start again. "It was my choice to skip class on Friday. I was . . ."

But Anastasia runs over my attempts to explain.

"Lana, you are replacing Danyella on the New York tour."

I'm uncharacteristically speechless.

"*Lana, ochni's*. Wake up, Lana. This is real. Could I get an acknowledgement?"

"Anastasia Dmitrievna, thank you so much," I manage. "My mind just wasn't there. I mean I just came from the hospital and . . ."

I know I need to start at the beginning. Confirm each step that led to this unexpected turn of events.

"So, the tour has not been cancelled? Because of the . . . accident?"

With a single exhalation, Anastasia expresses surprise at

my ignorance, certainty in her answer, and confusion with my question. She vocalizes all these things, like a French philosopher, flapping her lips and blowing out her cheeks. An affected gesture. And not very attractive. She knows it and recovers.

*“Lana. Shto ty? Of course the tour goes on. Do you have any idea of the expenditure behind such an operation? The corporate sponsorship involved? The Metropolitan Opera House is booked for ten days. It’s a three-million-dollar commitment. This tragedy has no impact whatsoever on the Bolshoi’s international engagement. Pasha Vartukh, as you know, sustained minor injuries—nothing graver than a dancer should expect once or twice in a career.”*

I am looking at this woman, struggling to remember that she, too, was once a Bolshoi ballerina, retiring from the stage just a few years before Vartukh. A hard-working, professional performer who danced through injuries and gracefully acknowledged her thousands of fans. And now she is second in command to the Executive Director of the entire theatre, with the ballet as her responsibility. I watch her smooth her skirt and glance sideways at her reflection in the blackened computer monitor, and I marvel that even as the Theatre itself has been reduced to corporate funding and indifferent programming, so too have Bolshoi’s best dancers. I very nearly close my eyes, the better to consider this woman, the assistant to the director in charge of personnel and union relations, as the artist she once was, an idol of the stage, a vision under spotlights.

But it is impossible. This happens all the time. And when it does, I experience a moment of relief for my mother and a moment of panic for me. There but for the grace of God . . .

“Of course, Anastasia,” I say. “You are right, of course.

Vartukh has certainly overcome greater challenges. But Danyella . . .”

I stop, mostly because Anastasia’s eyes are so ice cold. It’s a non-starter. Danyella is immaterial.

“I thought Nina could easily replace Danyella in the *corps*,” I say, still thinking I’ve misunderstood.

She waits a beat for me to reach complete discomfort and then says: “For the bulk of the program, yes. Nina will replace Danyella in the *corps* for *Sylphide*, for example. But we have made some changes to the program. We’ve added a variation. A solo.”

Anastasia laces her fingers together and rests them on the desk. How do these gestures become so stereotypical? Did she have to practice them? Train her fingers to express management rather than grace?

“We will be doing three performances—two matinees and an evening—of a selection of interpretive excerpts. We had planned for Danyella to perform the *Danse Sacrale* from *The Rite of Spring*.”

I consider this. The *Danse Sacrale* is four minutes long. It is not technically challenging. But it is among the most avant garde of the classic ballets. It doesn’t cause a riot among the audience like it did when it was first performed a century ago, and compared with modern choreography it’s pretty tame stuff. But it is one of the more esoteric works in the canon. Why would they give it to a junior? Why would they give it to me?

“A brilliant concept, I think,” continues Anastasia. “I have been encouraging Pasha for sometime now. I have long thought that it’s absurd to see a veteran soloist dance the *Sacrale*. After all, it’s meant to be the Chosen One dancing for her elders, is it not? And we know perfectly well that in pagan rituals, the Chosen One would have been a virgin.”

There is so much wrong with this I don't know where to start.

"In the archaic sense of the word, of course," says Anastasia with a laugh that is almost merry. "We know you are a modern girl, Lana. But we want your youth. Your . . . untested quality. In truth, we want your spark. Even—and I never thought I would say it—your tattoo!"

Again, the conspiratorial chuckle. I can't help but rub the miniature spotlight inside the crook of my arm. Such a tiny precision of ink that most people mistake it for a birthmark. The first tattoo to ever make it through the Bolshoi. The smallest tattoo to ever make it out of my friend Vlad's parlor.

But I'm unnerved. The *Danse Sacrale* is legend, yes. It's a wonderful opportunity. But the Chosen One? The one selected to dance for her elders? She's meant to dance to her death. It is not merely a sacred dance. It is a sacrificial dance. And this has not escaped me—that Danyella was chosen for a sacrificial dance. That I am the next chosen one.

"We feel it is too much for Nina. We want you to dance it."

There is no time for me to brood on this. There is piano music rising from the floor below. A breeze blows through the window. Spring. Call me a pagan, but I'm suddenly utterly tuned in to the mystical sensation that there is rebirth and there is ritual, and as long as piano music floats freely through the Bolshoi Theatre, they can both have a home here.

"Nu, *devushka*, this is your cue to accept graciously and go find a rehearsal room," says Anastasia. "Or have I miscalculated you?"

I am about to answer but Anastasia is leaning forward now. Her fingers unlaced. Her blouse is open against her cleavage and I see a flush of red against her breastbone.

I hear the rash spread to her voice. “Your mother will be heartbroken if you miss this opportunity, Lana. If I tell her that I don’t for a minute believe that you were in Novodevichy Cemetery last Friday evening.”

My choice is made. I am going to New York as the Chosen One. Which means it’s not really my choice after all, is it?

Ten days is not much time to learn the *Danse Sacrale*. Even if it is a repetitive piece. All rhythm and energy. The dance of a girl desperate to please. Anastasia had said I could tap Larisa Odelnikova as a trainer, but I’ve seen her rendition of desperate. I don’t do that sort of desperate. I have already decided that my Chosen One will dance to her death because there’s nothing worth living for once she’s done dancing.

On the stairs to the dressing room I glance over the railing and see familiar freckled shoulders crowned with an auburn bun—Nina.

I hesitate. I haven’t spoken with her since yesterday, when she just blubbered the entire time about Danyella and Pasha. *Pasha?* I had thought. *Now “Vartukh the fartukh,” was “Pasha?”* *How quickly we warm to the jackasses when they take a fall.*

I call down to her. She lifts her cupid face. I see relief register and she runs quickly up one flight to hug me.

“I know I should have gone but I just couldn’t get the nerve,” she says. “How is she? Is she better? Does she look awful? I sent flowers—did you see the flowers? I know I should have gone but . . .”

“Nina, we’ll go tomorrow,” I say. “She’ll be better tomorrow.”

Nina nods. She hugs her elbows. We never had a chance to talk about the tour and I can see that she wants to now. I’m glad that she won’t have to feel guilty any more, about me being left out. I want her not to worry about that, so I beat her to the punch.

"Ninotchka. We're going to New York. We're going to dance for Danyella, okay? That's what we'll do."

I misguessed. Nina is confused. "I thought that . . ."

"I just came from Anastasia's office. It turns out that they are adding a variation. One that Danya was to perform. It's for a junior." Nina's mouth opens, just slightly. Like she might be nauseated. Like she needs more air.

"You will dance all of *Sylphide*," I say quickly. "But I'm going, too. It's only three performances, but I'll be there too. You won't go alone."

"What variation?" she asks quietly.

"*Danse Sacrale*."

"*The Rite of Spring*?"

I nod. Nina nods. She lifts her chin, closes her mouth with a snap.

*Oh please, Nina, be my ally. Be my partner.*

"I've never danced it, Ninotchka. I don't even know it."

I see many emotions cross her pretty face. None of them are ugly—but I can see the traces of a suspicion that she doesn't even feel yet. Is it my imagination? Or is this shadow of doubt on every face I see? Even my mother's.

Nina reaches out and grasps my hand. "You'll be amazing," she says. "Call me tomorrow and we can meet to go to the hospital." She's halfway down the steps when she stops and looks back up at me.

"Congratulations."

I need to tell Marina. I pull out my phone. It says I've missed a call from Stas. He left a text. *Call me*. I do.

"So they brought me in. And I told them what we agreed. We didn't see them on the highway. We were home in Moscow by nine thirty."

"Stas, I'll tell them whatever you tell me to. I'll back

everything you say—but I don't think anyone really cares. I mean. I don't know. I came in expecting to have to defend myself, but instead . . ."

"Instead what?"

"Well, I mean my mother apparently came in on a pre-emptive strike and now . . ."

"Now, what?" I hear his impatience. Stas is worried. Stas feels guilty.

"She's still unconscious, by the way," I say. "Danyella. We're going to see her tomorrow, me and Nina."

"Okay, sure," he says. "But you need to watch your back too, Lana. I have a bad feeling. Like it's, I don't know, a setup. It's just such a weird coincidence."

He's silent.

"I'm thinking of selling my bike," he says a minute later.

"That's absurd."

"Maybe."

"Plus it would look bad."

"I guess."

"Listen, I have to go. This is going to sound really weird, but I just found out that I'm going to New York."

More silence.

"Stas, did you hear me."

"Yeah. That's just . . . a strange coincidence."

He doesn't say what we're both thinking: *and it looks bad*.

"Are you coming in today?" I ask.

"No. The tech head told me I could take the day off."

*And that looks bad too.*

"I'll see you tomorrow." Stas hangs up. It feels like he's hung up on me. It feels, impossibly, like Stas suspects me as well.

It's not even ten when I get home, but Marina is already in bed.

I tiptoe into her room to turn off the light she's left

burning. Her book is pinioned on the opposite pillow, her reading glasses perched on its spine. I've seen this pose many times. My fingers are on the switch when she stirs.

"You're home."

"Uh-huh."

"*Danse Sacrale*, huh?"

"*Da. Chudovishno. A monster.*"

"I never danced it."

"Should I turn this off?" I ask.

"No."

My mother sits up, rubs her eyes, props a pillow behind her back.

"I'm not pleased," she says.

I sigh and run my fingers through my hair. It's about three inches long. Running my fingers through it is like scratching an emotional itch. "You never are, ma."

"Lana, it's a great honor. To be chosen for a solo. But why not here? On your home stage? Why do you have to go all the way to New York for your debut? I just . . . I wish I could go with you."

"That's sweet. But it's not happening."

Her jaw tenses. Her brow knits. I bend my head and she runs her fingers through my hair. It has the same effect on both of us. Which, I realize, not many things do. I'm feeling gracious. I am going to solo on the Metropolitan stage in New York City, I can afford to bite my tongue. By which I mean, I really should bite my tongue. I should humor my mother. I should make this our triumph. Not mine.

"I have a right to intercede, you know. I'm still your mother. And I still have more experience with those people than you do."

"Okay, ma. But making up stupid stories about All Saints' Day—that's not the way."

"I've kept my distance. I know that it's your turn. But Lana, I have too many scars to not feel phantom pain."

More cryptic talk. I wait, not moving. I will her to tell me what, exactly, she is talking about. I give her five seconds and then conclude what I always conclude. My mother is an overly dramatic, damaged former ballerina. And she can't figure out if I will heal her or hurt her.

"Anastasia said your participation was 'welcome,'" I say, wondering if that was the word she used.

My mother's fingers stop.

"Anastasia is a manipulative shrew."

"Of course she is, ma. She's practically second in command."

Marina leans over and flips on the radio.

*I understand he's the youngest director to have held the position, which of course was a question of some debate when he was first appointed. But the last two seasons have been, I would say overall, successes—at least in terms of the box office if not uniformly well-received by the critics.*

We've landed in the middle of the skewer-the-Bolshoi hour on government radio. So much for my good mood.

*Indeed, yes Vartukh is a controversial director. There are those who applaud some of his innovations—they see that there could be more attempts to modernize the Theatre in respects not always seen from the audience perspective but naturally, it being the Bolshoi there are just so many time-honored and traditional practices, not to mention persons of political power and influence . . . it's an interesting comparison to consider the legacy, for example, of Arkady Danilov, who ran the Bolshoi Ballet for thirty years from—*

Marina moves quickly. The voices are silenced. I hear the radiator reconsider whether it's really spring yet. She turns her back to me and pulls the blanket close.

"Turn the light off please. I'm tired."

I do. In the dark I feel her reach out. I put my hand in hers. I know I should bite my tongue. But I don't.

"What did that man do to you, ma?" I ask.

"Arkady Grigorevich Danilov ruined many people I loved," she says quietly.

But I think that the truth is that Arkady Grigorevich Danilov, Vartukh's predecessor, ruined my mother.



---

# Hero Complex: A Keaton School Novel

---

Margaux Froleay

October 2014

IT'S ONLY been a few weeks since Devon Mackintosh exposed the apparent suicide of Keaton golden boy "Hutch" for what it really was: murder at the hands of his older brother, Eric. On New Year's Eve, Devon just wants to forget about the trauma and party with her friend Cleo on Cleo's father's corporate yacht. But when a mysterious figure attempts to throw Devon overboard, Devon is convinced that the Hutch nightmare isn't over. When she returns to The Keaton School for her second semester, the school assigns her to their new counselor, Dr. Hanson. In these sessions, Dr. Hanson tries to get Devon to believe she is simply an unfortunate victim of a random attack, a run-in with a burglar who snuck onboard. But Devon refuses to believe it, as does Cleo—and their other friends, Raven and Bodhi, who helped her uncover the truth about Hutch.

Meanwhile, Hutch's grandfather, Reed Hutchins is dying of cancer. Devon knows that he is holding onto a family secret, something about the very land on which Keaton was

built—something Eric alluded to before he was arrested. Devon swipes his diary, and through these entries, we are plunged into Reed's life as an eighteen-year-old science prodigy in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor. Along with close friends Francis Keaton and Edward Dover, Reed is recruited for top-secret work to create a biological weapon to use against possible invading Japanese forces. When the Japanese internment camps start up in California, Reed watches helplessly as Francis Keaton's beloved Japanese-American wife, Hana, is taken away from him. When Hana dies in an internment camp, pregnant and without her husband, Keaton becomes a broken man, more focused on his work than ever before. To honor his friendship with Keaton, Reed Hutchins buys the surrounding land and promises to protect it. And after a mysterious falling-out with both Reed and Francis, Edward Dover buys a nearby plot. Dover (the grandfather of pregnant Maya Dover) goes on to start a lucrative business developing pharmaceuticals, even if his morals are questionable.

Now it's up to Devon to decode Reed's diaries. Ultimately Devon will uncover a bunker hidden in the Keaton School hillside containing Francis Keaton's ultimate secret. The land below Keaton is filled with rare earth, a highly valuable metallic element that the present day Dover Pharmaceutical Industries would do anything to get ahold of . . . even kill for.

MARGAUX FROLEY grew up in Santa Barbara, California, and attended not one, but two boarding schools during her high school years in California and Oxford, England. She studied film at the University of Southern California, and has worked for such television networks as: TLC, CMT,

Travel, MTV, and the CW. She currently lives in Los Angeles and still loves Nutter Butters. *Escape Theory* was her first novel.

Pub Date: October 2014

YA \* Hardcover

5.5 X 8.25 \* 256 Pages

ISBN: 978-1-61695-320-1

Rights: All



---

## Prologue

---

*December 31, 2012*

*San Francisco Bay*

The limo had seemed excessive. That was before Devon boarded the 250-foot mega yacht, handed her overnight bag to her personal butler, slipped on a hand-beaded Marchesa gown, and requested a song from the children's choir singing the Rolling Stones catalogue. "Moonlight Mile"; it seemed an appropriate song for the moonlit waters of the San Francisco Bay on New Year's Eve.

Cleo called the yacht party "Dad's New Year's Spectacular." He called it just another opportunity to woo investors. For Devon it might as well have been a trip to the moon.

After everything that had happened on the Keaton hillside, Devon needed an escape. With twelve bedrooms for guests, and enough bunks for twenty crewmembers, the mega yacht was a study in Cleo's world, full of secret compartments and hidden rooms. Already Devon had accidentally turned on a television (the screen took up the entire wall of her bedroom) and found a room full of scuba gear just by trying to turn on a light in the bathroom. Everything onboard, from the cup holders to the infinity swimming pool, had the ability to be tucked away, strapped down, and folded up. If only experiences could be compartmentalized as neatly.

Outside on the second-level deck, Devon could watch

the choir singing on the smaller deck above. Their conductor—probably an elementary school teacher in his regular life—had donned a black tux, but he wore scuffed, black Converse. A nice reminder that most people weren't dining on five-hundred-dollar white truffle risotto balls at home. On the other hand, five-hundred-dollar white truffle risotto balls tasted fucking amazing. Tonight wasn't about the constant class war Devon fought to ignore at Keaton. Tonight, she was happy to forget. Yes, these people tipped their gardeners more than her mom made all year. But for right now she was one of them, part of the 1 percent. She would gladly play her Cinderella role at the ball knowing pumpkin time was inevitable.

There was a sharp elbow at her side.

"They are pouring Dom like it's Jay-Z's birthday," Cleo said, juggling three bubbling flutes.

"Took you long enough." Devon grinned, relieving Cleo of one of the glasses.

"Hey, manage the 'tude. I had to squeeze this dress past all of these bloated idiots, flirt with the bartender, avoid my dad, and make it back up to this deck with full glasses. Now, a toast to an awesome 2013 full of bigger, better, and brighter. *A la votre*." She clinked glasses with Devon. "And to maybe a little less drama this year too, *c'est ne pas*." Cleo clinked glasses again.

"Cheers." Devon smiled in agreement. "Less drama would be nice."

Both of them glanced at the puncture mark still healing on Devon's wrist. The thin sleeves on her dress couldn't fully hide the red scar that might not ever fade.

"But this is exactly what the doctor ordered, right?" Cleo said as if speaking louder would keep their heads from going *there*: the night Devon was working hard to forget.

*There*, the realization that they had drawn out a murderer. *There*, the memory that Eric Hutchins killed his own younger brother, Hutch. *There*, Devon finally accepting the loss of her first love; the guy that all future guys would be compared against. *There*.

Knowing Eric was behind Hutch's death didn't bring Devon the satisfaction she had hoped for. Whatever answers Hutch was looking for, they were beyond Devon's reach. All she could do now was let go. Let it all go.

Cleo flicked a nail against Devon's glass. "Got somewhere else to be?"

Devon fought to stay present. But the storm cloud of thoughts kept swirling, building pressure in her head, as they always did. Eric Hutchins had murdered his only brother, universally loved, to protect his share of the land on the Keaton hill. And Reed Hutchins had warned Devon of an impending battle between the Hutchins and Dover families. But why? Eric Hutchins and Maya Dover had been hiding their relationship—naturally, because of Maya's pregnancy.

When Devon confronted Maya about what she knew, their age (hers still under eighteen) seemed to be the least of her worries. The battle between their two families loomed largest. Devon still didn't understand how that was possible. If *she* were pregnant, the last thing she'd care about was her family history. Then again, she didn't come from a family like Maya's. (Or Cleo's for that matter.) Devon felt like she had blinders over her eyes so she could only see the small bits of information in front of her. There was so much more on the periphery. Every time she turned her head to get a better look, what she needed to see remained just out of her vision. Whatever it was, whatever this elusive thing that had divided two families, pitted brother against brother, whatever it was . . . Hutch had died for it.

"This is great. Really," Devon forced herself to respond. "Although, I'm going to start thinking that all champagne is supposed to taste like this." Devon took a big sip, resisting the dry tickle of bubbles behind her nose.

"Doesn't it?" Cleo laughed. "Okay, so what's the game plan? The bartender on the lower deck is totally cute and we had a little eye-contact moment. But, did you see that cater waiter in the entertainment room?"

Devon tried to frown, but kept smiling. "Was that the room with the spiral staircase?"

"No, try to keep up. The entertainment room had the pinball machine and eight-foot flat screen."

"Right, how could I forget?"

"No seriously, the waiter walking around with the tuna tartar. Dimples. I'm a total sucker for a guy with dimples. And tartar."

"Say 'tartar' one more time," Devon said.

"Tartar, why?" Cleo shrugged.

"I just wanted you to hear yourself." Devon broke into a fit of giggles.

"You're avoiding the subject. We've got to find someone to kiss at midnight or else our year will be boy-less. It's a New Year's rule."

"I thought you already had a boy." More than ever, Devon envied Cleo's lightness, her ability to float between people and places without getting stuck or bogged down in anyone else's sticky issues.

"Bodhi?" Cleo took a long swig of her champagne. "Yeah, he's been fun, but he's not here, is he? And we need to appease the gods of New Year's Eve. Must kiss a boy at midnight or be forever cursed. Drink up."

Devon couldn't help but look around, just in case. "Are you sure your dad is cool with this?"

“Ha! You think my dad has time to stop and care about us having a glass or two—”

“—or three.”

“—or three on New Year’s Eve? He’s making all his deals for next year tonight.”

Cleo downed her champagne and split the remaining third glass into their flutes. Devon exhaled at the refill. “I’m getting a little light-headed.”

She tried to hand her glass back to Cleo.

“That’s the point,” Cleo said, pushing the glass back. “What good is peer pressure if it doesn’t work? Finish up. Then, let’s find you a waiter to kiss at midnight. I got dibs on Dimples.” Cleo gave Devon a quick wink, grabbed a handful of her black billowing gown, and led Devon below deck.

The party was deafening downstairs. A DJ danced in front of his computer and hidden speakers pumped jazzy techno (*was that even a real genre?*) into the dense room. Devon took in the herd of grey-haired men in black tuxes, clinking ice cubes and golden liquor. The women were all clones too: sculpted hairstyles and jewel-colored dresses, always laughing at the right times, an eye on their men for the correct social cues.

Cleo turned away from the party, pulling Devon toward a mirrored hallway behind the staircase. “I think the waiters are using the deck off the navigation room as a smoking lounge,” she said, letting go of Devon and sauntering ahead. “And if they’re taking a break, then they’ve got time to chat with us.”

Devon caught a glimpse of herself. It was impossible not to. She now realized what the wind had been doing to her hair. *That’s what I get for trying to copy an updo from YouTube.*

“Be right there,” she called.

She attempted to tuck the flyaways back into the knot on

the top of her head. The party chatter from outside was getting louder, and Devon could hear loud splashes of water. But the splashes sounded like they were coming from inside the boat. How was that possible? Devon gave up on her hair and continued along the hallway. She hit a dead end at a double door.

Where had Cleo disappeared? The mirrors echoed Devon's reflection into infinity. She ran her hands across the glass, certain that she'd find Cleo's fingerprints ending at a door handle. Maybe she had to walk through these doors?

Devon tiptoed into a bedroom suite that seemed to be designed exclusively for architectural magazines, rock stars, and movie drug lords. A creamy-white bedspread and perfectly pressed pillows. White lacquer walls lined drawers and cubbies. A leather bench beside a stocked wet bar. The ceiling made entirely of glass . . .

With a laugh, Devon realized she was looking up at the bottom of the swimming pool on the deck above. Bare legs kicked and rippled through the water. Waves of purple and red light danced across the bedspread, blasted from the outdoor lighting above. A silver plastic *Happy New Year!* kazoo drifted to the bottom of the pool and rested next to a broken tiara simply stating *Happy New Y.*

Another splash and another girl went into the water. Her red dress fanned out around her like a life-size lily pad. A silver sequined heel clunked down against the bottom of the pool in slow motion, landing with a muffled thud. Devon reached up and could almost touch the glass above. It was like being inside a snow globe, except this snow globe was filled with leather banquettes and a revolving liquor cabinet.

"Pretty insane, right?"

A waiter in a white jacket stood at the entrance to the

room, an empty tray hanging by his side. Devon dropped her hands, feeling like she'd been caught doing something wrong. But no, she was the guest here.

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, once you've seen one glass-bot-tomed pool on a yacht, you've seen them all, right?" The waiter laughed a little, revealing a perfect dimple on each cheek. *Cleo's waiter*: But where was Cleo?

"You don't know where the navigation room is, do you? I got a little lost down here. I'm Devon, by the way." She reached across the room to shake his hand. Best to be formal.

"Eli," he said with a puzzled smile, giving her hand a short shake. "You mean, this room?" He pressed a panel in the white lacquer wall next to Devon and it popped open. "I gotta get back to the bar, but Happy New Year, Devon."

He gave Devon one last glance at those dimples before disappearing back into the hallway. *Typical Cleo*, Devon thought. *Of course there was a secret door and she didn't tell me. Probably watching from some hidden camera while I figure it out.*

Devon pulled open the lacquer panel. Screens glowed in the small dark room: black and white footage of various parts of the yacht. Another screen, all in blue, displayed graphs charting the yacht's trip, knots traveled or something water-related. Devon didn't speak "*yacht*." On a shelf at her eye-level was an antique spyglass. Copper with hints of green, fighting the oxidation from the salty sea air. In her imagination yachting still involved things like spyglasses and rum and wooden legs. Okay, maybe she was just thinking of pirates now. She looked again at the screens, a blinking dot slowly moving in the Bay. She shook her head; staring at the screens was making her vision blurry or was it the champagne? She felt a chill from the outside air. There, across the room was another door and probably Cleo sitting on a balcony. Devon steadied herself against the wall

of monitors. She wished Cleo had warned her that wearing heels while yachting was a bad idea. *Is yachting a real verb?*

“Were you trying to lose me?” She said as she opened the balcony door.

But she was talking to empty sea air. No Cleo. No smokers lounge for the waiters. The party continued to roar on the other side of the boat and the wind whipped past her ears. Before she could turn around Devon felt a hard crack against the back of her skull.

The pain so deep, yet distant. It consumed her, but she couldn’t feel it yet.

As a tremor vibrated through her body, the moon went fuzzy and everything sounded thick, an underwater dream in Devon’s personal snow globe. A flicker of the green metal spyglass flew past her, overboard, and landed in the water. The splash was absorbed by the moving boat. Shoes squeaked on the deck behind her. White, rubber. White sleeves opening a door. Someone had hit her and had left. The metal railing was coming toward her. Fast.

*Put a hand out, catch yourself!*, she commanded her body. But her hands weren’t responding. And when her cheek connected with the railing the pain was immediate. A flash of light, the image of the *Happy New Y* tiara. *Happy Newy, indeed.* Just before everything went dark, Devon could have sworn she heard the end of her Rolling Stones song, “I’m just about a moonlight mile on down the road.”

---

## CHAPTER 1

---

*Tuesday, January 8th, 2013*

“But I still don’t understand why Mr. Robins isn’t here?”

Devon ran her hand across the blue suede couch cushion. Next to her, stacks of books leaned against the wall in mini towers. One push and they would all fall. Her cheek burned at the thought of falling. The bump under her right eye had gone down, but the bruise was still a deep purple. And the large lump under her hair on the back of her head still ached if she pressed it hard enough.

Across the small office, Dr. Hsu tucked her legs under herself in the large leather chair. She pulled a knitted throw blanket across her lap and took a sip of her tea. "Well, I can explain it again if you want. But there isn't much more information I can give you. Headmaster Wyler, among a few other concerned advisors, including Mr. Robins, thought he could use some additional support around here."

Devon nodded. "Go on."

"Well, given that you and Mr. Robins were working somewhat closely together last semester, it seemed appropriate that you work with someone who might bring a fresh perspective to things. So that's where I come in." Dr. Hsu smiled warmly.

For someone who seemed to enjoy cozy blankets, thick wool socks, and flowing blouses, her hair was surprisingly sharp and stylish. She probably had it done in San Francisco as opposed to the hippy salons in Santa Cruz, Devon thought. That was definitely not a ten dollar Monte Vista barbershop visit.

"Do you think you'll be okay with that?" Dr. Hsu smiled again, but Devon could see her pressing her lips together, waiting for an answer.

Devon had been noticing that smile a lot lately. From her mom, holding her hand at the hospital asking her explain the yacht attack yet again. From Presley, urging her to tell her anything she wanted. Everyone wanted Devon to talk

about it over and over again. From the police and doctors, too—all with their understanding smiles. In the short week since her attack Devon had told the story more times than she could remember.

Thankfully Cleo had stepped in and soaked up most of the attention in her role as Devon's Knight in Shining Armor. Cleo had found Devon unconscious on the deck that night: the one place on the yacht without security cameras. Naturally: there would be no proof of Devon's claim that someone had clubbed her from behind. There seemed to be a quiet understanding between Cleo's father and Devon's mom that Devon had snuck a few glasses of champagne, gotten tipsy and fallen down. Devon's insistence that she didn't "eat rail," as Presley was calling it, just brought on more tight smiles. The police had real cases to solve, and Cleo's father didn't want any publicity about an underage girl getting drunk at his company's yacht party.

But Cleo had never given Devon an understanding smile. She knew there was nothing to be patient about, nothing to politely endure while the story unfolded. No, what had happened was somehow personal and deliberate. Cleo understood that this wasn't a random accident. Devon also suspected—though Cleo never admitted as much—that Cleo might have even felt responsible. She'd let Devon out of her sight. She'd traipsed ahead, happy and drunk, not knowing. Besides, the attack had shaken the politeness out of Devon, something Cleo got intuitively. Life was too short to follow rules anymore. She needed to get answers and wasn't worried about stepping on anyone's toes along the way.

"You don't have to pretend that I have a choice in this," Devon said.

Dr. Hsu's smile didn't falter, but she tilted her head to the side.

“Oh, of course you have a choice whether you want to see me or not. Except, you’re smart. You also know that your choice comes with conditions. Keaton can’t reinstate the Peer Counseling program until I’ve given my vote of approval.”

“What else is new? I play ball with you guys or I can kiss my Stanford rec letter goodbye.”

Dr. Hsu’s shrugged but kept smiling. Professional yet understanding, Devon thought. The recipe for a good counselor.

“Who says I even want to be a peer counselor again?” Devon asked.

“I don’t know. No one. You, maybe. It’s your choice.”

“Choices again, nice.” Devon let out a short laugh.

Dr. Hsu sipped from her tea. Waiting. Devon knew the waiting game. Let the subject talk about what they want; it’s more revealing. Dr. Hsu’s haircut was too expensive for someone who didn’t take this job seriously. Hell, she’d earned a Ph.D. in psychotherapy; she probably wouldn’t cave until Devon said something first.

“You want me to talk about the attack, huh?”

“If you want.” More silence. Another sip of tea.

“I didn’t see him. I didn’t notice anything weird earlier in the night. I’ve been through all of that. Someone pushed me. There’s nothing else to tell.”

“There’s still you, your experience of the night. Plus, we know that you were drinking at the time, so maybe your experience is, let’s say, *heightened*.”

Devon blinked. “Heightened? You ever been attacked? It happens so fast and yet time slows down too. It’s hard to explain. One minute I can’t find Cleo, another I’m on some secret deck and someone hits me, hard. I could have gone overboard. It would have been so easy. Girl gets drunk, falls

over side of boat at night. No noise, no light. I wouldn't be here. I'm sure that was their plan. Someone didn't want me to be here."

"And by 'someone,' you mean your *attacker*?"

Devon shook her head and laughed. "I see what you did there. You say *attacker* like it's in quotes. Like that part is still up for debate. My *presumed attacker*."

Dr. Hsu leaned forward, gripping her mug with both hands. "Well, let's discuss the facts. Cleo found you, called nine-one-one. The yacht immediately came back to shore. What happened then?"

"Look, I know it sounds far-fetched." Devon maintained eye contact with Dr. Hsu. It was important that she not present like she was lying or uncomfortable with the truth.

"Devon, the police met the boat at the dock. Everyone was cleared. So, either the attacker was a guest at the party, or what? He jumped overboard in the middle of the night in the Bay? Yes, I'll be the one to say it. What you're proposing does sound far-fetched. That's why people are worried about you. Do you want to talk about how much you had to drink that night?"

"That's not the issue here." Devon fought to keep her voice even. "What happened wasn't random. I know there's more to this; I just don't know what yet. The last time I felt like this . . ." She didn't finish the thought. It would make her sound paranoid, she knew.

"Yes, tell me about last time." Dr. Hsu leaned back, adjusted the blanket over her lap, and took another sip of tea.

Devon paused. Dr. Hsu had been warned about Devon, clearly. But how? Was the school pitching Devon as some sort of a paranoid rogue they needed to tame? She had been right about Hutch despite everything Robins had

said about her theories. Yet still somehow it felt like she was being painted as the delusional one here.

"You think I'm imagining things? Like someone is out to get me?"

"No, not at all," Dr. Hsu quickly replied. "If someone was out to get you, this is a very real post-traumatic stress reaction. I'm just trying to understand why you feel that one person is part of something larger."

Devon lowered her eyes. "Last time, when Hutch died, no one believed me. This feels the same, like there's more than just this one incident. I don't know how I know, I just do. There's more to it."

Dr. Hsu nodded. "But this isn't last time."

"I didn't say it was. It's *like* last time." Devon pushed her shoulders back and sat up straighter. Dr. Hsu was not going to twist her words around.

"Okay. Tell me more about Hutch. About your relationship to him."

"I'm sure Headmaster Wyler told you everything you need to know about Hutch and what happened. It's been in all the papers."

"Yes, but I want to hear it from you."

Devon bit at her thumb nail. It was pointless to attempt to convince Dr. Hsu of anything. Apparently the brass at Keaton had a specific idea of what Devon's issues were. Fine, if she couldn't change their minds, she might as well use their pre-conceived notions to her advantage. While their version of Paranoid Devon spun in circles, Real Devon could focus on finding her attacker. Raven and Bodhi were already hacking into the records of the yacht catering company. But that wasn't appropriate conversation for therapy, was it?

For the first time, she smiled at Dr. Hsu.

*Game on.*

## Chapter 2

---

Devon found herself part of the sparse early-bird crowd at the dining hall on Saturday morning. She had been awake since seven am. Sleeping until noon would have been a luxurious waste of the day, but her body would not comply. So she'd rolled out of bed, pulled her Keaton hoodie on, re-tied the drawstring on her plaid flannel pajama pants and slipped into her battered Uggs. It was Saturday morning; bras were optional as far as she was concerned.

The good news about Keaton was that weekend mornings were generally an all-out call for sloppiness. It's not like they wore starched uniforms during the school week, but after five days fully scheduled for sixteen straight hours, Saturdays mandated pajamas.

While the kitchen staff poured steaming potatoes and silver dollar pancakes into the waiting vats at the food counter, Devon opted for the cereal island. Fruit Loops, Lucky Charms, Cocoa Puffs, Cheerios, granola, and Corn Flakes. All freshmen tended to fill up on the Fruit Loops and Lucky Charms. Maybe it was that early taste of freedom from parents, or just a more finely-tuned sugar radar. But almost everyone started with the full sugar cereals and when the fun dimmed, you went plain. Devon had indulged in her Lucky Charms phase and was happy to put it and the memory of all that purple milk behind her. Now she was a Corn Flakes girl.

Seated at an empty table in the back of the dining hall, she dug into her bowl of cereal. From this vantage point she had a clear view of Presley strolling through the doors and filling up a plate with pancakes—also in pajamas and Uggs. *Weird*, Devon thought, even though she was psyched to see her. She

expected Presley to be in a soccer uniform or running gear. Winter was her prime time to show off her athletic skills, and she usually spent her free time training.

Devon wasn't getting a soccer scholarship anywhere; that much was certain. No, instead of pretending that she had any inclination to be a future all-star, Devon was happy with "self-directed gym" or "Approved Slacker Hour" as she looked at it. It had to be the easiest sports assignment in school and only juniors and seniors were allowed to sign up. Go to the school gym for an hour and sign an attendance sheet. That was it. No teacher supervision, no uniforms. While most of the school ran laps, drills, and scored goals, Devon could pretend to do yoga or simply read a book in the corner near a weight machine. Presley, on the other hand, was actually ranked in California as a top soccer player. Colleges would be vying to give her a scholarship.

"Last Saturday before the gauntlet of crazy," Presley explained, answering Devon's unspoken question, as she plunked her tray on the table. "I'm about to lose all my weekends to soccer for the next four months, can we please have a girls date today?"

Devon laughed. She let her remaining Corn Flakes go soggy. "What does this girls date entail?" she asked.

"Well, first off, we get back to where we were," Presley said. "Things haven't been the same since last semester and I kinda still hate myself for . . . you know. Doubting. Hutch. Can we please get our nails done and get a picnic from the deli and eat too many carbs while ogling surfers down at the Cove?"

*Perfect.* It was their favorite Saturday ritual starting from their freshman year. Granted, those deli sandwiches were partly to blame for both Devon and Presley gaining a few of their Freshman Fifteen pounds, but those early weekends on the beach were the beginning of their friendship. Who

else could Devon talk with equal intensity about the value of a good sharp cheddar cheese, and the hilarity of watching surfers trying to peel themselves out of soaked wetsuits and look cool at the same time?

"If those carbs are attached to a deli sandwich, then, yeah, I'm in."

Presley clapped her hands together. "Cool! I gotta go for a run, do some laundry, but meet you for the twelve noon bus into town. We're gonna have some fuuuuh-uuuun!" She danced her head from side to side, singing the last word.

Devon smiled in spite of herself. Pretty much everything with Presley was *fuuuh-uuuun!* Even the way she used her hands to dip each pancake into a puddle of syrup before stuffing them in her mouth. Hutch's death had drawn a Before and After line in their friendship. Before, Devon figured that she and Presley would be inseparable. College, first jobs, boy-friends, future husbands, weddings, kids . . . there was Presley alongside her. But After, Devon had to face the reality that maybe this friend wouldn't have her back unconditionally. Was this an attempt to reclaim their "Before" friendship? But that wasn't the question that mattered, and Devon knew it. The question that mattered was, was that even possible?

Bay House was just stirring to life as Devon left her room to meet Presley at the bus pick-up. The sound of a lone shower running, the chatter of girls talking in the laundry room, a movie playing on someone's computer trickled into the hallway. But when male voices joined the chorus Devon slowed her pace. Where was that coming from? Boys weren't allowed inside a girl's dorm at this time of day. She heard the bang of drawers opening and closing. Near the end of the hall a door was wide open: Maya's door.

Devon peeked inside. Two movers, burly guys in matching yellow T-shirts were taping boxes closed. The mattress was bare, walls blank; even the desk looked cleaned off. Maya wouldn't be coming back to Keaton, Devon realized. She knew Maya might be taking time off because of her pregnancy, but Devon thought there was always hope of her returning. In one quiet Saturday morning Maya's existence would be wiped out of Keaton history.

Outside Devon saw the U-Move-It van in the dorm driveway. A black Mercedes was parked next to it, a woman in the driver's seat talking on her cell phone. Devon locked eyes with her. The woman's dark black hair fell perfectly around her shoulders, her almond-shaped eyes looked just like Maya's—and Devon recognized her instantly from the Internet and magazine articles. C.C. Tran, Maya's mom and wife to pharmaceutical titan, Edward Dover.

Devon gave her a tight smile, which C.C. returned. She couldn't imagine what that woman must be going through: her high school daughter pregnant, dropping out of school, and having a baby with an accused murderer: the scion of a family rival, no less. *I thought my family dinners sucked.* It seemed impolite to stare so Devon continued her way up the hill to meet Presley.

As the Keaton bus shifted gears on its drive down the hillside into Monte Vista, Presley turned around in her seat to face Devon in the next row. "I had an idea over break. It's kind of amazing, but you're going to have to get your mom on board."

"On board for what?" Devon asked. She saw where this was going: permission slips of some sort.

"What if we went on our college trip together? Maybe you and your mom and me and my mom? We wanna do a few

schools around New York and Vermont. A little East Coast tour. Wouldn't that be the best trip ever?" Presley's blonde curly hair bounced with each word.

Every junior at Keaton was starting to plan a productive spring break either touring college campuses across the country, or doing *something* to boost their applications. Working in an orphanage in Honduras. Organizing a charity event to promote early cancer screenings. And that wasn't an exaggeration. Just last night Devon overheard Sima Park down the hall asking her roommate which shoes were more appropriate for hanging out with orphans, Toms or Birkenstocks. (She voted Toms, ultimately. Double dogooding, she reasoned.) Devon meanwhile had overshot her extracurricular bonus points for Stanford. Beyond just bragging rights for being Keaton's very first peer counselor, she'd picked up some local notoriety for her involvement in sniffing out Hutch's murderer. The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* had run a small column about Devon as Keaton's first peer counselor turned live-action sleuth. Devon's problem wasn't so much what to write about herself, but how to approach the delicate subject of boosting her self-image from others' pain. She'd long stopped Googling her own name; it made her sick. Which probably wasn't a good thing.

"Besides," Presley continued. "We totally have to scope out which school has the hottest guys. 'Cause you know I'm a sucker for a guy in a peacoat. And the one thing we can count on during spring on the East Coast? Peacoats. It'll be like living in my favorite J. Crew catalogue. Yummy."

Devon smirked, thinking of all the J. Crew catalogue pages of men wearing black and blue peacoats—handsome, yet slightly chilly—tacked to Presley's dorm room walls. "Yeah, that could be fun. I'll talk to my mom," she said. Presley clapped her hands together again. But Devon couldn't

muster up the same excitement. She had been so focused on Stanford, it hadn't occurred to her to look elsewhere. *Screw it.* Maybe Presley was right. Maybe Devon should keep her options open.

The sandwiches looked too good to eat. Devon realized that she hadn't had one yet this whole school year. She indulged in her favorite: the roast beef with cheddar on pumpernickel bread. (Presley stuck with her favorite, the turkey and cranberry. "For old times' sake," she said.) Wrapping the sandwiches to go, they walked the few blocks to the beach and found a comfortable set of boulders to lean against while they stuffed themselves and watched the surfers.

"If you watch them long enough you can feel like you're bobbing along the top of the ocean like they are," Devon said between bites.

"What's up with you going all surfer-centric on me?" Presley joked. "First you're friends with the Elliots, next you'll be on the morning van."

Devon finished chewing before answering, "And you're saying that's a bad thing?"

"Hey, I didn't say it was good or bad. You're just different. I feel like I used to be able to read your mind, but now, you seem kind of lost at sea like you're just drifting through everything. Or maybe it's just me." Presley slapped at Devon's leg. "Come on, admit it. You over me? You found someone else?"

Now Devon had to laugh. Only Presley could cut to the heart of what was happening between them. "Pres, you know you're my first love. There's nobody else but you. Well, you and the entire men's section of the J. Crew catalogue. Hope that's okay." She wadded up her sandwich wrapper and tossed it at Presley's head.

"You two being surf groupies today?"

Devon squinted into the sun to see Raven Elliot standing over them in the sand. Wetsuit hanging at her waist, a black swim shirt with a Rip Curl logo across her chest, and her wax-riddled surfboard under one arm. Raven's signature dreadlocks were wrapped into a beehive shape at the top of her head.

"Hey!" Devon cried. *Speak of the devil.* "Yeah, we're just here to make sure everyone's behaving out there on the water."

"Yeah, 'cause if they're not, they're gonna have to answer to me . . ." Presley held up a fist, menacing. Raven laughed and Devon and Presley broke into giggles.

"You see Bodhi out there?" Raven asked.

"Wasn't looking. But don't think he's out there," Devon replied.

Raven looked at Presley and bit her lip, like she was debating whether to keep talking. "You know, he wanted to talk to you. About the yacht crew from New Year's. We found something. Well, Bodhi found it mostly, I just pulled some video files."

Devon heard a sigh next to her. Suddenly Presley was standing up. "Okay, Veronica Mars. I'll leave you to your investigations."

"Wait!" Devon wasn't sure why she'd piped up. She knew Presley didn't want to be a part of this. So there was no point in asking Presley to stay; this was the line their friendship didn't cross. "I mean, I'm sorry. I have to deal with this."

Presley nodded. "I get it. You got to scratch that itch."

"Pres," Devon started. "This is real. Something happened and I have to find out—"

"I know you do. It's just . . . I miss the old you. I want that girl back, ya know?"

Devon swallowed. "I miss her too, Presley. I'd love the old me back, but that ship has sailed. Besides, it's not like I chose this."

"Didn't you?" Presley said as she slung her backpack over her shoulder. "I'll see you back on campus." She carried her shoes as she walked barefoot down the beach to the parking lot. Devon watched her go, a cold pit in her stomach. How could her best friend not even care what had happened? Or worse, had she just lost interest?

Raven crouched beside her. "Let her go. Most people can't process something unless it happens to them."

"Presley isn't 'most people.'" Devon exhaled a long breath. Raven couldn't understand; besides, Devon still had bigger problems at hand. "So, what'd you find?"

"The yacht crew. When we did the first check the numbers added up. That's what the cops found that night too. That's why everything checked out. But, when we matched the video with the numbers, one of the crew didn't match his ID badge. It's all on our computer next time you come over to Reed's. Didn't exactly expect to find you here."

"Ha. One set of friends wonders why I've gone surf-centric, I think was how she put it. And you guys don't think I'm beachy enough. Can't win with you Elliots, can I?"

Raven nudged Devon with her foot. "I'm going in. You want to be more beachy, try going in the water at some point." She grabbed her surfboard and wrapped the Velcro strap around her ankle, then nodded to the parking lot behind them. "Here's the beach king now. You know if you asked he'd probably love to show you how to surf. Think on it."

Devon turned to see Bodhi stepping out of his blue Volkswagen camper. His surfboard was strapped into a rack on the roof of the car. The door slammed shut and Bodhi

tucked his hands into the pocket of his hoodie, then turned to check out the water. He lifted his chin in a nod to Devon and Raven.

"You're not going out in the water?" Devon called as he approached, leaving the surfboard behind.

Bodhi arrived at Devon's boulders and sat down in the sand across from her. He squinted into the glare of the sun off the water. "Nah, the waves look a little small. I'll wait until they pick up a bit."

"Whatever. I'm going in." Raven zipped her wetsuit up the back and jogged toward the water. Bodhi was silent as they watched Raven drop onto her board, paddling her way into the surf with ease.

"Where's Cleo?" Devon asked.

"Probably doing whatever she wants." He chewed on the inside of his cheek. "We're not like hooking up anymore or anything, just so you know," he added quickly.

"At least one of you is keeping me in the loop," Devon said. "Cleo never said anything. Not that it matters." *Why would it matter?* Why was Bodhi telling her this, anyway? None of that was her business. Although, she did have to fight back the small smile that wanted to spread across her face. Cleo and Bodhi had always seemed like a weird match. But it wasn't because she was jealous or anything.

"It's not, like, weird or anything between us, but it probably wasn't a good call to hook up with a Keaton student," Bodhi clarified, meeting her eyes. "You know how word gets around."

Devon wanted to switch topics. "So Raven said you found a weird thing with the crew on the yacht? One of their IDs didn't match?"

"Yeah, it was weird. One of the caterers, Isaac something, oh, Isaac Green, called in sick that day. We found the note

in their company emails. Don't ask us how; it's better you don't know. So Isaac called in sick, but he also showed up to work that night."

Devon's stomach started to spin just remembering that night, the swaying of the yacht, her slow-motion fall into the railing. That glimmer of the metal spyglass twirling end over end and disappearing into the dark water. "You think that's our guy?"

Bodhi shrugged again. "I have pictures to show you in case something rings a bell. You can come by the guest house whenever. I just keep thinking about what you were saying, that someone did this on purpose. And I keep coming back to the Hutchins family. They're the only ones that would have it in for you. But even Bill wouldn't get his hands dirty like this. With Eric's trial coming up; it just seems too obvious, even for them." Bodhi dug his hand into the sand and slowly lifted it up, letting the sand rain off. He smiled toward the surfers. "She actually got a good one."

Devon turned and saw the end of Raven riding a wave and then turning her board over the top of the small crest, dropping down again to paddle back out. "Well, we do know that Eric would happily get his hands dirty. I wouldn't put it past him to have orchestrated something like this. He has enough money at his disposal, not to mention, he's been waiting out his trial at his parent's house in Pacific Heights. It's probably not the most restrictive situation."

Bodhi sniffed. "Yeah, that house arrest thing is totally cush. The guy commits murder, tries to hurt you, and they can still buy his way out of jail."

"Do you think you can visit someone who's on house arrest?"

"Nah ah, not going to happen. I know where your head is at. You're not visiting Eric Hutchins." Bodhi leaned against his boulder and looked at her.

She scooped sand onto her bare feet, covering them and then drawing an outline of where her foot would be.

“He’s not exactly my BFF, but it kind of makes sense when you think about it. If someone is trying to kill me, why not visit the last person who tried to kill me?”

“No way. They’ll never let you in to see him. You’re a key witness in the trial.”

Devon raked the sand back off her feet and shook off the excess grains. “That’s why you’re going to help me.”

---

## CHAPTER 3

---

The Keaton soccer team was playing Waldorf that Saturday in San Francisco. Hoping to score an approved trip to the city, Devon volunteered to be the “Ball Bitch.” (Definition: The non-athlete loser in charge of carrying a bag of soccer balls to and from the game with the team on the Keaton bus.) “What good is self-directed gym if we can’t help out our favorite teams?” Devon had asked Coach Duncan in the dining hall that morning. “Besides, school spirit always looks good on a college application.” However thin her logic, there was room on the bus, and Coach Duncan did need “the help,” so he couldn’t say no.

Once Presley quickly put the Keaton team in a comfortable lead, Devon excused herself to find the nearest bathroom. Coach Duncan barely noticed. Between clutching the stopwatch around his neck and chewing on the pencil he stored behind his ear, he would be too distracted to keep track of how long she was gone.

Bodhi’s van idled in the Waldorf parking lot, as planned.

With one quick glance behind her to make sure no one was looking, Devon pried open the heavy passenger door.

“Good timing,” she said.

Bodhi turned the radio off.

In the sudden silence, Devon realized she’d never been in Bodhi’s van. Raven’s beat-up Volvo, yes. Reed Hutchins’ Range Rover, yes. But never here.

“You still want to do this?” Bodhi asked. “Cause, we could just drive across the Golden Gate, get a bite at the marina. Or we could just hang here until the game is over.”

Devon nodded. She knew what Bodhi was trying to do. She hadn’t seen Eric since that night two months ago when he tried to slice open her wrist at The Palace. Luckily Devon’s friends, Bodhi included, had stopped him and saved her. But what if they hadn’t been there? Devon might not have met with Eric if she didn’t know she had the support. Yet, she did often wonder about that night. Would Eric really have killed her? She kept returning to Maya: quiet, all business, girl formerly just down the hall from Devon. Maya Dover had gone out of her way to have an affair with Eric. Their families hated each other for reasons Devon still didn’t understand. But Maya and Eric were having a baby and from what Devon could tell, they really did care about each other. Maybe they even loved each other. This was the key to getting through to Eric. This was how she could humanize him.

Grandpa Reed had told Devon that power and money has a way of poisoning men. Eric had killed his brother out of anger about his inheritance. She could almost believe how Eric’s jealousy over Hutch had gotten the better of him. At one point Eric probably really did love Hutch, but the part of Eric that allowed him to cross that line, the part that said *Do it*, was probably always in him too. And it was all the more

reason to see Eric in person. If someone out there wanted Devon dead, she had to look Eric in the eye to know if it was him or not. She had to see if the evil within him had taken root and flourished.

"I need to see him," Devon said, looking straight ahead.

"Well, you're lucky that you've got one awesome body-guard." Bodhi pulled a black piece of fabric off his wrist and slipped it over his head. A headband, of course. Devon smiled. There was something funny about watching Bodhi expertly pull his thick head of dreadlocked hair back in one simple move. It was almost . . . elegant. "Pacific Heights, here we come." He shifted the van into reverse.

"The Keaton bus leaves in two hours. Think I'll be on it?" Devon asked.

"Done. No one will even know you were gone," Bodhi said with a wink.

The one thing Devon knew for sure about Pacific Heights was that it was famous for its views of San Francisco. Until now, Devon had only driven through the neighborhood; she wasn't exactly Pacific Heights material. When Bodhi's van pulled up across the street from the Hutchins family home, Devon knew if she got inside, she'd be privy to a breathtaking glance of the entire bay: the Golden Gate Bridge, Mill Valley, all of it. Maybe that would make the trip worth it. Perfectly situated at the top of a steep hill, the three-story villa (there was nothing else to call it but a "villa") somehow avoided looking like a Pepto Bismol catastrophe. It was somehow both pink *and* regal.

"Let me do the talking," Bodhi said as he locked the front door. He wiped his hands on his navy blue Carhartt pants. Devon looked down at her Keaton hoodie, jeans, and Converse—then and at Bodhi's pants, flannel shirt and Vans.

*Damn.* She hadn't thought that part through. The Keaton casual uniform does not apply well to the outside world. Why did she always forget that? The Hutchins family probably had a separate entrance for their service staff. Devon was pretty sure she and Bodhi looked more suited to remove the garbage than they did to sit down for tea with Mitzi. Bodhi re-applied his headband to little affect. His bleached blonde dreads stuck out the back of his head like porcupine quills. There was no way tea would be offered.

The doorbell echoed when Bodhi pushed it. Devon wondered how many rooms the sound could travel to.

Silence.

She looked around for signs of Eric's house arrest. Shouldn't there be sensors to note the boundaries of the house? Maybe Devon was confusing house arrest with an electric dog collar. The ornate stone lions standing guard at the foot of the steps seemed appropriate, like Devon was there to visit a prisoner in ancient Rome.

But when Eric answered the door, barefoot in jeans and a plain white T-shirt, he didn't seem like much of a prisoner. His chin-length hair had gotten longer and hung just above his shoulders and he seemed to be growing a beard. "What the hell do you two want?" He sighed heavily.

Bodhi stroked his chin. "Nice little grow going on there. You quit shaving? Mine just comes in in patches."

"Why did you bring her here? After everything this family has done for you?"

"I actually need to ask you something," Devon said. Maybe she could appeal to his oversized ego.

"Oh yeah? Well, ask away little Keaton. Ask away." Eric rubbed his shoulder against the doorframe, his eyes only on Bodhi.

"Who's trying to kill me?"

Eric laughed. "What? You came here to ask me that?" He looked to Bodhi for confirmation.

Bodhi stepped forward. "Someone attacked her on New Year's Eve," he said in his mellowest voice. "At a yacht party. She thinks you might be helpful in figuring out who it was. We can go. I figured you didn't know anything." He shoved his hands in his pockets.

Devon stood straighter, refusing to give in just yet.

Eric cackled bitterly. "This is the most entertainment I've had in weeks. Come on in. I want to hear more about this conspiracy theory of yours." He made a sweeping gesture with his arms, inviting Devon and Bodhi inside.

As Devon squeezed past Bodhi at the door he mumbled, "I'm not letting you out of my sight." His hand grazed the small of her back. Devon snuck him a grateful smile. For the first time since she'd snuck away from the Waldorf bench, she wasn't scared.

Inside was something from a *Vanity Fair* spread. The long staircase with the wooden banister sloped to the second floor in a relaxed curve. A wide, crystal chandelier hung from the two-story ceiling in a stylish array of crystal, metal, and light. Eric escorted them down the hallway to the living room, or maybe it was a sitting room? A den? They seemed to pass another living room on the way there, so Devon couldn't figure out what they might call this museum-quality assembly of chairs and stiff sofa.

"So, it's open season on Devon, is it?" Eric said with a smile as he sat down in a large wingback chair. "Forgive me if I find that a little funny."

Devon clenched her teeth and felt her heartbeat quicken. She sat across from him. Bodhi remained standing. "You think someone trying to kill me is funny? You must be more of a sociopath than I originally thought."

Eric's smile dropped. "You're going to testify against me in the trial, aren't you? So, yeah, I've thought about how nice it would be if you didn't exist, but it's not like I did anything about it. I'm already in deep enough shit as it is." He leaned back and crossed his ankle over his knee. It was impossible to ignore the grey plastic ankle bracelet with a small green light. Eric noticed as she quickly tried to look elsewhere. "You wanna get a good look? This is what it looks like when your future gets flushed down the toilet."

Bodhi drummed his fingers against his thigh. He finally sat beside Devon. "Doesn't look too bad from where I sit."

"Mr. Hutchins?" a woman's voice said.

Devon and Bodhi turned. So . . . they *weren't* alone in the house.

"I thought you and your guests might like something to drink."

A thirty-ish Latina woman, stylishly dressed, entered the room, carrying a tray of soda, a silver ice bucket, and crystal tumblers. She placed the tray on the coffee table. Devon and Bodhi smiled and thanked her, while Eric pressed his lips together and looked out the window until she was gone.

"I'm sorry," Devon started. "You were saying something about this being a horrible way to live."

Bodhi gave her a slight smile.

"Look," Eric said, leaning forward in his chair. "I don't know who or what happened to you on that boat. I have enough going on here. I am not going to complicate my situation. I've been kicked out of Stanford. I'll never get into med school now. And if for some reason I don't spend the rest of my life in jail, I'll forever be labeled a felon. You think that goes over well in job interviews? I'm fucked, Devon. Completely fucked."

"Yeah, but at least you're not dead, which is more than Hutch can say."

"She didn't mean that," Bodhi said quickly. "Sorry, we came here for your help, not to point fingers." He squeezed her knee. It was her cue.

Devon took a second to collect herself. How dare Eric sit here and have the gall to complain about his life when he took Hutch's from her

"Bodhi's right. I'm sorry." She forced the words out of her mouth. "We came here for your help. I shouldn't have said that. Sorry." She couldn't believe she was actually apologizing to Eric of all people, but if she wanted to make any progress with him, it was the only way.

"Guess I'm going to have to get used to people hating me." Eric said quietly. It was the first time Devon had seen the faintest hint of remorse. If there was a caring human underneath the horrible rich boy persona Eric had so carefully cultivated, now was the time to find him.

"Have you heard anything from Maya?" Devon asked. "About the baby?"

When Eric looked up at her, she saw fear. The cold stare was gone. Maya *was* his humanity; she knew it then. She and that baby were his salvation, even if he couldn't participate in their lives. "They won't let me talk to her. Her parents sent her somewhere to have the baby. Why? What have you heard? She's okay, isn't she?"

Devon shook her head. "I haven't heard anything. I saw her mom moving her out of her dorm room, but that was it. I guess she's not coming back to Keaton, that's for sure." Devon hoped this wasn't a terrible idea. "I could try to find out for you. Where she is. See if you can email her or something. I mean, only if you think it would help her. I don't want to interfere."

“Why would you do that for me?” Eric asked.

“Yeah, why *would* you do that?” Bodhi demanded, turning to Devon with a glare.

Devon shrugged. “Because, Maya’s pregnant and she’s been pulled from school. She’s probably lonely and afraid. And if you still care about her, maybe she’d like to know that. I would if I was in her shoes.”

Eric dropped his head and let out a long sigh before he spoke again. “If you can do that. If you can get me an email that works for her? A phone? An address? I’ll send freakin’ smoke signals if I have to, I just don’t know where. That’d be amazing. Thank you.”

Bodhi looked at his watch and showed it to Devon. Twenty minutes until the Keaton bus would leave Waldorf. “Hate to cut this short, but we’ve got to get going.”

Devon followed.

Eric looked between them and nodded. “Yeah, okay.” He stood up too. “You know, you’re actually the only people who’ve visited me. Not sure what that says about my friends, but . . . thanks.” He started to walk them back down the long hallway. “Devon, if I knew anything about the boat, I would tell you. I don’t know who it would be or why. You were just trying to do the right thing by Hutch. I can’t hold that against you.”

Devon couldn’t bring herself to look him in the eye. “Thanks, I think,” she muttered.

“You know, we knew about you before Keaton. Before Hutch started.”

“What do you mean? How?”

Eric laughed as he opened the front door for them. The sudden bright sunlight burned Devon’s eyes, but she didn’t care. “You really don’t know, do you?” he said, more of a statement than a question. “Who do you think pays for your scholarship?”

She whirled to face him, but he was already closing the door. "It's a trust," she said.

"Some trust set up for Keaton kids that need financial aid."

"Nosey in all the wrong places, as always," Eric snickered.

"Eric, wait. Who set up that trust?"

"I'd look a little deeper into that one if I was you," he said. The door slammed shut.

---

# Stone Cove Island

---

Suzanne Myers

November 2014

WHEN A catastrophic hurricane devastates Stone Cove Island, a quaint New England resort community, the locals pull together to rebuild. Seventeen-year-old Eliza, one of the island's most idealistic residents, leads the recovery effort—and stumbles upon a secret in the wreckage: an anonymous confession to the thirty-year-old unsolved murder of a local teen. It was national news in the mid-1980s; it ripped the community apart; many of the rifts are so longstanding that they're an unspoken part of Stone Cove Island life. Eliza's discovery not only opens these old wounds, it uncovers a horrifying and longstanding conspiracy among the community's leaders, and may even implicate her parents.

SUZANNE MYERS was born in Philadelphia and grew up in Toronto, Canada. She is a graduate of Princeton University and USC Film School. Her feature film *Alchemy* won the SXSW film festival. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, two sons and two dogs. *Stone Cove Island* is her first novel.

SUZANNE MYERS

Pub Date: November 2014

YA \* Hardcover

5.5 X 8.25 \* 288 Pages

ISBN: 978-1-61695-437-6

Rights: All

---

## Prologue: What Happened to Bess

---

*IT WAS my fault that she was murdered. The night Bess died, she left the bar at the marina late. She would have had a couple of drinks, not enough to get drunk. She would have danced, maybe with Jimmy, maybe with Nate, maybe with an older guy we didn't know. She would have walked home alone. Unless I was sleeping over, she always went home alone. She was mad at me that night. I knew that, but I couldn't help it. I couldn't go out.*

*I got into bed early but couldn't sleep. My skin was itching and my ears were ringing. I was probably still awake while it was happening. Bess always told me to snap out of it, that it was just one of my moods and I needed to get hold of myself. But when I looked in the mirror, I saw black hollows that should have been my eyes. My skin was puffed and pale. I was so ugly. I couldn't stand the idea of people looking at me. I needed to be alone, where no one could see me. So I couldn't go to The Slip with Bess.*

*The Slip was our diviest bar, and not the atmospheric kind of divey. There were wobbly plastic deck chairs, sticky folding poker tables. The finish on the floor had worn off, replaced with a varnish of years of soaked-in beer. Someone had strung some thick, knotted rope around the walls in a lazy nod to the nautical theme. It was gross, but they didn't card there. In town, the bars had to protect themselves. They had the summer tourist business to worry about. It was way too risky getting busted for letting kids in. But tourists would never make it out to The Slip, so no one ever paid attention.*

*Sometime after midnight, Bess would have left.*

*I went over and over it in my head, realizing I'd never know the real story. It wasn't far to the bungalow she shared with her mom, halfway between the marina and East Beach. She might have had that lame Phil Collins song stuck in her head. We hated that song so much. We used to sing it to each other as a joke, howling into hairbrush handles and making gooney faces like we were in some lame romantic comedy, then collapsing in hysterics on Bess's bed.*

*Or maybe—and I preferred this version—she had been singing that Sinéad O'Connor song she loved. Bess had a nice voice. The song was everywhere that summer. "All the flowers that you planted, mama./In the backyard/All died when you went away." Bess loved the way that "mama" was wedged into the line like an upbeat afterthought. She thought it sounded like a bubble popping. She was good like that at describing things. After she pointed that out, I could never hear the song any other way.*

*Bess had been too good a swimmer to drown. I don't mean too good a swimmer to get caught in a riptide; too good a swimmer to go swimming alone on a moonless night in the remorseless Atlantic Ocean. She was smart and she was sensible, the kind of girl you could count on. Her clothes were found in the lighthouse, covered in blood. Her killer had cut off all her hair. Some people said a huge anchor had been painted across the front door of their house. Others said that was only a rumor. I wouldn't know; I didn't go to her house again after that night. Her body was never found.*

*Her mother, Karen, refused to talk about Bess afterward. She got rid of all her stuff. I wanted to keep something to remember her, but Karen said no. Maybe she knew what I knew.*

*Bess had been scared before she died. She had shown me—just me, she swore—the letter.*

*I only read it once. I didn't copy any of it down. But I can still remember every word. "Uninvited guest," it began and then later, "down came a blackbird and pecked off her nose." The more*

*I tried to push that line from my mind, the more fiercely it returned, and with it her face. I hoped he had not done anything to her face.*

*I should have gone with Bess to The Slip that night. I should have told someone about the letter. But I never did.*

---

## Chapter One

---

Of course we knew that Hurricane Victor was going to be a big storm. But there hadn't been a storm like this in anyone's living memory, so we weren't prepared for the damage it would do.

I live on a small island a few miles off Cape Ann, an hour or two north of Boston. Our closest mainland towns are Rockport and Pigeon Cove. When you grow up on an unprotected island facing Atlantic storms, you're supposed to know what to do when things get serious. But we'd had so many false alarms, so many calls to evacuate to the mainland, only to return to find no damage or, much worse, that thieves had taken advantage of a day they knew they could work pretty much undisturbed. No one on Stone Cove Island evacuated for a storm warning anymore.

The morning after, I opened the front door to find a fifty-foot oak tree lying across our porch. I squeezed through the narrow gap the tree allowed and stood outside. Its trunk came up to my waist. The island was silent, as though all the sound had been sucked away by the force of the hurricane as it ripped through. There were no birds chirping, no insects. I couldn't even hear the waves, though I could imagine how wild the ocean must be.

I *could* hear my mom, banging pots and dishes inside as she worked herself into a panic, trying to figure out how to make breakfast in a kitchen with no power or water. She was

the oatmeal and eggs type, not the cold cereal type, and definitely not the roll-with-the-changes type. Dad was asleep. He'd been up all night, moving furniture up to the second floor as the water rose, trying to make extra sandbags out of freezer bags and flour, taping and re-taping the windows as the wind sucked the glass in and out.

Who knew glass could bend like that? The porch light lit the pea soup green night and the trees screamed as they blew sideways. No wonder the big oak had come down. It was amazing more trees hadn't. I didn't think I'd be able to sleep, but I'd finally nodded off on the floor in my room, well away from any outside wall. My bed and the rug in my room were soaked. The rain had poured under the closed bottom window forming a waterfall, as if someone was holding a hose to the glass. I was scared, but I knew my dad was busy doing all he could to keep the house together, and my mom would make me more freaked out, not less. So I just lay there, waiting for it to be over. I tried pretending it was tomorrow already, and that all this was behind me.

"Eliza?" I could hear my mom calling me from the kitchen.

"I'm out front, Mom. Just checking things out." I didn't mention the oak. My dad's best at handling bad news with her. "I'm going to walk into town and see how everyone is. Maybe they have power. Do you want me to get coffee or anything if they have it? Or more bottled water?" She was a worrier, so bottled water was one thing I was pretty sure we had plenty of.

"Eliza, no. I don't want you going out there alone," she called back. The clattering in the kitchen was getting more frantic.

"It's fine, Mom. The storm's over."

"What if a branch falls? It's not safe for you to be out there. Nate?"

I heard my father's exhausted voice from the next room. "Let her go. She's fine. Eliza, walk down the middle of the streets, stay out of the park and don't go near the water. Get extra batteries from Harney's if he's not sold out." Then he rolled over and went back to sleep, or so I guessed. It was a familiar pattern: Mom, looking for a reason to freak; Dad, reeling her back in. I hadn't figured out his magic formula. Usually my attempts to calm her down only made things worse.

I turned my attention back to the oak and to how I was going to get off the porch. The trunk was wide and blocked my view of everything beyond it. I was dreading what I would find on the other side, but putting it off would just let my imagination run wild. It was better to face it, however bad things might be, and figure out what to do next.

I threaded my way to the edge of the porch, grabbed a sturdy branch, climbed out, and dropped to the ground. It wasn't that difficult, but coming and going would not work with groceries. The bay window off the kitchen would have to become our temporary entrance, unless Dad wanted to get into it with the back door. Its seized-up lock hadn't worked since I had been in fourth grade. I looked out at the formerly cozy little street, and felt like Dorothy landing in Oz.

Summer is our big season. Growing up on the island, you get used to the time before Fourth of July and the time after. It's like living on two different planets. In the off-season, you can ride your bike across the whole island until your fingers are frozen to the handlebars and not see another person. There is only one school with about fifty kids in each class. We all go there, our parents went there, and mostly their parents did too. The ferry runs once a day

and when the harbor is iced over, there are lots of weeks it doesn't run at all.

In the summer, crowds stream off the ferries hourly. They juggle beach chairs, umbrellas, Radio Flyer wagons packed with groceries for their summer rentals. The inn is full. People pack Water Street, the main drag that curves along the harbor, wearing bathing suits under their T-shirts and sundresses, licking their dripping ice creams cones. By the way, don't let anyone talk you into working in an ice cream parlor as a summer job. It sounds fun, but it's actually grueling, Charlie-horse inducing work. I always go for day camp counselor: sailing, capture the flag, and campfire songs.

You would think summer would be our total focus, that we would be holed up like hibernating bears waiting for beach weather, but it's not like that at all. You get used to the silence and sense of belonging that we few residents have. It's like throwing a party. You're excited before, decorating and getting things ready. It's fun while the party lasts, but after a while you just want the guests to go home so you can put on your pajamas and sit around the kitchen, rehashing highlights.

That morning, Stone Cove Island didn't look like any version of itself I'd ever seen before, summer or winter. Our street was smothered with downed trees and broken branches. It would be a while before any cars could make it through. My dad had said to stick to the middle of the roads, but I had to zigzag around or climb over whatever blocked my way. I couldn't choose the path. I turned down the hill toward Water Street, my breath catching in my throat. It felt like watching a movie about someone else's ruined life. Houses were missing roofs, walls were caved in. In some cases, only the rubble of the brick foundation was left. Furniture, clothes, and belongings were scattered everywhere.

Those personal things tugged at me the most: the stuffed tiger which no doubt some toddler was unable to sleep without; the royal blue leather family photo album, assembled over decades and destroyed in one night. I pulled my sleeves down over my hands and folded my arms across my stomach. It was cold, and I felt the chill in the small of my back. I wished I had not come down to face this alone.

When I reached the harbor, normally the busiest section of town, I kept my eyes on the water. The beach had ugly, deep gashes in it, like a monster had bitten away hunks of flesh and left bleeding mud behind. I tried to put it back together in my mind to the way it was supposed to look, but I couldn't. I felt tears well in my eyes and sting. I felt the destruction, as though I was the one who had been hurt.

Where the ferry comes in—or used to come in—the docks were all but gone. The few weekend people who hadn't made it over in time to prepare for the storm were rewarded by having their sailboats either washed up and overturned on the village green, a hundred yards from the water. Either that or shattered into kindling-sized strips and mixed together with the pilings they'd once been secured to.

The village green was now charred a yellow-brown, the grass burned by the salt water that had flooded it. The shops that were on the bay side of Water Street were either gone or ripped open like dollhouses, their sun hats and saltwater taffy boxes floating in murky, possibly electrified standing water. Businesses on the up-island side of the street fared a little better. At least the water had receded.

The whole island seemed to be without power—except for The Picnic Basket, the sandwich and coffee shop on Laurel Lane. Nancy and Greg appeared to have rigged a

generator. I could smell coffee brewing and theirs were the only lights glowing on the main street. So they'd been lucky, too. I felt a rush of quick relief. If The Picnic Basket were dark, I would have panicked. Nancy and Greg were known to be the source of all news, official and unofficial, on the island. They prided themselves on always being first to know. They were also usually first to gossip. The Picnic Basket was probably the nerve center of Hurricane Victor information by now.

I wiped my tears with the sleeve of my sweater just in time to hear my name.

"Eliza? Is that you?"

When I turned, Charlie Pender was standing behind me.

*What is he doing here?* That was my first thought. Charlie had graduated from Stone Cove High last December, a semester early. I had not seen him since. I remembered that he was taking a year off before college to intern at a newspaper in Boston or Providence and wondered if he might be on some kind of assignment. He seemed taller, or maybe it was just because I felt so beaten down. I saw that same feeling reflected in his blue eyes; they were faraway, cloudy. He looked a lot like I did, in fact—dazed, brown curls unbrushed, dark jeans and a sweatshirt, low-top black Converse. That was funny: we had the same shoes on.

But I could feel the space he'd put between himself and the island. It made him seem like a stranger.

Of course, there had always been distance. While he and I were friendly, our families weren't. That is, my mom and Charlie's mom made clear their lack of interest in being friends. His parents owned the Anchor Inn, one of the oldest and definitely the biggest of the hotels. They lived by the success of the island as a summer destination. My mom thought Cat Pender was manipulative, a "climber," she called her, always sucking up

to the richest guests at the inn. I didn't know what Cat thought of Mom, but I could project my own complaints: too nervous, too shrinking, too fragile. My dad and Charlie's dad were neutral at best. As one of the few local contractors, my dad often worked on projects at the inn, but I don't think they'd ever so much as shared a beer.

"This is crazy, huh? Everyone okay at your house?" He sounded wired and a little scared, just like how I felt.

We hugged hello. I was glad for the company, even if he had almost caught me crying.

"Yeah. Big tree came down on the porch. But everyone's fine. This is unbelievable," I said. "How's the Inn?"

"It has some damage. That's a pretty exposed spot up there on the hill. My parents are trying to make the best of it. They don't want their guests to panic."

The inn sat on the bluff, perched above the harbor. It was repainted a perfect, gleaming white every spring. Next door was the famous Anchor Club, known for its grass tennis courts and the croquet tournaments, where members dressed in white, wearing the traditional clothes from the 1920s, when the club was founded. I pictured the howling winds I'd heard the night before, raking through the white clapboard walls, rattling the slate rooftops—as if fighting to tear apart the years of island history. It gave me another chill. Everything about my life on the island had seemed permanent until last night.

"Are you here to do a story? You're working at a newspaper, right?" I asked.

"The *Boston Globe*. I don't get to write much though. A little for the website but it's mostly research and whatever anyone else doesn't want to do. I was coming back this weekend to see my parents anyway, so I thought I'd stay in case it turned out to be big."

We both took in the mangled shore. It was big.

"I feel bad," he said. "I almost feel like I willed it. Looking for a story."

"Weather's not that mystical," I said, mostly to myself. "It's just weather. This just happened. It's not like we asked for it."

"Huh. You haven't changed. That's nice." I felt a weird flutter as he said it. It was uncomfortable, the compliment amid the destruction.

"Yeah, well, I'm still here," I said quickly. "Things don't change that much. You're the one who left for the big city."

"True," he said. He looked at me a minute, like he was going to say something else. "Should we go see what's going on? Nancy and Greg have probably set up a war room down there."

"Or at least they'll have some coffee." I'd been drinking coffee, black, since I was twelve and hanging around my dad's construction sites. My mom didn't know about it until much later. Of course she disapproved. My feet were wet. My nerves felt raw. I realized right then I was actually dying for some coffee.

"That sounds good," he agreed.

We turned and headed back up the street to The Picnic Basket. Slowly people were starting to come out to take in the damage. On the steps of the Congregational church, Mrs. Walker, the minister's wife, was sweeping uselessly at huge fallen roof tiles and wood fragments from the steeple. Lexy Morgan and her father were bailing water out of his candy and souvenir shop. Charlie and I paused at the surreal lake of floating jawbreakers and Atomic Fireballs and offered to help. Mr. Morgan shook his head, too upset and too focused to talk. Mrs. Hilliard, my English teacher, stood in the middle of the street, staring at her car. It had

been flattened under a giant maple tree, and now was an accordion of red metal and spider-webbed glass. She looked confused, as if she'd just awakened, as if she weren't sure what she was looking at was real. I knew the feeling. I couldn't shake it.

Nobody even noticed when we entered The Picnic Basket. The stove was unlit, but Greg was toasting bagels, and there was a hug pot of coffee plugged into the portable generator. Nancy was at her computer, finding out everything she could about the storm. She called out headlines to the dozen or so people huddled around her.

"No prediction of how long to restore ferry! Freak softball-sized hail across the border in New Hampshire! Coast guard expects delays of supplies and building materials to island residents in region! Lady Gaga plans Martha's Vineyard storm victim fundraiser with Diane Sawyer and Carly Simon."

She snickered. A few others grumbled. Stone Cove Island's rivalry with Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket goes back a long way. Locals insist our island has a more low-key, discrete reputation, but a lot of people feel jealous of the glitzier image of the other two. When the president vacations in Nantucket, islanders here make a big point of saying how thankful they are for the peace and quiet of Stone Cove.

"Nancy, what about the power?" called Jim McNeil, the mechanic in town.

"Thursday at the earliest, they're saying."

That was three days from now. I could see everyone mentally calculating their supplies: water, canned food, batteries, extra blankets. So far the weather was warm for October, but at this time of year, it could be below freezing tomorrow. I'd heard my mother worrying about that just last

night, and wondering if we had enough firewood on hand. Greg looked up from his bagel station and nodded at us.

"Charlie, Eliza, you okay? Everybody good at home?"

"We're fine, Greg. Thanks," I said.

"Your dad's about to be busy, I guess. Lots of work to be done."

"Yeah, I guess it looks that way."

Charlie handed me a cup of coffee and gestured to the door. I followed him outside.

"That's about the worst way I can think of to find out what's really going on. Local news sites and gossip magazines. Let's go over to the *Gazette* and see if Jay will let us look at their wire service. Even just their Twitter feed would be better info than this."

Jay Norsworthy was the editor of our local paper, the *Stone Cove Island Gazette*—an island staple. Charlie had interned for Jay at least one summer, and the relief lit up on Jay's face the second we walked in the door.

It was chaos in a tiny office. Jay was racing between his computer and the AP wire printout. His only company was his black lab Sparkler. At least he had power, too. Amazing: Jay was still struggling to get the paper out on schedule, despite everything that was going on that morning. The *Gazette* had its own generator, and Jay had gotten their Internet connection half-working, but there were no land lines up anywhere on the island. For a dizzying, manic moment, I felt a flash of relief. Maybe things weren't as bad as they seemed.

"Charlie, I could really use your help with the Wi-Fi. It's been on and off, creeping like a snail when it does work. Maybe you can work your magic."

"I can try." Charlie pulled the latest printout from the wire and handed it to Jay, then passed me his coffee and stooped down to take a look.

"Jay, is your house okay?" I asked. Jay lived in a cottage near the west bluffs; there was worry about erosion even in an ordinary storm.

"Slept here," he answered, avoiding my eyes. "I knew I'd have to get the paper out early today once I saw what we were in store for last night. I hope it's still standing. It might be halfway to Rockport by now though." He laughed, but I didn't hear any humor in it. Here he was trying to jury-rig his Internet connection to get the town paper out, and he didn't know if he still had a place to live.

Unconsciously, my gaze went to Charlie. We exchanged a look. The relief faded, leaving a dark hole in its place. This was bad, and we were only going to uncover how bad by degrees. What if people had died?

"Was anyone . . ." I swallowed. "How soon will we know if anyone is missing?" I wasn't sure how to put this.

Jay's expression was grim. "No one has been reported missing yet, as far as I've heard. But everyone's still taking stock. We should know more this afternoon. The churches are setting up check-in stations with hot food and drinks. The ones with propane stoves that can *make* hot food, anyway—and there's an evacuation center at the high school. They said only about fifteen people stayed there last night, but I've heard lots more are moving over this morning, the ones that can't stay in their homes."

"Do we know how many?" asked Charlie, his eyes slits, his fingers working to re-screw the haphazard wiring in the block of drives and modems.

"Not yet. That's my next stop."

"This thing is flaky," Charlie complained. "Even on a good day."

"Don't I know it," muttered Jay.

Suddenly I felt out of place. Sparkler padded up to me,

eyeing me as if I were going to hand him one of my coffee cups. It seemed crazy that we were inside, reading reports off the AP wire about what was happening to us, right now, right outside. I wanted to get back out and *do* something, anything, so I wouldn't feel so useless.

I peered over Charlie's shoulder at some more papers piled on top of the modem. The info confirmed what Nancy had told us: no power for up to a week, no ferry service for the foreseeable future, possibly until the spring depending on how fast federal emergency money would come in repair the harbor. Someone would have to work with the coast guard to figure out how we would get food shipped in, garbage shipped out, and how people would get on and off the island. There were many more questions than answers, and all of them needed to be solved before winter set in. I was scared, thinking about how bad things could get once the temperatures really dropped. You couldn't survive on Stone Cove without heat, gasoline, or a way to get food.

"If there's no ferry until spring, my dad is going to completely melt down," said Charlie with a grim smile.

*Or starve*, I thought.

He gave up trying to fix the connection and stood, taking his coffee cup back. It was no longer steaming. "Sorry, Jay."

"No worries. Your parents have been down here, you know that? It sounds like the inn did okay. They have power, at least."

Charlie sighed. "The boiler room was flooded. They're dealing with some unhappy folks."

Jay nodded. I could see his newsman's antenna sussing out a story in this last comment, a piece about those stranded, late-season guests who refused to leave despite dire warnings—the Island dilettantes now stuck here with the rest of us. "I'll bet. I'll swing by later and see if I can find some

way to help with that. Coast guard is holding a press conference at eleven to talk about initial transportation plans. That should be on the agenda.” He finally looked me in the eye. I noticed the dark circles ringing his own. “You two go and be with your families. I’ll manage here.”

---

## Chapter Two

---

Charlie walked me home. Strange: under any other circumstance, that would have been ripe for Stone Cove gossip. *What is Charlie doing with Eliza?* But today there was no strange. Today everything was strange. Besides, there was no one to whisper or catch us; we were all alone. I kept searching for people. What was everyone doing right now, our friends and neighbors? The ruined streets were eerie, deserted, no signs of life behind the dark windows. I reminded myself there was no power. My own mom was too afraid to go out, trying to stay warm, figuring out how to face the devastation.

Our house sat part of the way up the hill, still within the village. From there it was another ten to fifteen-minute walk up to the inn. Most guests took advantage of the inn’s loaner bicycles to get back and forth to town, or a couple of golf carts the inn made available.

“It’s always weird to be back,” said Charlie out of nowhere. I almost jumped. “Yeah,” I said.

“This place is so its own world. But today . . .”

“Today is like being on another planet,” I finished. “What’s Jay going to do if his house is gone?”

Charlie shook his head. I pictured Jay and Sparkler moving into the *Gazette* offices permanently, making coffee on the hot plate and eating ramen noodles every night.

"Can we swing by Meredith's?" I said. "Do you mind? I just want to make sure she's okay."

I'd said "we" without thinking. But it did feel like we were in this together, tossed into the same hole that we'd now have to crawl our way out of. I suppose you picture getting through a disaster with your closest friends and family, but instead you're thrown into random situations with people you would never expect. There was no question of making plans.

"Sure," said Charlie. He didn't seem to be in a rush. The problems were too big; you couldn't go straight at them. Addressing them would mean chipping away over a very long time. It made me itchy though. I wanted to jump in, start, figure out some way to put things back, fix it *now*.

I hurried ahead. Meredith would get it. Meredith, my best friend since we were toddlers, lived nearby in one of the Rose Cottages: a tourist-friendly neighborhood of really old, tiny houses—all adorned with roses trellised up the sides and over the roofs. Stone Cove Island is famous for these. People buy mugs and T-shirts decorated with pictures of her house. That always made us laugh. I wasn't laughing now.

Trees were scattered over her street like pick-up sticks. But her house had been spared. Still, it looked like a skeleton. Or a punk rock zombie. The beautiful roses, which normally cascaded over the roof, had been torn away and were sticking up wildly, like a thorny mohawk. The last blooms, which had lingered in the warm fall weather, were gone. The trellis was broken and dangling.

"Phew," I said. I meant it. Her house had survived.

Charlie trudged up behind me and nodded, his eyes far away.

When I ran and knocked, nobody answered, but I could

see through the taped-up windows that the inside looked relatively undisturbed.

"Maybe they're out getting provisions?" Charlie suggested.

"Or helping out at school." Meredith's parents taught music and art. Her mom was my favorite teacher. If they were running a storm shelter there, the whole family was likely pitching in. That antsy feeling came back. If I didn't join them, do *something*, I'd lose my mind.

Ten minutes later, we stood side-by-side at the end of my pebble drive. Our house, cottage-sized by anyone's estimation, looked like a dollhouse under the massive oak.

"That is a seriously big tree," said Charlie. "You guys are lucky it only landed on the porch."

"I know. I don't think Salty is ever coming back out of my parents' closet." Salty was our ten-year-old schnauzer. He had taken cover at the first bolts of lightning last night and, last I'd checked, was still huddled in the dark with my mom's shoes.

My dad appeared from behind the trunk, sweaty under his bundled clothing and holding a chainsaw. He waved hello but didn't come over. I didn't invite Charlie in.

"You okay?" Charlie asked quietly. He was looking at me now. I couldn't help but stare back. As if for the first time, I noticed gold-flecked warmth of his brown eyes. Meredith had always harped on how he had such great eyes. Only now, it seemed he could see me sinking into myself.

"Yeah. I'm fine," I said, trying to rally. But I remembered a time a few years earlier when Salty got lost on the golf course. Charlie had been nice then too, waiting with me on the steps of the inn while my dad walked up and down the links with a flashlight, calling Salty's name and shaking a bag of treats. Of course Salty eventually trotted out of the

brush, covered in burrs and something stinky, acting like nothing had happened.

"I'll see you around, okay?" he said. "Stay safe."

"You, too," I said.

After one last glance at our house, he hurried away.

I wasn't anxious to head inside. Just the thought made me a little claustrophobic. I wondered if my dad would let me try the chainsaw. Honestly, it looked kind of fun. I stepped toward him.

"Forget it," my dad said, following my eyes and pursing his lips. "Go help your mom dry out stuff inside."

I smirked, and proving I could handle a chainsaw, I showed off my tree trunk climbing technique, landing with a thud near the front door.

"Nice," he said. "Next time try going through the back. You're going to take down the porch completely if the tree doesn't get it done first."

"What? You fixed the door? Maybe I should check your temperature. You're clearly delirious."

"Ha ha. Hilarious, missy." He reached for the chainsaw cord, then paused. "Wait, tell me about things in town."

My smile faded. "It's bad," I said. "Ferry's out for at least a couple of months. Plus, no power and no phone lines, obviously."

"Damn. We knew it could happen, but I guess we never believed it."

"But we'll fix it, right?" I suddenly sounded like a little girl, but I couldn't help myself.

"Of course, kiddo. This island's seen worse."

I wasn't sure that was true, but it made me feel better to hear him say it.

Inside, Mom had stripped the wet sheets off my bed and was hanging them to dry in the bathroom. She had rolled up

the rugs from the first floor and dragged them to the back door. We had a small generator and a small camp stove that ran on sterno, but the generator was not going to power the clothes dryer. She looked up as I came into the bathroom, her forehead lined with stress, her blonde hair in a mess of a bun. Her lips were pinched in a tight smile that wasn't fooling anyone, especially me. It was an expression I'd seen often. I tried to picture her at my age. Her hair was pretty and silky. She was tall and slender, but so much tension and fatigue radiated from her body.

"Oh, good, Eliza, you can help me. Hold this up while I grab the other side."

"Mom, why don't we hang them outside?"

"What if it rains? Or if there's another storm?"

"There is not going to be another storm like this. And hurricane season is almost over. This stuff'll never dry in here. It'll stay damp and the house will stay damp." I could see the new worry of toxic mold fluttering behind her eyes. She had never been seventeen, I decided. It was impossible to imagine her having one beer too many at a beach party, giggling on a bike ride with friends, or daydreaming over a crush, her marriage to my dad notwithstanding. I turned on the sink faucet to wash my hands.

"Don't touch that!" she yelled. I jumped back and hit my head on the medicine cabinet door, which was open.

"Why?"

"It might be contaminated. We don't know if the water is safe. You're supposed to boil it—"

"Mom. I'm just washing my hands. I'm not drinking it. Stop freaking out." I left the room without helping with the sheets. I felt bad, but I just couldn't take it. Wasn't she supposed to be calming me down? *I* was the kid, not her. She was so exhausting.

I lay down on my stripped bed. The edge of the mattress felt wet. I stared at the ceiling, the only part of my room that looked unchanged. My rug was gone. My dresser had been dragged to the middle of the room. The pictures on the wall along the window were ruined. There were brown, rusty stripes running down the walls where the roof had leaked through the ceiling and under the paint. My entire last semester of life drawing had melted into a leaden, gooey, newsprint brick in the corner.

My mom hadn't even asked about my trip to town. The whole place could have washed away and she hadn't given it a second thought. Her self-absorption was insane. I was not going to be like her. I was going to pitch in and do something—in fact, I would organize something. Something big. Our house was fine. We could survive with a little water and having to use the back door. Other people had bigger problems, and I was going to focus on the future of the island, not my mother's petty neuroses. I got back up and headed out the newly operational back door to climb the hill to the Anchor Inn.

Before I had time to head for the veranda, Charlie walked in. He looked surprised but pleased to see me.

---

## Chapter Three

---

Jay at the *Gazette* came through, thanks to Charlie. On clean-up day, we had twenty-four kids from the high school including me, six from the middle school, a handful of volunteer parents, and Officer Bailey, our town sheriff, who offered to organize transportation and garbage removal.

Granted, there had been some awkward weirdness organizing the whole thing. Colleen Guinness, local lacrosse star

and part-time waitress at the Anchor Inn, wanted to know why I'd come up to see Charlie that morning. She wasn't mean about it, and a part of me was relieved—first, that she had even showed up to work at all, serving coffee. Besides, if she were curious about my motives for seeing Charlie, it meant that Stone Cove Island was still itself: still small, familial, gossipy, tight.

My memory of the conversation blurred over the three days, but it consisted mostly of my rambling: "I want to organize a clean-up day. Kids from the high school. Younger kids, too. The island will be ours eventually, right? Shouldn't we be the ones to help rebuild it? So I was thinking if you talked to Jay, and if Jay put it in the *Gazette*, people would show up. I really feel like it's the only way to get through this: get outside your head and your own problems and help someone else. If we sit around feeling miserable about what's happened to us, we'll just be stuck. We have to all pitch in if we want things to go back to the way they were . . ."

That was when Charlie chose to interrupt.

"Listen. You love it here. I get that. I love it too in certain ways. I just think one way people keep everything so perfect, the same way it's been for two hundred years—"

"Two hundred and fifty years," I corrected. It was obnoxious. I knew that. It just came out.

"Yes, excuse me, Miss Island History. *For two hundred and forty-seven years*, is by keeping out any new ideas."

"My clean-up crew is a new idea," I pointed out.

"Not what I meant. But yes, I'll help. You want some more coffee? I'm going to get a refill. We should drink the good stuff while we can, because I have a feeling we're in for months of FEMA coffee."

Standing there with Colleen—my not-quite-friend but Stone Cove sister and survivor—I could imagine that soon,

without regular food shipments, coffee would come to stand in for gold. Through the window, I watched guys in white jumpsuits from FEMA unload supplies from the driveway up to the inn kitchen. Fast work. They must have come in by helicopter. Still, I was certain that Charlie was wrong. The reason the island was able to preserve its way of life was because everyone here shared a common vision of how they wanted to live. No one was telling anyone else what to do.

At least I thought so then.

The day itself was not the crisp, sunny autumn day I had pictured. It was humid, weirdly warm, and raining on and off. There was hardly any wind. Harney's hardware had donated work gloves. I put on jeans, rainboots, and a windbreaker and took off on my bike at dawn. For three days I had felt trapped and helpless. But nobody was dead. An older lady from the bluffs was unaccounted for, but it turned out she had evacuated to her sister's house in Salem, just like she was supposed to. Two ten-year-old boys were feared drowned. Really, they had decided to camp out in the lighthouse during the storm, and then were afraid to go home the next day and find out how much trouble they were in.

I met Meredith at the Little Kids' Park. She was already waiting, straddling her bike, dressed from top to bottom in the kind of foul weather gear her family reserved for their sailing expeditions. Ironically, I was the one who ended up loving to sail.

We called Putney Park the Little Kids' Park because it's where our parents used to take us when we were in nursery school. Only a few trees remained standing. The playground, which sat in a low spot in the center, was completely flooded. The baby swings hovered over a deep pool of brown

water that stopped a few inches below the tire rubber seats. The little slide was half-submerged. Crews were working on clearing streets and damaged buildings first, so the parks and beaches had to wait.

Meredith was a dancer. She had started ballet at six and had stayed serious about it ever since. We made friends instantly in that first class our moms had signed us up for. I'd only lasted about six weeks. It was too slow and I was too fidgety. I had thought dancing would mean, well, dancing, not standing still, holding onto a bar and bending your knees.

"Ready?" Meredith asked, her eyes bright. Despite being a devout herbal tea drinker, she always looked way more awake than I felt.

"Storm's over," I joked, giving her outfit a onceover.

Meredith rolled her eyes. "My mom made me change out of my regular raincoat. She didn't want me to get it dirty. It was this or one of her painting smocks."

"Well, we'll probably be inside mostly. We're on lighthouse duty."

The fanciest houses on the island sat along the bluff along the west side, just north of Jay Norsworthy's (luckily still inhabitable) house. Normally it was fairly protected from wind because it faced the mainland, but I had heard some summer people were now rethinking that location. The cliff had been eroding slowly for years, and the hurricane had speeded the process. A few houses would either need to be braced on pilings and tied into the hillside or end up in the ocean.

There were also rambling, huge, old-fashioned summer houses out on East Beach, past the lighthouse. I loved that part of the island. The houses there felt gracious, stretching

out into the surrounding open fields. Some kept horses or cows. Few were occupied by year-rounders though, unless they were caretakers. We tended to live in the central section of town just up the hill from Water Street—my neighborhood—or else up behind the inn, or down in the little row houses along the harbor. A few people lived near the marina off East Beach, but in the winter, you really wanted to be close to town. People further out could get snowed in for days.

As we rode, I tried not to take in the flattened trees, half-collapsed houses, and sad debris washed from people's basements: endless sodden photo albums, ruined toys, lost sports trophies, mud-encrusted toddler snowsuits. On the steep hill down from the harbor, we passed the road sign that said "Do Not Coast." We coasted, letting our bikes fly, no brakes until we neared the bottom and the bikes were rattling so hard our bones shook. The wind pulled at the skin on our faces. I looked over at Meredith. She was grinning like I was. We did this every time, without thinking. We had always done this. When we were kids, we would take our hands off the handlebars.

"What did your mom say about school?" I asked her. They were trying to decide when to open again. The building wasn't damaged, but they were still using the gym as temporary housing and weren't sure if they could operate the whole building off generators alone.

"Next week," she said. "Tuesday. Wednesday at the latest."

I wrinkled my nose, the wind whipping through my hair. I was getting used to having free time and I liked it. Meredith and others, who were more worried than I was about college admission tests and applications, were anxious for the high school to open. Meredith wanted to get into Barnard, which had a really good dance program.

We distracted ourselves talking about the Halloween dance, pretending that the immediate future was predictable. Meredith had a crush on Tim McAllister, a junior. She was obsessed with what people would think about her dating a younger boy. If she ever got around to dating him, that is. So far the whole thing was theoretical.

"Tim's birthday is March twenty-second," she said. "That means I'm really only four months older."

"So you've pointed out at least eight billion times."

She shot a quick smirk at me as we slowed, approaching the beach. "I'm picturing what Lily Kirby and those guys would say, but it's not like I couldn't go with someone in our grade. I could. I just happen to like Tim." Meredith had worked the whole thing into a star-crossed drama in her mind, though I was pretty sure Tim would be thrilled to go to the party with her if he had any clue she even liked him.

"You know what I think," I said. "Just ask him."

"Who are you going to go with?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe Josh again. Or maybe I won't go." Josh and I had had a thing for about a second last year before deciding that we were friends, which we still were. My mind flitted to Charlie for a moment. But Charlie wouldn't be here by then, and could anything be lamer than going to a dance at the school you just graduated from? "We should just go as a group again. Do a theme costume. The seven deadly sins or something."

"That could be fun," she said. But she was still thinking about Tim.

As we dismounted and ditched our bikes, I took in the long expanse of sand. Yes, it was littered with garbage and broken branches, but it was still there, still recognizable as East Beach. I took a big stack of heavy-gauge garbage bags from Officer Bailey. Meredith kept her distance. Most kids

did when it came to our sole local law enforcement official. She was a stocky woman about my mom's age, built very straight up and down. She wore her uniform's belt buckled in tight, but didn't really have a waist. Officer Bailey was the first woman sheriff in the island's history, and the jokes and rumors flew: she was really a man; she was a closet lesbian; she couldn't get a job off the Island on a "real" police force because of her weight. A lot of people made a very big fuss about it, or grumbled about it, but I thought it was cool that she was the first female sheriff on Stone Cove Island, even if she had zero social skills.

Some of the boys were dragging garbage cans onto the beach where kids had started stacking wood and raking up debris.

Colleen was among them. She held up a bright green, high-heeled shoe she'd dug out of the sand.

"It's my size! Maybe I'll find the other one."

I laughed, but was also thinking it would be a good idea to come up with some way to connect people with their lost belongings, maybe start a website where people could post pictures. I could put that together. I would need someone more tech-savvy than I was. Once again, my mind flitted to Charlie. *He's going back to Boston*, I reminded myself. *And you already asked for your favor. Leave the guy alone.*

"Thanks for coming!" I called.

"No worries," Colleen yelled back. "It's a great idea!"

Meredith and I handed out extra work gloves, and then went into the lighthouse carrying rakes and shovels. The tall tower was painted on the inside with wide black and white stripes all the way up to the lantern room. It had been in operation until the early 90s, marking the channel that led back to the marina. Park rangers checked in on their rounds, but mostly it sat empty, open to tourists who

wanted to climb up and take in the view. That wasn't a possibility now.

Standing water and soaked papers and cardboard carpeted the floor. We winced at the odor: dank, stale mildew. Sand had blown inside and formed a mini dune against the far wall. Meredith and I hung garbage bags off the metal stair railing and began to fill them with the rotten paper. We moved shovelful after shovelful of sand back outside where it belonged. The wet sand was heavy. After ten minutes, my T-shirt was dripping. I tied a bandana over my hair, hippie-style, to keep the sweat off my face. After a while Colleen joined us.

"I came in here thinking this job would be easier," she said, struggling with the sand.

"Ha!" I grunted. Meredith just shook her head.

"You got a good turnout, Eliza," Colleen said.

"I'm just happy people actually showed up." It was funny how in the last few days Colleen had come to feel like a friend. Before the storm I couldn't remember more than two times we'd said more than hello. "Hey, did you happen to see Charlie this morning? He's still here on the island, right? Do you know if he's coming out to help?"

It came out before I really thought. She shot me a huge grin.

"Not a joiner. I told you," said Colleen. "Seriously. You two are ridiculous. He's about to leave. What are you wasting time for?"

"You and Charlie?" Meredith piled on. "Why didn't you tell me you hooked up?"

"Because we didn't! He helped me with clean-up day, you know, by getting Jim to put in the *Gazette*. I want to thank him. That's all."

"You should invite him to Halloween," said Meredith.

Colleen rolled her eyes. "You snooze, you lose, Eliza."

"There's nothing *to* lose," I groaned. But I could feel myself blushing. It was true, I had been looking around the beach for Charlie, feeling disappointed—okay, even annoyed—that he hadn't shown up. But this wasn't about me. We were doing this for the island. It wasn't like he hadn't shown up to my birthday party or something. "I'm going to check the windows upstairs," I announced, even though I knew they were fine. I could see from outside they weren't broken. I just wanted a break.

As I climbed the spiral staircase, the air became fresher. I could taste the tang of salt. The view was still as beautiful as ever. The ocean was calm, rolling in leisurely, innocently, as though nothing had happened. On the upper landing, a narrow stairway led to the observation deck. To the left there was a door, normally locked, the former office of the lighthouse keeper. Now it sat halfway open, blown in from the force of the storm. I pushed my way into the office and sighed.

The place looked like that illustration in *Alice in Wonderland*, the one where she's standing in a mad swirl of playing cards. The papers—seemingly every scrap from the entire lifespan of the place—were plastered across all surfaces. It looked like a bomb had exploded.

"Wow."

I think I actually said it out loud. There was almost no water damage up here, and I couldn't figure out how the storm has created a little tornado in here without tearing out the windows in the process. I reached down and picked up something at my feet.

It was a letter.

It had been written on a typewriter, not printed from a computer. The paper was heavy stationery—that formal blue people use for thank-you notes.

It was not a thank-you note.

*Uninvited guest. There's no room here for you. Daddy is waiting at the bottom of the sea. Square peg. Break your mother's back. We make the rules. You had your chance to play.*

*Do not await the last judgment. It takes place every day. To breathe is to judge. Eleven, twelve, dig and delve. Anchor through your throat. Down came a blackbird and pecked off her nose.*

*Goodbye, Bess. Read it out loud so you can hear your name one more time. You didn't have to go but now you will. Don't say no one warned you.*



---

## Boundary: The Books of Eva #2

---

Heather Terrell

December 2014

EVA IS now Archon: a New North leader whose sacred role is to unearth the wrongs of the past to justify the glorious present. Until now, this role was exclusive to men like her father. Eva is also newly betrothed to Jasper, her old friend and a fellow scion of the Triad, the all-male ruling class. But the secret time she spent in the Boundary land with her former servant, Lukas, nags at her as she playacts her life. Even more unsettling is Lukas's sudden belief that she is the "Angakkuq," a mystical figure of ancient Inuit prophecy, destined to destroy her society and usher in the "true Healing."

When her Archon training begins, Eva decides that she can't keep any more secrets. Nor can she maintain the boundary between her ex-servant and herself. Eschewing everything she believed in, she discovers not only the impossible reality of the New North's founding, but also the identity of her brother's murderer—tragically upending what she thought she knew about both Jasper and Lukas.

Torn between them, Eva must face a battle to determine the fate of the New North and those beyond it—for the sake of the truth.

HEATHER TERRELL worked as a commercial litigator in New York City for over ten years, but she has always been obsessed with myth, lore, and the gap between history and the truth. This preoccupation has led to several loosely factual historical novels (*The Chrysalis*, *The Map Thief*, *Brigid of Kildare*) and the pure-lore Fallen Angel series. *Boundary* is the second installment in The Books of Eva series. She lives in Pittsburgh with her family. Visit her at [www.heatherterrell.com](http://www.heatherterrell.com).

Pub Date: December 2014

YA \* Hardcover

5.5 X 8.25 \* 288 Pages

ISBN: 978-1-61695-199-3

Rights: World English & English Rights

---

## Prologue

---

LUKAS STANDS on the highest point of the Ring. He knows the position is too exposed, too risky in the light of day, but he has no choice. Not if he wants to see Eva. He strains for a glimpse through a small crack in the ice-roof of the Basilika. If he angles himself just right, he may catch something of the ceremony proceeding behind the colorful stained ice-windows. Perhaps the swoop of a Gallant's silvery cloak. Maybe even the trailing hem of Eva's white gown.

Bracing himself against the bitter wind, he draws toward the edge, over the top of the snow cornice. In his eagerness, he sends *qetrar* flying down the side of the Ring. The chunks of ice-crust crash into one another as they fall, making a noise that no Ring-Guard could ignore. Even the laziest of them.

Ducking behind one of the mounds behind him, Lukas slows his breath and stills his body. He leans into a depression, willing his inky sealskin coat and black hair to blend into its shadows. The *unalaak* picks up, and his coat flaps in its wind. He grabs the coat and pulls it close to his body. To the eyes of the Ring-Guards—poorly trained in the Boundary ways of parsing the ice and snow—he will look like nothing more than a shadow. Which is all he is to them anyway.

The thud of clumsy footsteps grows louder. After all these thousands of *siniks* on the ice, the Aerie people should be

more nimble, yet still they walk as heavily as bears, even on such an important day as this. But it's just another example of their dependence on the Boundary people. The Aerie would starve if there was no one to hunt for them; they'd scare even a deaf rabbit away.

The footsteps stop close to his hiding place. Lukas slides his bow out of his pack and turns it toward the ground to notch his arrow. In one single, silent movement, he draws the weapon—holding it close to his face as he listens to the Ring-Guards.

"Looks like the ice fell from here."

"The cornice seems weak. Probably just couldn't hold."

"So some pieces broke off and slid down on their own?"

"That's what I'm guessing."

"It's possible. Still, the Triad issued strict orders about today—"

"Come on. We don't want to miss the festivities, do we?"

The voices trail off and the footsteps fade. Lukas exhales and lowers his bow, watching his breath form frozen clouds. He dares to step out onto the Ring again and peers down onto the Aerie. The open spaces at the Ring's center—usually bustling with all manner of the self-proclaimed "chosen"—are empty. All the Aerie folk are within the Basilika's walls. A stark reminder that this ceremony is not for the Boundary. The Boundary are always *ellami*, outside. Unless they're serving at the Feast afterward, that is.

Lukas waits, watching through his soldered-together metal tubes. Without warning, the light intensifies. The bright rays afford him a quick glimpse through the rift in the Basilika's roof. The procession of Gallants, Maidens, Lords and Ladies has begun: the ceremonial walk down the Basilika's nave. It reminds him of the slow journey of an iceberg across the Frozen Sea. Cold and inhuman. Lukas can

only make out their white and silver-grey finery, not their faces. He can barely hear their chanting. It's the purr of insects. He's not certain how he'll identify Eva.

Blame and anger course through him. He alone is at fault for this. The guilt is his to shoulder; it doesn't matter that his acts were *ajurnama*, that they could not be helped. Their lies gave him no choice. He'd like to send one of his arrows down into the icy parade to stop her ceremony with that tedious Gallant, but he knows he must only bear witness. He's already sacrificed his *arninik* to the void to bring Eva to this moment.

Just then, he sees it. A flash of her long auburn hair cascading down the back of her white gown. Eva. His Eva.

No, she is more. He must remind himself of that, always. She does not belong to him alone. She is the *Angakkuq*. The only one who can spark the true Healing, the one who will melt the frozen sea of lies and destroy the Aerie forever.

---

## I. Junius 20—Year 242, A.H.

---

I stand at the back of the nave of the Basilika, waiting. I watch as every friend I've ever had, every highborn Aerie I've ever known, promenades down the nave first, a resplendent sea of white and silver. The men's elaborate cloaks of animal hides are bleached white from Mother Sun, and the women's sumptuous gowns of undyed fabrics, scrubbed ivory, embroidered with rare silver thread, shine as if fresh from the dressmaker. Of course, these robes may only be worn on this particular occasion.

A Betrothal is the only time the Lex permits us Aerie to deviate from our usual somber blacks and browns . . . not counting the whites a Maiden and her Gallant wear on their

Union day. Only on this occasion does the Lex allow us to focus on the future—Unions and children—rather than our terrible past. On this special day, we Aerie band together in a swath of the purest snow, a plea to give mankind another chance. We stand before the Gods in the Basilika, the rays of Her Sun pouring through the ice-windows, illuminating the symbols of the Father, Mother, and the Healing. The day is unseasonably warm, even for spring. The walls weep, as if the Sun Herself is crying colored tears.

I draw a Maidenly smile for the Aerie people to see—I know they're all watching—but really I feel like crying along with Her. Here I am at the center of it all, some kind of offering to the Gods. The trussed-up, milky-white emblem of mankind's hope for a continued second chance. But I am a fraud.

Not because my Betrothed is Jasper. He is the best kind of Gallant, and I believe he's in love with me. I'm lucky in this, because love isn't a prerequisite for Unions in the Aerie. In fact, it's a rarity, and that just fuels my guilt over this ruse.

No, the tears I don't dare shed are for the loss of my old self. Not long ago, I lived without guilt or fear. I was a child, playing with my twin Eamon before he fell from the Ring. I was a trusting Maiden in search of Testing glory in her dead brother's name. I was an Aerie. I stood within these sacred walls and worshipped the Gods with my whole spirit.

No more. One night with Lukas in the Boundary lands melted that innocence.

A shift in the music awakens me from my dark thoughts. The deep chanting of the Basilikons becomes more layered, more intense. Their polyphonic pleas for the Gods to bless this Union—voices only, no instruments in the Basilika—escalate. I look over at the Chief Basilikon, who nods in my direction.

This is my signal.

I muster my courage, gather the folds of my white gown heavy with embroidery and beadwork, and take the first step down the long nave. Silver and gold orbs—symbols of Father Earth and Mother Sun—stare down at me from the chancel. I suddenly feel that the Gods Themselves see through my artifice. A shiver passes through me at the thought of Their judgment, and then the doubt creeps in. The fear vanishes and in its wake is something I cannot name. This new feeling I have, that I cannot shed, is like a sickness. Do the Gods even exist? I believed in the Father and Mother for so long, but now I wonder.

As I continue down the nave, I absorb the smiles of my friends and neighbors, even some Aerie I only recognize by sight. Hundreds of faces, beaming at me. I am the cornerstone of their hopes. Not only I am about to become a newly Betrothed Maiden, I am already their newest Archon. I am something special: a gift from the Gods.

With a steady pace, I am careful to keep my gaze downcast in Maidenly modesty. In truth, I dare not look any one of them in the eyes. I fear that my eyes will reveal my true purpose, the whole reason I continue with this subterfuge. I am alone. Because I am the only one who knows my true mission: I must uncover who among them killed my brother.

---

## II. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

One by one, the tight stays of my gown loosen. As my Companion Katja slowly undoes the bindings of my corset, I sigh in relief. I've been laced up in my most somber Basilika gown since the first bell of morning—suffering through the last in an endless number of services blessing me as Archon. At long last I can breathe.

The heather-grey gown drops to the floor, and I reach for my black sealskin Archon uniform. The tunic, pants, and cloak look almost exactly as they did during the Testing—except they're now a lot cleaner and fresher-smelling. And they've been embroidered with the Triad symbol.

I finger the red stitching; it looks like my mother's fine handiwork. She got the Archon for which she's longed. Just not the one she expected.

What would this day have held if Eamon hadn't died? Would I be helping him prepare for his first day of Archon training? Would I be betrothed to Jasper and ready to enter a life like my mother's? Even though I've never wanted to be anything like her, I'd choose that path if it would bring my brother back.

Watching me pause, Katja hurries to my side. Shaking out the uniform, she holds out the pants so that I can step into them. I take them back from her instead.

"It's all right, Katja. I can manage this on my own."

"Oh no, Lady Margret would never forgive me."

"Are you Lady Margret's Companion or mine, Katja?"

Her body stiffens. "Yours—"

"If you don't tell Lady Margret that I got dressed on my own, then I won't either," I interrupt. But I am smiling.

Katja hesitates. My request is certainly outside the bounds of the Lex; secrets are never, ever permitted. But I am an Archon now, and my rule is law, too.

Nodding in acquiescence, she starts to curtsy, and says, "Good day, Maid—" Then she stops herself. She isn't quite sure how to address me. No one is.

She tries again. "Good day . . . Archon."

Now I force a laugh. "Just call me Eva. It's a lot easier."

Backing out of the room, head down, she mutters, "I couldn't do that."

And she's right. Such familiarity between Boundary and Aerie is forbidden by the Lex. Never mind that Lukas and I more than bridged that gap.

Careful not to call me anything at all, Katja closes the door behind her.

Alone for a few ticks, I kneel on the floor next to my bed. I slide my hand under it until I reach a loose floor-board. Lifting the splintery pine up, I walk my fingers into the crevice below, until I feel my treasure: Elizabet's amulet. Lukas taught me the real name for the pendant—a "flash drive"—but I will always think of it as an amulet, because Elizabet wore it around her neck as such the night she died. She'd put her hopes and dreams into it and by doing so, she had made it magic.

I slip the amulet around my neck. No matter the risk, I want Elizabet with me on my first day as Archon. She's the one who got me into this, after all. Pulling the black tunic over my head, I arrange the neckline to cover my secret. Then I pull on the sealskin pants and cloak. They feel so light and comfortable after all these long *siniks* in gowns. I remember how peculiar the uniform had felt when I first wore it for the Testing. Now I prefer it.

Just this once, I wish I had a mirror to see my reflection. I feel so different than when I set out on this path. I'm certain my face must show it. But after the Testing, I returned the only proper mirror in the Aerie to my father. And it's telling that Father removed it from the mantel in our home and locked it in his private treasury. His precious Relic ultimately won him the Sacred Role of Chief Archon. Though we've never discussed it, Father and I both know it served me well during my own Testing, and that we both owe a debt of gratitude to Lukas. Mirrors are not forbidden in the Boundary lands. Lukas insisted I take it, knowing it could

be a tool as well as a Testament to Vanity. Father agreed, in violation of everything we believe.

I take a deep breath at the top of the stairs. My parents will be waiting at the bottom, eager to send me off with blessings for my first day of training at the Hall of Archons. Striding down the steps with a confidence I don't really feel, I'm surprised when I reach the last step and find that Jasper is waiting too.

"Your Betrothed wanted to say his farewells," my mother announces on Jasper's behalf, as if he concocted this meeting. Of course she arranged this; any chance she gets to tether me to my role as Betrothed instead of Archon, she takes.

I glance over at Jasper, so handsomely Gallant and Nordic blond. He gives me a small, knowing smile—he understands my mother almost as well as I do—and takes my hand in his. Now that we are Betrothed, we are permitted to touch.

"I'm glad that you came," I say. Truly, I am. It's a relief to be with someone who understands something of the truth. Not about my mission to find Eamon's killer, but he alone knows the circumstances of our Betrothal—forged under the shining light of the Ring-Guards' threats instead of in an impassioned moment on the turret, as we told our parents. And our parents believed us, or pretended to anyway. It was relief or delight or both. And we felt it, too. After that, Jasper and I embarked on a whirlwind of Feasts and Basilika services, culminating in the lavish Betrothal ceremony. The actual Union festivities may feel anticlimactic.

I squeeze his hand. Jasper also understands that no matter how hard I fought for the Archon Laurels in the Testing in Eamon's name, I have mixed feelings about this day. He believes my discomfiture stems from grief. Like everyone else, he thinks I mourn the brother who died tragically and

accidentally. Nobody suspects foul play. And I do mourn. But even Jasper knows nothing about the fear I feel as the so-called Angakkuq.

During my secret trip to the Boundary lands, I met Lukas's grandmother, who may or not be crazy—an old crone who has never known the inside of the Aerie. She claimed that I was the Angakkuq, a shaman mediator between the Earth and the spirit world. She spoke in grave tones about how the Boundary has been waiting for me—the seeker of the truth—for over a generation.

Normally, I don't disagree with elders. The Lex is very clear on respect. Yet while I accept the duty to unearth the truth and change things if I must, I cannot accept her words. If the Aerie's religious beliefs are false—as I'm starting to wonder—then doesn't that mean the Boundary's beliefs could be false too? But far more terrifying is that my belief or skepticism may not matter. If the Boundary people have faith that I am the *Angakkuq*, I might not be able to convince them otherwise. I feel their expectations on my shoulders as much as my own.

"May the Gods travel with you," Jasper says.

At first, I'm surprised by his words; they constitute the ritual blessing for those few permitted to journey beyond the Ring. I'm only heading to the Hall of Archons. I realize, however, that his words are fitting. This is the start of a pilgrimage, and it may well indeed take me beyond the Ring.

"May the Gods travel with you also," I answer.

His own journey begins today too. He will commence training for the Forge, the competition for the position of Lexor. If he wins, he'll join one of the other three ruling groups in the Triad, the one charged with enforcing the Lex. We'll be quite a pair in our Union, a powerful first for the Aerie. The eyes of the New North are on us both.

We stand together for a long tick.

My father clears his throat. When we don't move apart, he says, "Eva, we must go. Your fellow Archons will be awaiting you. And me."

My mother chimes in, "Your brother would not have been late on his first day as Archon."

She certainly knows how to reach me. At the mention of Eamon, I try to release Jasper's hand, but his fingers are still wrapped around mine. He doesn't want to let go. "Be careful, Eva," he whispers.

I smile at him in reassurance. "You'll probably see me later this week," I whisper back. There are no guarantees, however. I could spend months training in the Hall of Archons by day and dining at home by night, or I could be sent on a Frozen Shore dig by the midday bell.

"Eva," my father says again. This time, his voice brooks no delay.

Jasper releases me. My father and I move toward the door. I glance back, and the unprecedented nature of this moment hits me. This is the first time in Aerie history that a Maiden leaves her Gallant at home as she heads off to her calling.

---

### III. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

My father and I step out of our home and into the bustling Aerie. Even though the Prime Bell has not yet started to ring, the streets are crowded. Boundary stewards from the Grain Keep rush past us, delivering steaming loaves of bread to Triad homes. Maidens and Ladies line up outside the Basilika for a special service on their sacred role in New North. But there is one new constant among all the people—Aerie and Boundary—when they see us, they pause and bow. A

sighting of the Chief Archon and his daughter, Eva, will provide the people with excellent gossip for their evening meals. The first female Archon in history, on her very first day of Archon service!

I feel a new pride in spite of my misgivings. I mean, I've always felt proud walking by my father's side or standing alongside him during ceremonies. But this is different. The respect is no longer for him alone. But that feels wrong, too. This should be Eamon's moment. No matter how hard I worked to win the Laurels in his memory, Eamon will never have a chance to live his dreams, whatever they might have been. He was cheated out of his life. How dare I try to fulfill his destiny for him?

I push away my dark thoughts and work hard to match my father's stride through the warren of narrow streets. Our sealskin coats trail behind us like ravens' wings, and we are moving so fast I almost feel like we are flying. Almost like I felt coursing over the snow on my sled during the Testing. Maidens must always move with careful grace—let no inelégance overtake your movements, instead keep the slow passage of Her Sun ever in your mind—so this is all new to me. But now I'm an Archon. It is liberating in ways I hadn't expected. And that is valuable knowledge if I am to find my brother's killer.

My father doesn't mention it, but I know my long moment with Jasper is the reason we must hurry. The Lex requires that we pass through the front doors of the Hall of Archons before the Prime Bell sounds its final, sixth chime. Otherwise, the Archon-Guards will lock it for the day, even though my father is the Chief. It would not only embarrass me, but it would bring shame on my father as well.

I imagine there are those Aerie who would like to see that happen, my own mother among them.

Just as I spy the ice-spires of the Hall of Archons over the top of the Raiments Keep, the first bell of Prime sounds. My father grabs my hand. Panic must show on my face, because he smiles. “We can’t have you late on your first day, can we?”

I shake my head. “We won’t be late.”

Hand in hand, we sprint down the final street before we reach the small plaza in front of the Hall of Archons. The usually stone-faced Archon-Guards look shocked to see their stoic leader breathless and ruddy. I empathize. This day is indeed unlike any other. The sacrifices that have been made—chief among them, Eamon’s life—so that I can enter this sacred place where only Archons are allowed. . . As the Ring-Guards heave open the thick metal doors, I recompose myself.

It is dark, save for the torchlight. No cheery welcome awaits us, only a fearsome line of black-uniformed Archons, gazing stone-faced at me from the back of the Hall. The doors screech and clang shut behind us.

Many of these men are very familiar. I’ve Feasted with them, prayed to the Gods alongside them, played with their children—but their expressions bear no hint of recognition or Gallantry. I glance over at my father. No evidence of his kindly reassurance remains, either. The hand that helped me along a few ticks ago has passed me off to his underlings. I am no longer Eva—daughter, Maiden, fellow Founding family member, and Schoolmate. I am simply the newest Archon.

During the long days before the Testing and the even longer *siniks* of the Testing itself, I had envisioned so much about the glory of becoming an Archon. But I didn’t envision the reality. I never foresaw this moment. I wonder if the Testing is such an ordeal to mask what is truly terrifying: Archon service itself.

I try to mimic those cold faces on mine and square my shoulders. I nod when one of the more senior Archons directs me to far side of the line. As I march past the dark, watchful eyes of the other Gallants, I remind myself that I won the Laurels without any help. I deserve to be here too. I must be strong. If I allow even a tiny chink in my armor, the others might glimpse my true purpose. I am the youngest and the shortest, without question. I silently repeat to myself: *You are an Archon, here to do your sacred duty. Nothing more, nothing less.*

My father starts a prayer, and we join our voices with his. “Oh Father and Mother, who art in the Heavens, Hallowed be thy names. Thy Kingdom has come, thy wills have been done . . .” The prayer reminds us that the Aerie is the fulfillment of the Gods’ prophecy, that we of the New North are Their wishes, realized.

My eyes drift as my lips chant the words I’ve spoken so many times. The symbol of the Triad cover the walls and ceiling of the Hall. A few windows dot the thick ice-walls, lined with shelves, arrayed with Relics from past Testings.

My gaze comes to rest on a curious group of bowls, boxes with small handles in many colors, and metal cans. There are delicate bags imprinted with nonsensical word pairings—Happy Meal and Quarter Pounder—and a tall pitcher-like item emblazoned with a double golden arch. Squinting, I notice that the image of the arch is on all the artifacts, as well as the word McDonald’s. What or who is a McDonald’s? What are these things? What was their purpose in the pre-Healing world, not the purpose assigned to them by their respective Chronicles? I’m fairly certain my father would tell me that McDonald’s is some sort of evil vassal of Apple, but Lukas taught me to not believe such stories anymore.

Elizabet Laine would know.

Are these the sorts of artifacts Lukas wants me to investigate? I've never heard of a McDonald's mentioned in the Chronicles of past Testors that I know—and I know most of them—but then the Archons often undertake excavations about which the people of New North hear nothing.

I hear my name. Reluctantly, I shift my gaze from the Relics to my father.

"The Lex mandates that each Neophyte Archon be assigned a Mentor Archon. Thanks to the Gods, these Elders train the newly-Laureled members of the Triad. This selection is undertaken with great care by the senior Archons. The Neophyte-Mentor relationship is the first key to the Neophyte's understanding of the Gods' will. For our newest Archon Eva, we have chosen Archon Laurence as Mentor."

---

#### IV. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

Archon Laurence?

At first I think there's been a mistake. Laurence is the second-in-charge under my father, far too busy to serve as Mentor. Usually a seasoned but relatively junior Archon would be chosen.

My heart thumps. What should I think of this? Maybe I should view the selection of such a senior Archon as a compliment, but right now I'm worried that the other Archons will see it as favoritism. Or maybe I should see it as my father protecting me, as a female in a male's world? Then there's the common knowledge that Archon Laurence is vying hard for the Chief position when my father steps down from his ten-year term. He can't be thrilled about this appointment,

either. Not only am I the first Maiden Archon, I'm possible competition: the Chief is selected solely on the strength of his or her Chronicle, not his years of service.

Before I realize it, my father has finished his speech, and the Archons disperse.

No one tells me where to go. Only my father and Laurence remain, engaged in deep conversation. Could their exchange be about the Mentor appointment? For an endless tick, I'm standing in my queue spot in the Hall, awkwardly awaiting their command.

"Archon Eva," my father calls to me.

Marching over to his side, I answer, "Yes, Chief." Calling him "Chief" feels artificial, like we are playing a Schoolchild game. But it must be done.

"You know Archon Laurence, of course." My father gestures to him.

Out of long habit, I start to curtsy. Stopping myself, I bow to my senior like any other Archon, and wait for Archon Laurence to speak.

He doesn't. He merely lowers his grey eyes and silvery-blond head, not a bow in return—and so it is an insult. Such deviance from polite rituals of greeting, whether directed at Archon or Maiden, is tantamount to a challenge.

"I'm certain that Archon Laurence will serve as a dutiful Mentor to you, Archon Eva," my father says loudly, his tone flat. He fixes his unblinking eyes on my Mentor. "The Lex is pane-clear on the issue of obedience. Triad members must obey the authority of their leaders, above all else. Isn't that right, Archon Laurence?"

Archon Laurence waits a long tick before answering. "The Lex is indeed pane-clear on that, Chief."

My father's eyes smolder at him in a way that only I can see, in the same way they smolder when I've misbehaved at

home. “And as an obedient member of the Triad, you will comply with the Lex in the matter of Archon Eva, correct?” he asks. It is a command. There can be no other answer but yes.

“Of course, my Chief.” Archon Laurence then bows deeply, hiding his steely eyes. I’m certain they would not display any meaning beyond submission.

I think of words my father whispered when I first returned from the Testing in triumph, after we’d shared the first and only embrace in the privacy of our home. “*I am Lex-bound not to tell you about your duties as Archon. But as part of the Triad, I can tell you this: keep your enemies close.*”

For a split-tick, I wonder whether Archon Laurence is the killer that I’ve been seeking. But he’s too self-protective—and too self-serving—to take such risks . . . even if he viewed Eamon as a threat, which I’m guessing he did.

“You and Archon Eva may be dismissed to begin her instruction,” my father concludes. He whirls and strides toward the doors.

Archon Laurence and I bow to him. Again, the ritual salute feels strange and inauthentic—this is my father. But I cannot let that show. I turn and follow Archon Laurence to the shadowy vestibule at the end of the Hall.

When he abruptly stops, I do as well.

Another Archon stands nearby in the darkness, a stooped Elder. At first, I don’t recognize him, especially after the relative brightness of the Hall. But after my eyes adjust, I see that it’s Archon Theo. I know him from Feast Days in our family homes and various Town Square gatherings. He won his Testing year nearly forty years ago, making him the oldest Archon still serving.

Why is he here?

Archon Laurence finally deigns to speak to me. “Archon

Eva, I will see you in two weeks, at which time we will leave for an excavation on the Frozen Shores. Until then, Archon Theo will instruct you.”

I detect a sneer, one that he surely wants me to see. Before I can ask any questions, he slips off into one of the many hallways that extend from this spot like a squid. So this is how Archon Laurence follows explicit orders from the Chief Archon, from the words of the Lex itself: he’s palming off his mentoring responsibilities to the very oldest Archon.

My father would be furious.

Should I tell him? If I do, there is no doubt he will inflict that fury on Archon Laurence. As my fists clench at my side, I come to a realization: this is another test.

Archon Laurence wants to prove that I’m just another Maiden who will run weeping to her family. Archon Laurence wants me to tell my father.

In that case, I’ll answer his defiance through defiance of my own. I won’t utter a word. My father will find out soon enough. The fury Archon Laurence is expecting wouldn’t be about the mistreatment of the Chief Archon’s daughter, anyway—though everyone in the Aerie would see it that way and consider it another example of favoritism. No, when my father discovers on his own how Archon Laurence abdicated his Mentor responsibility, my father will foresee that same reaction from the Aerie. He will know why I kept quiet. So I am also certain that he will remain quiet, too, so as not to give Archon Laurence the satisfaction of even a minor victory.

Besides, I can’t draw any more attention to myself if I’m to do my true work. In a way, I am grateful to Archon Laurence. His petty test served a valuable purpose. I can no longer name my true work—even to myself—if I am to

succeed. Quiet is what I shall become. A quiet little mouse scurrying in and out of all the Archons' secret places.

---

V. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

"You can't be happy about this re-assignment of your education, Archon Eva," Archon Theo says as he leads me away. "I know how feeble I must appear."

Is he baiting me? I think about how Eamon would respond.

"I follow the authority and commands of my superiors," I reply. "It is a blessing to learn from an Elder. Happy doesn't factor into my thoughts, Archon Theo." I'm thankful that I'm walking behind the wizened old man; it allows me to keep my eyes hidden while I utter a complete untruth.

"The perfect response. Very nice, Archon Eva. Such stoicism and obedience will serve you well in this Hall." He turns around abruptly. His rheumy eyes look me up and down. "Just like they did your father."

Turning back around, he signals me to follow him down a sharp turn off the corridor. He moves surprisingly quickly for a man of his years. "The Lex does not permit diagrams of the Hall of Archons," he continues. "We must protect our Relics and our study of them by every means. You must rely on instinct and memory to guide you through this sacred labyrinth." He chuckles to himself. "But I'm guessing that if you won the Laurels, you've got a pretty well-developed sense of direction."

"Yes, Archon Theo."

"Good. You'll need it. You will have much to learn in a short time, and you can't waste a tick by getting lost. Understood?"

"Understood, Archon Theo."

As he leads me down the passageway of ice, he points

out a bright room, full of long tables strewn with objects: the Conservation Chamber. Two unfamiliar Archons hover over the strange artifacts, examining them with a tool I've never seen before. It is black and c-shaped with a tube at the top. The Archons slide the artifacts under the tube and then peer down the other end. It looks like a Relic itself, as if it should be studied rather than doing the studying. But Archon Theo's pace is fast, and I don't have the chance to linger and watch.

The moment I commit the location of that chamber to memory, Archon Theo points out another, than another. We twist and turn down endless hallways, passing the Receiving Chamber, the Chamber of Equipment, the Examination Chamber, the Chamber of Records, the Map Chamber, on and on . . . all places I've heard my father mention in passing over the years, all places he's Lex-bound not to describe, so that I had no clear sense of them. I am overwhelmed, but I feel a tingle of excitement. His world is becoming mine.

The connecting corridors are cut with at least one arched hole in the walls, like ice-windows without the panes. Each opens onto an interior courtyard. Their placement helps me organize the layout in my mind. As we turn again, there's a roar from one of the archways, and I strain for a glimpse inside the space.

Archon Theo pauses as well. "That's the Yard. It's used is for the teaching of advanced ice climbing and excavation techniques. You will have the chance to train there later this afternoon, after the Sixth Bell."

I nod, and he hurries on toward a stairwell, the only one I've encountered so far. Two Archon-Guards—carrying bows, arrows, and knives—stand at its base. No other place in the Hall or its corridors is similarly protected.

Archon Theo stops. Gesturing with a grand wave, he says, “The Offices of the Chief and the Vault of Archons are located up there.”

My face is blank, but I’m suspicious. Why are we making a special stop here?

“Most Archons—especially our most junior—have no need to mount these stairs. The Offices of the Chief are no place for them. But you must remember this spot, as you will be making use of the Vault.”

Now my heart thumps. This is the exact sort of place Lukas told me to try and locate. But I hadn’t dreamed that I’d find it on my first day, or that I’d be granted access to it. Trying not to sound particularly interested, I ask, “What sort of work would you like me to perform in the Vault?”

He smiles a little. “Ah, I hear the disappointment in your voice, Archon Eva. You’d rather train in the Yard than spend your ticks poring over dusty archives?”

“No, Archon Theo. I didn’t mean—”

“You don’t have to apologize,” he interrupts. “I know the Yard is where most young Archons want to be.”

I can’t help but think of Eamon’s long bells in the Library, researching past Testings for his own preparations. Of all the wealth of information it yielded him—and me. “I thought the records of past excavations were kept in the Library,” I manage.

“Some Testing documents are indeed collected there. Other Testing records are kept in the Vault, as well the Archons’ private excavations.”

“Of course.” I fall silent, fighting to betray no excitement.

He pauses. “Aren’t your curious what you’ll be doing up there in the Vault?”

I try to smile but I’m almost too frightened. “Yes, Archon Theo.”

“The Site to which you’ll be traveling with Archon Laurence has been excavated once before,” he goes on, not noticing how I’m squirming inside. “Many years ago. But then the ice shifted, and for the safety of the Archons, the Site was closed. Only now have the Gods opened the crevasse again. So you will be researching that earlier excavation. I might as well warn you that it will likely be dull. But we must make certain that we don’t retread the ground of those earlier Archons. Or miss any areas that they deemed promising.”

“I’m honored to be doing such important work, Archon Theo.”

“When you’re coughing on the dust of the past, you won’t feel so honored,” he says with a gruff laugh.

I wonder why he’s trying to make me feel badly about this assignment. Is this his subtle way of telling me what he really thinks about a Maiden as Archon? Or is some other message at work? Is he trying to tell me that he’s on my side, and what he really thinks of Archon Laurence? It doesn’t matter. All that matters is that I’m going to be granted access to the Vault.

“When was the Site last excavated? The one to which I’ll be traveling?” I ask in a controlled voice.

“In Year 102, after the Healing,” he says as he leads me up the stairs.

Interesting, I know that Testing year. It was the year that one of only two other females besides me Tested. It was the year of Madeline.

---

## VI. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

I excuse myself before the Attendants serve the final course of sweets, which I used to adore. I haven’t craved sweets since the Testing; like so much else in my life, their taste

rings false. Even though my parents and Jasper offer their understanding when I say I am exhausted, I know they are disappointed. They hunger for details about my first day as Archon, what little I can reveal that's not forbidden by the Lex. But I can't stand another tick of the contrivance. It's exhausting.

My parents stand by the arched doorway to the dining hall as Jasper and I part, chaperoning as always. We are not to be alone until our Union.

"I'm just happy that you'll be in the Aerie for at least two more weeks," he whispers as he bows and kisses my outstretched hand.

"Me too," I whisper back.

"Our Union cannot happen soon enough."

He looks into my eyes. I see such longing in them that I blush, and he releases my hand. As the Attendant heaves open the weighty wooden door, Jasper turns back and waves. I raise the palm of my hand in farewell. A mixture of sadness and guilt rises within me. I lower my eyes.

The stairs feel as though they've multiplied since this morning. The Basilika services seem so long ago. As I drag my feet up step by step, I tell myself that I'm just tired from the early rising and the newness of everything I've experienced. Today truly was a day unlike any other I've ever had. It isn't the heaviness of my real burden weighing me down. I can handle it. Just like Lukas wants.

The tick I reach the last step, I overhear my father mutter, "It was hard, Margret. Seeing her in the Hall."

"I'm sure it was, Jon. To see your Maidenly daughter among all those male faces." My mother's soothing voice is a Lady-whisper. I can almost picture her leaning across the wide Feasting table to touch my father's hand in a gentle show of reassurance and solidarity. Her defining feature is

her fierce loyalty to our family—or rather, her vision of what our family should be. But it is born of genuine love for my father. That is her saving grace.

“That’s not the reason, Margret.”

“No?”

“No.” The word quavers. “I kept looking at Eva’s face and seeing Eamon there instead. I know he’s gone, but I’ve imagined his face in the Hall for so many years, it—”

His voice breaks off, and I freeze. He’s crying. I’ve only ever heard my father cry once before. The day the Ring-Guards brought my brother’s body home.

Katja sees me frozen on the top stair. She rushes over to my side. “Come—” She pauses, still unsure what to call me. “Eva, you are exhausted. Let me draw a bath for you.”

“No, Katja. I’ll be fine.” I wave her off and hurry into my bedroom alone. Shutting the door behind me, I slide down to sit my haunches. And I sob in silence.

I’m not the only one playacting. My father—seemingly the essence of pride and support today—suffers, too. The loss of Eamon haunts us all.

I try to calm myself. I must put aside my own worries about straddling two worlds, and about past, present, and future. Maiden and Testor. Betrothed and Archon. Aerie leader and . . . whatever I am to become. The role-shifting must become instinctive and hidden. If I am to uncover the truth of Eamon’s death and the truth about New North—two knots I know are tangled—I must compartmentalize. Silence, even within my own head, is best for the quiet little mouse.

But the sobbing will not stop. I try to stifle the emotion—I don’t want my poor parents to hear me—but I can’t breathe unless I let it out. All the grief that I’ve kept trapped inside me since Eamon died bursts forth in convulsive gasps. For

months now, I've stuffed my sorrow into the darkest reaches of my spirit—thinking only of winning the Archon Laurels in his name. Avenging his death has kept me from acknowledging that the victory was empty. It will never bring my dead brother back to life.

Before I even realize it, I am on my knees. Not in front of the diptych where I used to pray to the Gods, but in the middle of my bedroom. I'm not sure to whom I'm praying anymore—what Gods exist, if any. But I must try. "Whatever you are, whoever you are, please help me," I whisper.

The praying just make me cry harder. The enormity and futility of my tasks overwhelm me, and my chest heaves. Why did I ever think I could do this? I sink into the floor and allow my head to rest upon my knees. I am a cocoon of sadness.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. Blood rushes to my face. No matter how hard I tried to keep quiet, Katja heard my sobs. Or worse, my parents.

I look up to see near-black eyes staring into mine. It's Lukas.

---

## VII. Junius 24—Year 242, A.H.

---

For a long tick, I am paralyzed. He would be put to death if discovered here. But somehow that is the farthest thought from my mind.

In his eyes, I see that he understands; he's straddling two worlds, too. His entire Aerie life is an act for the people who believe that Tech is evil and Apple a False God. He can only be himself in the Boundary, where the people know Tech is only as evil as the hand that wields it and that Apple is only a symbol of something long forgotten. Lukas has been

wrestling with self-imposed silence his whole life. All at once, I am ashamed. Who am I to complain or doubt what I must do?

He wipes a tear from my cheek. The gentle gesture makes me cry harder; he isn't known for his softness. Then he wraps his arms around me, and whatever stones left standing in my interior wall crumble. But the tears stop flowing. For the briefest of ticks, I feel safe.

"I've missed you, Eva," he whispers into the top of my head.

"And I, you." The words almost lodge in my throat. I wonder if we'd make these confessions if we were looking each other in the eye. Our relationship was built more on action than anything we professed to each other.

"I wanted to see you to . . . to make sure you were okay," he stammers. "I know this is hard."

"Being an Archon?" I ask, my head still buried in his shoulder, my eyes closed.

"That, and all that is being asked of you. As *Angakkuq*."

I laugh a little. In the midst of all this grief and helplessness, the thought of me as some sort of shaman leader strikes me as so absurd to be funny. "I'm no *Angakkuq*," I breathe.

"Yes, you are." His words are firm, humorless.

I pull back a little, but we are still seated, sort of tangled in one another. I try to meet those black eyes. "No, Lukas. I'm just a Maiden searching for answers—about my brother and about New North. An ill-equipped Maiden, at that."

"The answers you seek are the exact answers the *Angakkuq* has been foretold to seek. You . . ." He finally returns my gaze. His jaw is tight. "Eva the Maiden and Eva the *Angakkuq* are one and the same."

"No, they're not. Or maybe they are. Anyway, what does

it matter if we're both searching for the same things? Now that I'm an Archon—an insider like you wanted—I can find out the information we need. Whether I'm an Archon or Maiden or *Angakkug* . . . in the end they're just words." I shrug. "Like Apple," I add for good measure.

"Words?"

Although he's not yelling, I can hear the anger in Lukas' voice. I pull even farther back from him. "Yes." I stay resolute.

"Words matter, Eva. Words built the Aerie. Much has been sacrificed so that you can lead New North to the truth."

I blink several times. "Sacrifice? What do you mean by sacrifice?"

His voice sees my reaction and softens. "Sacrifice . . . okay, that's too *strong* a word. What I meant to say is that we've all been suffering in our ignorance for too long. And you alone—in all of New North's history—have the chance to change that."

"Please, Lukas," I implore, shaking my head. "I just want to find out my brother's killer and have him punished. If that means I have to learn some unpleasant truths about New North in the process—truths that got him killed—then so be it."

His eyes grow darker, sadder. "I wish you could understand how important you are, Eva."

I see myself reflected in his inky eyes, and I realize something. No matter how close I feel to Jasper, the only one who really knows me is Lukas. How can I have real feelings for a Gallant who only knows the public me? Even if his heart is pure? He knows I grieve, yes. But beyond that, he knows the construct I fashion—whether it's Maiden or Archon—whenever I face the world. Only with Lukas am I free not to wear any costume or mask, to assume any role. I act the same way with him that I acted with Eamon.

Although I feel very differently about Lukas than I felt about my brother.

Lukas runs his fingers along my cheek. Now that it's dry of tears, I feel the roughness of his skin. I hold his hand in my own and stare at it, if only to avoid that same piercing gaze I'd just sought. His hand is dry and heavily scarred. But very, very warm. I clasp it tightly.

"When will I see you next?" I ask.

"I'll come to you when I can."

"From the Boundary?"

"I'm sure a new placement will come in soon." He lifts my chin, forcing me to look eyes. He looks so old, so tired. I realize that I have no idea how old Lukas is. I always assumed that he was same age as me because he was Eamon's Companion. Even though he knows me better than anyone else, there's so much about him that I *don't* know. That I never asked.

"I'll try to wait."

"You must. You don't realize how many eyes are upon you. We must keep you safe."

He releases my hand, and without glancing back, climbs out the window and into the night.



---

# I'm Glad I Did

---

Cynthia Weil

February 2015

IT'S THE summer of 1963, and sixteen-year-old JJ Green is a girl who knows she is born to write songs, even though the rest of her family—including a pioneering female attorney mother—wants her to think more practically about her future (i.e., law). JJ's Uncle Bernie is a music mogul with whom her family forbids contact. When JJ secretly applies for an internship in the famed Brill Building, she finds herself navigating a secret relationship with Bernie as well as a secret office romance with Luke, a boy she meets in the elevator. Through luck and fate, Luke and JJ find themselves collaborating on a song with an office cleaning woman, Dulcie Brown, who was once a famed nightclub singer. When Dulcie allegedly commits suicide right after they cut their demo, both JJ and Luke suspect foul play—and JJ is plunged into a deadly mystery that exposes the best and worst of the birth of modern music.

CYNTHIA WEIL is a multi-Grammy winning songwriter who has been inducted into both the Songwriters Hall of

Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She is the lyricist of classic songs like “On Broadway,” “Here You Come Again,” “We Gotta Get Out of This Place,” “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling” (the most performed song of the 20th century), and “Somewhere Out There,” which was a double Grammy winner and Oscar nominee. Although she has lived in Southern California for many years with her husband and writing partner, Barry Mann, she still considers herself a New Yorker. *I’m Glad I Did* is her first novel.

Pub Date: February 2015

YA \* Hardcover

5.5 X 8.25 \* 288 Pages

ISBN: 978-1-61695-356-0

Rights: All

---

## Prologue

---

SOME PEOPLE follow their destiny by accident. Take, for example, Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. I was nine years old when I first saw the movie, and the minute Dorothy sang “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” I knew she’d find a way to get there. True, she didn’t do anything to make it happen. A tornado showed up and took her exactly where she needed to go. But the haunting beauty of that sad song made still made me feel like she earned it.

Knowing my life was not a movie, that there was not much chance of a tornado in New York City, and that the place I needed to go was only across town, I figured I’d have to get there myself. So way back then, before I even hit a double-digit birthday, I made a choice. One day I would fly over my own rainbow and write a song like that one. I’d walk through those big brass doors of the Brill Building, the place where songs are “born.” I’d earn it, too—on my own.

I wasn’t able to figure out exactly how I’d get there until the summer of 1963, seven years later. And although I may have gotten there myself and faced my fear by choice, looking back now, it seems that most of what followed—the joy, the tragedy, the love, and the loss—were meant to be. It was my destiny that summer to find out who my family was, who my friends were, and eventually, who I was.

The only part that didn't feel like destiny, that never will, was the cost.

---

## Chapter One

---

There are three unbreakable rules in my family.

The Greens always have breakfast together.

The Greens always negotiate instead of arguing, and

The Greens always become lawyers.

Even though I'm hardly ever hungry at breakfast and I really love a good screaming argument (I believe it clears the air), I've managed to live with rules one and two. It's rule number three that scares me, crushes my dream, and destroys my soul. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is that I do not now nor have I ever wanted to be an attorney.

Unlike my big brother Jeffrey, I have not inherited the legal gene. Jeff—who at the age of seven suggested a contractual relationship between us regarding use of the bathroom—is clearly a Green. I was four at the time, so I accepted, proof only that I seem to have been born to the wrong family. If I didn't look so much like my mother, I'd suspect I'd been adopted, but we have the same face (heart shaped), same hair (ridiculously straight, medium brown with red highlights), and the same big feet (don't even ask what size).

That morning in June, however, I had a bigger secret than my shoe size.

What I was keeping under wraps: a plan to break sacred rule number three by getting a summer job in the music business. A job that would no doubt lead to a total family flip-out. I had no intention of telling them anything about it

unless I got it, and today was just an interview. I was painfully aware that if anyone in my family of legal eagles thought I was hiding something, I was going to be cross examined, so I tried to look relaxed and extremely normal as I ambled into the dining room and slid into my chair.

"Good morning, Irving," Jeff greeted me, munching on cornflakes "You look a little more uptight than usual. What's up?"

So much for my acting ability. My brother has called me Irving, as in Irving Berlin, ever since I was idiot enough to tell him that I wanted to write songs.

"Stop calling your sister, Irving," my mother instructed. She was cutting off the top of her egg with my grandmother's silver egg cutter, reading the *Herald Tribune* and monitoring our conversation at the same time. She was one of the few people in the world who could do three things at once and do all of them perfectly.

My mother, Janice Green—Janny—is a criminal attorney. My dad, Julius Green—Jules—is a judge. Jeff, the bathroom negotiator, is prelaw at Columbia. He's also working at Janny's office for the summer. Could he be more perfect? J is the family letter for alliteration given the happy coincidence of my parent's first names. But J can also stand for lots of other things, like Judgment. Or Joy. Or Joylessness. Or Joke.

Janny and Jules named me Justice, and if that's not making a point and giving a kid vocational guidance, I don't know what is. My middle name is Jeanette after Jeanette Rankin, who was the first woman to serve in the United States Congress. Try living up to that. The only saving grace is that everyone calls me JJ and I hardly ever tell anyone my real name. I graduated from high school at Dalton last week, class of 1963. I'm sixteen, two years younger than most of my friends because I skipped a grade in elementary school

and made one up in middle school rapid advance. I mention this as proof that I am not too dumb to be a lawyer; I simply don't want to be one. I've known what I wanted to be ever since I was three years old and crawled up on the piano bench in my family's living room. Ever since I touched the keys and realized I could make my own sound. Ever since I heard the Latin music that our housekeeper Juana (another cruel letter J coincidence) played on her radio, I've wanted to be a music maker, a spinner of dreams, the creator of some kind of new and beautiful noise, a poet to give words to what others feel but can't express. In short: a songwriter.

The problem is that in the Green family, it's the equivalent of saying you want to be an axe murderer or even worse, a music business lowlife who rips people off, like my Uncle Bernie.

"*Buenos días, carina,*" Juana whispered, sensing I was daydreaming. She placed my usual toasted bran muffin in front of me.

"Justice, I think you're going a little heavy on the mascara," Janny observed, "It makes you look unhappy."

"It's not mascara, Mom, they're false eyelashes. Everyone's wearing them."

"You are not everyone." Jules reminded me from behind *The New York Times*. He peered over the headline JFK SIGNS EQUAL PAY ACT. "Your mother's right. You look unhappy."

"It's her guilty look," Jeff chimed in, "I remember it from when Irving and I shared a bathroom and she used it during my time."

"Why are you talking about me as if I'm not here, Jeffrey?" I asked calmly. Whenever he did that I wanted to rip his vocal chords out, but letting him know that would mean he'd won, so I smoothed the skirt of my seersucker

shirtwaist dress and smiled. "Don't you think that type of behavior is rude, Mom?"

"JJ has a point, Jeffrey," she agreed, as I knew she would. "You two could debate it, but it's getting late and I have to get to the office."

Janny stood up and slipped into her raspberry linen suit jacket. It matched her pillbox hat perfectly. My mom looked like Jackie Kennedy before Jackie looked like Jackie Kennedy. Impossibly chic. So chic that people often took her for a model. She was also brilliant, charming, well read, successful—and one of only two women in her class at Columbia law. You might say she was a tough act to follow, or you might say it was better not to try. You might also say that trying to slip into the music business on her watch was a death wish.

Jules shrugged into his jacket, folded the *New York Post*, which he always finished before breakfast, and handed it to Janny.

"Check Earl Wilson's column," he told her. "It appears Bernie is being called to testify in some payola scheme again."

"What else is new?" Janny grumbled. "I say a prayer every night that no one will figure out that 'the godfather of the music business' is my no goodnik brother. It's all I can do."

She dropped her keys into her handbag and the newspaper into her attaché. Then she turned her attention to something she could actually control: those at the kitchen table.

"Justice, you have this week to find a summer job doing something useful or I'll expect you to begin filing down at my office next Monday. I've been thinking that being around a law office might awaken your legal instincts. Jeff, there's a package you need to pick up at Malken, Malken

and Strobe. Please get it to me before 10:30 and then Susan will tell you what to do today. Jules, I'd like to share a cab with you if you're ready to leave."

And with that everyone jumped to do Janny's bidding as everyone usually did. I hightailed it out of her sight before she could figure out that Jeff was right on the money. I was guilty as charged. Today I was taking that giant step toward my not-so-secret dream and my parent's worst nightmare. Today I was sticking my toe into what Janny called "a cess-pool," the music business." Defying her was scary enough. But even more terrifying was learning if I was right for my dream. Today I'd be finding out if I had any songwriting talent.

---

## Chapter Two

---

I stood at the corner of W. 49 and Broadway, clutching my purse and staring up at the Brill Building, praying that I wouldn't run into my Uncle Bernie. On the plus side, I wasn't sure we'd even recognize each other. This was it, the Mecca of songwriting. The brass doors were flanked by black marble pillars. Above them, set into a brass niche, was the bust of a young guy. You might think it was George Gershwin or some other famous song writer, but it was the developer's son. The poor guy died at seventeen. His name wasn't even Brill. The Brill Brothers owned the land and they leased it to a developer. The Brills actually had a clothing store on the main floor.

How do I know all this? I know it because I did a report on New York architecture for my art class just so I could do research on the Brill Building. I can also tell you more than you want to know about the New York Public Library. Like

the lions out front were named Patience and Fortitude by Mayor LaGuardia in the 1930s.

A steady stream of people poured in and out. Fumbling in my purse, I reread the scrap I'd torn from last week's *Cashbox*:

WANTED: Good Music Publishing seeks smart assistant/talented aspiring songwriter. Exchange office work for feedback on songs from hot publisher. Call Rona at Ju5-5253 for audition appointment.

I took a deep breath. I belonged here. This job fit me like a glove and I could emphasize the office experience to Janny and Jules. Shoving the scrap back in my bag, I checked my watch, then strode through the entrance. I wanted to be early but not so early I looked desperate.

Inside everything was gleaming brass and mirrors. I double-checked the Good Music suite number and strolled as casually as I could to the elevator at the end of the lobby. A whole bunch of people, mostly men, stood waiting. The only person close to my age was a really cute guy. He looked like he might be Italian, olive skin and black hair. He was studying papers in a manila folder and when he looked up at the elevator dial, I saw that his eyes were green. Not blue/green or grey/green, but almost emerald green. I'd never seen anything like them before. I had to look away to get my mind back on my own business—reviewing the song I was going to play for my audition in my head.

The elevator arrived and the waiting crowd, including Green Eyes, swarmed into it.

Everyone yelled out their floors to the operator, a short cheery guy in a uniform. I chirped out "eight," hoping I'd

been heard. Conversations swirled around me as the doors opened and closed.

"Hey, Nick, when you take a break, bring me up the trades."

"Sure thing, Mr. Bienstock." The elevator guy answered.

"Where are you this week, Aaron?"

"Five with a bullet, Cashbox. Seven with a bullet, Billboard."

"Enjoy it now, my friend, Goodman's got the follow-up."

"Is there anything he doesn't have the follow-up to?"

"I've heard he's asking for a guarantee of the B-side these days and he's getting it."

"Yeah, it's that and your firstborn child."

There were some chuckles. I wondered what was so funny. They were talking "music biz," and the only person I knew who could translate was Uncle Bernie. But soon I told myself, I wouldn't need an interpreter. I'd learn how to speak fluent "music biz" on my own.

When we hit eight, I elbowed my way out of the elevator. Good Music was way down at the end of the hall. As I made my way there I could hear muffled music coming from behind the doors of the offices I passed: pianos pounding out riffs, voices struggling to find melodies hidden in their subconscious, and records being played—no, not played, *blasted*. All of it was punctuated by some very bad language. I quickened my pace with a secret smile. It was raw and real and it was exactly how I imagined it and exactly where I wanted to be, a million light years away from the world of the Green family.

At Good Music I opened the door, entering a small waiting room with built-in seating. Two guys a little older than me had settled in, probably to wait for their auditions. One was tall and skinny, all elbows, knees, and acne. The other was a chubby little guy with an already receding hairline, wearing a suit and a tie with musical notes on it. At the

far end, a switchboard operator was busy chewing gum and frantically answering continuous incoming calls.

"Good Music. Hi, Nancy. Bobby said to tell Mr. Wexler he'll call him back after lunch. Good Music. Sorry, Mr. Goodman is booked all week. Just drop off the demo, and I'll get it to his secretary. Good Music. Please hold. Good Music. We're not seeing any more applicants until Friday so call back on Thursday to see if the job's still open. Good Music. Sorry . . ." She looked up at me. "Lost the hold. So, what can I do for ya?"

"I'm JJ Green. I have an eleven o'clock appointment to see Mr. Goodman about the assistant job."

She nodded. "Take a load off. You're after these guys."

As I sat down, she called out: "Paul Keller, go on in."

The suit with the musical tie got up and gulped audibly. All the color drained from his pudgy face. He looked so terrified that my heart went out to him even though we were competing for the same job.

"Good luck," I whispered to him.

He looked at me, his eyes glazed with fear, and then wiped his hands on his pants and entered the inner office. He looked as if he were going to his execution.

"You're not here for the assistant job are you?" the skinny one asked.

"Yeah, I am."

"I didn't know girls wrote songs," he announced, as if his ignorance was something to be proud of.

"We learn something every day, don't we?" I responded politely. "Did you ever hear of Alberta Hunter?"

His face was blank.

"Great blues songwriter, female. Wrote a song called 'Downhearted Blues' that sold two million in 1923. How about Kay Swift?"

He smirked. "I know about Bob Swift. He was a catcher for the Detroit Tigers way back."

"Kay Swift was the first woman to write the whole score to a Broadway musical: *Fine and Dandy* in 1930. Did you ever . . ."

"Hey, you a music teacher or something?"

Before I could answer, Paul Keller of the musical tie emerged from the inner office. He stood facing us for a minute in a daze.

"He hated my song," he announced in a bewildered voice. "Bobby hated the best song I ever wrote. My mother loved it. It made her cry." He stared at us blinking. "He's mean, really, really mean." And with that he blew his nose loudly into a crumpled Kleenex and exited.

The receptionist nodded our way. "Artie Lorber."

Tall and skinny got up and stood there for a moment, his eyes wide with the same panic. You could almost hear the wheels in his brain turning. He hesitated for what seemed like an eternity, then turned and followed Paul Keller's route out of the office.

"Wrong door," the receptionist called out.

But Artie Lorber paid no attention.

"We lose a few of the thin-skinned ones," she muttered. "Go on in . . ." she checked her list. "JJ Green."

I stood up, took a deep breath, and moved toward the door that Artie couldn't open.

*Here goes, I thought. Be brave, be strong, and be ready to hear the truth.*

---

## Chapter Three

---

The room I walked into was five times larger than the room I'd come from. At the far end, guarding a red lacquered

door emblazoned with BOBBY GOODMAN in gold letters, was a cute girl. She wasn't much older than me—wearing a beige polka dot Anne Fogarty dress that I'd been saving my birthday money to buy. On her desk was a brass nameplate: RONA CALUCCI: DON'T TRY TO GET PAST ME. She was talking on the phone, rummaging through a huge stack of music paper on her desk, and trying to wipe up spilled coffee at the same time. From behind all the doors leading off of this main room, I could hear the sound of pianos in different keys hammering out clashing melodic phrases.

I took out my handkerchief, (Janny always insisted I carry a real handkerchief and not a Kleenex), and tried to help with the mopping operation. Rona looked up gratefully.

"Thanks," she said. "You JJ?"

"That's me," I answered.

"First female applicant." She smiled, took my soggy handkerchief, squeezed it into the wastepaper basket, and handed it back to me. "Go on in."

Shoving my wet handkerchief back into my purse, I marched through the final door. There was a baby grand piano and a huge desk strewn with records and tapes. Behind it sat Bobby Goodman. He was a big guy. Not fat, just big. I would have guessed him to be early thirties but I had read in *Cashbox* he was only twenty-four. His face was wide and open, with a high forehead and thinning hair. He was wearing a short-sleeved shirt and you never would have guessed by looking at him that he was a big deal music publisher. He looked more like a coach for a suburban Little League baseball team.

Taking my application from a stack on his desk, he leaned back in his chair.

"So, JJ, what makes you want to learn about the music business?" he asked, without making eye contact.

I sat down in the chair facing him and tried not to sound as nervous as I was.

“Well, I want to be a songwriter. I’m sixteen and I’ve been playing the piano since I was about four. I took a semester of lessons in school but I’m mostly self-taught. I started writing songs when I was ten but you definitely don’t want to hear any of those.”

Bobby didn’t even pretend to smile. A sympathetic sense of humor was obviously not one of his character traits.

“What made you start writing? Anyone in your family musical?”

“Oh no, nobody, not a soul. Everyone’s a lawyer.” An image of Uncle Bernie popped up in my mind, but I ignored it. I was determined to get this job on my own. No Bernie bias would influence anyone’s decision.

“So are you the black sheep or the shining star?”

I almost smiled. “Definitely the black sheep.”

“You’re in high school, right?”

“I graduated last week.”

“You must be smart,” Bobby observed, still not looking up. “You going to college?”

“Yeah, I got into Columbia, but I could work part time after school in the fall if you wanted me to.”

“I got it,” He dropped my resume on the desk, then leaned back and closed his eyes. “Now play me something you wrote. Play me a song you’ve written that you think could be recorded.”

I had never thought about getting my songs recorded. I just wrote what I liked. My heart was pounding like a bass drum as I stood and slid onto the piano bench, but once I settled in and my fingers touched the keys, I was home. The song was called “A Beautiful Thing.” I had written it only last week, so it was fresh in my mind and my fingers. I

tried not to let my nerves make me speed up and I played the intro until I found just the right tempo. Then I made-believe I was playing just for me—losing myself in the music. I thought it sounded pretty good.

When I finished there was dead silence. I looked at Bobby and his eyes were still closed.

“What else do you have that you think I could pitch?” he asked, without opening his eyes.

This shook me up. I’d only rehearsed one song. My mind went blank. I had no idea what “pitching” was, but I knew he wanted to hear something else. Then I remembered a four chord song I’d written a long time ago called “Where Would I Be.” I had to concentrate hard to remember the words and my hands got kind of clammy, but I made it through without a major screw-up. Then I sat there listening to the loudest silence of all time until Bobby sighed, opened his eyes, and looked straight at me.

“You don’t listen to the radio, do you?” It was a statement in the form of a question. He didn’t wait for an answer. “You go to Broadway musicals, right? The second song was better for me than the first, but neither one was a home run. You need help lyrically. Forget those inner rhymes and write words that come from your heart and can touch the hearts of other girls your age. Do your homework. Listen to the radio. Listen to Cousin Brucie and Murray the K. Learn the top ten songs well enough to play them backward and forward. Study grooves, chord progressions, and ideas. You need to remember three things: simple, simple, simple. Thanks for coming in.” He stood up and held out his hand.

I shook it, fighting back tears.

“Thanks for your time,” I mumbled and sprinted for the door.

"How'd it go?" asked Rona as I raced past her.

I shook my head and bolted through the inner sanctum and reception area. Out in the hall, I lost it, wracked by silent sobs as I leaned on the elevator button. Fortunately, when the doors opened, it was empty except for Nick, the elevator operator. I sniffed. My nose was leaking along with my eyes, and my handkerchief was a soggy coffee-stained mess—so when Nick handed me a Kleenex, I took it gratefully.

"Hey, who did what to make a cute kid like you cry those big tears?" he asked sympathetically. The doors shut and the elevator lurched down toward the lobby.

"Bobby Goodman," I choked out. "I was applying for a job and he turned me down. He made me feel like an untalented idiot."

"Not a good feeling."

"No, my mother'll be happy, though. She doesn't want me to be a songwriter. She hates the music business."

"Most mothers do. What does she know?"

"A lot. Her brother is 'The Godfather of the music business.'"

"Bernie Rubin?"

"That's him."

We'd reached the ground floor. Nick hesitated, his gloved hand on the lever.

"I don't want to open up until you're okay," he said.

"I'm as okay as I'm gonna be. I won't have to tell my family anything about not getting the job now. I'll just have to go to work for my mother this summer. Good for me." The thought sent more tears rolling down my cheeks.

"Listen, kid, there's one thing I know for sure: Ya never know what's gonna happen, so save the tears for when you really need 'em. You may be wasting them today."

It was such a sweet thing to say and he was such an unlikely guy to say it, that I dried my eyes and almost smiled.

"Good for you, kiddo," Nick said as he pulled the door open.

I wandered the streets for a few hours. I knew Juana would be the only one in the apartment when I got home at two o'clock. I strolled past her nonchalantly and headed for my bedroom, but she took one look at my face and in less than a minute she was knocking on my door.

"Go away, please," I pleaded, but the floodgates opened again.

She sat down beside me on the bed as I sobbed. She didn't even ask what was wrong, just patted my back and, when I sat up, she pulled me close. The smell of her cologne and the softness of her pale coffee skin had comforted me for as long as I could remember. It still did. Whenever I was upset, she always spoke to me in English, even though I spoke Spanish fluently. It was her way of reaching out.

"Tell me, *carriña*," she whispered.

I swallowed. "I thought I had talent but I don't. Someone who really knows told me my songs aren't simple enough and my words aren't any good."

"I don't know anything about talent, *mi niña*," she said softly, "but I know this is not the only time you will be disappointed. It hurts not to get what you want, but sometimes you learn from it."

"You don't understand," I told her, pulling away and looking her in the eye. "I write too complicated. I don't know a hit and my lyrics aren't—"

The phone rang.

I groaned, rolling my eyes. My shoulders sagged. Juana's

eyes met mine, wondering if she should answer. I shook my head and marched out into the foyer.

"Hello?" I sniffled.

"May I speak to JJ, please.

"This is JJ."

"Hi, this is Rona at Good Music." She paused. "Are you okay?"

It was such a loaded question that when I opened my mouth, nothing came out.

"Congratulations. You got the job."

Time seemed to freeze. I blinked several times. "I got the what?"

"The assistant gig. We're sending over a three-month contract for the songwriting part. Your parents have to sign since you're under twenty one. Bobby wants you to start Monday at ten, so bring the signed contract with you when you come in."

"But . . . but . . . I don't understand . . ."

"Just be here Monday. Ten o'clock. See ya." Before she slammed the phone down, I heard her yelling to someone: "Bobby's in a meeting! Don't touch that door, Steve—" *Click!*

I was grinning through my tears. I must have looked insane. Juana came up softly behind me. "This is crazy," I breathed. "I got the job."

"See, you learned something from this," Juana whispered as she hugged me. "You learned not to cry too soon."

"You're the second person who's told me that today."

I was happier than I thought possible, but I couldn't help wondering what could have made Bobby change his mind. Were the other applicants so bad that my songs had begun to sound good in comparison? Was it worth trying to figure out? Couldn't I just accept it and be happy? Of

course not. I would never take “yes” for an answer without knowing why it had changed from a “no.” I was, after all, a Green.

---

## Chapter Four

---

I brought out the contract after dinner when Janny and Jules were relaxing in the living room. They had finished their coffee and were sloshing brandy around in snifters. I waited until I thought the liquor had taken effect and Jules was smoking a Marlboro. Then I sat down, papers in hand.

“I have a summer job,” I announced. Best to start with the good news.

“JJ dear, that’s wonderful,” Janny enthused. “Truthfully, I was hoping you’d end up working for me, but congratulations. Isn’t that wonderful, Jules?”

“Wonderful,” echoed my dad, exhaling a cloud of smoke. “Tell us all about it.”

“Before I do, I want to ask you something. Mom, did you have any idea where I was going today?”

She laughed. “I’m an attorney, Justice, not a detective. You never did tell me where you were going, did you?”

“So you never said anything to Bernie?”

“Bernie?” Her tone abruptly changed. She sat up straight and placed her brandy on its coaster. “This is not headed in a good direction.” After a sour glance at Jules, she zeroed in on me. “You know I haven’t spoken to him in six years, not since—”

“Not since he showed up uninvited to Jeff’s bar mitzvah,” I finished. I wish I’d kept my mouth shut. But I wasn’t in the mood for a lecture. I wanted to know the truth.

“Exactly,” Janny said. “Your uncle is a gambler, a thief,

and a music business low-life. Why would I want to speak to him about anything?"

"Now don't get worked up, Janny," my dad cautioned. "You're not telling us you got a job in the music business, are you, Justice?"

"Yes." I said, trying not to get defensive. "And I wanted to be sure that Uncle Bernie wasn't involved, because I want to make my own way on my own talent. But it seemed like didn't get the job, and then I got it, and I can't figure out why, and I just thought maybe . . ." I ran out of breath and stopped.

"There is no way Bernie heard about this from us," Janny snapped. "This is the first we've heard of it. And now I want to know who you saw and everything about them."

Of course, Jeff chose this moment to saunter quietly into the room. He sat down out of the range of fire, but close enough so he could observe my agony.

"The company is called Good Music," I told them. "And they publish songs and produce records."

"There was an article about them in last week's *Wall Street Journal*," Jules remarked. "They've only been in business three years, but they're doing very well."

I nodded, hoping this was a sign of encouragement. "They're really hot—I mean successful—and I'll be doing office work, but I'll also have the chance to listen to the writers who are getting records and play songs for Bobby Goodman, the head of the company. There's a chance I could even get a song recorded."

"So, JJ," Janny said sharply. "Knowing how I feel about the music business, you went behind my back and applied for a job." She might as well have not heard a word.

"Not exactly. If you had asked I would have told you, but you didn't ask." I protested weakly.

"Well, what's done is done." Jules stubbed out his cigarette. He looked at my mother and then back at me. "Justice, your obsession with songwriting has always bewildered us. It's frankly a waste of time, a meaningless occupation. But with that in mind, I would like to see you get it out of your system. This job may be the way to do it."

"I don't agree, Jules," Janny protested. "I'm inclined to say no to the whole thing. It's not just the job, it's the deception on JJ's part."

My heart stopped. I felt completely out of control, which I was. After all, they were already talking about me in the third person, (which they knew I hated)—as if I were a criminal, waiting to be sentenced.

"And what is that in your hand, JJ?" Janny demanded.

I took a deep breath, knowing the worst was yet to come. "It's a contract for three months. It pretty much says that Good Music publishes any songs of mine that I write during that time whether they get recorded or not."

"Think you'll get a record, Irving?" Jeff asked. There was the hint of a smirk in his voice.

I turned to him, my gaze steely. "I don't know," I told him truthfully, wondering why he was sticking his nose into this at all.

"Let me take a look," ordered Janny.

I handed her the papers. As she flipped through it, we all waited, barely breathing. The clock on the wall boomed in synch with my heart. When she finally looked up she shook her head.

"This is a terrible contract. It's very one-sided in the publisher's favor. I would advise against this deal for anyone, let alone my own daughter."

"Mom," I said, trying to keep my voice from shaking. "I'm going to be honest with you. I don't really care if the

contract's good or bad. I can learn so much there. It's where I want to be this summer. Please, just sign it."

Janny didn't answer. I could see the cogs turning in her brain. She was mentally reviewing arguments for and against. Then she and Jules locked eyes. My future hung in the air like the last cloud of Jules's cigarette smoke. After what felt like forever, Jeff broke the silence.

"I have a solution," he announced. The smirk was gone. "It's only for three months, right? So let Irving do it. But, if she doesn't get one of her songs recorded by the time it's over, she has to give up this crazy songwriting thing and never mention it again."

I couldn't figure out if he was trying to help me or hurt me. My brother has always had a weird instinctive ability to understand our parents in a way I never have. The three of them were on some strange wavelength I could never quite tune into. The worst was when he and I fought as kids—as in actual kicking and punching. He somehow always knew that they would never intervene. Even when he pinned me to the floor and I was fighting for my breath and it was clear he'd won, they still insisted we work out our disagreements ourselves. Finally when I was ten, I begged Janny to sign me up for Brazilian jujitsu classes because it was all about ground fighting. She was happy to do it, but I was such a klutz that after all my classes I only mastered one move: the upward lift escape. But by then Jeff had stopped attacking me physically and had moved on to verbal assaults.

"Hmm," Janny mused, rolling Jeff's proposition around in her meticulous mind. I had to hand it to Jeff: I could tell that the thought of never having to hear me talk about songwriting again had made an impact on her. Her lips actually curved up in a little smile. "Would you agree to that, JJ?" she

asked. "I might actually let you do this if you promised that it could be a way to put an end to your songwriting fixation."

I shot Jeff a dirty look and turned back to my mother. "Why are you all so sure I won't get a record?"

"Because you're a Green," Jules proclaimed in his courtroom voice. "You were born for the law."

That's how simple it was for them. They honestly believed that music was a decision I had made, like wanting to learn Brazilian jujitsu. They had no clue that it was like my laugh and big feet, a part of me—like arguing was for them. I didn't know if I had talent. I didn't know if I would ever write a song worthy of being recorded. But I knew I had to have the chance to try. Bobby himself had told me I didn't know what I was doing but a door had opened, and I had to walk through it. I'd never been much of a gambler, but I had to be one now. It was all or nothing. Maybe Jeff's deal was fair. If I couldn't get a song recorded this summer maybe it would be a sign that I was on the wrong track. I didn't know how I'd go on living after that, but I'd worry about it if it happened.

"I'll do it," I said. "If a song of mine isn't recorded by the time I start school, I'll give up songwriting."

"Agreed," Janny and Jules announced, almost in unison.

*Court adjourned*, I thought with a mix of terror and relief.

I turned to Jeff.

"Good luck, Irving," he said with a wicked grin. "I'll be rooting for you."









