

A Vampwitch Novel  
*Hunted*



KATHLEEN HARRYMAN

*Plunted*  
*A Vampwitch*  
*Novel*

*Book One*

**Kathleen Harryman**

## **Hunted**

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# Books by Kathleen Harryman

## THRILLER

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS  
HIDDEN DANGER

## ROMANTIC SUSPENSE

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LOOKING GLASS

## HISTORICAL ROMANCE

THE PROMISE

## PARANORMAL ROMANTIC-SUSPENSE

VAMPIRITCH SERIES:  
HUNTED

## POETRY

LIFE'S ECHOES

## COMING SOON

## THRILLER

(The sequel to WHEN DARKNESS FALLS)  
DARKNESS RISING

## PARANORMAL ROMANTIC-SUSPENSE

ANGELS AT WAR TRILOGY:  
THE BLACK FEATHER



# Acknowledgments

I once read that writing is a lonesome profession. For me, writing is a wonderful experience. It is a place far from the stresses of life, and the steel chains of conformity and expectations. It is an amazing place, full of surprises, constant chatter, and ideas. A place of wonder where storyteller and reader become one. Hand in hand we take this journey together, outside the cosmos, to a world very different from the one we live in.

An author is not a slave to the story, but a chrysalis. The story is reborn each time a reader picks it up. Without a reader what is a story but an injured bird never to spread its wings and fly to new heights. Thank you for choosing to read *Hunted* and setting the story free.

For my family, my parents June and Neville Chappell, without whom I would not be the person I am today. You are my blessing, one that I shall always be grateful for. Though dad is no more of this world, he is and always will be part of me.

My sister's Maureen and Julie, sometimes the path beneath our feet crumbles and we slide, but the rock our love is made from keeps us from falling.

To Stephen, my husband, for his patience and support, and to my wonderful children Victoria and Maddison. Let us always treat each day like it is our last. Enjoy each moment and know how special we are.

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Hunted is the first book I ever wrote. It is a shame it has taken me so long to put it into print. I hope it makes you smile.

*Dedicated to my girls  
Victoria and Maddison*







# Prologue

“Get back!” A man screams, halting my advance.

I stumble, coming to an abrupt stop in the middle of the living room.

In front of me is a strange-looking chap with pink-candy-floss-hair. Wild eyes dance within their sockets and flames line his palms. On instinct I freeze, my gaze fixing on the fire as it leaves his hands, shooting through the air like a firework. Fear and confusion merge. The erratic beat of my heart sweeps through my body, vibrating in my ears. Sweat trickles down my back as I track the yellow and orange blaze. It lands near Mum’s feet. Horrified, I watch the heated ball as it gains momentum, creeping closer to her. Fiery rings hold her in place.

“Get out, Alice!” Tears fall down her cheeks.

I shake my head, even though my brain can’t make sense of what is happening, I’m not leaving her to die. Grabbing a blanket off the sofa, I beat at the fire. Smoke fills my lungs and heat bites at the delicate flesh of my trachea.

Candy Man’s laughter mixes with the crackling of burning furniture. “Still think you can win, Nathaniel?”

Rings of molten heat circle round Nathaniel’s neck and ankles. The flames almost touching his skin. Tears roll down

his face. There is a familiarity about him I can't place. Deep inside me, something stirs, answering the silent emotional call from the man bound in fiery chains.

"Alice, do what your mother tells you! *Go.*" I ignore Nathaniel and continue to beat the flames as they grow in momentum.

Heat pushes against the large window; it buckles exploding and spitting out shards of glass. Oxygen fuels the fire and Mum's face disappears, consumed by flames and smoke. Her screams vibrate deep within my soul. I stare at the blanket, recognising how useless my actions are.

"No, Mum." My cries are too late. She's gone.

But I'm not listening to reason. With renewed vigour, I beat at the inferno at my feet.

A woman's cry erupts from my right. A large piece of glass protrudes from her leg. Candy Man's laughter taunts me, and my hands tighten around the blanket. Rage consumes me. I throw down the blanket and run at him. My actions involve no thinking, I just want to pound my fists into his flesh until he stops his insane laughing.

"Stop her!" I don't wait to see who Nathaniel is shouting at as I charge, focused only on the root cause of my pain.

Candy Man's arms fold over his chest, his lips curving into a sneer. "That's it, Alice, come get me!"

One minute my legs are flying in the air, ready to connect with his face, the next I'm yanked back by the hood of my coat - fabric tearing.

"What the hell. Let me go." I beat my fists into the fingers gripping my arms.

Golden-brown eyes meet mine as a low growl falls from his lips. He changes his grip, pressing me against his body, holding me prisoner, pinning my arms at my sides. I open my mouth and scream into his face.

“Ethan, take her out of here.” A man similar in looks to Nathaniel, though younger, appears in the doorway.

Before I can register what is about to happen, I’m airborne over Ethan’s shoulder. Like a sack of potatoes, he carries me from the room.

“Put me down!” My cries go unheeded.

As the fire magnifies, so does the heat and smoke filling my lungs, making breathing difficult. I don’t care. The only thing that matters is Mum, and she’s dead. Consumed by the flames sent flying from Candy Man’s hands.

Grief hits and my world splinters. My human brain can’t rationalise what has happened. Mum’s dead and I don’t understand how or why.

I have always thought a heart can withstand the pain of death. I am wrong. The heaviness of loss clutching my heart is a weight I have never experienced before. With my head upside down and my eyes staring at the ground, my body convulses in grief. It rips its way through my internal organs until I no longer know how to feel.



# Chapter One

From my hiding place behind the Ye Old Deli Shop, I watch the door to Hobson Solicitors open. A man steps out into the frosty night, pulling up the collar of his coat and adjusting the scarf around his neck.

Hobson Solicitors is on the Shambles, which is the oldest street in York. Though Mr Hobson Solicitor can't see them, the narrow street, with its cobbled floor, is littered with ghosts. Some float amongst the few humans wandering the street. Others replay the traumatic moment of their death in a continuous loop.

"You sure that's him?"

Polly leans over me, "yep, that's him alright."

The man doesn't fit my preconceptions of a thief. Money drips off him. From the expensive cut of his trousers to the confident manner in which he strolls down the street.

Polly's vibrant red hair flies about her face. I can taste her excitement as it floods her system. Her pink neon leggings clash with her lime-green coat and vivid orange gloves. Not quite the getup for prowling about undetected. It is, however, conservative for Polly.

No one wears colour like Polly Palmer. She's the vivacious member in the Palmer clan. Her older brother Richard

is a lawyer. His jollity left when he hit puberty. Ben is a computer nerd who has a knack for making me feel uneducated. It's not my fault he talks gibberish.

Polly and I have been friends since nursery. Her fashion sense and easy-going nature haven't changed at all.

She's a remarkable lady and friend.

"Look at the brazen bugger, Alice."

Gripped within the soft leather of his gloves is the package containing the stolen antique. The box might appear plain, but what's inside will set you back a small fortune.

"Right, remember the plan, and stick to it." Shadows prevent my stern glare from reaching her.

"I still don't understand why you can't just zap him." My eyes roll at her words.

"Pol, I'm a Vampwitch, not a superhero. I swear you watch too much TV." Polly flashes her teeth at me.

Six weeks ago, I found out I wasn't human, thanks to a fire demon called Aeden. For twenty-five years I have been oblivious of the preternatural DNA within my makeup. It's fair to say I am not dealing well with my newfound knowledge. Deception and lies hurt when uncovered.

Unable to kill me, Aeden, the candy-floss-haired monster, killed my Mum. Grief is a hard emotion. It requires acceptance in order for the person to move on. Time is also a factor, allowing the mind and heart to heal. I am in a place right now which won't grant either. This, I blame on my father, Nathaniel, and take out on my half-brother, Julian, as he is around more than my father.

Throw in the fact I have little control over my new powers, being part vampire, part witch with a dash of fae isn't helping the situation. Like I said, lies and deception hurt.

As the first of my kind, no one knows what to expect. I have no desire to wrap my mouth around someone's neck

and suck out their blood. A plus for me. The dormant vampire is awake and its effects on me are startling. I now possess enhanced hearing and sight. And speed and strength. There is also a need to feed on violence and strong emotions, or anything else that increases the tempo of the heart.

The witch stuff I remain uneducated about and unstimulated to find out more. I know it involves a lot of studying.

Mum's death has changed me. I no longer dream of finding my dad alive and full of regret. Instead, I harbour feelings of resentment and wish he had stayed dead, rather than undead. I now have more relatives than I can shake a bat at, and all have my *best interest at heart*. It's an appalling way to say, *control you*.

My tears hadn't dried on my face when Nathaniel, Julian, and Mum's sister Dot, informed me of my lack of humanity (supernatural birthright).

As the only daughter of a single parent, with no relatives taking them for trips to the ice-cream van or park, I find my present situation overwhelming and unwelcome.

The time for additional family sailed with Noah and his arc.

What puzzles me is their reaction to my unenthusiastic response and open hostility. They were ill-prepared for my anger when I found out the truth. Their confusion at my emotional discord leaves me baffled. What did they expect?

My attitude isn't helping my relationship with my brother, Julian.

As a master vampire, he's used to obedience and hates the constant challenges I raise. Announcing my supernatural status to my best friend, sent him into a frenzy of frustrated anger. How was I supposed to know that '*not telling anyone*' also included Polly? We share everything.

To maintain family life balance, as we all live at Roseley, Julian and I have reached a mutual understanding by agreeing to disagree.

"Your eyes are sparkling green and gold fire." Polly's words yank me back to the present.

"Sorry, I was thinking."

"You know what I've told you about that. It's dangerous."

"Hm..."

Polly's sense of humour and breezy outlook never alters. Julian will lock us up in separate cages if he finds out we're prowling the streets with a death threat hanging over my head.

Polly nudges me. "It would be good if you could zap him."

"Even Vampwitches have their limitations, Pol."

"It wouldn't happen to Supergirl."

"What about kryptonite?"

"She can still zap."

Mr Hobson Solicitor is inching closer. "Hm... right, time to go."

Polly grabs my arm as I move out from the shadows.

"Be careful, Alice."

I flash her a toothy smile. "I might be no superhero, but I've got some awesome moves."

Running at a speed too quick for human eyes, I make a beeline for the thief. We collide, hitting the rain-soaked floor. The guy groans as I let out a scream of surprise – playing the part of the unsuspecting victim. The solicitor is on top, so there's no argument of whom ran into whom.

"What happened?" His voice is like velvet, a good reassuring quality for a man in his profession.

*You walked into me stupid!* is what I want to say.



Instead, I let a flicker of a smile cross my lips, my brows furrowing. "I think you tripped us up."

I arch my eyebrows, wondering when he's going to move, so I can get off the damp stones. The hat I'd been wearing is dancing across the cobbles, and I am blinded by a mass of black curls, as the wind plays with my waist-length hair.

A flicker of surprise lights his face. "Sorry, I didn't see you."

"Well, I was there. Large as life." My arms float in the air and I sound grumpy. "If you don't mind moving so I can get up." Dampness is soaking through my coat into my jeans, causing me to shiver.

Vamps are cold-blooded creatures.

As a living vampire, low-body temperature makes your teeth rattle. Winter is a season of dread and rattling bones.

"Oh! Y- yes sorry."

Polly slithers from the shadows in exaggerating moves and exchanges the boxes. She throws me a thumbs up, and a big grin, hopping from foot to foot as she disappears down the street. I resist the impulse to peer at the sky for help.

Mr Hobson Solicitor dangles a hand in front of me. I take it with a slight smile.

"Thanks."

I examine my red duffel coat for dirt, watching him survey the floor. His heartbeat increases its rhythm as he searches for the stolen goods.

Eyes lighting up, he grabs the package.

"Hope it's not broken," I say dusting off my coat.

"What?" Nerves raise his voice an octave.

I point at the parcel. "Whatever's in there."

"Oh." His fingers curl round it. "No... no... I'm sure it is fine."

The Edwardian ten-point-seven carat old mine diamond solitaire ring carries an estimated value of one hundred and eighty thousand pounds.

*Fine* seems such an under-descriptive word to associate with the expensive sparkling stone.

The term *old mine* refers to gemstones originating from historical/ancient mining sources.

If the word Edwardian doesn't give its age away, old mine will.

I notice he makes no move to question my own well-being. Annoyance clouds my face and I swipe at my coat with more vigour. "I'm OK, too.

His eyes widen. "Yes, um, are you alright, I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"Hm..." I stare at him, so he knows I'm not buying his sudden concern. "I'll live."

My boots hit the stones as I walk away, grumbling to myself about idiots and selfish people.



## Chapter Two

The Golden Fleece comes into view as I approach the end of the Shambles. I whistle crossing the road onto Pavement, which is one of the major streets into York city centre.

'Damn, I'm good.' I congratulate myself.

Great-Great Grandma Palmer's Edwardian diamond solitaire ring will soon be back in the not-so-safe hands of her granddaughter, Polly.

A smile curves my lips as I consider the possibility that I just might be a superhero.

*Ha!*

Heat hits me as I enter the pub, along with the constant drum of conversation. Grateful to be in the warmth, my body sighs.

Built in 1503, The Golden Fleece is one of Britain's most haunted pubs. York boasts more phantoms than many of its counterparts. Therefore, it isn't surprising that this watering hole is their central meeting place.

Living or dead, we are still creatures of habit. The pub possess a mix of resident ghosts, from those who died on its premises over the years, and spectres who use it as a social gathering.

Lady Alice Peckett wanders round the small rooms, supervising the goings-on, and moving furniture as she sees

fit. As the wife of John Peckett, Lord Mayor of York during 1701-1702, and owner of the property, Lady Alice takes her role as mistress of the house with utmost seriousness. Death has not prevented her from tending to her duties. My favourite resident is Geoff Monroe, a Canadian airman who fell to his death from the pub's upper floor window in 1945. Despite his premature demise, Geoff is jolly, and his stories entertaining. He waves at me through his gathering flock of ghosts and vampires as I pass. His legendary stories make him popular.

Boots clanging on the old wooden floor I walk over to Polly. I try not to make eye contact with the spirits milling amongst the living. Some acknowledge me with an incline of their heads, others ignore me. They know better than to harass me. Vampires have an affinity with the dead, not surprising given their undead status. That analogy passed onto me via my father, Nathaniel Quinn.

My lips flatline. The thought of my father is enough to dampen my high spirits. Nathaniel and Julian became vampires in the 1700s, just before the Industrial Revolution hit.

Both were forced to become creatures of the night, for sporting reasons, by a master vampire with psychological issues.

Polly sits tucked away in a corner at the back of the pub. Her nerves are on display as she nurses a glass of Coke. The package containing the ring is hidden from sight. As I wave, relief lights up her face.

"What took you so long?" She groans as I reach the table.

"I've only been ten minutes. It's not as if I could cut and run."

"Crikey!" Her voice squeaks in disbelief as she checks her watch. "It feels like hours."

"Hm..." I point at the half-drunk Coke. "You want another one?"

"No, thanks."

As I sit down, her fingers circle through my arm, nodding over at her coat. "Should we open it here? Or wait till we get back to Roseley?"

Her heart rate speeds up. Blood rushes through her veins, triggering my vampire instincts. Swallowing them down, I battle for control, aware I can't afford to vamp out here. The hunter in me sensing its prey.

"Let me get a drink first."

"OK." Polly's voice becomes gloomy as her eagerness dies.

The predator in me evaporates.

"I know you need the visual reassurance of seeing the ring, but it's best it stays hidden until we're back at Roseley."

"You think?"

"Yeah, I do. We don't want to attract any unwanted attention. Ghosts talk just as bad as humans, and it's packed in here tonight."

Polly scans the room. "I don't see any ghosts."

"It's a vampire, werewolf, and a witch thing. OK, it's a supernatural thing." I nudge her arm. "Come on, Pol, it won't be long, and we'll be home. Let's enjoy my freedom before I have to endure a lecture about my safety."

"I guess. Richard and Ben would kill me if they knew I'd lost it."

"You didn't lose it, someone stole it. There's a big difference."

Polly grins. "Too right."

"That's better. No peeking while I'm gone. Promise you'll wait."

"You used to be so trusting. When did you turn into a cynic?"

"Since I lost my flat and was forced to live at Roseley."

"Is Roseley such a terrible place?"

"Humph." Polly giggles at my lack of comment.

Roseley's country Victorian style is breath-taking. Surrounded by woodland and streams, it oozes peace.

Positioned on the outskirts of Poppleton, five miles from the centre of York, and with no immediate neighbours, Roseley remains secluded from wandering travellers.

"Right, I'm going for that drink. Are you sure I can't tempt you?"

"Yeah, too much Coke makes me burp."

I hesitate as a familiar scent drifts over. "What the chuff is he doing here?"

A keen sense of smell is another vampire trait, and the aroma of my earlier mark is assailing my nostrils.

"Who? Where?" Polly's eyes dart around the room.

"Him." I point at our target as he comes into view.

"Oh." The colour drains from her face. "What do you think he wants?"

"How the chuff would I know." My comment earns me a sharp look. "I guess I'd better find out." As I stand, Polly's lime-green coat moves.

"Make sure that stays out of sight." I point at the parcel.

With a gasp, Polly reaches for it. With shaking hands, she wraps the fabric around the package.

"Why don't I get you something a little stronger than Coke?"

Her rapid heartbeat amplifies, banging with vigour against her chest. Blood rushes through her veins and the pulse on her neck throbs.

“OK, get me a shot of vodka.” My eyebrows disappear into my hairline. It’s stronger than I was thinking, but if it helps to slow down her heart rate, I’ll get her a double.

Trisha is attending the bar tonight, which means my lack of purse won’t be an issue. Julian can pick up the tab.

Mr Hobson Solicitor’s elbow lodges into my side as I enter the crowd at the bar.

“We should stop meeting like this,” I say moving away from his elbow.

He looks at me in surprise, and I curse under my breath. I should have stayed in the shadows with Polly.

Shock fades from his features as he pulls himself together. “Let me buy you a drink to say sorry for earlier.”

“Sure, I’ll have a triple vodka and Coke,” I say catching Trisha’s eyes.

Trisha nods at me as she takes his order. I offer her a smile, tapping my foot eager to be off and back with Polly. As my vodka hits the wooden countertop, I grab it.

“Thanks,” I call.

His eyes stare at my receding back, and I try not to let my tension show. Walking in Geoff’s direction, I loop back round to Polly as Mr Hobson Solicitor turns his attention back to the bar.

“Well?” Polly asks as I slide the glass of vodka over to her.

“I don’t know why he’s here, other than to drink. He seemed surprised to see me, so I thought it best to leave things alone.”

Polly chokes on the vodka, and I pat her back. “This a double?”

“Triple, I thought you could do with it.”

“You’re the one that’s going to need it. I predict trouble heading your way... fast.” My head snaps up.

*Crap.*

Julian strides towards us. Anger radiates off him like a snap of electricity.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing?" His eyes blaze golden-green fire. An air of magnetic danger rolls off him. Under his right arm is a motorcycle helmet. The black-leather Dainese motorcycle suit adds to the threatening display of danger and sexual appeal. I try not to smile. He looks very striking when he's cross.

"I'm having a drink."

My flippancy increases his displeasure.

"You'll get yourself killed."

Vampires like to exaggerate.

Aeden's death threat lingers like a morbid net over me. I refuse to accept the bait and allow Julian's concern and annoyance affect me. Death threats aside, I need my independence and to take back control of my life, otherwise, I might as well be dead.

Aeden, the candy-haired demon who killed Mum, is the leader of MAMS (Magic Against Mixed Species). A radical group of beings who kill half-breeds such as me.

The name is unoriginal and lacks in aggressive strength. As their numbers increase, so does the pile of dead half-breeds.

Their belief that mixed breeding is weakening their world has led to widespread hysteria amongst some preternatural creatures.

I don't share MAMS theory, failing to understand how beings like me are weakening them. We are an unknown element. Our powers are varied and unexplored. Perhaps it is fear of the unfamiliar which rules and governs their actions, not the mixing of species.



Nathaniel and Julian are law enforcers known as Le Sang. Charged with enforcing the laws set by the Keepers (mystical beings who rule over the supernatural world). Because of this, and the fact my grandfather is a Keeper, my death is on MAMS priority list of kills.

My frustration mounts. Though I want to shout my exasperation at Julian, I know that sarcasm and indifference are more irritating to a vampire.

“Julian, you’re getting your leather-clad body worked up for nothing. It’s not like Aeden is going to show up, and set me on fire, with all these nice humans around to watch as you all like to keep your existence hidden.”

Arms folding across my chest, smugness emanates off me. The muscle in his jaw twitches and I know my comment has hit its mark.

“Don’t make light of the death threat, Alice. At the moment you’re defenceless. You need training. To understand and home in on your vampire skills.”

All I hear is blah... blah... blah.... Same old record on play.

Drinkers move like the Red Sea parted for Moses and Nathaniel appears. Fire burns within his sharp green-gold eyes. The colour intensifies as they land on me. Nathaniel strides through the crowd, a hunter in full pursuit of its prey. The soft red leathers of his motorcycle suit hug his body as he walks. At six- five, he’s a shade shorter than Julian. They are both over a foot taller than me.

Jack materialises at my side, making me jump. Annoyance prickles my consciousness at his amused smile. Polly remains unaware of the ghost’s presence. Jack’s shaggy mousey hair falls over his piercing blue eyes, and his square jaw juts out. He reminds me of a hippy-come hit man. Big biceps sit on a lanky frame. Before his sudden death in his mid-thirties,

Jack was a warlock. Either he lived life on the edge or was terrible with the magic.

Nathaniel pulls out a chair, and with a grace I can only dream of possessing, lowers himself down, placing his helmet on the table. The threat of violence surrounding him has Polly snuggling closer to me. Nathaniel's silence is worse than Julian's verbal tirade over my lack of safety.

"Well, isn't this peachy! The entire gang is just about here," I say through gritted teeth.

Julian pulls out the other chair and sits down. "What did you expect when you disappeared?"

"I left a note on the fridge. Perhaps you should have read it before sending out a search party?"

The crowd parts and Ethan Jefferies steps forward. Ethan is a werewolf and Alpha of the Yorkshire Pack. Polly's elbow digs into my ribs. I have a thing for Ethan. Who wouldn't? He is gorgeous with a capital G! His short bright copper hair, and large muscular body has my heart working overtime. I shoot her a warning glance, earning me a flash of her teeth. My cheeks redden in response. The deep red t-shirt under Ethan's leather bomber-style jacket clings to his upper torso, outlining the ripple of muscle hidden beneath. A werewolf's natural body temperature runs high so the cold the never bothers them.

"All I need is for Aunt Dot to appear and I'll have a full house."

Incensed by their lack of faith in me, I raise my arms, letting them fall to my knees in a loud slap.

The grumble hasn't time to die on my lips when Aunt Dot pushes her way through the crowd of drinkers, who are ignoring her attempts to push her way through. Her willowy physique makes her appear fragile. Wisps of silver hair fall from the bun sitting on top of her head. Her loose-fitting

trousers swing about her thin legs as she walks. The long down coat she is wearing makes her resemble the Michelin Man, better known overseas as Bibendum. Unlike most supernatural creatures, witches feel the cold.

"Did no one read my message?" I say sliding along the bench to make room for her, pushing Polly closer to Nathaniel. Her fingers dig into my arm in fear, unhappy to be any nearer to the angry vampire.

"Oh, we got your note." Jack smiles at me.

"Then I'm baffled! Why the posse?"

"How did you expect us to react?" I shoot Nathaniel what I hope is a lethal glare.

"I left a note." People turn in our direction as my voice carries above the music.

"A note that serves only to highlight your lack of responsibility or awareness to the gravity of your situation. We can't protect you if we don't know where you are."

The need to stick a finger in Nathaniel's eye is strong.

Jack gives a dramatic sigh. "Vampires have a tendency to overreact, Alice."

Ignoring Jack, I pick up Polly's vodka and throw the contents down my throat. It burns like hell, making me cough.

"You ready to go, Pol?" I ask.

Polly scrambles for her coat, hiding the package down the sleeve.

"Your aunt will take you home."

I look at Nathaniel. "Gee thanks, but I'm going to say no. Polly brought her car, I'll go with her."

Aunt Dot's hand rests on my knee. "Alice Mary Quinn, you stop right there." I cringe at the use of my full name. "Remove that tone from your voice. Nathaniel is your father. He worries about you."

Father, my arse. He never bothered with me for twenty-five years of my life. It's too late to worry now.

"Ethan's left work, and Jack's been flying around the place looking for you. At least show them some respect."

Aunt Dot's words should resonate somewhere within my capacity to feel guilt. However, I'm too incensed to acknowledge her concern for my welfare, and the tiredness darkening the skin beneath her eyes. "I left a note. It's what normal people do." Despite my twenty-something-years, I feel twelve.

Jack snorts. "I'd wake up and smell the coffee if I were you, Alice." He spreads out his hands. "Girl, your life is so far removed from normal that it's damn right weird."

"Thanks for the reminder, Jack."

"Is the ghost here?" Polly asks her coat still gripped in her hands

"I'm afraid so."

Ethan steps forward, placing a gentle hand on my shoulders. The heat from his touch sinks through the fabric of my sweater. "If MAMS wasn't out there ready to kill you, your message would have been acceptable. The threat from MAMS is real. Your mixed heritage is enough for them to want you dead, your relationship with Nathaniel and your grandfather's position within the supernatural community provides them with more of an incentive."

"Sorry." It pains me to mutter the word, but this is Ethan.

Ethan's fingers squeeze my shoulder. "Things will get easier. Let's eliminate the threat MAMS poses first."

Julian stands. "Alice, you'll ride back to Roseley with Ethan. Jack and Dot will go with Polly." This time I didn't argue. Not because I agree with Julian's barked orders.

Spite will not force me into missing out on spending time with Ethan, even if it is a car journey.