

# Tormented Soul



# Tormented Soul

By  
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Summary: Seattle is best known for its welcoming and diverse culture, but Kaden cannot seem to grasp the life it offers. When Megan, Kaden's best friend, decides it's time to hit the night life, it turns into a night they will never forget. Megan mysteriously disappears and Kaden is the only one invested in finding her. Along the way she meets an unusual ally, Finley, who reveals a world beyond the ordinary streets of Seattle. Kaden finds herself pulled into a dark world of fae as the two struggle to locate Megan before it's too late.

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For  
Jillian, Fallon, Marin, and Mom



# Prologue

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Heavy rain showered down from the late night sky on the cement of the sidewalk. The only three working street lights flickered as they guided stragglers through the almost empty night. Thunder crashed and became more frequent in the distance as a young girl crossed the road, shivering from the rain's chilly breeze. The squeak of her wet boots echoed in the night as she made her way to the small Seattle police station. She opened the glass door to find two cops seated behind their desks as they shuffled papers. An older, stout man stood behind the main counter where the girl assumed she needed to go. The dark bags under his eyes explained the massive cup of coffee he sipped which probably wasn't his first. The

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distraught girl appeared disheveled with her chopped, shoulder-length hair, runny makeup, and soaking clothes. She waited in the doorway, hesitant to approach the officer with her problem.

“May I help you?” The officer behind the counter asked, not looking up from the file on his desk. His eyes were only drawn away from his file when the girl didn’t respond. A faint sparkle caught his attention first; it came from the necklace the girl wore around her neck. She moved closer to the desk, unsure of what the cop’s reaction would be when he saw her clothes were covered with dark red stains. A massive amount of blood absorbing her sweatshirt was not something cops would consider innocent. Her body quivered, making it apparent to the officer she was crying as she got closer. At the sight of all the blood covering her clothes, the officer’s attention focused solely on her. “Are you alright, Miss?”

“Yes...” her doubtful voice shook partially because she wasn’t even sure herself. “I don’t know.”

“I’m Officer Marks,” he almost whispered in an attempt to be gentle. “Are you hurt? What’s your name?”

“I’m not hurt. It’s not my blood.” The girl finally reached the desk and stood against it. She leaned closer to Officer Marks so she only had to whisper what she knew.

“Can you tell me what happened? Is there someone else who needs help?” By now the girl had captured the attention of the other two officers. With a late night shift like this, they probably had nothing else to do anyway.

“I woke up in an alley a few blocks from here. I...I can’t remember anything.” Her hand slipped into the



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pocket of her black sweatshirt as she pulled out a dagger. The dark gold sheath contained more traces of blood. The gold had an intricate design as though it originated from a museum. With twisted Celtic knots covering the sheath, the handle formed a vicious gold dragon. When Officer Marks saw what the girl was holding his eyes widened giving him a deer-in-the-headlights expression. He placed one hand on his gun holster with the other held out toward her, not aware of the girls motives. "I've never seen this before in my life," she placed the weapon on the counter to appease the wary man. "I can't remember who I am."

# Chapter I

Three days earlier

“Working out is so overrated,” Megan said before taking a bite of her Chunky Monkey ice cream. “I mean, these girls are way too skinny. Who wants to be a size four anyway? I know I don’t.” She sat alongside her best friend Kaden who ate potato chips, barely able to keep her eyes open. Megan, seeing her friend half asleep, reached for her couch pillow then slapped her friend across the face with it. Instead of hitting her intended target, she sent several chips flying out of Kaden’s hand and onto the floor. “Wake up! It’s only ten!”

“I’m getting too old to stay up this late,” Kaden replied stretching off the couch to pick up the chips which had fallen.

“We’re only eighteen. These are supposed to be the best years of our lives...and stuff.” Megan grabbed

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Kaden's leg and began to rapidly shake her, "We were young! Heartache to heartache we band! Something, something, something no promises!" she screeched Pat Benatar incorrectly.

Kaden kicked her friend on her side, "Stop it, you're embarrassing me. It's a Friday night and where are we? Sitting in my living room watching reality television and eating bad food. I can feel my brain cells dying as we speak."

"So let's go out! We can go to a party," Megan took a deep, gasping breath "Or a movie! What about a strip club?! I've always wanted to go to one." Megan always seemed to get excited by the most outrageous things. She continued to ramble on about different things they could possibly do on a Friday night, but Kaden stopped listening after the mention of her worst nightmare, mini golf. This was the reality of her life. An eighteen-year-old girl, who decided not to continue her life with another four years of schooling, currently looking for a job, but she had one crazy friend. Even her younger sister, Quinn, had a better life which actually involved a boyfriend.

Kaden never really took to the other kids from her neighborhood. Sure, she was good with other people when she had to be, but only if she was forced to. It was hard for her to make friends; she had more difficult things going on in her life while growing up. Normal kids had issues like 'which movie do we go see this weekend' while her problems were more 'what dinner am I making my sister tonight'. Most of her life Kaden had taken care of her younger sister, seeing that their mom was always in

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and out of the Seattle Mental Health Center. When their mother was home, she spent most of her time drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. It didn't help much either that their father had left a long time ago. Despite her parents, Kaden and Quinn were always there for one another, no matter what.

Breaking Kaden's silent thoughts, Megan said, "Are you listening to me?"

"Of course I'm listening to you," she sighed. "How could anyone possibly not hear *your* voice? We should go out, maybe tomorrow night. But I'm not going to a strip club. What about...." The only interesting thing Kaden knew of was some jazz festival weekend at a pub downtown. She had seen a flyer for it at the grocery store just the other day. "What about the jazz festival at O'Brien's? I'm sure there will be a lot of strapping young men for you to toy with."

"That's genius! We can pretend to be these incredibly intelligent scholars studying the art of music at the University of Seattle. This will be easy," Megan nodded her head while rubbing her hands together. "Alright, my name will be...." She sat back against the couch eyeing the room for assistance to come up with a fake identity, "Victoria Wrench."

"Victoria Wrench? *That's* what you're going with?" Kaden questioned mockingly. Megan probably had gotten the idea from the Victoria Secret bag which hung on the banister.

"Absolutely! It's sophisticated and sexy," she crossed her legs Indian style on the couch to face Kaden. "Now,

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your name should be..." Again, Megan searched the room for help. "Torrey Jackson," she said squinting at Kaden with an approving look. Kaden couldn't tell where she came up with that name; nothing in the room had Torrey or Jackson on it.

"Alright then, it's settled. Tomorrow at six you can come over. But we should probably leave around seven thirty so we can get good seats," Kaden said as she began to clean up the mess of food her friend had made.

"This is going to be so much fun!" Megan cheered, spilling a copious amount of chips on the floor.

By eleven Megan was already gone, leaving Kaden to clean the kitchen where she had found her mother slumped in a chair with a bottle of vodka on the table. Their kitchen was more like a cubicle filled with decrepit appliances left over from the previous owners. Even with just another person in the room, Kaden felt claustrophobic. Her mother sat at the table babbling to herself which was a normal thing. This usually meant Kaden would avoid any kind of communication with her at any cost. What would be the point? She wouldn't be thinking straight and probably would just end up yelling about something random.

"Ugh, I just don't know anymore," her mother slurred, sipping the last bit of her glass. Her dark brown hair was roughly pulled back into a disheveled ponytail. The dark circles under her eyes contrasted against her pale skin which made her look like a raccoon.

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Kaden was well aware of her mother's judging eyes following her every move as she put the junk food away. Just as Kaden was about to leave her mother to her sulking, she noticed no one had cleaned the pile of dirty dishes which sat in the sink. Naturally, Kaden took it upon herself to clean the dishes which smelled of old food. "You know," her mother began, "you always cried."

"What are you talking about?" Kaden answered in a restless tone as she rolled her eyes. After each plate she scrubbed clean, she then placed them in the drying rack.

"When you were a baby..." her hammered mother paused to collect her drunken thoughts. "You cried all the time. It was annoying," her joyful giggle turned into a light sob just as the front door swung open and Quinn stepped in.

"I'm back," Quinn announced, shaking off her rain coat and placing it on the banister. Her wavy brown hair was soaked and frizzy. Kaden noticed her boots had mud caked on them as she slipped them off her feet.

"Quinn! You're home!" Their mom practically sang. "How is Justin?"

"You mean Joe?" Quinn corrected the name of her boyfriend, who she's dated for the past two years, as she entered the now crowded kitchen.

"Yes, Joe. That's what I meant."

Quinn was only sixteen but she acted much more mature than anyone her age. She took the bottle of vodka from their mother, placing it back in the liquor cabinet where it came from. "I'm going to go to bed now," their mother stood up grabbing onto any piece of furniture so

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she could use it to help steady herself. To their surprise, she somehow managed to make her way up the stairs without face-planting.

“Has she been like this all night?” asked Quinn.

“I don't know,” Kaden shrugged. “I was watching TV with Megan. She must have slipped in through the back door,” she hoped to change the topic before getting a headache. Quinn helped her older sister by drying the dishes she had finished washing.

Quinn and Kaden were practically twins. They shared a love for the same things, knew exactly what the other was thinking, and sometimes even finished each other's sentences. Although they were similar in many ways, when it came to looks they were polar opposites. Quinn took after their mother to the point of being mistaken for her when they went shopping. She was a few inches shorter than Kaden with thick shoulder-length brown hair. Her hazel brown eyes matched the olive skin she had, which was a trait she received from their father. On the other hand, Kaden was the tallest of the family, though she herself was considered short at the height of five-foot-two. Her hair was a gorgeous bleach-blond that matched her grey eyes and fair skin.

The girls basically raised one another. With their mom out of commission most of their life and their dad missing in action, how could they not?

Their mother's depression deprived them of their childhood, along with having a dad who was more focused on himself than anyone else. He spent his nights sitting on the couch watching endless amounts of

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television with whiskey in one hand and the remote in the other.

The relationship between their parents had always been rough, even before things got bad with their mom. When Kaden and Quinn were young, their parents always argued, mostly because of their moms' postpartum depression which she developed after Kaden was born. Not long after Kaden was born, her mother struggled to adjust to motherhood. After two years, her father thought it might help her if they had another kid, Quinn. Although at first their mother was better, she continued to struggle with 'inner demons' as their dad used to say. Once her postpartum depression turned into chronic depression, it took a toll not only on the couple's relationship but their entire family relationship.

One Easter, their mother remained locked in her bedroom with the blinds closed. This was right before she went back to the hospital for the fourth time. Their dad hadn't seemed to care it was a holiday. That or he was too drunk to remember. He had sat on the couch like any other night spacing out to what Kaden imagined was a better life. The night before Easter was always when their mother tried to put toys out in the living room for the kids to wake up to. But this year, since their mother was in a bad place mentally, Kaden searched the house for her old toys to give to Quinn. She'd placed them in the living room to make it look like the Easter Bunny had visited while her father sat watching her, not bothering to help in any way. The next morning, Quinn was so happy her smile had stretched to her ears and her eyes were full of



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joy.

“How’s Joe?” Kaden asked with relationships on her mind.

“He’s good. We walked around the park which was nice until it started pouring. I’m pretty sure tomorrow we’re going to a movie.”

“So are you guys going to get dinner near the theater? Megan and I were planning on going to O’Brien’s for the jazz thing they’re having.”

“Really? That sounds like fun. Maybe you’ll meet someone,” Quinn raised her eyebrows up and down.

“I doubt it,” Kaden grumbled as they finished up the dishes just before they both headed off to bed.

As Kaden slept peacefully in the comfort of her own bed, images began to float through her mind. Her brain flashed vague images from her childhood until landing on her sixth birthday party.

It was a bright October day for Seattle. It wasn’t too cold out yet so she wore her blue fall coat as she sat at the park’s picnic table. The only difference between her dream birthday and her actual one was that there was no one there. Kaden sat alone at the picnic table that had a pink table cloth which blew in the wind. Her cake sat in front of her with six colored candles and each seat had a plate laid out for her guests, even though there were none.

The childless park was so unnatural, so eerie. The lonely slide, the empty monkey bars, and the deserted swings blew in the wind. Even the park bench, where all

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the mothers sat chatting as their kids ran around playing, was lifeless.

“Happy Birthday,” a tiny girl tapped on Kaden’s shoulder. She jumped at the sound of her voice, half expecting it to be in her mind. The girl had her long black hair tied in a ponytail. Kaden recognized her immediately as her best friend from class.

“Thank you,” she automatically responded. “Where is everyone?”

Megan shrugged her shoulders and took a seat at the table next to Kaden. “I have a present for you,” she reached into her pocket and pulled out a stone, “Here.”

Kaden took the stone and analyzed it. It was a small shiny stone, black with deep red blotches. The six year old Kaden didn’t know the name of the stone, but the eighteen-year-old Kaden who loved learning about various stones and minerals knew it was called ‘blood stone’. “I love it,” she said rubbing the smoothness of the stone underneath her little fingers.

“You won’t,” Megan said.

## Chapter II

The next morning Kaden was the second to wake up, the first being Quinn who was still showering. Kaden decided to start making breakfast, and then take her shower once Quinn was finished. Downstairs, she searched the empty fridge for anything edible but there wasn't much. The only thing that could be made into a meal were the two eggs that sat on the shelf with the last bit of orange juice. So she whisked the eggs together in a small metal bowl when she heard her mother come stomping down the stairs. This was typical for her mother after a night of heavy drinking.

"Morning," said her mother as she entered the kitchen. "What are you making?" Kaden could sense it was not going to be a good day for her mother. After a night of drinking she was either super nice or grouchy. Judging by her tone, it was a grouchy day.

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"We only have eggs, so I figured I would finish them off. I was planning on going to the store before I go out tonight," she answered pouring the egg batter into the frying pan. Her mom double-checked the fridge to verify Kaden's story of no food.

"You only made enough for yourself?" She questioned which irritated Kaden immensely.

"No, I wasn't going to eat any." She responded angered that her mother would think she wouldn't share. "I don't like eggs, remember?" She sipped the last of the orange juice placing her cup in the sink.

"You know, maybe if you had a job instead of sitting around doing nothing all day, we could afford to have our fridge filled," her mother roughly shut the fridge door. Her hands were firmly on her hips with one leg carrying most of her weight, "If you were more like your sister we would be better off." Kaden refused to even look at her mother when she compared her to her sister. The frying pan started smoking a bit, indicating that she had burnt the only breakfast in the house.

"I'm sorry?" questioned Kaden, although she wasn't even close to being sorry. She didn't spend thousands of dollars on the most expensive piece of paper she would ever buy and didn't even guarantee her a job. As if her life weren't frustrating enough trying to figure out what she wanted out of life, she had her mother nagging her constantly.

"You drank the last of the orange juice?" Her mothers' voice made the event sound like the most traumatic thing in the world.

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“Yes,” Kaden sharply replied. “We would have had enough for everyone, but you used it for your cocktails last night.” She turned the stove off before slapping the burnt eggs onto a plate, then headed back upstairs where her mother wasn't.

“How dare you talk to me with that tone!? I work my butt off for you and your sister!” Her mother yelled after her. “Yeah! That's right, just walk away!”

When Kaden reached her room, she shut the door behind her and body slammed her bed, “Ugh.” With a deep cleansing breath she rolled from her stomach to her back to stare up at the ceiling. She closed her eyes tightly hoping to prevent her headache from turning into a migraine. To soothe herself, she began to hum a random rhythm. The melody was like a story painting a vivid image in Kaden's mind. A place where she could be whoever she wanted to be. A place where no one could find her.

The image was erased when Quinn slipped through the door, “Hey. What's mom bitching about now?” She had her towel still wrapped around her hair but she was changed into her jeans and t-shirt.

“The usual,” Kaden sighed. “How I'm a failure and everything is my fault.” Quinn sat down next to Kaden with her legs folded over one another. “Oh,” Kaden almost forgot. “There are some burnt eggs downstairs if you want some.”

“Don't listen to her; she just has her own problems she can't deal with.” Quinn reassured her sister.

“At least I can go out tonight.” As much as Kaden

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disliked going out, it was better than staying in. “Sometimes I just wish I could take all the money from my bank account and leave. Just travel until I run out of money,” Kaden sat up using her elbow to lean on, “Do you think we'll ever really be able to leave her?”

Quinn pondered the question before answering, “Maybe... I don't know. I'm sure things will get better. Just watch, soon we will be able to do anything.”

After rummaging through endless amounts of clothes at the department store, Kaden had only found three things she wanted to try on. “Quinn,” she whispered zigzagging through the rows of racks. “Quinnnnn,” she called like a child bugging her mother. She found Quinn holding an armful of various sparkling shirts.

“What?” Quinn was fixated on the tag of a gold sparkly bra. When she was in shopping mode Quinn blocked everyone and everything out.

“Are you almost ready to try your clothes on?”

Quinn quickly glanced away from her desired bra, “That's all you have?” Kaden looked at her pile and thought what she had was too much. “You're the one who's going out tonight,” she decided to add the bra to her heaping pile of clothes.

“I hate shopping,” Kaden whined. “I don't have the patience for this.”

“Hold on,” Quinn half sighed. “Let me just grab a few more items.” She quickly moved around the rack on

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the opposite side as Kaden followed behind her. As she waited, Kaden scanned the store as other shoppers actually shopped. A younger woman had a little girl in a stroller, an older lady tried on some jewelry, and their mother was over by the shoes which she probably didn't need. She tapped her foot, anxious to get the shopping over with, "Why did mom even agree to take us shopping? I thought she said we didn't have enough money for groceries?"

"She likes to shop when she's mad," Quinn lifted a sweater off the rack. "Besides, she's using her credit card. And you are in desperate need of something to wear tonight. Okay, I think I've got enough for now," she grabbed two more shirts off the rack. "Do you want to share a dressing room?"

"Yeah, that way we don't have to keep opening our doors to see how each outfit looks." The girls headed towards the cashier who seemed to be asleep even though her eyes were open.

"How many?" she asked before they entered the changing rooms.

"Three."

"Eleven," they said simultaneously. The woman handed Kaden her number, but had to give Quinn a five and a six since they didn't have one past ten. They took the handicap stall even though they knew better. They enjoyed having more space verses being cramped in a smaller room.

"You put your stuff on the bench and I'll hang mine on the hook," Quinn said only because she had way too

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many clothes to fit on the bench.

As they faced the opposite direction, they began to try on what they had picked out, “Guess what?” Quinn's voice was full of excitement.

“What?” Kaden curiously wondered.

“Arcade Fire is touring again. We should go see them!” Quinn's favorite band never really toured near where they lived, making it difficult to go see them. Also, they didn't exactly have the money for good seats for their show.

“How are we going to pay for this show?”

“I've been saving my money up for a while,” she turned to face the mirror and get a good look at the green button-down she had on. When Kaden looked over to see what Quinn had on, she realized they were both wearing the identical green button-down. “Damn it,” Quinn slapped her arms to her side just as she realized they had the same thing.

“We'll just share it. We're the same size anyway.”

Once they were both done, Kaden exited the dressing room with a new dark blue strapless shirt that she didn't fully like, but Quinn convinced her otherwise. “Trust me. It will go great with some black skinny jeans and boots.” Their mother was waiting by the jewelry section, eyeing a silver pair of earrings. “Hey, we're done,” Quinn told her as they approached her from behind.

Naturally Quinn began to check out the jewelry as well, “Okay, you're not getting too much are you?” She saw Quinn with four shirts and a sparkly bra, but didn't question that purchase.



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"I'm just getting this," Kaden waved the one article of clothing she picked out. "Did you find anything?"

"Just some shoes, and maybe these earrings," she showed both girls a pair of heart shaped earrings. Kaden never really liked earrings; she didn't even know why she had her own ears pierced. She only had one pair of really expensive earrings she received from Megan's parents as a graduation present. They were white gold studs and cost too much money for her to accept, yet Megan's parents refused to take them back. "After all, you're like family," her parents had said.

"Those are pretty," Kaden complemented her choice.

"I know." Their mother replied negatively. Quinn and Kaden widened their eyes at each other. *She always has to bite my head off.* Kaden complained in her thoughts. A small pair of trinity knot earrings caught Kaden's interest.

"What about these?" She held the small box up to her mom. Her mother stared at the box a little too long without saying anything, "Mom?"

She snapped out of her trance looking away from the box, "No, I like these. Let's pay, I want to get out of here."

"I love clothes," Quinn said as she practically skipped to the register.

"Everyone knows you love clothes, Quinn," Kaden teased her sister.

Music blared out of Kaden's speakers in her bedroom as she tried on multiple outfits. Not that she

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had a large selection of clothes to choose from anyway. She went with the dark blue shirt she just bought, which made her eyes pop and hugged her curves nicely. She wore black skinny jeans and knee-high boots, just as Quinn suggested. Her hair was pulled back with two bobby pins, one on the left and the other on the right. Kaden looked into the mirror behind her door for a few minutes before finalizing her outfit for the night.

"Knock, knock," Megan said with a light tap on the door. "Are you decent?" She flung the door open even though Kaden hadn't responded. "Damn, you look hot," Megan whistled as if she was a construction worker eyeing an attractive girl as she walked passed. Megan wore an extremely short miniskirt with a top that was a size too small and made her boobs pop out at the top.

"Your boobs were not that big when you left here yesterday," Kaden said spraying herself with some perfume.

"I bought a water bra this morning. I bought you one too, but it doesn't look like you need it," as soon as Megan said that Kaden glanced down at her boobs in confusion. "What do you think of my hair?" Megan spun in a circle for Kaden to get the full effect of her bouncy black locks. It was long, like Kaden's, but wavy with side bangs. Megan's hair was probably her proudest achievement.

"I think I'm extremely jealous," she honestly answered while she slipped on her black pea coat she'd bought at a thrift store.

"I love the earrings you're wearing, wherever did you

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get them?"

"Like you don't know," Kaden threw a small black bag over her shoulder as Megan jumped in the air with her face glowing like a five-year-old who'd gotten a new bike for Christmas.

"You will never believe what I got!" She fumbled through her purse. Megan pulled two licenses out of her bag, "I got my brother to get us some fake I.D.'s to match our fake names we made up yesterday." Her mouth was wide open waiting for Kaden to have the same overly excited reaction.

"But we have I.D.'s," Kaden reminded her as she scanned the ridiculous I.D. Megan handed her.

"Not the kind that can get us alcohol," her voice went up in pitch. "Besides, he owed me a favor after his little trip to California that my mom and dad don't know about. So- rules for the night: we flirt our butts off, but no hookups. And we are out of there if anyone gets too attached. I don't want a repeat of Halloween last year."

Kaden laughed at the reminder of last Halloween, "But Harold really thought you two had a 'connection'."

Megan glared at Kaden, "We don't talk about Harold. Ever."

Megan drove her parent's car. It took them a half an hour to get to the pub since they lived on the outskirts of the city. They parked along the curb and were greeted by a line of shivering people waiting outside the pub's entrance. The girls took their spot at the end of the line

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hoping they would make the cut between the people who actually got in and the people who waited for nothing. Most of the people in line were either young college students or older couples who already seemed drunk.

The building was old with red brick and a huge, glowing green sign that read 'O'Brien's'. Belltown, Seattle was filled with art galleries, cafes, nightclubs, and a dozen restaurants to choose from. Kaden wondered why she thought this would be a good place to go to for their 'big night out'. They were freezing their butts off and they weren't even guaranteed to get in. She peered around the people in front of her to see if she could tell if they would be one of the lucky ones who got in. As she was counting, a tall guy with a trinity cap smoking a cigarette walked into her shoulder, "Sorry." She apologized out of habit to the guy, who didn't even seem to notice he had walked into her. She turned, aggravated that he did not acknowledge her, to see he wore a white buttoned down shirt that was tucked in; the sleeves were rolled up to his elbows with a black vest over top. As he walked in the opposite direction of the line, he turned the corner of the building, disappearing before Kaden could say anything else. "This is exactly why I hate social events, people are so rude."

"I am freezing my ass off," Megan said gritting her teeth. She hugged herself to keep her arms as warm as possible with her knees bent.

"I told you to wear a coat," Kaden reminded her. "It looks like they're letting people in now."

Fortunately for them, they were one of the lucky

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ones who got into the cramped pub. There was a bar to the right that seated only six people, the rest of the seating faced the stage. Two long wooden tables with benches were the seats they had for the show. It was basically like two cafeteria tables squished into the room. The only form of lighting for the back seating area was colored Christmas lights along the wall. Other than that it was the stage lights. "Let's sit near the back," Kaden pointed to an empty space at the first table closer to the exit.

"Why? We would be able to see better from the front."

"Just in case we need to make a quick escape," Kaden whispered to her friend. Megan rolled her eyes, but took the seats anyway. Kaden sat leaning against the cold back wall with Megan next to her on her right side.

"You're an idiot. We look like two loners back here by ourselves." Megan slouched with her head tilted to the side.

"You know what, you're going to thank me for taking these seats." Megan glared at Kaden when two horridly ugly guys sat across from them.

"Yeah, thank you so much," she sarcastically commented. One of the guys had tattoos up and down his arms, some even reached to his bulky neck. He appeared fit with the tight black shirt he had on, his hair was almond brown and spiked up. The other man spooked Kaden out; he wore a twisted smile that made a cold shiver run down her spine. He was younger and scrawny with a face that reminded her of a rat. His nose

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was small, the tip of it was red, and he had ears that seemed too big to be on his head. Both guys wore matching silver chains around their necks which hung beneath their shirts.

“Great,” Kaden muttered under her breath.

“Told you we shouldn’t sit here,” Megan raised her eyebrow.

“Congratulations, would you like a medal?”

Megan must have noticed the matching silver necklaces as well because she whispered to Kaden, “We have two gang members across from us. If I go missing you know who did it.” Megan watched the men for a minute, but they weren’t paying attention. It was very clear she was trying to analyze them, she was never afraid of what was on her mind. Megan waved her hand for Kaden to disregard what she had just said, “Never mind. I forgot I have pepper spray in my purse.” She said this directly staring at the guy who looked like a rat. Kaden’s face blushed bright red and she attempted to focus on something else.

“What was that love?” The skinny guy, who Kaden thought hadn’t been paying attention, asked in an Irish accent. His voice was surprisingly low and neither one of them expected him to be Irish. Nevertheless both Megan and the guy were watching each other. Kaden looked at his friend who was focused on the stage; he didn’t seem to notice the stare down that was taking place.

“I wasn’t talking to you,” Megan snuffed.

“My name’s Riley,” he said as he ran his fingers through his bleached hair. “Do you like magic Victoria?”

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Megan furrowed her eyebrows when she heard him say her fake name.

“How do you know my name?” Megan’s voice was confused, there was no way he could have known her fake name because they hadn’t even taken out their I.D’s.

“I know a trick or two,” Riley pulled out Megan’s I.D from his sleeve and slipped it across the table to her. At first she just stared at it, then grabbed it and analyzed it to ensure it was hers. She frantically opened her purse to check her wallet only to find it wasn’t in there. “Can’t go around without that, now can you, love?”

“Is that supposed to allure me? Who the fuck do you think you are?” Megan was fuming which shocked Kaden because Megan always loved when boys would flirt with her. But she guessed this was different seeing that he gave off a psychotic murderer vibe.

“You’re a fiery one aren’t you? I could have fun with that,” his face turned from a creepy guy into a serial killer within a second. Kaden took Megan’s arm, lifted her to her feet before Megan could say anything else.

“Why are we moving? They should be the ones to leave,” Megan protested as they headed closer to the stage.

“You didn’t even want to sit there,” she answered. “They could kill us.” Kaden dragged Megan to an empty spot near the front.

A few people stepped in from the back door into the hallway which led to the stage. They carried cases that held their instruments as they walked onto the stage one at a time. The already drunken audience applauded as the

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performers took their spots. First, an older man with a long grey beard sat to the far left holding a saxophone followed by a young woman who went behind the drum set. A younger guy stood next to the drum set with a trumpet, and then the last person to come up was the bass player who stood to the far right. After tuning their instruments to get the proper sound, they played some common jazz songs by Louis Armstrong, followed by some of their own songs which were just as good.

After every song the audience clapped. Some of the more obnoxious people whistled instead. The last song was a Richard Boulger tune, only played by the trumpet player. Kaden recognized him as the man who bumped into her outside the pub. Outside, Kaden had missed what the guy looked like but now with the beaming white stage lights, she could see his face clearly. He had dark brown hair which was cut short, but spiked up a little in the front. Sweat from his forehead dripped down his smooth face. His leaf green eyes were focused on something at the back of the room. Kaden inconspicuously turned her body to see what the musician was staring at. At her first glance she didn't notice anything special, but then she remembered the almond haired man from before had been concentrating on the stage. Her eyes followed the path back to where Megan and Kaden's old seats were; she saw the tattooed man had a disgusted expression while Riley was practically jumping out of his seat. Riley's face was a twisted mix of murderous and joyful. When he caught Kaden looking at him, her face turned the same bright red as before. She



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turned away from him, but not before he was able to wink while making inappropriate gestures. When she sharply turned back in her seat, Megan gave her a concerned look. "What's wrong?" Megan asked.

"Don't worry about it," Kaden replied, however Megan turned around only to find Riley still making gestures at the girls. Megan's fury got the best of her, so she retaliated with the middle finger. Kaden slapped her hand down before they got on Riley's nerves, "Stop it. I really don't want to end up at the bottom of the ocean." Megan rolled her eyes at her friend as they both turned back to the finale.

"He's just a wannabe Backstreet Boy. I mean, seriously, what's with his hair?"

At the end of the show most of the attendees stumbled to the bar for more drinks. The girls sat there for a few minutes before they decided whether or not to leave.

"Maybe we should go," Kaden insisted. She took a quick glance around the room for the two men who had been taunting them all night. Well, mainly Riley who creepily lingered behind the entire time. She spotted them in the cramped hallway near the back exit, and saw now how much taller the tattooed man was compared to Riley. Riley stood in his companions' shadow, as if he was a school kid following a kid a grade above his. But they weren't the only ones in the hall; the trumpet player was there as well. The tattooed man clenched the trumpet player's shirt in his hands pressing him up against the wall. Megan followed Kaden's wide-eyed gaze, witnessing

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the same scene.

“We should definitely go.” Megan was convinced now. “But next week, I’m picking where we go. And we’ll find us some boys.” Megan grabbed her purse as they headed for the front door.

Once outside the girls were greeted with a light drizzle and a cold breeze. “Shoot,” Kaden said under her breathe. “I forgot my coat inside. Let’s go get it,” she said as she took a step back toward the pub.

“You go,” Megan replied watching the mass crowd fumble out of the pub. “It’s too crowded. Besides, I have my pepper spray. I’m good,” Megan jiggled her purse for reassurance. “I’ll meet you back at the car.” Kaden nodded before reentering the pub. This was the one time she embraced her tininess, it was easy for her to swiftly swerve past people. She grabbed her coat quickly off the table, but before she left Kaden shot a glance at where the men had been arguing, only to find they were no longer there. Without giving it a second thought she darted past people to get back outside to Megan’s car.

Megan was well aware of how dangerous it was to be walking alone at this time of night. Especially since she had a miniskirt on that she should have gotten rid of two years ago. She used her dry hands to warm the upper part of her arms as she walked back to her car, which was three blocks away. Her teeth ground together in the damp, chilly weather. Megan was far enough away from the pub goers that she decided it was time to speed walk to the car

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before someone could jump her. Her legs were short like Kaden's, so speed walking didn't do much for her. It was more like a bunch of quick steps, one after the other. The blue beaten-up Ford was straight ahead of her and Megan let out a sigh of relief as she got closer.

"Hey, Victoria!" Warm breath hit her ear as the Irish voice whispered. Megan jumped to the side practically falling, not realizing anyone was near her. She scrambled through her bag for her pepper spray. As she scrambled to get it out, Riley spoke again, "Looking for this?" He flipped the small pepper spray high in the air then caught it.

"How did you..." Megan's voice quivered as she wondered how he could have possibly gotten her pepper spray.

"As I said before, I know a trick or two," Riley tossed the bottle into the air again. Once it reached its' highest point, he snapped his fingers together making the bottle disappear into thin air. Fear struck Megan quickly. She threw her purse at him in an attempt to run past him back to the crowded pub for help.

"Hel—" She yelled but was cut off by Riley's hand over her mouth.

"Now, now, love. Don't spoil all my fun," he whispered into her ear. Megan kicked every which way she knew how, but Riley only laughed in her ear, amused by her failed endeavor. Warm tears streamed down Megan's cheek, as she tried her best to call out for help. "Don't worry, I've got you, lass. We're going to have fun."