

ДЕМОП

GLASS

A HEX HALL NOVEL



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# DEMONGLASS

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RACHEL HAWKINS

HYPERION  
NEW YORK

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*For John, who said, "You know what this book needs? More fire. And maybe some swords." Th  
one time, honey, you were right.*

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*Still she haunts me, phantomwise,  
Alice moving under skies  
Never seen by waking eyes.*

—Lewis Carroll

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## CHAPTER 1



At a normal high school, having class outside on a gorgeous May day is usually pretty awesome. It means sitting in the sunshine, maybe reading some poetry, letting the breeze blow through your hair....

At Hecate Hall, a.k.a. Juvie for Monsters, it meant I was getting thrown in the pond.

My Persecution of Prodigium class was gathered around the scummy water just down the hill from the school. Our teacher, Ms. Vanderlyden—or the Vandy, as we called her—turned to Cal. He was the school’s grounds-keeper even though he was only nineteen. The Vandy took a coil of rope from his hands. Cal had been waiting for us at the pond. When he’d seen me, he’d given me a barely perceptible nod, which was the Cal version of waving his hands over his head and yelling, “Hello, Sophie!”

He was definitely the strong and silent type.

“Did you not hear me, Miss Mercer?” the Vandy said, twisting the rope in her fist. “I said come forward.”

“Actually, Ms. Vanderlyden,” I said, trying not to sound as nervous as I felt, “see this?” I gestured to my mass of curly hair. “This is a perm, and I just got it done the other day, so...yeah, probably shouldn’t get it wet.”

I heard a few muffled giggles, and next to me, my roommate Jenna muttered, “Nice one.”

When I first came to Hecate, I would’ve been too terrified of the Vandy to talk back to her like that. But by the end of last semester, I’d watched my great-grandmother kill my best frenemy, and the boy I loved had pulled a knife on me.

I was a little tougher now.

Which was something the Vandy apparently did not appreciate. Her scowl deepened as she snapped, “Front and center!”

I muttered a few choice words as I moved through the crowd. When I reached the shore, I kicked off my shoes and socks to stand next to the Vandy in the shallows, grimacing at the slimy mud under my bare feet.

The rope scratched my skin as the Vandy first tied my hands together, then my feet. Once I was all trussed up, she rose, looking satisfied with her handiwork. “Now. Go all the way into the pond.”

“Um...how, exactly?”

I was afraid she was going to make me hop out into the water until it was over my head, an image too mortifying to even contemplate. Cal stepped forward, hopefully to come to my rescue.

“I could toss her off the pier, Ms. Vanderlyden.”

Or not.

“Good,” the Vandy said with a brisk nod, like that had been her plan all along. Then Cal leaned down and swept me into his arms.

There were more giggles, and even a few sighs. I knew most girls would give up a vital organ for

Cal to hold them, but my face flamed red. I wasn't sure this was any less embarrassing than flopping out into the pond on my own.

"You weren't listening to her, were you?" he asked in a low voice.

"No," I replied. During the part where the Vandy had been explaining why someone was about to go into the pond, I'd been telling Jenna that I had *not* flinched just because some kid had called me "Mercer" yesterday, the way Archer Cross always did. Because I hadn't. Just like I hadn't had a dream last night that re-created in vivid detail the one kiss Archer and I had shared last November. Only, in the dream, there was no tattoo on his chest, marking him as a member of L'Occhio di Dio, so there was no reason to stop kissing, and—

"What were you doing?" Cal asked. For a second, I thought he was talking about my dream, and my whole body flushed. Then I realized what he meant.

"Oh, I was, uh, talking to Jenna. You know, making monster small talk."

I thought I saw that ghost of a smile again, but then he said, "The Vandy said that real witches escaped trial by water by pretending to drown, then freeing themselves with their powers. So she wants you to sink, then save yourself."

"I think I can manage the sinking part," I muttered. "The rest...not so sure."

"You'll be fine," he said. "And if you're not up in a few minutes, *I'll* save you."

Something fluttered inside my chest, catching me by surprise. I hadn't felt anything like this since Archer had disappeared. It probably didn't mean anything. The sun was shining through Cal's dark blond hair, and his hazel eyes were picking up the light bouncing off the water. Plus, he was carrying me like I didn't weigh anything. Of course I'd feel butterflies when a guy who looked like that said something so swoon-worthy.

"Thanks," I said. Over his shoulder, I saw my mom watching us from the front porch of what had been Cal's cabin. She'd been staying there for the past six months while we waited for my dad to come get me and take me to Council Headquarters in London.

Six months later, and we were still waiting.

Mom frowned, and I wanted to give her a thumbs-up to let her know I was okay. All I could manage was raising my bound hands in her general direction, clocking Cal on the chin as I did so. "Sorry."

"No problem. Must be weird for you, having your mom here."

"Weird for me, weird for her, probably weird for you since you had to give up your swinging bachelor pad."

"Mrs. Casnoff let me install my heart-shaped Jacuzzi in my new dorm room."

"Cal," I said with mock astonishment, "did you just make a joke?"

"Maybe," he replied. We'd reached the end of the pier. I looked down at the water and tried not to shudder.

"I'll be pretending, of course, but do you have any advice on how I'm supposed to not drown?" I asked Cal.

"Don't breathe in any water."

"Oh, thanks, that's super helpful."

Cal shifted me in his arms, and I tensed. Just before he tossed me into the pond, he leaned in and whispered, "Good luck."

And then I hit the water.

I can't say what my first thought was as I sunk below the surface, because it was mostly a string of four-letter words. The water was way too cold for a pond in Georgia in May, and I could feel the



chill sinking all the way into my bones. Plus my chest started burning almost immediately, and I sunk all the way to the bottom, landing in the slimy mud.

---

Okay, Sophie, I thought. Don't panic.

Then I glanced over to my right, and through the murky water, made out a skull grinning back at me.

I panicked. My first impulse was a human one, and I bent my body, trying to tear at the ropes across my ankles with my bound hands. I quickly realized this was profoundly stupid, and tried to calm down and concentrate on my powers.

*Ropes off*, I thought, imagining the bindings slithering off me. I could feel them give a little, but not enough. Part of the problem was that my magic came up from the ground (or something beneath the ground, a fact I tried not to think about too often) and it was hard to get my feet on the ground while I was trying not to drown.

*ROPES OFF*, I thought again, stronger this time.

The ropes snapped violently, unraveling until they were nothing more than a big ball of floating twine. If I hadn't been holding my breath, I would have sighed. Instead, I untangled myself from what was left of the ropes, and made to kick for the surface.

I swam up about a foot, and then something jerked me back to the bottom.

My eyes went to my ankle, half expecting to see a skeletal hand grabbing me, but there was nothing. My chest was on fire now, and my eyes were stinging. I pumped with my arms and legs, trying to swim up, but it was like I was being held underwater even though nothing was holding me.

Real panic set in as black spots danced before my eyes. I had to breathe. I kicked again, but just bobbed in place. Now the black spots were bigger, and the pressure in my chest was agonizing. I wondered how long I'd been down here, and if Cal was going to make good on that promise to save me anytime soon.

I suddenly surged upward, gasping when I broke the surface, the air burning as it rushed into my chest; but I wasn't done yet. I kept flying until I was completely out of the water, landing on the pier in a heap.

I winced as my elbow connected painfully with the wood. I knew my skirt was probably hiked up too high on my thighs, but I couldn't bring myself to care. I just took a second to enjoy breathing. Eventually, I stopped gulping air and started to breathe normally again.

I sat up and pushed my wet hair out of eyes. Cal was standing a few feet away. I glared at him. "Awesome job with the saving."

Then I realized Cal wasn't looking at me, but up toward the head of the pier.

I followed his gaze and saw a slender, dark-haired man. He was standing very still, watching me. Suddenly, it was hard to breathe all over again.

I rose to my feet on shaky legs, tugging my soaked clothes back into place.

"Are you all right?" the man called out, his face clearly worried. His voice was more powerful than I would've expected from such a slight man, and he had a soft British accent.

"I'm fine," I said, but the black spots were back in front of my eyes, and my knees seemed to wobble to hold me. The last thing I saw before I fainted was my father walking toward me as I crashed back to the pier.

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## CHAPTER 2



For the second time in six months, I found myself sitting in Mrs. Casnoff's office, wrapped in a blanket. The first time had been the night I'd discovered that Archer was a member of L'Occhio e Dio, a group of demon hunters. Now my mom was next to me on the couch, one arm wrapped around my shoulders. My dad was standing by Mrs. Casnoff's desk, holding a manila folder overflowing with papers, while Mrs. Casnoff sat behind that desk in her great purple throne of a chair.

The only sounds were Dad flipping through all that paper and my teeth chattering, so I finally said, "Why couldn't my magic get me out of the water?"

Mrs. Casnoff looked up at me like she'd forgotten I was even in the room. "No demon could escape from that particular pond," she answered in her velvety voice.

"There are protection spells in it. It...holds anything it doesn't recognize as a witch, faerie, shifter."

I thought of the skull and nodded, wishing for some of that spiked tea I'd had last time I was here. "I kind of figured that. So the Vandy was trying to kill me?"

Mrs. Casnoff's lips puckered a little. "Don't be ridiculous," she said. "Clarice didn't know about the protection spells."

She might've been a little more believable if her eyes hadn't slid away from mine as she'd said that, but before I could press the issue, Dad tossed the folder down on Mrs. Casnoff's desk and said, "Quite an impressive file you've amassed, Sophia." Clapping his hands, he added, "If Hecate offered classes in complete mayhem, I have no doubt you'd be valedictorian."

Nice to see where I got my snarkiness. Of course, that seemed to be all I'd gotten from him. I'd seen pictures of him before, but this was the first time I'd seen him in person, and I was having a hard time not staring. He was so different from what I expected. He was definitely handsome, but...I don't know. In a fussy way. He looked like the kind of guy who had a lot of shoe trees.

I glanced over at Mom and saw that she was having the opposite problem from me. She was looking anywhere but at Dad.

"Yeah," I said, turning my attention back to him. "Last semester was intense."

Dad raised both eyebrows at me. I wondered if that was on purpose, or if, like me, he couldn't lie just one. "'Intense?'" He picked up the file again and studied it over the top of his glasses. "On your first day at Hecate, you were attacked by a werewolf...."

"It wasn't really an attack," I muttered, but no one seemed to pay any attention.

"But of course, that's paltry compared to what came after." Dad flipped through the pages. "You insulted a teacher, which resulted in semester-long cellar duty with one Archer Cross. According to Mrs. Casnoff's notes on the situation, the two of you became 'close.'" He paused. "Is that an accurate description of your relationship with Mr. Cross?"

"Sure," I said through clenched teeth.

Dad turned another page. “Well, apparently you two were...close enough that at some point you were able to see the mark of L’Occhio di Dio on his chest.”

I flushed at that, and felt Mom’s arm tighten around me. Over the past six months, I’d filled her in on a lot of the story with Archer, but not all of it.

Specifically, not the whole me-making-out-in-the-cellar-with-him part.

“Now, for most people, nearly being murdered by a warlock working with the Eye would be enough excitement for one semester. But you also became involved with a coven of dark witches led by”—he ran his finger along the page—“ah, Elodie Parris. Miss Parris and her friends, Anna Gilroy and Chaston Burnett, murdered the other member of their coven, Holly Mitchell, and raised a demon who just happened to be your great-grandmother, Alice Barrow.”

My stomach twisted. I’d spent the past six months trying not to think about all that had happened last fall. To have it all read out to me in Dad’s emotionless voice...well, let’s just say I was beginning to wish I’d stayed in the pond.

“After Alice attacked Chaston and Anna, she killed Elodie, and then you killed her.”

I saw his eyes drift from the paper and to my right hand. A puckered scar ran across my palm, a souvenir of that night. Demonglass leaves quite a mark.

Clearing his throat, Dad dropped the papers. “So yes, Sophia, I would agree that you did have quite the intense semester. Ironic considering the fact that I sent you here to be safe.”

Sixteen years’ worth of questions and accusations flooded my brain, and I heard myself snarl. “Which I might have been if someone had filled me in on the whole my being a demon thing.”

Behind Dad, Mrs. Casnoff frowned, and I thought I was about to get a lecture on respecting one’s elders, but Dad just watched me with those blue eyes—my eyes—and gave a tiny smile. “Touché.”

The smile threw me, and I looked at the floor when I said, “So are you here to take me home to London? I’ve been waiting since November.”

“We can discuss that at some point, yes. But first I’d like to hear about the events of last semester from your perspective. I’d like to hear about the Cross boy.”

Resentment surged up in me, and I shook my head. “No way. You want those stories, you can read the accounts I wrote up for the Council. Or you can talk to Mrs. Casnoff, or Mom, or any of the other people I’ve told the story to.”

“Sophia, I understand that you’re angry—”

“It’s Sophie. No one calls me Sophia.”

His lips thinned. “Very well. Sophie, while your frustration is perfectly valid, it’s not helpful at this moment. I’d like to spend time talking with you and your mother”—his eyes flickered to Mom—“as a family before we proceed to the subject of your going through the Removal.”

“Too bad,” I retorted, tossing off the blanket and Mom’s arm. “You’ve had sixteen years to talk to us as a family. I didn’t ask you to come here because you’re my dad and I wanted some kind of tearful reunion. I asked you to come here as head of the Council so I can get my stupid powers removed.”

All of that came out in a rush. I was afraid if I slowed down, I might start crying, and I’d done enough of that over the past few months.

Dad studied me, but his eyes had gone cold, and his voice was stern when he said, “In that case, in my capacity as head of the Council, I reject your request to go through the Removal.”

I stared at him, dumbfounded. “You can’t do that!”

“Actually, Sophie, he can,” Mrs. Casnoff interjected. “Both as head of the Council and as your father, he’s well within his rights. At least until you’re eighteen.”

“That’s over a year away!”

~~“Which will give you enough time to understand the implications of your decision to the fullest”~~  
Dad said.

I whirled on him. “Okay, first of all, no one talks like that. Secondly, I *do* understand the implications of my decision. Removing my powers will keep me from potentially killing someone.”

“Sophie, we’ve talked about this,” Mom said, speaking for the first time since we’d come in Mrs. Casnoff’s office. “It’s not a foregone conclusion that you will kill someone. Or that you’ll even try. Your father has never lost control of his powers.” She sighed and rubbed her eyes with one hand. “And it’s just so drastic, honey. I don’t think you should risk your life for a ‘what if?’”

“Your mother is right,” Mrs. Casnoff said. “And bear in mind that you decided to go through the Removal less than twenty-four hours after watching the death of a friend. More time to weigh your options might be a good thing.”

I sat back down on the couch. “I get what you guys are saying. I do. But…” I looked at the three of them, settling finally on my dad, the only person I thought might understand what I was about to say. “I saw Alice. I saw what she was, what she did, what she was capable of.” I dropped my eyes to the faded cabbage roses on Mrs. Casnoff’s carpet, but I was seeing Elodie, pale and streaked with blood. “I don’t ever—*ever*—want to be like that. I really would rather die.”

Mom made a choked noise, and Mrs. Casnoff suddenly became fascinated by something on her desk.

But Dad nodded. “All right,” he said. “I’ll make you a deal.”

“James,” Mom said sharply.

Their eyes met and something passed between them before Dad continued. “Your year here at Hecate Hall is almost over. Come spend the summer with me, and at the end of that time, if you still want to go through the Removal, I’ll allow it.”

My eyebrows shot up. “What, like at your house? In England?” My pulse sped up. There had been three sightings of Archer in England.

Dad paused, and for one awful moment I wondered if he could read minds. But he just said, “England, yes. My house, no. I’ll be staying with…friends for the summer.”

“And they won’t care if you bring your daughter?”

He smiled at some private joke. “Trust me. They have room.”

“What exactly is this supposed to accomplish?” I was trying to sound haughty and disdainful, but I’m afraid it just came off as petulant.

Dad began fishing in his coat for something, but when he pulled out a thin brown cigarette, Mrs. Casnoff made a disapproving cluck. He sighed and put the cigarette back.

“Sophie,” he said, sounding frustrated, “I want to get to know you, and have you get to know me before you decide to throw your powers—and possibly your life—away. You don’t even fully comprehend what it means to be a demon yet.”

I thought about Dad’s offer. On the one hand, I was not exactly his biggest fan right now, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to spend time on a whole other continent with him.

But if I didn’t, I’d be stuck as a demon for a lot longer.

Also, my mom had given up the house she’d been renting in Vermont, so I’d probably be spending all summer at Hecate with just her and the teachers. Ugh.

And then there was England. Archer.

“Mom?” I asked, wondering if she had some motherly input. She seemed pretty shaken up, which was understandable, what with watching me nearly get killed, then having to deal with Dad.

“I’d miss you like crazy, but your dad makes a good point.” Her eyes were bright with tears, but she blinked them back and nodded. “I think you should go.”

“Thank you, Grace,” Dad said quietly.

I took a deep breath. “Okay,” I told him. “I’ll go. But I want to bring Jenna.”

She didn’t have anywhere to go this summer either, and I wanted at least one friendly face if I was going to spend a whole summer embracing my demon-ness or whatever.

“Fine,” Dad said, without hesitation.

That took me by surprise, but I tried to seem nonchalant as I said, “Awesome.”

“That reminds me,” Dad said to Mrs. Casnoff. “I was wondering if it would be all right for Alexander Callahan to come with us as well.”

“Who the heck is Alexander Callahan?” I asked. “Oh, right. Cal.”

It was weird to think of him as *Alexander*. It was such a formal name. Cal suited him a lot better.

“Of course,” Mrs. Casnoff said, all business again. “I’m sure we can manage without him for a few months. Although without his healing powers, we’ll certainly have to invest in more bandages.”

“Why do you want to bring Cal?” I asked.

Dad’s fingers strayed to his suit pocket again. “Council business, mostly. Alexander’s powers are unique, so we’d like to interview him, possibly run a few tests.”

I didn’t like the sound of that, and something told me Cal wouldn’t either.

“And it will give the two of you a chance to get to know one another better,” Dad continued.

A sense of dread slowly began creeping up my spine. “Cal and I know each other well enough,” I said. “Why would I want to know him better?”

“Because,” Dad said, finally meeting my eyes, “you and he are betrothed.”

---

## CHAPTER 3



It took me a good thirty minutes to find Cal. That was actually a good thing, because it gave me plenty of time to come up with something to say to him that wasn't just a string of four-letter words.

There are a lot of freaky things witches and warlocks do, obviously, but the arranged marriage thing was one of the grossest. When a witch is thirteen, her parents hook her up with an available warlock, based on things like compatible powers and family alliances. The entire thing is so gross, it's almost funny. It's the eighteenth century.

As I stomped across school grounds, all I could see was Cal sitting with my dad in some manly room with leather chairs and dead animals on the wall, chomping on cigars as Dad formally signed me over to him. They probably even high-fived.

Okay, so it's not like either of them are exactly the cigar-and-high-fives type, but still.

I finally found Cal in the potting shed behind the greenhouse, where our Defense classes were held. His talent for healing extended to plants, and he was running his hands over a browned and drooping azalea when I flung open the door. He squinted as a shaft of late afternoon sunlight flooded in behind me.

"Did you know I'm your fiancée?" I demanded.

Cal muttered something under his breath and turned back to the plant.

"Did you?" I asked again, even though I clearly had my answer.

"Yes," he replied.

I stood there waiting for him to say something else, but that was apparently all Cal had to say.

"Well, I'm not going to marry you," I said. "I think this whole arranged marriage thing is gross and barbaric."

"Okay."

There was a bag of potting soil by the door, and I scooped up a handful to fling at his back. Before it hit, he raised his hand and the dirt froze in midair. It hovered there for a moment before floating slowly back to the bag.

"I just can't believe you knew and didn't tell me," I said, sitting on an unopened bag.

"I didn't see the point."

"What does that mean?"

He dusted his hands off on his jeans and turned to face me. He was streaked with sweat, and his damp T-shirt was clinging to his chest in ways that would have been interesting if I wasn't so irritated with him. As usual, he looked more like an all-American high school quarterback than a warlock.

His face was blank, but Cal always held his cards pretty close to his chest. "It means that you didn't grow up in a Prodigium family, so I knew you'd think arranged marriages were—what did you say?"

"Gross and barbaric."

“Right. So what was the point in making you all freaked out and hostile?”

~~“I’m not hostile,” I protested. Cal gave a pointed look to the potting soil, and I rolled my eyes.~~  
“Okay, yes, but I was mad that you didn’t tell me, not that we’re...engaged. God, I can’t even say it. sounds too weird.”

“Sophie, it doesn’t mean anything,” he said, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his knees. “It’s like a business contract. Didn’t anyone explain that to you?”

Archer had. He’d been betrothed to Holly, Jenna’s old roommate, before she died. Of course, not that I knew he was an Eye, I wondered how legit that had ever been. But I didn’t want to think about him right now.

“Yeah,” I said. “And we can, you know, break it off, right? It’s not a done deal.”

“Exactly. So are we cool?”

I drew a pattern on the dirt-covered floor with my toe. “Yeah. We’re cool.”

“Great,” he said. “So there’s no need for things to be awkward.”

“Right.”

Then we sat there awkwardly for a moment before I said, “Oh! Almost forgot. Dad wants you to come to England with us this summer.” Briefly, I told him everything that had happened in Mr. Casnoff’s office. He looked surprised when I told him about the Vandy, and he scowled when I mentioned the interview-and-testing part of his summer vacation, but he didn’t interrupt me. When I was finished, he said, “Well, that sucks.”

“A bunch,” I agreed.

He got up and walked back to the azalea, which I guess was my cue to leave. Instead, I said, “Sorry I tried to throw dirt at you.”

“It’s fine.”

I waited for him to say something else. When he didn’t, I pushed myself off the bag of soil. “Send you back at the house, honey,” I muttered as I left. He made a sound that might have been a laugh, but it was Cal, so I doubt it.

The sun was beginning to set when I walked up the front steps of the crazy half-antebellum mansion, half-stucco institution that was Hecate Hall. Crickets were already chirping, and frogs croaked around the pond. A gentle breeze that smelled like honeysuckle and the sea breeze nudged the vines that climbed the walls of the school. I turned and looked back at the lawn. I’d hated this place when I first came here, but I was actually going to miss it this summer. So much had happened to me since Mom had steered that rental car up the drive for the first time, and, as impossible as it would have seemed then, Hecate Hall almost felt like home.

Something furry brushed my arm. It was Beth, a werewolf I’d met my first night at Hecate.

“Full moon,” she growled, nodding her muzzle toward the darkening sky.

“Right.” Weres got the run of the place during the full moon. Glancing behind me, I could see a handful of them gathering in the foyer.

“Can’t believe the school year is almost over,” Beth said, in that voice that sounded like a teenage girl who had a throat full of broken glass and lug nuts.

“Tell me about it,” I replied.

Her eyes were bright yellow, but I could see the affection in them as she said, “I’m gonna miss you this summer, Sophie.”

I smiled. Just a few months ago, Beth hadn’t trusted me, thinking I had to be a spy for the Council or something. Luckily, nearly dying had cleared me of that suspicion. I reached out to pat her shoulder. “I’ll miss you too, Beth.”

Then she leaned forward and licked the side of my face.

~~I waited until she had loped off before wiping my cheek with the back of my hand. "Yeugh."~~

Okay, so I wouldn't miss everything about Hecate Hall.

I headed up to the third floor, where all the girls were housed. There were a few people gathered in the lounge on the landing, but for the most part, things were pretty quiet tonight.

Taylor, one of the shifters, saw me and waved. "Hey, Soph! Heard you went for a swim today," she said, taking in my still-bedraggled appearance. "Why didn't you change your clothes?"

I tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. "I, uh, didn't really have time."

Taylor laughed, the sound surprisingly throaty for such a delicate-looking girl. "I meant with magic," she said.

Oh, right. "With the way things have been going lately, I didn't wanna risk it."

She nodded sympathetically. "Oh, I understand. Especially after the Bed Thing."

The Bed Thing had happened two months ago. I'd wanted to move my bed, and decided to use magic to do it. Instead of scooting over a few feet, the bed had gone flying out the window, taking off a big chunk of the wall with it.

Mrs. Casnoff had not been amused.

Especially since the Bed Thing had followed the Doritos Incident. Jenna had wanted chips; when I'd tried to make them appear, I'd flooded the hallway with Doritos. There were still traces of cheese dust in the floorboards. Before that, there was That Time With The Lotion (the less said about that, the better). Ever since Alice and Elodie, my magic had definitely been...off. As a result, I'd pretty much stopped using it.

After saying good-bye to Taylor, I continued on to my room. A few more students called out greetings, or commented on my date with the pond. It still caught me off guard, this newfound popularity. At first I thought that word must've gotten out that I was a demon, and everyone was being nice to me because they were afraid I'd eat them. But according to Jenna, who was a champion eavesdropper, everybody still thought I was just a superpowerful dark witch. Mrs. Casnoff had done a bang-up job covering up the truth of Elodie's death, which meant there were all kinds of rumors about what happened to her. The most popular one had Archer sneaking back onto Graymalkin Island and me and Elodie trying to fight him off with our mad magic skills, Elodie dying in the attempt.

Too bad the truth was a lot more complicated. And a lot sadder.

I was nearly at my door when I caught a movement out of the corner of my eye. Hecate Hall was full of ghosts, so we were always catching glimpses of them like that. But when I saw who it was, I froze.

Even as a ghost, Elodie was still beautiful. Her red hair waved around her face, and her skin was translucent. It sucked that she had to spend eternity wearing her school uniform, but then again, Elodie made even that look good.

She was doing what all the ghosts seemed to do: wandering around, looking confused. They weren't technically in our world, but they weren't in the afterlife either, so they were just...stuck.

I'd seen Elodie's ghost a lot, and every time I did, a wave of sadness washed over me. Her death had been her own fault. She and her coven had raised a demon in the hopes that they could bind it and use its power. They'd even sacrificed Holly for it. Still, Elodie had given me her last spark of magic. Without it, I never would have been able to kill Alice.

Now Elodie drifted past me, her eyes searching for something, her feet not touching the ground.

It seemed wrong that someone as vibrant as Elodie would be reduced to this pale, sad spirit forever wandering the place where she died. "I wish you could just go on to wherever you're supposed



to be,” I whispered in the silence of the hallway.

The ghost swung around and looked at me.

My heart lodged in my throat.

That was impossible. Ghosts couldn't see or hear us. That was why I should've known right away that Alice wasn't a ghost like she claimed. But Elodie was staring at me, the expression on her face no longer lost and bewildered, but annoyed, with just a touch of disdain.

The way she'd always looked at me in life.

“Elodie?” I barely murmured the word, but it sounded deafening in the quiet. She kept studying me, but she didn't reply. “Can you hear me?” I asked, slightly louder this time.

A pause. Then, to my disbelief, she made a tiny nod.

“Soph?” My door opened, and Jenna peeked out. “Who are you talking to?”

I whipped my head around, but Elodie had already vanished.

“No one,” I said, trying hard not to seem irritated. It wasn't Jenna's fault she'd interrupted me in the middle of talking to a ghost, a ghost who wasn't supposed to be able to communicate at all.

“Where have you been?” Jenna asked as I slumped on my bed. “I was worried.”

“It's been a really long afternoon,” I answered before launching into the Tale of Casnoff's Office again. Unlike Cal, Jenna had a lot of questions, so the story took a lot longer to tell. I left out the part about Cal and I being betrothed. Jenna was already practically wearing a Team Cal T-shirt. I didn't want to give her any more ammunition. By the time I was finished, I felt too tired even to go down for dinner, usually my favorite time of day.

“England,” Jenna breathed when I was done. “How awesome will that be?”

I laid an arm over my eyes. “Honestly, Jen? I have no idea.”

She tossed a pillow at me. “It's going to be superawesome. And thank you.”

“For what?”

“For letting me come too. I thought maybe you'd want some time alone with your dad.”

“Are you kidding? You were the deal breaker, my friend. No Jenna, no England. Those were my conditions.”

She smiled brightly, shaking her head so the pink stripe in her bangs fell over one eye. “I'm not sure that island is big enough for the two of us. Oh! Do we get to use some sort of sweet witch transportation to get there? Like, a traveling spell or a magical portal?”

“Sorry,” I said, forcing myself to get up and change. After all, my uniform still had the distinct odor of Nasty Pond. I would need at least a thirty-minute shower before going to bed tonight. “I asked Dad. We're taking a plane.”

Jenna's face fell. “That's such a...human thing.”

“Look on the bright side,” I told her, tugging on a clean Hecate-blue skirt. “It's a private plane, so at least it's a rich-human thing.”

That cheered her up, and we started planning our entire wardrobe for the summer as we made our way toward the dining hall.

But once our plates were filled and we were sitting at our usual table, Jenna's face grew serious. “Sophie,” she said.

“What?”

She pushed her food around and seemed to be debating what to say. Finally, she just decided to be blunt.

“Archer's in England.”

The piece of ham I'd been chewing turned to sawdust in my mouth, but I forced my voice to be

light as I said, “Allegedly. I’m not sure the word of two warlocks—who were drunk off their butts from what I hear—can be taken as fact.” Except that that hadn’t been the only sighting. There was the werewolf who’d seen a guy matching Archer’s description when The Eye raided a den in London. And the vampire who’d fought with a young dark-haired Eye three months ago a few blocks from Victoria station.

Mrs. Casnoff had a file on Archer in her bottom desk drawer. Her desk was protected from spells but apparently not from nail files and elbow grease.

“Anyway,” I said to Jenna, lowering my eyes to my plate. “That sighting was months ago.”

“It was last month,” Jenna corrected, and her tone suggested I had known that. “And people have been saying he was in England since he disappeared. I overheard those two witches in Savannah.”

“It’s a big island, Jenna,” I said. “And even if Archer is there, I seriously doubt he’s anywhere near Prodigium. That would be stupid. Archer’s a lot of things, but he’s not an idiot.”

Jenna turned her attention back to her food, but when her green beans had made their third circuit around her plate, I pushed my dinner away and said, “Spit it out.”

She put down her fork and looked into my eyes. “What would you do, though, if you did see him?”

I held her gaze for as long as I could. I knew what she wanted me to say. She wanted me to tell her that I’d turn him in to the Council—who would almost certainly execute him—or maybe even that I would kill him myself.

For the first time in a long time, I let myself remember Archer, really remember him. His brown eyes and slow smile. His laugh, and how I felt when I was with him. How his voice sounded when he called me “Mercer.”

The way he had kissed me.

I lowered my eyes to the table. “I don’t know,” I finally said.

Jenna sighed, but she didn’t say anything more about it. After a moment we started talking about the trip again, and I made Jenna laugh by wondering aloud if there was such a thing as vampire high tea. “And when you ask for Earl Grey, you actually get Earl Grey,” I summed up, sending Jenna into another fit of giggles.

I felt better as we left the dining hall, and Jenna must have too, since she looped her arm through mine to walk up the stairs.

But the thought she’d put in my mind refused to die, and I fell asleep that night seeing Archer’s eyes and hoping with most of my heart he wasn’t in England.

Even as a not so tiny part of it hoped that he was.

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## CHAPTER 4



Three weeks later, I left for England.

Mom and Mrs. Casnoff walked down to the ferry with the four of us late in the afternoon. Mom's eyes were red, so I knew she'd been crying, but she tried to seem cheerful as she helped Jenna and me load our luggage. "Make sure you take lots of pictures," she told me. "And if you come back using words like 'queue' or 'lorry,' I'll be very upset."

We stood on the deck, the sea breeze ruffling our hair. Jenna had already claimed a bench in the shade, and Cal was talking in a low voice to Mrs. Casnoff. I saw her look over his shoulder at me, and I wondered how she felt about me leaving for the summer. She was probably pumped, or as pumped as Mrs. Casnoff got. God knows, I'd brought nothing but trouble to Hecate Hall.

I also wondered if I should have told her about Elodie's ghost. Actually, I *knew* I should have. I'd told her about Alice when she first appeared to me, maybe Elodie wouldn't be a ghost. It was a thought that had burned at the back of my brain for months, and here I was making the same mistake all over again.

Before I could think about that any more, Mom wrapped her arms around me. We were about the same height, and I could feel her tears at my temple when she said, "I'm going to miss your birthday next month. I've never missed your birthday."

My throat was so tight that I couldn't speak, so I just hugged her closer.

"Sophie," Dad said, appearing at my elbow. "It's time to go."

I nodded and gave Mom one last squeeze. "I'll call lots, I promise," I told her as we pulled apart. "And I'll be back before you know it."

Mom wiped her cheeks with the back of her hand and gave me one of her dazzling smiles. Dad drew in a sharp breath next to me, but when I glanced over at him, he had turned away.

"Good-bye, James," Mom called after him.

Cal, Jenna, and I stood at the railing as the ferry pulled away from the dock. Mrs. Casnoff stood on the shore, watching us go, but Mom was already walking back into the woods that surrounded the beach. I was glad. It was a miracle I hadn't started sobbing already.

The ferry chugged out into the brown water. Over the trees, we could make out the very top of Hecate Hall.

"I haven't been away from this place since I was thirteen years old," Cal said softly. "Six years."

I'd never asked Cal what he'd done that had landed him at Hecate Hall. He just didn't seem like the type of guy to do the dangerous spells that usually got warlocks sent to the school. He'd decided to stay on after his eighteenth birthday, although I'd never been clear on whether that had been his choice. But the farther we got from the school, the more troubled he looked.

Even Jenna, who usually acted like she was composing a thesis on all the ways Hecate sucked, looked wistful.

I stared at the bit of roof I could see against the blue sky, and a strong sense of foreboding came over me, as though the sun had gone behind a cloud.

*The three of us will never come back here.*

The thought was so startling that I shivered. I tried to shake it off. That was ridiculous. We were going to England for three months, and we'd be back at Hecate by August. Premonition isn't one of my powers, so I was just being paranoid.

Still, the feeling stayed with me long after Graymalkin Island had faded in the distance.

\* \* \*

"Being a demon should make you immune to jet lag," I mumbled hours and hours later as a sleek black car carried us through the English countryside.

The long flight from Georgia to England had been pretty uneventful. Except that Cal had sat next to me.

Which was fine. Really.

It wasn't like I'd been hyperaware of his presence and jumped the three times his knee bumped mine. And after that third time, he definitely hadn't shot me a kind of disgusted look and said, "Chill out, will you?"

And when Jenna gave us both a quizzical look, we hadn't snapped, in unison, "Nothing!" Because all of that would have been weird, and Cal and I weren't weird. We were cool.

"You'll feel better soon," Dad said. For the first time since I'd met him, his eyes were bright and he actually looked relaxed. I guess being back in the motherland will do that to a guy.

Jenna was practically bouncing with excitement, but Cal looked as tired as I felt. I hadn't been able to fall asleep on the plane, and I was paying for it now. My eyes felt gritty and hot, and all I could think about was collapsing into a bed. After all, my poor body thought it was six a.m., but in England it was nearly lunchtime. Plus, we'd been driving for what felt like hours.

When the plane had landed in London, I'd assumed the car would take us to a house in the city, or maybe to Council Headquarters so Dad could do business stuff. But the car had driven out of the crowded streets and past small houses all clustered together that reminded me of a Dickens story. Gradually, the brick buildings had given way to trees and rolling green hills. I saw more sheep than I thought existed.

"So we came all the way to England just to hang out in the middle of nowhere?" I asked, leaning my aching head on Jenna's shoulder.

"We did," Dad replied.

Cal smiled. Well, of course he'd be thrilled to be stuck on some British farm all summer long. I thought grumpily, my visions of Big Ben and Buckingham Palace and Tower Bridge crumbling. Probably all sorts of English plants to heal—

Then I caught sight of a house.

Although, calling it a house was like calling the *Mona Lisa* a painting, or Hecate Hall a school. The term was technically correct, but it didn't even begin to sum up the reality of the object.

This house was one of the biggest buildings I'd ever seen, and made of a light, golden-colored stone that looked warm to the touch. It sat nestled in a lush valley, an emerald green lawn stretching in front of it, while a forested hill rose in the back. A thin, shining ribbon of water curved gracefully along one side of the property. Literally hundreds of windows glittered in the sunlight.

"Wow," Cal said, leaning over to look out the window.

"This is where we're staying?" I asked.

Dad just smiled, looking way too satisfied with himself. "I told you there would be room for a

of us,” he said, and I caught myself smiling back. We held each other’s eyes for a second, but I broke away first, nodding toward the house. “Don’t houses like that always have a name?”

“More often than not,” he answered. “This is Thorne Abbey.”

Something about that name was familiar, but I couldn’t think why. “It used to be a church?”

“Not that actual house. It wasn’t built until the late sixteenth century. But there was an abbey on the land.”

He went into lecture mode, talking about how the abbey had been razed under Henry VIII, and the land given to the Thorne family.

But to be honest, I wasn’t really listening. I was watching several people walk out the front door of the house. Then I spotted a pair of wings and wondered who exactly Dad’s friends were.

The car rumbled over a stone bridge and pulled into a circular drive. Dad got out of the car first, and as he opened my door, I suddenly wished I’d worn something nicer than a faded pair of jeans and a plain green T-shirt.

Impossibly wide steps led up to a terrace made of the same golden-colored stone as the rest of the house. There were six people standing there, two dark-haired kids who looked about my age, and four adults. I guessed they were all Prodigium. Well, the faerie was obvious, but I could sense magic hovering around the rest of them, too.

The day was warmer than I’d expected, and I felt a few beads of sweat pop out on my brow. The gravel crunched under my feet, and in the distance I heard birds singing. Jenna appeared at my elbow, her earlier excitement gone, her fingers moving over her bloodstone.

Dad placed a hand on the small of my back and steered me up the steps. “Everyone, this is Sophie. My daughter.”

Suddenly I felt something surge in my blood. Something like magic, but darker, more powerful. It was coming from the two teenagers near the back of the crowd. They were the only ones not smiling, and the boy—who looked weirdly familiar—was glaring at me.

Realization slammed into my chest, and it was all I could do not to gasp.

They were demons.

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## CHAPTER 5



I stared at the demon kids, numbness seeping through me. Dad and I were supposed to be the only demons in the world, so how—

A sudden, horrifying thought came to me: holy hell weasel, were these kids my half-siblings? Had Dad dragged me all the way to England to play out some twisted version of the Brady Bunch?

“What is this?” I choked out, meaning the other demons.

But Dad smiled proudly. “This is Council Headquarters.”

Behind me, I heard Cal let out a long breath, like he’d been holding it, as a woman with dark blond hair stepped out from the group and offered her hand. “Sophia, we’re so thrilled you’ll be with us this summer. I’m Lara.”

I shook her hand, even as I shot a glance at the demon kids. They were whispering to each other.

“Lara is a Council member, and my second-in-command, you might say,” Dad said.

Lara didn’t let go of my hand right away. “I’ve heard so much about you, both from your father and from Anastasia.”

“Mrs. Casnoff?” Oh, God, if that’s where this woman had gotten her Sophie Mercer gossip, I was surprised she’d greeted me with a handshake instead of an exorcism.

“Lara and Anastasia are sisters,” Dad said.

“Okay,” I replied, trying to process that. Then something else occurred to me. “I thought Council Headquarters was in London.”

A deep vertical line appeared between Lara’s brows. “It is. Due to some unforeseen events we’ve decided to relocate for the summer.” Now that I knew she was Mrs. Casnoff’s sister, I could see—and hear—the resemblance. I wondered if the demon teenagers were the “unforeseen events,” or if there was *more* messed up stuff happening. Wouldn’t have surprised me.

I turned to Dad, “You said we were going to a friend’s house. Why didn’t you tell me you were bringing me here?”

He met my gaze. “Because if I had, you wouldn’t have come.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the demon kids break away from the group and head for the massive double doors just past the terrace. The girl shot me one last look before they slipped inside.

“Sophie, this is the Council,” Dad said, drawing my attention back to the Prodigium standing there.

“That’s it?” I heard Cal say under his breath, and I had to admit, I was surprised, too. All the time I’d imagined the Council as this huge, shadowy group of Prodigium who wore long black robes or something.

I don’t know if he heard Cal, or if he could just read the looks on our faces, but Dad said, “There are normally twelve members, but now there are just the five of us currently at Thorne.”

“Where are—” Jenna started to say, but she was interrupted as one of the men stepped forward.

He was older than Dad, and his white hair gleamed in the sunlight. "I'm Kristopher," he said, his voice thick with an unidentifiable accent. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Sophia." His eyes were icy blue instead of gold, but he was definitely a shifter. I could feel it.

Wondering if he turned into a husky dog, I turned to the next guy, craning my neck to look up at him. He must've been nearly seven feet tall, and his huge wings reminded me of water in oil: the wings were black, but they still swirled with every color, from green to blue to pink.

"Roderick," he said as my hand disappeared into his. The woman was Elizabeth, and with her short gray hair and little round glasses, I thought she looked like someone's nana; but when I went to shake her hand, she yanked me to her and sniffed my hair.

Great. Another werewolf.

Dad said something about speaking with all of them later, and then, finally, we headed inside.

Jenna gasped as we moved into the foyer, and if I hadn't still been reeling from the one-two punch of the Council on the steps, plus the demon teenagers, I probably would have too. It was one of those spaces where you felt like you could look forever and still not see everything. Hecate could be overwhelming as well, but it was nothing like this. The black-and-white marble floor underneath my feet was shiny enough to make me glad I hadn't worn a skirt, and I was nearly blinded by the acres of gold that covered every surface. Like Hecate, the main entrance was dominated by a staircase, but this one was a lot bigger, and carved from white limestone. The steps were covered in a carpet as red as spilled blood.

Overhead, the curved ceiling was covered in a mural, but I couldn't quite make out what was being depicted. From the looks of it, it was violent and tragic. Other paintings around the room showed the same kind of scene: stern-faced men pointing swords at weeping women, or men charging into battle while their horses' eyes rolled in fear.

I shivered. Even in June, it was impossible to believe you could ever be warm in a room like this. Or maybe my goose bumps were from all the magic, as though five hundred years' worth of spells had seeped into the stone and wood.

"They have statues," Jenna said. "In a *hallway*." Sure enough, two bronze statues of veiled women guarded the massive staircase, where even more people were now lining up. They were all wearing black uniforms, and had nearly identical smiles plastered on their faces.

"What are those people doing?" Jenna whispered to me.

"I don't know," I replied through a frozen grin, "but I'm afraid a musical number might be involved."

"This is our household staff," Dad said, sweeping his arm toward the group. "Anything you need, they'll be happy to help you with."

"Oh," I said weakly, feeling like my voice echoed in the cavernous room. "Great."

Beyond the crowd, at the top of the stairs, was a large marble arch. Dad nodded toward it and said, "Our temporary offices are through there, but we can see those later. I'm sure you'd like to see your rooms now."

I caught the edge of Dad's sleeve and pulled him away from the group. "Actually," I whispered, "I'd like to know where those other demons came from. Are they—they're not my brother and sister, are they?"

Dad's eyes widened behind his glasses. "No," he said. "Dear Lord, no. Daisy and Nick are... We can talk more about them at another time, but no, they're no relation to us."

"Then why are they here?"

Dad frowned and rolled his shoulders. "Because they have nowhere else to go, and this is the

safest place for them.”

~~That made sense. “Right. Because you guys could take them out if they went all super-demon.”~~

But Dad shook his head, puzzled. “No, Sophie, I meant it’s safer for *them*. Nick and Daisy have already had several attempts made on their lives.”

He didn’t even give me time to react before raising his hand and waving Lara over. Her heel clicked on the marble as she strode toward us. “Sophie, Lara has prepared some lovely rooms for you and your guest. Why don’t you go get acclimatized? We can talk later.”

It obviously wasn’t a request, so I just shrugged and said, “Sure.”

Lara led us across the foyer to a tall stone doorway housing yet another set of steps. As she led us up the dim passageway, I couldn’t shake the feeling that I was walking into a tomb.

As we walked, Lara rattled off statistics that I only half listened to. They were unbelievable anyway.

Over a million cubic feet of living space. More than three hundred rooms, thirty-one of which were kitchens. Ninety-eight bathrooms. Three hundred and fifty-nine windows. Two thousand four hundred and seventy-six lightbulbs.

Jenna was shaking her head by the time we reached the fourth floor, where the three of us would be staying. Cal was shown to his room first, and Jenna burst into giggles when we peeked over his shoulder. The room could not have been less Cal. I mean, I guess the hunter-green bedding and drapes were kind of masculine, but the spindly gold-and-white furniture was definitely not. Nor was the giant ruffled canopy over his huge bed.

“Wow, Cal,” I said, feeling a little bit like myself for the first time since I’d walked into this crazy house. “You will be able to have some awesome slumber parties in here. All the other girls are gonna be so jealous.”

Cal shot me a half smile, and I felt some of the weirdness between us dissipate. “It’s not so bad,” he said. Then he flopped down on the bed, only to sink out of sight in the middle of it. As Cal drowned in a sea of fluffy coverlets and throw pillows, I couldn’t help but crack up.

Lara looked offended. “That bed originally belonged to the third Duke of Cornwall.”

“It’s great,” Cal said, his voice muffled. He gave her the thumbs-up, which only made me and Jenna laugh harder.

Frowning, Lara led us down the hall a little ways. She opened a door, and there was no doubt the room had been set up for Jenna. There were pink drapes, pink furniture, and even a deep rose-colored bedspread. The room overlooked a small, private garden. A breeze from the open window carried the scent of flowers. I had to admit, I was impressed. And a little surprised.

“It’s perfect,” Jenna told Lara. Her smile was bright, but her face was chalky, and I suddenly realized that Jenna hadn’t fed since we’d left Hecate. Lara must have been thinking the same thing because she crossed the room and opened a cherrywood armoire. Inside, there was a mini-fridge stacked high with blood bags.

“O-negative,” Lara said, gesturing to the blood as though Jenna had just won a prize on a really gruesome game show. “I was told that’s your favorite.”

Jenna’s eyes darkened, and she licked her lips. “It is,” she said, her voice thick.

“Then we’ll leave you to it,” Lara said smoothly, taking my arm. “Sophie’s room is just down the hall.”

“Awesome,” Jenna replied, but she was still staring at the blood.

“See you later,” I called as we left. Jenna just shut the door and, I assumed, chowed down.

“We prepared a very special room for you,” Lara said, and her voice sounded nervous. “I hope



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