

THE
BEL GRAVE
LEGACY
ZARA HOFFMAN



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*For Grammy,
My guardian angel*

*For Mom,
My biggest supporter*

THE
BEL GRAVE
LEGACY

THE
BELGRAVE
DAUGHTER

*The world is full of magic things,
Patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.*

—W.B. YEATS



Prologue

A POWERFUL SORCERESS with blood laced in gold sevenfold shall determine the fate of the world.

The ancient man's eyes scanned the scroll again. Fawn's destiny had been appointed at her birth, but the girl's mother had never spoken to her about it. He had done his best to conceal her identity from the Devil, but now the girl's powers had emerged, they formed a beacon which would attract the attention not only of Lucifer, but also of every other Supernatural in the world. Her existence would not remain a mystery from anyone, friend or foe, much longer.

Outside, metal clattered to the white marble floor, disrupting the silence. *He's early*, the man mused. It appeared Fawn's brilliancy was already shredding the protective shroud he had placed over her.

He waved a hand over the parchment, magically rolling it up. He snapped his fingers and the scroll disappeared in a puff of smoke, returning to its secret hiding place. Only when it was gone did he signal the guards to exit. Dusting off the lapels of his white suit, he stood and used his ivory cane for support as he walked up the marble stairs to his golden throne.

The doors burst open and a draft strong enough to pick any mortal off the ground howled through the hall. A young man strode in with his

ZARA HOFFMAN

head held high. Insolence surrounded him like an ornate cloak. He had raven hair, eyes to match, and wore an immaculate black ensemble of a leather jacket, black t-shirt, and black jeans. To an unsuspecting eye, he looked like someone from a boy band on the way to a funeral. His presence consumed light like a walking black hole. His black combat boots pounded the marble floor. It was the only sound in the hall and was loud enough to wake the dead.

The elder nodded in salutation. "Hello, Lucifer."

"Hello, Father," the fallen angel spat, his lips pursing like he had tasted something rancid. "Or should I call you by your official name?"

God rose and came to a halt mere inches away from the visitor, his cane forgotten at his throne. He stood tall, not in a menacing way, but his posture commanded respect. Even Lucifer had enough sense to retreat a few steps.

"I see you redecorated my old quarters," Lucifer said. "I don't like it. You should definitely fire your interior designer." He paused. "How long *did* you wait after banishing me before you erased any trace of my presence here? A month? A year? A decade? A century? Oh, wait. You started immediately and turned my fellow brothers against me by making me 'Angelic Enemy Number One.' Do you know what it's like being hunted by everyone you once called family?"

"Do not act as though you were innocent. Your rebellion required swift disciplinary action. You left me no choice." The walls seemed to waver as his deep voice rumbled through the hall. "I know why you're here and the answer is no."

Lucifer placed his hand over his heart, "How you judge me, Father. I am not going to demand anything. I'm not the spoiled youth I used to be. I swear I've changed."

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

“You’re just as impertinent now as you were back then.”

Lucifer straightened his spine. “Then I’ll get right to business. Fawn Belgrave is the one, is she not?”

Unfortunately, the intensity of Fawn’s powers had begun to shred the protective veil the month before.

“I hope she’s careful.” God could see the corrupt amusement lurking in his son’s gaze. “All that power can be very tempting for someone as green as her. I’m sure you remember the last time a seventh generation witch got drunk on power...”

Morgan le Fay had destroyed Camelot. God had then rendered sixth generation witches infertile, but he knew the Chosen One would still be born. To his chagrin, there were things even he could not control.

“Do not trifle with me. Or do I need to remind you of the reason you were cast out in the first place?”

Lucifer’s anger boiled beneath his calm veneer, but he kept his voice strong. “Let’s make a bet. If Fawn abuses her power or sins as she learns magic, she becomes mine to exploit.”

God frowned. *He* had declared it a sin to make deals with his son. There was now the potential for Fawn to be led astray, and he knew his son would stop at nothing to harness her power for evil. He would yield to this bargain to protect the world.

He could see Lucifer was growing impatient. The fallen angel’s gaze roamed the grand hall, paying particular attention to the white marble throne in the center.

Lucifer’s coal eyes ignited into smoldering red embers, finally settling into a fiery red. “I do believe we’re talking about the fate of the world here. Do we have a deal?”

“If she remains pure, she will stay in my heavenly domain and you

ZARA HOFFMAN

can never meddle in her affairs again.”

“Agreed, but for the duration, I can send any temptations to persuade her and—so can you,” Lucifer begrudgingly added. “We can speak to our own pawn but under no circumstances are we allowed access to the other’s champion.”

“If you are considering using the boy,” God interrupted, “I will add that if he becomes pure, in any way, he will be freed from his contract with you.” If he could save Caleb in this bargain, stripping Lucifer of his right-hand man, not only would he have redeemed one soul, but also saved countless others from his son’s manipulations. “I will give you time to think this over. Know what you are getting into, my son.”

Lucifer stiffened at the term of endearment and met his father with an expression of determination: “Deal.”

They shook hands. A bolt of power passed between the two divine giants, strong enough to incinerate any lesser being, either angel, demon, or other monster. Thunder and lightning raged outside and the Earth was plunged into darkness for twenty-four hours.



NO MEN WERE at the table. What Thanksgiving dinner didn't include the whole family? Fawn wondered. And what was she doing in her uncle's dining room, anyway? She only ever sat at the mahogany table once a year, and she inexplicably knew it was too soon for the holiday.

Looking around, she realized she only recognized her mom and grandmother, but also felt like she'd seen the woman on her right before. She examined the woman more closely.

Evelyn? The venerated matriarch of the Belgrave family. This had to be something from her imagination. It was impossible to eat a meal with dead relatives.

Scanning the faces again, she remembered the special silver album. It was traditional for each family witch to have a picture taken when her powers first emerged.

She was about to ask why they were assembled when her ginger ale began to ripple as if the table was shaking, but everything else remained completely still.

Suddenly, a man's face appeared in her drink. Her eyes widened in horror. She noticed his irises were black as coal and indistinguishable from his pupils, shining with sinister intent.

She backhanded the glass across the room, smashing it.

ZARA HOFFMAN

No one moved. Were they oblivious to what had just happened?

She froze when the same face stared back at her from the mirror hanging on the wall across from her. "You can't get rid of me." Flames flickered in his eyes, but then he surged forward. Hands reached out of the frame and the man came out like Alice did from the looking glass in the Lewis Carroll story.

When he was fully out of the mirror, she could see he wore an all-black version of James Bond's signature look complete with a dress shirt, tie, suit, and black Italian leather. Remembering the fictional character's motto: "Be polite, be courteous, show professionalism, and have a plan to kill everyone in the room," and hoped this man didn't emulate Bond in more than just his wardrobe.

The stranger stood on top of the cabinet surveyed her relatives, and chuckled. "A whole room of you and none of you could stop me. What a waste of talent. My father should have put better defenses in place to protect his precious champion." As he said the last words, he made eye contact with her, sending a shiver through her.

"What are you talking about?" she asked, searching for the door which normally led to her uncle's kitchen.

"Ah, he's left you in the dark. How unfortunate for you." He took another step forward. "And don't bother looking for an exit. I can assure you there isn't one."

Backing away, Fawn forgot to step around her chair. It fell backwards and clattered to the floor. Was she going to die like the kid who inspired A Nightmare on Elm Street had?

The man chuckled. "No, I have much bigger and better plans for you, Fawn Belgrave."

A loud boom made her cover her ears and the menacing man looked

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

up, glaring at the ceiling. “How inconvenient,” he muttered.

Before she could ask why, the space began to rumble and the dining room started peeling away like old wallpaper, disappearing into the void as gray wisps of smoke.

Fawn woke up to someone shaking her. She blinked multiple times until her eyes adjusted to the darkness after being in such a well-lit room, even if it had only been in her dream.

Her twin brother Alec loomed over her, his forehead crinkled with worry. “What just happened?”

Pressure in her head stamped out her senses as if a vice were squeezing her mind to the point where the pain was the only thing she could focus on. Black spots peppered her vision. “Don’t yell. I have a migraine.” Despite that fact, she grabbed her smartphone off the nightstand and, once her eyes adjusted to the offensive glare, read the digital numbers which declared it was past midnight. They were officially sixteen years old. A nightmare and a headache were *not* what she wanted as her first memories of the year.

Alec took the device from her hand. “Then you shouldn’t be looking at screens.”

She rolled her eyes, but knew he was right. As if to rub the point in, lighting flashed through the window, illuminating her purple wallpaper—a color she had chosen when she was ten. Alec had picked blue for his room. Fawn winced. The burst of exposure burned her eyes and even the distant rumble of thunder was too loud. She shivered, noticing her blanket had fallen to the floor while she slept. She pointed to it, in too much pain to retrieve it herself.

Alec grabbed the comforter and laid it over her. Though she was cradling her head in her hands, she could still feel his searching gaze

penetrating the darkness.

She envied her brother, who remained unaffected by her pain. Their strange twin connection only meant they shared each other's emotions, not any physical conditions.

He motioned her to scoot over and the mattress sank under their combined weight as he settled next to her. They sat shoulder-to-shoulder on the double bed. "Tell me what happened."

"A man was stalking me..." Fawn trailed off. She had a history of psychic visions. Was this one, or just a terrifying figment of her imagination? "And how did you even know to come in here?"

"I was having a normal dream, when it suddenly fell away and a one-way mirror appeared. I was curious, so I checked it out. Just as quickly, I felt as if I was falling and woke up back in my room. I think someone didn't want me to see what was happening. I immediately came here to see if you were okay."

"I am—kind of," she amended when he pointed to her head and raised an eyebrow. "Have you ever seen my dreams before?"

"No. I was pushed into it and then someone took me out." He paused. "I think we should tell Mom."

As if on cue, the door creaked open, revealing the silhouette of their mother, Stella. Despite the early hour, she wore her hair in a bun and sported a moon necklace, star earrings, and a triple-moon bracelet. They twinkled in the lightning flashes outside the window. Stella sat at the foot of the bed.

"Are you all right?"

Fawn shook her head. "I had a nightmare. And have a migraine."

"I saw her dream," Alec interjected. "That's never happened before. What's going on?"

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

“Fawn woke up in the middle of her transition. Halloween blurs the veil between the mystical and real worlds. Witches are responsible for keeping the balance during this window of time until the barrier is restored once again. Your birthday and the weakening of the veil triggered both of your powers.”

Fawn had grown up with their family’s magical history, but she never believed it was real.

Alec leaned back until his head touched the wall behind the bed. “Didn’t you say only girls inherit the magic? Why am I affected?”

Stella took both her children’s hands in her own. “Fawn is a very powerful witch because she’s the seventh generation of our family. Some of her magic has rubbed off on you, Alec, through your twin bond. That is why you know each other’s emotions.” Stella turned her attention to her daughter. “Are you still frightened, honey?”

“I’m not as scared as before now that you’re both here, but I’ve been better. And why was I having logical thoughts during the dream?”

“Your pain is caused by your magical powers transforming your DNA.” Stella saw Fawn’s eyes go wide with alarm. “Witches usually stay asleep while receiving their powers. Your body is pulsing with new, alien energy and it’s trying to resist it. It’s like growing pains.”

“I thought I got over that when I first had my period,” Fawn grumbled. Beside her, Alec gagged. She elbowed him in the ribs.

“As to your second question, magic allows us witches to maintain complete control over our faculties even while in the dream realm.” She paused, clearly mulling something over in her mind.

She waved a hand and sixteen candles appeared in a large circle on the floor. Then she instructed her children to sit in the center and hold hands. “This is channeling. It’s when witches tap into the energy around

them. Ley lines are mystical energy trails which intersect throughout the world. Cleopatra's Needle marks a powerful convergence site."

Fawn nodded, understanding. She had read theories of why the major cities of the world all seemed to possess a special vitality. She had never believed studies claimed the basis was mystical energy, but when her mom said it, she did. A new thought occurred to her. "But what about Salem? Can't witches collect power from massacre sites?" At least, that's what she had seen happen in some television shows.

"Yes, but channeling magic so steeped in anger and pain can overwhelm one's personal magic. It's a dangerous method and one I advise you to avoid it at all costs unless it is a matter of life and death." A frown marred her usually peaceful expression. She took a deep breath and said more lightly, "Fawn, you're going to light these candles. This will bind your magic to you and help your pain go away. But first, here's a birthday present I think will help."

From out of nowhere, Stella produced a large, leather book. On the cover, a sun and a moon were embossed against a background of stars. "It's a Grimoire," she said, twisting the book in front of their eyes. "Every witch in our family, starting with Evelyn, has chronicled her magical experiences in it. Think of it as a witch's diary, if you will."

This was as old as the original Belgrave witch? Fawn was suddenly anxious about touching the book. Despite her worry, Fawn ran her hands over the cover.

Stella waved her hand over the cover, magically opening the book to a specific page before retaking her children's hands in hers. At the top, it read "Hope in the Dark."

"What does this do?"

"It's the spell to light a candle. Repeat after me: *Ignis et lux intus*

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

illuminat, hoc accende lucernam expellat tenebras.”

She did and nothing happened. “Did I mispronounce the Latin?”

Her mother shook her head. “Spells are not just saying empty words. You need to visualize what you want to happen with a singular focus as you recite any incantation. Try again.”

Fawn closed her eyes and imagined finding a beacon of light. A flame appeared and engulfed her, searing through her veins. It raced up her limbs toward her heart like bullets flying toward a target. She ground her teeth as the tendrils began to settle in her chest.

The burning subsided to a simmer and she felt the tingling warmth spread across her skin. Her headache slipped away, as if the light chased the shadows from her mind. Her skin started burning again. It was no longer comfortable and her heart felt as if it were on fire.

In an attempt to cool down, she imagined the current emanating from her palms and going into her brother and mother. Maybe if the three of them shared the burden it wouldn't hurt as much. She imagined her inner fire lighting the room in a single whoosh. She felt a breeze on her skin and sighed as it gradually faded to a soothing sensation...

“Fawn!” her mom shouted in alarm.

The light disappeared and her headache was back. Her eyes snapped open and she was surrounded by a thick cloud of smoke. She coughed and briefly worried how her room would look in the morning. She'd done all that within moments? She started to breathe harder. Guess it zapped more of her energy than she had thought.

“What happened?” she asked.

“You lit the whole room on fire,” her mother answered, a grim expression in place.

“Damn, that was cool,” Alec mumbled.

ZARA HOFFMAN

Stella leaned forward. “Fawn, did you visualize a lit *candle*?” The new witch hesitated and then shook her head. “You have to be specific in what you visualize. You’re more powerful than I thought. When you channel someone, you have to—” Stella paused, the cost of speaking taking a toll on her.

Fawn was surprised. She thought she had done all the work. Had she also been channeling her mom and Alec without realizing it? Looking closer, Fawn realized her mother’s normal glow had faded. And Alec looked like he was about to pass out. “Are you guys okay?”

Stella rose. “Good night and happy birthday. In the future, Fawn, it is important to remain aware of the people you channel. It can make or break them as well as the spell being cast.” She kissed each of her children on the forehead and exited the room. Fawn noticed she walked slower than her regular, brisk pace.

Fawn heard the door to her mom’s bedroom close. Alec left too. He stumbled once on his way out and another wave of guilt crashed over her as she reconsidered exactly how much she had unintentionally drained her family. *I am never doing this again*, she silently vowed.

A voice whispered in her mind: *Fawn*. Her forehead wrinkled in confusion. She glanced around the room. No one was there. She was now hearing voices in her head. Had she gone crazy?

No, my dear, you are perfectly sane.

Who are you? Fawn was still searching for the voice when suddenly a young Evelyn appeared before her. She wore a floor-length gown. It looked as if it had been sewn from the night sky itself.

Her ancestor smiled. “You will. You have the gift and are special even among our kind. You are destined for great things, but until that time comes, you must be careful with your magic. He will come for

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

you.” Her voice was soft, but the warning was not lost on Fawn.

“Who? And how am I talking to you?” Fawn stood up and walked towards her ancestor. She stopped a foot away from the woman.

“As witches, our family can talk to the dead. It’s one of many other talents.” The hem of Evelyn’s gown fluttered around her ankles in an invisible breeze.

Fawn stared at her. She seemed solid but Fawn did not want to test the theory. What if her touch made the woman disappear? “But I’ve never heard the dead before.” She sometimes had psychic dreams and she shared a freaky twin connection, but she had never spoken to a ghost before.

“You didn’t have the power, but now you are the most powerful witch in the world—a world you’re destined to save.”

“There has to be some mistake.”

Her ancestor shook her head. Her image began to waver, like a hologram starting to fade.

Fawn scrambled to get her thoughts in line to ask the next question. “Evelyn—” but she was gone. Though she was still new to magic, Fawn could tell the connection had been broken.

The next morning, Fawn woke to the sound of her bedroom door slamming open.

Alec quickly appeared on the threshold and launched himself onto the bed, crushing her under his weight. “Happy birthday, baby sis!”

Fawn pulled the pillow out from underneath her head and whacked him with it. “Stop calling me that!” she huffed. “For God’s sake, we’re *twins*, Alec!”

He ignored her. “Hey! Seven minutes is a lot. Besides, we’re sixteen now, so I’m going to have to protect you from all the guys who will be

lining up to take you on a date.”

Stella walked through the doorway and pulled two small wrapped boxes, one purple and the other blue, out from behind her back. The twins knew which was which.

Fawn stared at the objects in her mom’s hands. “I thought I already got my gifts. You know, magic and a spell book that could fall apart the moment I open it.”

“Well, yes. But I’m also giving you both charms—”

Alec interrupted, “I’m a guy. I don’t wear jewelry.”

“No one has to see it. Now listen. This is important. These charms are spelled to tap into the natural twin bond you two have and will allow you to know if either one of you are ever in danger.” She pushed the purple box toward Fawn and the blue toward Alec.

They simultaneously ripped off the wrapping paper and Alec almost dropped his in the process. Turning to her own gift, she opened the box to reveal an oval opal pendant framed in silver on a silver chain.

Alec got one too, but it was smaller, therefore easier to hide underneath a t-shirt.

“These tap into the natural twin bond you two have and will allow you to know if either one of you are ever in danger.” Stella explained. “Always wear this and make sure it is touching your skin. No pockets, sorry Alec.”

They both put the necklaces on.

“Fawn, why don’t you get dressed so you can take your picture for the album?” She hugged them both again before leaving.

Fawn groaned. The picture was bound to happen. She donned the purple dress she wore to her uncle’s wedding and applied a little mascara and blush. Then she was in front of the camera alone, partaking

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

in a family tradition she never understood, but couldn't quite bring herself to shrug off. She sighed in relief when her mother finally printed the chosen picture.

Fawn approached the coffee table with the lineage album. As she got closer, she heard a crowd of whispers. *Again?* she wondered. She gingerly opened the cover and a hundred people shouted at her with ear-splitting volume. *He is coming.*

Fawn inserted her photo and hurried back to her room. Once inside, she locked the door. *He?* It was more specific than what Evelyn had told her, but not by much. If the dead couldn't give her a straight answer, and her mother hadn't seen anything dangerous, she was sure no one—dead or alive—could tell her.



CALEB HAD JUST returned from a three-month trip to England. He had been tasked with breaking the engagement of a nobleman's daughter. While the acting was not difficult, he found her rants grating. At least it was over.

A knock sounded. Caleb magically waved the door open to reveal Ivan standing with his arms crossed. He saw the infernal crimson light pouring into the stone courtyard behind Lucifer's Captain of the Guard. "He'd like to see you," the man tonelessly announced. "You've got another mission. I hear it's in Massachusetts this time."

"Tell him I'm too tired."

"You know I can't. Besides, do not act like you didn't enjoy yourself at least a little bit."

An image of the girl sprawled beneath him came to mind. Caleb swallowed his disgust and quickly shoved the memory away. He ignored

ZARA HOFFMAN

Ivan's vulgar suggestion and pressed, "Can't or won't?"

"I would like to keep my esteemed and hard-earned position. Does that answer your question?"

"You're awful."

"They didn't call me Ivan the Terrible for nothing. There was truth in that reputation."

Caleb straightened his black t-shirt and his dark wash jeans before flipping him off. He spread his black wings and flew to the throne room.

Lucifer sat on a black iron throne, surrounded by flames and broken skeletons. He was still in his all-black suit, but had hung his jacket across the arm of the chair. Caleb folded his wings and stood as frozen as the rest of the room. One would think Hell was a fire pit—and it was in some places, especially when Lucifer got angry—but it was either hot or cold without anything between.

Caleb wrinkled his nose at the sulfuric stench wafting towards him. Lucifer needed to clean the place up—or at least move the corpses into a vault where no one could smell the rotting flesh. The drastic fluctuations in temperature only sped up the decaying process.

"I need you to befriend a witch," Lucifer decreed.

To do what? And how far would he have to go with the girl this time? When he had first started, seducing girls sounded like the best thing in the world, but after the first hundred assignments or so, it got tedious. Sure, he used to take delight in wooing them, or making them jealously fight over him, but now it was only a matter of business. It was boring.

He could only imagine his mother shaking her head at him. She had taught him intimacy was the most sacred earthly experience, and now it was just a commodity to him.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

Caleb tried to keep his voice uninterested. “Why?”

“Because you’re going to help me win a deal with my old man.”

Caleb knew he had to do whatever Lucifer wanted because of their damned contract, but deliberately putting his head on the chopping block was not part of their deal. “There’s no way I’m putting myself in the crossfire. It’s *suicide*,” Caleb insisted, dragging out the last word through clenched teeth.

“But you won’t be. It’s all part of the deal. He already knows you’re involved.” Lucifer announced as if that solved everything.

Caleb raised his chin in defiance, his violet eyes ablaze. “I want no part in it.”

The infernos flared with Lucifer’s anger and then shrank as a devious smile appeared. “Even for your freedom?”

Caleb hesitated before shaking his head, “I have nothing to go back to. My family died two hundred years ago—right after I made my deal with you.” His eyes narrowed.

“I followed through on my promise: your mother’s immortality in exchange for your eternal servitude—”

“You turned her into a statue!”

“Immortality! No one but angels can escape death.”

“Then why didn’t you turn her into an angel?”

“Because I couldn’t!” Lucifer slammed his fists into the arms of his throne with enough force to create an earthquake. “Don’t you get that? I can only create dark angels and demons thanks to my exalted *Father* in Heaven, who saw fit to limit me in yet another way, as if banishing me here weren’t enough—and only then if they personally agree to a contract.” He exhaled and the fires calmed until they were all but extinguished. “Now, about your assignment...”

ZARA HOFFMAN

Caleb breathed heavily, weighing his choices: do what Lucifer wanted in exchange for his freedom or... what? Nothing could get worse than it already was. “What would you have me do?”

A triumphant smile spread across Lucifer’s hardened features. “Magic in itself is never good or evil. Your job is to corrupt her, or better yet, get her to agree to serve me. I’ll leave it up to your imagination, but a broken heart can drive one over the edge.”

Caleb nodded and began walking away, but Lucifer continued. “Your assignment won’t begin until she’s in college. Right now, she lives with a vigilant mother and an overprotective twin brother.”

“No father?” Caleb interrupted.

“He died before she was born. You can go now.”

Caleb nodded and took his leave. He was particularly anxious to get started, knowing this assignment could change his life.

A silver binder was waiting for him on his bed by the time he returned to his room. Caleb opened it immediately and began reading as he started formulating a plan of attack.

Wooing her would be the best course of action. He just had to meet her and personally assess what type of approach he would take. It would be best to start out as a jerk, and if she didn’t like that persona, he could become the “misunderstood bad boy with a soft side” cliché literature had been propagating for centuries. He hadn’t started it, but it had certainly made his job easier over the years. None of his assignments ever thought about the possibility of being ruined by a dark angel, but that was their mistake.

He pulled the picture of his family out from under his pillow. *We’ll be reunited if it’s the last thing I do*, he promised.



FIVE YEARS LATER

LIGHT FLASHED ACROSS the inside of Fawn's eyelids, tinting them red. She opened her eyes expecting to see sunlight flooding her room but instead, she was surrounded by a black void.

She bumped into an invisible wall and she stumbled backwards. Pressing her hands to it, she tested its strength. Solid. Fawn groaned. This couldn't get any worse.

"But unpredictable events are the most interesting," a mystery voice countered from the darkness.

She whirled around and saw a person standing behind her. She tried to back away, wary of him and unsure of his intentions, but he followed her. Fawn squinted at him and saw he was around her age, but that was all she could discern in the darkness.

"Where do you think you're going? I just got here. It took me forever to enter this damn box, too."

If he wasn't responsible for trapping her, who was? She twisted away from him. Please don't hurt me.

Fawn heard him chuckling in her mind and she could feel goose bumps forming on her arms. His laugh seemed lighthearted and yet she feared there were very dark intentions hiding beneath the surface. Like

ZARA HOFFMAN

a snake exhibit in a museum, it fascinated her, but inspired too much fear for her to follow her curiosity any closer.

“You have no reason to be afraid.”

Fawn faced him. “And why should I trust you? I don’t know you.”

“But you will soon.”

Fawn jerked away from him.

Without warning, the space started trembling. The darkness rippled, resembling heat waves on a hot summer day. Fawn frantically looked around, trying to locate the cause of the disturbance, but she could not find it. The stranger was doing a better job of composing himself, but he was still frowning. Did he know what was happening?

Suddenly she was floating in the air, rapidly ascending into the black unknown. Naturally, she tried to fight it. Fawn imagined herself rooted to the ground, but it didn’t help. The pull was impossible to resist and without thinking, she grabbed his hand. He looked up at her, just as surprised at her action as she was. She stared at him, hoping to see his face, but it was mostly hidden in shadow. At the last moment, she saw a distinctive feature. His eyes shone a piercing violet as he smiled at her one last time before she was yanked away.

She woke up to a blaring noise. It sounded like someone was blowing a horn in her ear. Fawn slammed her hand on top of the alarm clock.

Slowly, she sat up and pulled her knees to her chest. She had not had a strange dream since she got her magical powers five years ago, on her sixteenth birthday. And now, on her twenty-first birthday, not only was she required to attend all of her college classes, but she also had a meeting with some ass who got his kicks at her expense.

Her thoughts were cut off when the door opened and Ivy, her best friend and now college roommate, launched herself onto the bed.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

“Ow!” Fawn yelped as the bed jostled, causing her to hit her head on the wall behind them.

“Sorry. I just wanted to wish you happy birthday!”

“Thanks for that.” Fawn threw aside the sheets and walked over to the dresser. She passed Ivy and pulled out a graphic t-shirt she had made back in eighth grade with a phoenix crawling up the side. She cringed as she readjusted the cold silver of her opal necklace laying against her warm chest under the fabric, but she didn’t let that slow her down. Next came a pair of dark-wash jeans and black ankle boots.

“I’m going to grab breakfast. I’ll see you in class.” She grabbed her coat, phone, and keys before swinging her messenger bag across her torso. With one last glance into her room, the memory of the dream still in her head, she turned out the light and closed her bedroom door.

When she was in line to buy her usual bagel and cup of tea, she felt as though she were being watched. She turned, searching for the culprit in the open student center, but didn’t see anyone. Paranoia urged her to walk faster than her already brisk, New-Yorker pace.

As she was sitting down in her first class, her phone beeped. She pulled it out and saw a message from her old friend Dylan. *Happy birthday!* it read. *You need to come visit us in NOLA soon.*

She smiled and typed back, *Thanks, and that sounds awesome. Maybe this summer?*

The sound of someone sitting next to her made her look up. To her surprise, it wasn’t Ivy, but a guy who looked very familiar. Even weirder, her best friend took a seat behind them without an argument.

The stranger followed her gaze and said, “Oh, I’m sorry. Did you want to sit together?”

“No, it’s fine,” Ivy said, surprising Fawn. Normally her friend would

have insisted otherwise.

He turned back to her and she noticed his strange eye color. One she had seen just that morning. It couldn't be—

“My name is Caleb. It's nice to meet you.”

She mentally chastised herself for staring and quickly replied, “Likewise. I'm Fawn.”

He answered in her head like he had in her dream. *Yes, I know.*

Her spine straightened as if preparing for an attack.

No need to get defensive, he continued. *I'm not your enemy.*

She wavered and let her muscles relax, but still stayed alert. *Did he know who was?* she wondered, remembering Evelyn's old warning.

The Devil, Caleb answered.

“And you know that how?” she whispered, not wanting Ivy to overhear their strange conversation.

“It's common knowledge in the Supernatural world,” he replied at the same volume. “You're quite famous.”

“What are you talking about?” How did he know she was a witch? She hadn't done magic since the night she received her powers.

Before he could answer, the professor walked in and they were forced to stop talking. Fawn hoped he wouldn't continue the conversation in her head. She wouldn't be able to ask any of her questions if he did.

Luckily, he didn't. She wasn't sure if he had heard her wish, or if they were just on the same wavelength. But she did feel his gaze on her throughout the period. By the time the class finished, Fawn was ready to jump out of her own skin. Fortunately for her, her resolve was stronger than her instinct to tell him to stop. Instead, she silently suffered the discomfort and acted as if he weren't there.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

After the lecture, Fawn bolted, walking swiftly away from the English building—and from Caleb.

Later that night, she found him waiting outside the dark room where she had photography class. “What are you doing here?” she asked.

“I believe we got off on the wrong foot this morning and I wanted to remedy that.” He held out his hand. “I’m Caleb Pearce.”

She hesitantly accepted the gesture and said, “I’m just about to go get dinner. Why don’t you walk with me?”

They started off in silence, but after a few moments, Caleb whispered, “To answer your question from before we were so rudely interrupted, I know you’re more than human because I am too. We’re not the only ones.”

Fawn inhaled sharply before recovering. “What are you saying?”

“It’s not for me to say who else is Supernatural.”

Fawn let out a frustrated sigh and tugged the elastic out of her hair, causing brown waves to engulf her for a few moments before she started combing it back with her fingers. “So what are you?”

“An angel.”

Fawn’s step faltered and his hand was instantly on her arm, steadying her. Her mother had said witches weren’t the only supernatural beings on earth. Surprisingly, most of the ones in literature were based on reality. But what was one doing sitting across from her? “What are you doing here? With me?”

“You’re an important person. I’m here to watch over you.”

She could hear her heart beating hard and no doubt he could too. “I don’t believe it. I have a guardian angel.” The thought brought a relieved smile to her face.

He mirrored her and said, “You should.”

ZARA HOFFMAN

Before she could reply, he had disappeared from her side. Fawn heard Evelyn's voice in her head: *Brace yourself, child. It's starting.*



A WEEK LATER, Caleb hit his head against the headboard. The dull ache quickly disappeared, one of the perks of being an angel.

He had known his target for a full seven days, and he had absolutely nothing to show for it. After his last conversation with Fawn, the little witch had been very good at ignoring him. When they were in a group, she would be civil, but he needed to get closer if he was ever going to succeed. Every time he tried to talk to her privately, she would find some way to avoid the interaction though he couldn't figure out why. What type of person—who knew the Devil was coming after them—tried to ditch their guardian angel?

Granted, the last part had been a lie, but she didn't know that. And she seemed to be an intelligent person with enough sense to hopefully listen to someone saying she was in danger, or at least to her instinct for self-preservation. He shook his head. It didn't matter whether she wanted to save herself. What mattered was she wasn't *talking* to him. To make matters worse, Lucifer demanded daily reports. The man was more anxious than a mother on her daughter's wedding day. Caleb had started bullshitting information just to keep him off his back because the alternative—admitting he was clueless—was not an option. Luckily, Lucifer was too distracted to catch him.

Speak of the Devil, and he shall appear.

One knock was all the warning Caleb received before Lucifer was sitting at his desk. "You didn't report tonight."

"I was tired."

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

“I don’t pay you to be tired.”

“You don’t *pay* me, period.”

Lucifer let out a sharp laugh before his features resumed their serious expression. “You know I’m not a patient man, Caleb. I need to know this situation is being handled with the utmost care by the best person. And if you pull another stunt like tonight, I may be forced to question whether that person is still you.”

“It is,” Caleb snapped. “You gave this mission to me because you know I’m the best at blending into modern times. What are you going to do? Send someone else just to make a point?”

“I would watch your tone. You’re not released from your contract with me yet.” With that, he disappeared in a puff of red smoke.

Caleb let out a long sigh. Damn, he hated it here in Hell.



FAWN SLAMMED HER laptop closed. The latest Social Psychology assignment was driving her crazy and no one in the class was online except Caleb. She stared at the green circle next to his name and muttered a curse before clicking on his name.

It had been a week since she last let herself stay in his presence more than a few minutes. He may be her angel, but being near him made her brain go fuzzy and if the Devil really *was* coming after her, that wasn’t a good thing. But God help her, she needed help on this homework.

Can you help me with the latest Psych assignment? she typed. She stared at the screen and wondered if she should have started with a politer greeting. She had all but given him the silent treatment since she found out he was her guardian angel, and suddenly contacting him out of the blue probably wasn’t the best plan of action.

ZARA HOFFMAN

His reply was immediate. *Yes. Where are you having trouble?*

She sighed in relief. At least he didn't seem to find her rude. Or maybe it was because he was her guardian angel and *couldn't* get mad at her? She shook her head. It didn't matter *why*, what mattered was he wasn't pissed and open to helping her.

Explaining how people could have gone along with Hitler's plan to annihilate the Jews. Maybe she was naïve, but even with the research on conformity, compliance, and obedience, she couldn't understand how so many people idly or joyously watched as a culture was being systematically destroyed and buried in mass graves.

The chat box indicated Caleb was typing, but it had been showing that for the past five minutes. Too anxious for his reply, she messaged him again. *Want to meet at the library so we go over this in person?*

He still hadn't finished his response. Why was he taking so long?

Fawn shook her head. Why was she overanalyzing everything? *You're acting like you have a crush on him*, she reprimanded herself. *He's not even a normal college guy!* God, she was acting like an absolute idiot. Her phone buzzed and his message put her out of her misery.

Be there in five. Do you want some tea?

His offer sent a flurry of butterflies through her. She was thankful they weren't face to face because she was sure she was blushing. *Yes, please*, she replied. She packed her bag and left to meet her angel.



CALEB WAITED AT an empty table in the back. He had been surprised when she had reached out. If he thought God would help him, he would have guessed it was an act of divine intervention. Which was utterly ridiculous given his mission was to corrupt Fawn and make God *lose* in his bet against Lucifer.

He heard the library doors open and saw her searching for him.

Where is he? He heard her thought loud and clear as if she were projecting it specifically to him. He knew she wasn't. She didn't even know he could read her mind.

Not wanting her to take the opportunity to lose her nerve and walk back out, he quickly sent her a text. She glanced down at her phone and her gaze snapped up to his.

He smiled and held up a hot cup of tea. "Get it while it's hot," he mouthed at her. "You like oolong, right?"

She nodded and hesitated in moving toward him for only a moment before needlessly readjusting her shoulder bag, gripping the strap with enough strength to turn her knuckles white. He suppressed a chuckle. She probably didn't even realize she was doing it.

He magically pulled out the chair beside him and pushed the hot beverage toward her. She immediately took a long sip and sighed, but

stayed standing.

“You should have worn gloves,” he lightly admonished. “Wouldn’t want you to get frostbite now. What would I do without you to keep me company in class?”

She rolled her eyes, and he saw her aura flare with orange annoyance before settling into a calmer blue.

“I’ve grown up in the North East my whole life. The cold isn’t anything new.”

“Still,” he quietly objected. He felt as though he were chastising his little sister like he used to back when they had all been together as a happy family. He shook his head. Comparing Fawn to his sister was a bad idea. “You have them for a reason.”

She softened at his tone and answered honestly. “I always forget to put them on before I go outside. By the time I remember, my hands are already too cold for it to matter.” She took a sip of the tea and sighed.

He watched her light pink aura expand with contentment.

She said, “Thanks for this, by the way.” She raised the paper cup in a silent salute to him. “And for agreeing to meet with me.”

“It’s my pleasure,” he replied, not missing how her cheeks turned matched her aura at his words, especially the last one. He smiled.

For some reason, he could also feel residuals of her emotion as if they were his own, as if he were inextricably and inexplicably connected to her emotional state.

But rather than drape his arm over her chair like he would for any other assignment, he kept his elbows resting on the table. He figured going from “guardian angel” to “romantic interest” with one of the most commonly known signs of a male showing interest in a female might give her whip lash and scare her off for good.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

She looked down at his hands. *Where is his paper?* he heard her wonder. He saw confusion settle over her features. “You didn’t bring your assignment?”

He leaned back and crossed his legs, settling in for the upcoming show. “I didn’t do it.”

“What?” Her voice was loud enough for a few of the people at the surrounding tables to look over, some with annoyance, others with confusion or pure curiosity. “Then how can you help me?”

He smiled at her disbelief and patted the seat next to him, urging her to finally sit down. Once she settled, he said, “I know enough to help you without needing to complete it myself. I’m an angel, remember? I’ve been around for a while. And there’s always the internet,” he added with a wry smile.

Fawn’s aura confirmed her lasting skepticism, but she remained silent on her reservations. Instead, she pulled out her laptop and folder, withdrawing a sheet of paper riddled with marks in highlighter and green pen. She was clearly getting down to business.

“If I end up not being helpful,” he added, feeling a bit as though he were a desperate used car salesman saying anything he could to keep his customer, “I’ll buy you an apologetic dinner. That way, you won’t have completely wasted your time with me. How’s that?”

She looked as if she was going to refuse when her aura suddenly switched from gray to the pale green of gratitude. She turned to face him head-on and said, “Okay.” He caught a twinkle in her eye right before she added, “I could use a free meal.”

He laughed. “Overconfident, I see. We’ll see if you’ll even be getting one. I fully intend to surpass your expectations of my helpfulness.”



AFTER TWO HOURS of going back and forth over her proposed paper, she was finally done with the assignment. She leaned back and closed her eyes, grateful to have it over with.

Somehow, Caleb had anticipated all of her questions before she said them. If she hadn't known magic was real, she would have written it off to coincidence, but maybe angels could read minds? She hoped not. Otherwise, he would have heard her embarrassing, inner monologue.

She had long since finished her tea and now that she wasn't locked into work mode, she realized how hungry she was. Her stomach growled, a clear indication that if she didn't ingest food soon, she'd become hungry and she'd be mortified if she let anyone—let alone Caleb—see her that way.

He must have felt the same because he said, “Want to leave this place and go find something to eat?”

Like an idiot, she said, “I thought you were only offering a meal as compensation,” instead of just accepting.

What was *wrong* with her tonight? She usually was never this suspicious or seemingly ungrateful, especially to her guardian angel who—her original discomfort aside—had done nothing but help her.

He *was* her guardian angel, and it wasn't fair of her to make his job harder. It was his job to hover and she resolved to be more cooperative in the future.

He smiled good naturedly, thankfully unaffected by her rude behavior. “Consider it an apology for bailing on your dinner invitation a few days ago. I was unexpectedly needed at headquarters.”

She finished packing up her materials and rose from her seat. “Is

that what you angels call Heaven?”

“Technically, there are many names, but given it is the main place of business for guardian angels besides earth, I call it that.” He held his hand out to her. “Want to avoid the cold this time?”

“How?”

He gently took her hand in his. “You may feel a bit weird for a moment. Remember to breathe normally. And don’t let go.”

He gave no further explanation before Fawn felt all her muscles tensing so tight as if her body were trying to collapse in on itself. A moment later, her feet hit solid ground and she stumbled a step forward, Caleb’s hand steadying her.

“What was that?” Her head still felt like it was spinning. She bent over and tried to center herself.

“Magical travel. Much faster than any other transportation. You’ll get used to the dizzy feeling after you’ve done it a few times. I promise it’ll go away soon.”

“Uh huh,” she said skeptically. Like she’d ever be repeating *that* experience. Not likely.

He patted her back. “Come on. It’s better to walk it off. Besides, there’s a good restaurant around the corner. You like Thai, right?”

“It’s one of my favorites,” she said. “But I assume you probably already knew that.” Guardian angels knew everything, right?

“Always polite to check.” He held the door open for her and they were immediately seated at an empty table away from the outside chill.

He pulled out her seat and draped her coat over the back. Fawn straightened her spine, his proximity causing a tingle to dance over her skin. Why did he always have this effect on her? What made it worse was he didn’t even seem to notice.

ZARA HOFFMAN

“I’ve never been here, but I hear good things,” he said, interrupting her inner monologue. “You can get whatever you want. I’m treating.”

“Does that make this a date?”

His eyebrows rose and Fawn wanted to smack herself. *Way to let me down, mental filter.*

“It can be... I would like it to be,” he immediately amended, “but I didn’t want you to feel like I was rushing into things too quickly. It’s entirely up to you, Fawn. It would be remiss of me to put my wants above yours.”

“I would, too, but I’m sorry. I’m not normally that forward. We’ve only known each other for a few days. Maybe this *should* be just a dinner between...” she gestured between them, but couldn’t find an accurate description for their bizarre relationship.

“Friends?”

Her gaze locked with his in surprise. “Are we?”

“I may be your angel, but I hope you can eventually also view me, at the very least, as someone you can confide in.”

What was she supposed to say to that? She cleared her throat. “I would like that.”

“Then this is a simple dinner between friends.” He gave a reassuring smile. “Let’s not think about anything else tonight.”

Fawn nodded and was grateful when the waiter chose that moment to approach their table.



CALEB WATCHED FAWN carefully. She was so unlike the other girls throughout the years, even ones he met from his small town back when he was still human. She was incredibly intelligent, straight forward, but

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

simultaneously shy and innocent, and something else he couldn't name.

She had surprised him by broaching the subject of a possible romantic relationship. In the past five hours, she had initiated contact and allowed him to make more headway than in the past five *days*. Caleb had no idea what was making her so agreeable, but whatever it was, he hoped it continued until he was done with his mission.

"I would ask you what your major is, but since I already know..."

She smiled. "Yeah, the psychology bug bit me. I think I got it from my mom."

"What do you enjoy doing in your free time?"

"Nothing in particular. I haven't found a passion yet."

"You will eventually."

"Sometimes I doubt that. Most of my other friends already know what they want to do with their lives and I just... don't."

The disappointment in her voice and aura urged Caleb to reach out to her and take her hand across the table. He was surprised to feel real emotion over her indecision. He mentally shook it off. "I'm positive you'll do great things."

She gave a small, weak smile. "Thank you, Caleb."

It was the first time she had called him by name and he felt a shiver run down his spine. "You're welcome," he answered. And he meant it.

"I feel like we've been talking about me the whole time. Tell me more about yourself."

He opened his arms. "I'm an open book. What do you want to know about me?"

"How did you become an angel?"

"You could say I was picked for the job when I was still a human." It was a stretch, but she didn't know that.

ZARA HOFFMAN

“So much for being an open book,” she quipped, leaning back as disappointment and feigned disinterest transformed her body language.

“I’m willing to share anything else, but we aren’t allowed to share the specifics of our creation. Otherwise all sorts would be clamoring for the chance to become like us, or worse, attempt to transform themselves and rival those selected by God himself.”

He saw her sit up straighter. “Like Lucifer’s army?”

“Those were fallen angels who were originally in God’s service,” Caleb corrected. He hesitated, unsure of whether he should go on. “But yes, the Devil does sometimes create dark angels to do his bidding.”

“Do you run into them often?”

Caleb detected a hint of concern and nodded solemnly. “They often roam the Earth pretending to be humans and stir up trouble. When they stay invisible, they whisper bad thoughts and feelings into unsuspecting victims’ ears and minds.

“Even if someone’s guardian angel is around?” He heard her mentally add, *That’s ballsy.*

“We are not permitted to engage in combat unless we receive direct orders to.” Caleb almost laughed at how easily he was impersonating a light angel and how many times he had engaged in fights over the years. “We can’t violently defend our charges against words or change anyone’s behavior. Only tend to our charges and try to persuade them against the poisonous words of demons. The only time we can take *action* is if there is a bodily threat to the person we are protecting.”

“Does that get frustrating?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I know when I read and characters do stupid things, I some-

times want to smack them with their own books. I think I'd lose patience very easily if I were in your position. How do you do it?"

"I'm sure a lot of us originally felt that way. I certainly didn't believe I could do what was expected of me when I first started." He smiled at the half-truth. "It gets better with time and lots and lots of practice."

"What's eternity like?"

"There's always something new, but seeing the cycle of fads is also interesting. When I was a human, I never imagined I'd ever get the chance to see society truly move forward. It's amazing, really."

"Does it ever get lonely?"

He tilted his head as he considered her question. "At times," he quietly admitted. "Losing people to time is never an easy thing to accept, but when your own life is extended and theirs aren't—" he paused. "They say time heals all, but it doesn't quite account for the fact that new wounds are constantly being formed." He saw Fawn watching him with sympathy and cleared his throat. "How's your meal?" He noticed she had barely touched it, probably because she was spending so much time questioning him.

She looked down at her plate and said, "It's really good." As if this were a reminder to herself, she took another bite, licking her lips in the process before she took a sip of her water.

It was only a small gesture, but it woke something in him, making him want to pull her in and kiss her. He shook his head. *Strange*. He couldn't remember the last time he felt *true* desire for a girl, much less one of his assignments.

They ate the rest of the meal in comfortable silence, and every so often he would catch her watching him out of the corner of his eye. He never let her know he knew, not wanting to embarrass her, and let her

look her fill.

At the end of dinner, he paid the check, pulled out her chair, and walked her back to the dorm after she expressed her dislike of magic travel. He had lightly teased her about it, but relented. He wanted to make a good impression, not make her resent him.

At her dorm, he took her hands in his and said, “Goodnight, Fawn.”

“Goodnight, Caleb. Thank you for everything tonight.”

“My pleasure. I hope we will repeat the experience.” He turned and began walking away. He could feel her gaze on him and looked back, waving once, before using magic travel to return to his home in Hell.

He went straight to the throne room and said, “She’s hooked.”

Lucifer smiled. “I would expect nothing less.” His expression turned serious. “Tonight you’re going to start training with Bernael.”

“Why? She won’t be able to do black magic yet. She barely even knows *magic*, period. How do you expect her to do anything when she doesn’t even know the basics?”

Lucifer leaned forward. “Because he’s going to teach you a crash course on magic so you can act the sage with Fawn when you start teaching her.”

Caleb opened his mouth to ask more questions, but the Devil waved his hand and he found himself in the courtyard across from the intimidating demon whose red eyes blazed with dark glee.

“Ready to begin?”



FAWN DIDN'T SEE Caleb for the next two days.

At first, she thought nothing of it. But when the second day came and went without any sign of him, she had to admit she missed him. Logically, she knew his absence disappointed her more than it should have, but that didn't change how she felt.

Ever since their non-date, she hadn't experienced the ominous feeling she had when they first met and decided she enjoyed being around him more than she did avoiding him. And not just because he could protect her, but his sometimes-cocky-sometimes-sweet attitude had somehow gotten underneath her skin in the twenty-four hours she had known him.

But the warning still puzzled her. Why had Evelyn given it that first day, and what was she talking about?

And if she really *was* in danger, why wasn't Caleb at her side? Was he busy dealing with the threat now in a preemptive attack? She was so confused as to how he could protect her if he wasn't allowed to fight unless he was under strict orders. In her opinion, all guardian angels should have a license to protect their charge by all means necessary. But what did she know about angelic politics?

ZARA HOFFMAN

After a third day without his company, her mood dropped even further. She called off lunch with Ivy and instead took a nap in hopes of boosting her energy and mood in time for her next class.

Fawn was surprised when she saw Caleb waiting outside her building after her last class. She felt her pulse pick up and the hair on the back of her neck stand on end in anticipation. She pulled the key out of her pocket and slid it into the lock and attempted to contain her excitement. “You’re back.”

He laughed. “That I am. Did you miss me?”

She didn’t answer, earning another chuckle from him.

“It’s all right, you don’t need to tell me. And if I may confide a secret, I’m glad to be back in your company. It can get quite boring with my other colleagues.”

“Really? How?”

“They don’t talk about interesting things, always preferring to reminisce on the past. And for beings so close to the modern world at all times, one would think they would be more interested in current events. I wasn’t even *alive* for most of their conversation topics. It makes me feel like quite the black sheep among them.”

She patted his arm. “Poor you,” she cooed, fighting a smile. “You have my sympathies, though I can’t rightly say I pity your situation.”

“Was my story not miserable enough for you?”

She shook her head. “What are we doing tonight? I assume you have a plan.”

Caleb’s expression lost the majority of its levity as he got down to business. “We’re starting your first magic lesson tonight.” He started walking toward the center of campus and she quickened her pace to match his.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

“Wait, what? That’s an awful idea. Don’t you know what happened the night I got my magic?”

He nodded and continued moving. “You’re the most powerful witch on the planet and I’m your protector. While I’m very good at what I do, it’s best if you’re prepared to defend yourself.”

“You make it sound like the whole world is coming after me.”

“The Supernatural community has been waiting to learn your identity for centuries. They all want a piece of you, for better or worse, and we can’t let that happen.” He sighed. “I don’t mean to frighten you, but it’s important you know the threat you’re facing. Lucifer is not easily beaten. You need to be prepared for every possible outcome.”

“Okay, but that could take a while. I haven’t used my abilities for four years. And where are you walking to so fast? As much as I love it here, there isn’t anywhere *nearly* interesting enough for me to run to like you are.”

He chuckled. “This is actually unusually slow for me. You see, we angels usually travel at the speed of light. Can you imagine what it’s like for me when I need to walk even slower when there are other students around who *don’t* know I’m Supernatural?”

She shook her head.

“To answer your question: we’re going to the Great Lawn.”

“My first spell was out of control. If I make a mistake here, people could get hurt!”

“You’re going to start channeling and learn how to be in touch with nature,” he calmly explained. He held his arm out and she felt her stomach clench with anxiety. “Shall we?”

“Is our magic the same?”

He shook his head. “I can’t do spells, I can only travel and bypass

ZARA HOFFMAN

barriers when I need to reach you. But I can't *create* anything like you can. The Creator is very careful about what privileges we get since Lucifer's rebellion."

"Oh. Then how can you teach me?"

"I may not be allowed to do this magic myself, but as your guardian, I have access to *knowledge* about it. If I didn't, I would be ill-prepared to protect you."

She stared up at the cloudy sky. Standing beneath the shadow of the trees in the middle of the courtyard did little to calm Fawn's nerves.

"You'll do fine." He quickly squeezed her shoulder.

Fawn fought the impulse to rub the spot. It was tingling, and she didn't know if that was good or bad. She stared down at their hands. If she moved slightly, they would be touching.

He grabbed her hand and laced their fingers together. She could feel her skin heating up and tried to pull away, but he held on tight. She would *not* hurt him. Her blue eyes met his purple ones, pleading for him to let go.

"If it gets to be too much for either one of us, we'll stop."

"What if I can't?" The tears were now freely rolling down her face.

"I have complete faith in you." He wiped her cheeks with the back of his right hand. She nodded and he offered her a reassuring smile. "Just focus on breathing."

With each inhalation, she felt the warmth spread inside her, pulsing through her veins, and every time she exhaled, her palms briefly heated up before releasing the energy into Caleb. Out of nowhere, a light breeze came and lifted her hair off her shoulders, and her eyes flew open.

"That breeze you feel?" Fawn nodded, captivated by his words and actions. "You made that. I said you could do this." He placed a hand

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

underneath her chin, tilting her head up so she was staring into his eyes. “Do you believe me now?”

She swallowed. “I do.”

“Ready to try something else?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Part the clouds and bring out the sun.”

“Won’t people notice?”

“Yes, but humans—as much as they want there to be magical solutions to all their problems—refuse to believe in magic, and therefore write miracles off to coincidence or yet-to-be-explained science. There’s no worry of being discovered.”

She nodded. “How do I do it?”

“Say this until the sun appears. And remember to keep an image in your mind of what you want the end goal to be. *Veniat sol, lumen tuum. Tenebras et de orbe clara.*”

Rather than close her eyes this time, she stared up at a particularly dark cloud and began silently chanting the incantation as she imagined the sun’s rays bursting through the dark mass. She only got through three repetitions before her imagination was realized. Fawn spun around and laughed when she took in Caleb’s awed expression. “How did I do?”

“Fantastically, and you know it.”

She beamed almost as brightly as the morning star.



THAT NIGHT, CALEB had more than enough *real* information to report without needing to resort to lies.

While he hadn’t been at Fawn’s college the past few days, he also hadn’t returned to Hell. He had needed some time alone to analyze why

ZARA HOFFMAN

Fawn was not only more fascinating than his past assignments, but also how she made him *feel* for her. And he couldn't do that type of musing with Lucifer lurking over his shoulder. It's not like he was in love with her or anything, but the last time someone was able to inspire true emotion in him, he had been a naïve human.

Lucifer had probably burned the ceiling of the throne room at his disobedience, especially after his last warning, but he would get over it. Or Caleb hoped he would eventually.

He didn't even want to imagine his final months on the King of Hell's bad side. He had heard other horror stories being whispered in the palace corridors whenever Lucifer was busy with a meeting, but no one ever dared to fully explain the depth of the Devil's wrath.

Caleb took a deep breath, steeling himself against whatever waited for him, and pushed open the double doors.

"You've been missing in action," Lucifer's voice boomed through the throne room. "I thought we had already had this discussion where you promised you wouldn't repeat the mistake. And yet... here we are again. It's as if you hit rewind and replay, though I can't conceivably guess why. You *know* how I get when I'm displeased."

"But I'm back now and she fully believes I'm her guardian angel. And I've given her a magic lesson, though I still don't understand why you want me to train her. It's like arming your enemy."

"If you do your job correctly, she'll be an ally."

Caleb gave a stiff nod.

"A little birdy told me she is starting to fall for you, but you haven't taken advantage of it yet. Are you going soft?"

"No, sir. And your spy didn't tell you that every time she mentions

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

a romantic relationship between us, she immediately shuts down afterwards. If I actually acted on her unfiltered comments, I'd scare her off. I know what I'm doing."

"Perhaps I should have Asmodeus visit her..."

No way in Heaven. Caleb would do everything in his power to avoid Fawn meeting the demon of lust—and his hellish mentor back when he first began. He forced his tone to stay casual. "It would be a waste of everyone's time."

Lucifer's gaze sharpened. "Are you growing attached to her?"

"Of course not," Caleb scoffed. "Don't be ridiculous. She's just another girl to be seduced." He unfurled his wings, giving them a single shake to relieve his growing anxiety. "If that's all, I'd like to go now."

The Devil made a snort of disbelief. "Just stay focused and do your job. Deliver her to me, and I'll keep up my end of the bargain."

"As long as it's not like our last deal," Caleb muttered.



FAWN WAS GLAD to see Caleb in class the next day. Although she knew he didn't need to attend, it was strangely reassuring to see him during the day and not just during their routine nighttime magic lessons.

Ivy kept insisting there was something more going on between them, and though she consistently told her she was wrong, Fawn was starting to wonder the same herself. She had initially wanted to tell her best friend he was her guardian angel, but Caleb had recommended keeping that fact a secret—for security reasons, he had said, though she couldn't understand why her best friend would pose a threat.

"It's nothing against her character. It's just a precaution we need to take with everyone," he had assured her.

They had proceeded to another lesson about channeling before moving on to some simple incantations for levitation. Luckily, they hadn't done anything breakable or *that* would have been a mess she didn't know how to magically clean up.

"The reason it keeps shaking is because your focus isn't stable," Caleb said. "Which is probably because you're so nervous." He walked behind her and ran his hands down her arms until he was holding her hands, guiding them toward the floor. "Put it down for a moment."

She sighed, feeling tingles running up and down her arms, and lowered the pillow back onto the floor. "Am I doing *that* bad?"

"No," he insisted. "But let's try something else. Close your eyes and think of a candle flame."

How am I supposed to focus when you're holding my hands? "The last time I tried this, I set my room on fire."

He chuckled. "You're a lot better now than you were back then."

She closed her eyes and whispered the words she had somehow committed to memory: "*Ignis et lux intus illuminat, hoc accende lucernam expellat tenebras.*"

"I'm going to make one change given there is no candle here. *Ignis et lux intus illuminat ostende te me.* Do you need me to repeat it?"

She shook her head and silently made the adjustment.

Fawn heard Caleb's voice at her ear and felt the vibrations of his speech roll through her. "And now open your eyes."

She did. Hovering in front of her was a small, but vibrant flame. She made it disappear and spun around. "I just *levitated* a flame I created out of thin air."

He smiled at her. "You're more powerful than you know."



“HOW’S MY LITTLE witch doing?” Lucifer didn’t even bother looking at Caleb as he asked from atop his black throne.

Caleb bristled at the question. He didn’t like the idea of Lucifer owning Fawn, or her even being someone to be owned, period. What was wrong with him?

Lucifer had a faint smirk on his lips, and Caleb was suddenly worried it was too obvious he genuinely liked Fawn.

He dug his fingernails into his palms to check his frustration. He then carefully concealed his annoyance by banishing it to the recesses of his mind and answered, “Fine. She’s getting better by the day.”

“I’m glad to hear it. Just remember to stay focused rather than daydreaming of your future.”

“I don’t daydream.”

“You didn’t when you had no future but this one, but now you do, it’s only natural you would think about what you will do once you’re no longer in my service.” Lucifer raised an eyebrow in a silent challenge for Caleb to contradict what he had just said. When Caleb didn’t, he added, “Keep up the good work.”

Caleb was stunned. Never in his more than two-hundred years of service to Lucifer had he been complimented for his work. He had never

expected to be praised for his work, and to hear it now caught him completely off guard. “Will do, sir.” With nothing left to say, he took his leave and returned to his bedroom.

In the privacy of his own room, he began contemplating what to do next with Fawn. There were times he almost forgot she was a mission, which was extremely dangerous, and now was certainly not the time to make a misstep.

However, she hadn’t mentioned again or made any Freudian slip referring to the possibility of them entering a romantic relationship. He had, however, felt her physical reaction to him during their last magic lesson and it encouraged him to believe her secret wish hadn’t changed.

But how to broach the subject without scaring her off still puzzled him. He needed to pull her out of her shell and make it seem as though it were her idea for them to move forward—but how? Or perhaps he should take charge?

Caleb hit one of the wooden bedposts. A loud crack sliced through the air as it splintered. Still frustrated, he fell onto his bed and threw an arm over his eyes, groaning in frustration. What was wrong with him? Normally he had Plans A, B, and C in place before he ever met his assignment and would build more back-up strategies spanning to the end of the alphabet. He was known for being prepared, and yet with Fawn Belgrave, he barely had a single, complete plan of attack to fall back on when he found himself faltering—which now seemed to be all the time.

He sighed, trying to calm himself down, but he never felt more out of control in his life, save the situation which sent him to Hell in the first place. He had never been so uncertain as how to best handle any

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

of the girls he had been previously assigned, and yet for his most important one ever, he was acting like an inexperienced schoolboy.

Determined to shake his uncharacteristic doubt, he sat up just as quickly and pulled out his family photo. He would complete the mission as any other and move on from this damned existence to one of simple, divine peace in the company of his family in Heaven.



WHEN FAWN SAW him again, she was excited to get to work.

“What are we doing today?” she asked before he could greet her.

“No hello?”

She rolled her eyes. “Tell me what I’m getting into tonight.”

“We’re going to transition toward traditional magic. You’re special and can do a lot of things without written incantations, but you’ll still learn most magic from your Grimoire.” Magically it appeared in his outstretched hand. He moved closer. “Don’t be nervous,” he added when she eyed the tome with barely hidden terror.

“I’m just beginning to use my magic after a five-year hiatus. How am I supposed to know how to do a giant book of spells?”

“With practice. And don’t worry, it’s like the other magic you’ve already done. You visualize what you want to happen. You feel it in your mind, body, and soul as if it’s already happened. That’s the basis of all magic.” He paused. “Some more complicated types of magic have rituals attached, and for those, the steps are written in your Grimoire, but you’re not ready for something like that yet.”

Fawn took a deep breath, trying to calm her frustration. “This is just so embarrassing. I’ve been hearing stories about my family’s mystical legacy since I was old enough to understand sentences, but I always

thought they were just stories. I wish I had paid more attention.”

“Stay in the present, Fawn,” he said in an even tone.

The reminder calmed her again. She closed her eyes and tried to picture a pen in her hand. When she looked, nothing had happened. “I don’t understand this. Why can’t I make a pen appear?”

“It’s okay. Not everything is the same. It takes a lot of repetition. Your first spell from here is a transformation spell that presents a different image, based on what someone wants to see.”

“I don’t think I can do this.”

In an instant, she felt his hand underneath her chin, tilting her head upward to meet his smoldering gaze. “What did I say about you selling yourself short?”

Fawn could hear her heart pounding and didn’t know if it was from the adrenaline of practicing magic, or having him so near her. Realizing he was still waiting for her answer, she took a deep breath of air. “It hurts my magical abilities?” she whispered, answering his question.

He nodded and let her go. “Exactly. If you don’t believe in your power, your channels become clogged and it is harder to execute spells as easily and accurately as it normally would be. It’s imperative you’re confident while doing spells.”

“If I screw this up, what happens?”

“Nothing. There aren’t any nasty half-baked consequences.”

Fawn nodded once again and started turning the pages until she found the spell Caleb had just described to her. “Will people see what I want them to?”

“Yes. Only the caster can control the spell.”

“All right.” Fawn stood and walked over her book shelf and picked

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

her well-used copy of *Pride and Prejudice* from the collection. Returning to Caleb, she looked to him for approval.

He nodded in approval. "Recite the words written in the grimoire and imagine every page of Jane Austen's book, even the cover if you want, as blank canvasses for your mind to project onto. Visualize what you want and it'll transform into that, then clear the image so it reverts back to its original state. Ready?"

She read the words off the page once. "*Ostende mihi voluntas quidem cordis mei, oculus aspicientis.*" Then she closed her eyes and repeated them as she erased the cover and the pages of the romance novel. Then she imagined the book of her grandparents' love letters she had heard described so many times by both her mother and grandma. She started with the cover, with an image of her newly married grandparents when they were in their early twenties. She had seen a small copy of it enough times to remember it in perfect detail. For the pages, she had to imagine more, and hoped her mental description was accurate enough to manifest what she wanted.

She opened her eyes and his eyes shifted to the book in her hands. On the cover was the image of her grandparents. Excited by that small victory, she immediately opened the book. On the first page was a letter written on old stained paper. Fawn smiled nostalgically and started reading them.

"Can I see?" Caleb asked.

She shifted the book so he could read from his spot beside her.

Even as she felt his body warmth emanating from behind her shoulder, she was too absorbed in the letters to feel her usual nervousness at his close proximity.

When she was done, she imagined wiping the book and the pages

ZARA HOFFMAN

shimmered, transforming back to normal.

“What was that?” Caleb asked, his voice oddly tight. He seemed to be as caught up in the letters as she was.

Fawn rose to put the book away. “A precious family heirloom we can’t seem to find. I think it’s in storage somewhere.”

She saw Caleb’s eyes clear as he returned to the present. “Congratulations, Fawn Belgrave. You have completed your first Grimoire spell.”



CALEB WATCHED THE smile spread across Fawn’s face and felt her happiness seeping into him. He couldn’t explain it, but it was as if her aura expanded so wide as to encompass him with not only its physical reach, but also its emotional influence.

It had never happened before with any of the previous girls he had worked with and it made him wonder. Was it because she was a witch?

She must have noticed his confusion because her aura quickly changed to a confused gray. “What’s wrong?”

He shook his head. “Nothing. I mean it,” he added when her aura didn’t change. “You truly are a natural at this. You just have to remember to keep calm when trying new things.”

“I can try, but I’m a perfectionist at heart.”

“Don’t let that spoil the good thing you have going here.”

She brushed off his comment and said, “What else can I do?”

“You want to do more?” *What else can I teach her?* He hadn’t planned going beyond this lesson tonight.

She nodded. “I think the magic is giving me a high.”

“Then perhaps it would be better for you to slowly come down now rather than build up for a more severe crash later.”

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

She looked disappointed, but didn't argue.

He internally sighed in relief. Well, that fixed one problem.

She yawned. "I think I'm too tired to do anything else tonight."

"In that case, I'll see you tomorrow."

"Bye, Caleb."

"Sleep well, Fawn."



FAWN WAS BEGINNING to doubt the nature of her relationship with Caleb. A solid week had passed since he had started teaching her magic and she felt closer to him than ever.

Yes, he watched over her and had become a special sort of friend to her, but there were times he would look at her, say something, or briefly touch her in a way that made her wonder again about their mutually expressed desire to go on a date.

He hadn't brought it up again since, and though she was all for women asking men out, she couldn't muster the courage to do so with Caleb. And that small fact aggravated her almost as much as not knowing where he stood on the subject.

Unable to stay in her own head, she finally asked Ivy her thoughts. Unsurprisingly, her friend suggested if she was unwilling to ask him out, she should at least ask him if he felt anything remotely romantic towards her.

When they met each other again the next day in Abnormal Psychology, Ivy very obviously said, "Ask him," just as Caleb approached them.

He greeted them both with a smile and replied, "Who and what is being asked of me?"

"Nothing," Fawn quickly answered, casting a quelling glare towards

her best friend.

Caleb glanced between the two and laughed. “Now my curiosity is piqued, but I shall give you the benefit of the doubt and not pry.”

Fawn forced an embarrassed smile and tried to ignore the bizarre giddiness she felt at his teasing, praying her expression didn’t give away her inner thoughts.

Though he didn’t bring it up again during the class, Fawn caught him staring at her with an amused expression more than once during the period. And when she did, he would raise a questioning eyebrow and she’d quickly look away again.

Her phone buzzed with a text from Ivy saying, “Stop eye-fucking each other and get a room!” Fawn’s eyes flew up to her friend’s in the row behind her and an uncontrollable blush detonated across her cheeks as she turned away from Caleb.

At the end of class, Ivy yet again urged her friend, this time silently, to ask Caleb about their relationship before Ivy took off. As they left the building, Fawn could practically sense Caleb buzzing with anticipation and finally said, “Alright, I know you’re dying to ask. I—” She took a deep breath, “We mentioned maybe going on a date last week—or, not *going* on a date, but maybe... I don’t know. I was wondering if you were still interested in something like that?” She cut herself off and prayed he wouldn’t laugh at her.

He smiled and a small chuckle escaped from him, but his words were as surprising as they were reassuring. “I was considering asking you the same thing tonight, but it seems you’ve beat me to it.”

“Is that a ‘yes’?” she hedged, wanting him to answer explicitly. Her confidence was beginning to wane, and if he didn’t put her out of her misery soon, she knew she would be tempted by—and would likely

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

take—the coward’s route of retracting her query altogether.

He nodded. “Absolutely. In fact, I would like nothing better. I apologize if my pause gave you reason for worry. It was not my intention to further aggravate you on such a sensitive topic.”

She couldn’t help the smile that appeared at his affirmation and use of old-fashioned language. She wondered if he realized when he lapsed.

“Perhaps we can do something tonight after our lesson. If you are up to it, of course.”

“What are you thinking of?”

“I could cook for you and we can watch a movie at my place, or we can do something else if you prefer.”

“Your suggestion sounds lovely.”

“Then it’s settled.” He hugged her. “I’ll see you tonight for our lesson at our usual time at my place. I’ll text you the address.”

She beamed at him. “I’m looking forward to it.”



CALEB SMILED BACK, enjoying the inexplicable direct link between their minds even when he wasn’t actively prying. He had yet to tell her he was able to listen to hers whenever he wished, but it was an advantage he was not ready to give up.

“In the meantime, I believe we also have time for a quick lunch together before your next class. I hope you won’t mind indulging me a bit longer with your company. Perhaps you can tell me what movies you like so I can be sure to have a good selection for you.”

Her eyes flared with small alarm. “Oh, you don’t have to buy anything new for me. I’m sure there will be something interesting on Netflix for us to find.”

ZARA HOFFMAN

“I want you to be happy, and I’ll gladly shell out a few dollars to ensure your enjoyment.”

She blushed and he added, “If you prefer to think about it more, you can let me know later during our lesson. Now, about food.”

“For tonight?”

He shook his head. “I think I’ll keep that a surprise, but I was talking of now. I want to make sure you don’t accidentally skip lunch like you used to last year.”

“You say it like I did that intentionally. It’s not my fault I had a class and a lot of work that kept me too busy to go to the dining hall.”

“There were other options.” He held out his arm. “Eat with me?”

She nodded and he took the moment to dip into her mind and heard her initial excitement and then, *I should tell Ivy.*

“If you prefer not to, there’s no pressure. I’ll be seeing you later today anyway and would not wish to monopolize your time. Just be sure to take care of yourself.”

She smiled. “I would like to see Ivy, if that’s all right, but thank you for the invitation.”

“Yes, of course,” he quickly supplied. “May I say hi first?”

The question clearly took her off guard, but she said, “Sure.”



THEY FOUND IVY sitting with a date. Fawn drew up short and Caleb stopped right behind her, so close she could feel his body heat at her back, threatening to engulf her.

Her friend stood up and hugged her tightly, cutting off Fawn’s ability to draw breath. Though Ivy was shorter than her, her friend’s strength more than made up for her lack of height.

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

Fawn whispered back, "I didn't realize we weren't meeting alone."

"Oh, I can send him away. He's just a hookup last night."

She hid a smile. "Yes, I remember you two coming in."

Ivy blushed but made no move to hide it. They both knew she had the more voracious sexual appetite between the two of them.

Fawn didn't exactly approve of the almost-nightly rotation of hook-ups coming through their dorm, but as long as her friend was happy and safe, who was she to judge?

Ivy turned to her date and said, "My friend and I need some girl time. Could you give us some privacy? I'll text you later."

Instead of being offended like Fawn expected him to be, he rose as if in a trance and left them without a word or complaint. Fawn stared at his retreating back for a moment before turning her incredulous eyes to her friend.

Ivy shrugged and said, "He's not really one for words."

Strange, he wouldn't stop yammering last night. Maybe it was just the alcohol talking, she reasoned.

"I see you also brought a surprise plus one."

Fawn turned to Caleb and he took a step forward. "Just wanted to say hello and to let you know Fawn and I will be going on a date tonight. I understand good friends such as you like to be kept apprised of such social arrangements."

Ivy turned her huge eyes on her friend. "Really?" Ivy asked in an extra sweet tone. "This is the first time I've heard about it."

Fawn silently thought, *Great, now I'll have to fend off her Spanish Inquisition.* "We just made the plan."

Her friend nodded. "Uh huh. I want details. Now."

ZARA HOFFMAN

Caleb cleared his throat, drawing Fawn's attention. "I'll see you tonight, then." He moved forward and hugged her before releasing her and walking away. She and Ivy watched him go.

Fawn turned to see her friend wearing an intense expression. "Spill."

"Can I get something to eat first?"

Her friend shook her head. "Dish now, food later."

Fawn rolled her eyes. "Well, I took your advice and finally asked if he wanted to go out with me and he said yes."

"I knew he would. He'd be an idiot to turn you down."

"Can I finish?"

Her friend waved her on. "Proceed."

"I'm going over to his apartment after our tutoring session." The lie still felt strange, but less so than it originally did. It had been Caleb's idea to call their regular meetings that to dissuade any suspicion her friend might form. "And he's going to make me dinner before we watch a movie."

"That sounds amazing. You're going to have such a great time. And let's be real, movie-time is just code for second base."

"He has to get past first before I can even consider something past that. Anyway, I wanted to ask for your advice because I have no idea what to wear tonight."

"Of course I'll help you, silly! Now, let's get something to eat. I'm starving over here."

Once they had their food, Fawn asked the other question on her mind. "Am I wrong to be going out with him?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he is my tutor." She wanted so badly to say he was her guardian angel, but respected his wish to keep the true nature of their

THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

relationship a secret even if it hurt to do so. “Am I letting him take advantage of me?” She felt awful for doubting Caleb, but she couldn’t help what she felt.

Ivy shook her head. “I don’t think so. I mean, you’re both consenting adults. If you both like each other, I wouldn’t worry. But just because you want a relationship now, doesn’t mean you can’t change your mind later if something changes for you.”

Fawn gave a weak smile, still not completely sure. Was she attracted to Caleb? Absolutely. It was kind of crazy how strong their connection was, but was that enough? She’d already whittled her dating pool down so far, but was she being too impulsive now?

“It’s okay to not know where everything is going, Fawn.”

She looked up and was grateful to have such a good friend. “You’re right.” She took Ivy’s hands. “I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

OTHER BOOKS IN THE SERIES

UNMOORED

UNMOORED

TAMING THE ALPHA

BEHIND THE PLAYLIST

This playlist has been a long-time in the making. It has changed with every reiteration and revision of this story. I originally had a specific song for each chapter, but am now just going to list special songs that happened to be stuck in my head and relevant to the story.

“HELP I’M ALIVE” by Metric really captures the twins’ panic, especially Fawn’s, when they learn of their magical powers in the first chapter. When I first heard this song on *The Vampire Diaries*, I wasn’t a huge fan. But the song has since obviously grown on me and I feel it was a great match.

“MAGIC” by Olivia Newton-John: Okay, I know it’s a girl singing to a guy in *Xanadu*, but if we swap the characters’ genders, you get something similar to Caleb’s dream message to Fawn when they first meet.

“TRUE COLORS” by Cyndi Lauper: Granted, Caleb doesn’t exactly show his “true colors” until later in the story, I always thought this spoke to his character struggle and also reminded me of auras. So, yeah, a bit random, but who cares? It’s my playlist.

“CAREFUL” by Paramore: I picked this as a warning for Fawn, though now that I think about it, it’s probably more of a warning to the reader that bad stuff is coming.

“SMILE” by Mikky Ekko: This song was added within the past few months. Keeping with the sense of impending doom (the lyrics actually say “smile; the worst is yet to come”) and it’s pretty darn accurate. When I originally heard this in the trailer for *Paper Towns*, I thought it was an exciting, adventure/time of your

life song. And then I bought it and realized it's basically about living life up before the other shoe drops. Both interpretations fit for this chapter, in my opinion.

"EVEN ANGELS FALL" by Jessica Riddle: And this is when shit hits the fan. The title pretty much says it all, but this is all about the heartbreak and how "even angels fall" which is really appropriate given Caleb is the reason for Fawn's current state.

"JUST GIVE ME A REASON" by P!nk (feat. Nate Ruess): Fawn's mantra throughout this chapter. And rightfully so. I'd be asking a lot of questions if I were in her position.

"DOG DAYS ARE OVER" by Florence + The Machine: My main characters' (very) brief respite is abruptly ended when the Hunters make a move.

"I BET MY LIFE" by Imagine Dragons: Everyone tries to decide who will sacrifice themselves so Fawn can regain her magic.

"THIS IS WAR" by 50 Seconds to Mars: The title says it all. The fight begins and the Belgraves and their allies fight against Lucifer's demons.

"FIGHT FOR YOU" by Pia Mia (feat. Chance the Rapper): Devastated, Fawn snaps and ends the fight.

"TIL KINGDOM COME" by Coldplay: Epilogue song. It's a bit serious, but after everything I've put my characters through, I don't think there's a more appropriate song to finish the playlist.

JOURNEY TO THE BELGRAVE LEGACY

In middle school, I started writing a contemporary romance called *Cracked: A Life in Pieces* about a girl who is responsible for guiding a new, surly and Mr. Darcy-ish student through their high school. There was a love triangle featuring someone named Caleb. But besides that character name, there was no magic or anything else similar to *The Belgrave Legacy*.

After 3 years of struggling to finish the draft, I abandoned it. In that time, I had graduated middle school and my grandma had died, devastating me. I had a lot of dreams about her, but two in particular stood out to me:

The night before she died, I had a dream that it was Thanksgiving dinner and I was in her empty house. I woke up with a soaked pillow and began crying loudly enough that my mom came into my room and turned on the light. I spent the next hour crying until I couldn't produce any more tears. And I demanded I miss school so I could see my grandma one more time. It turned out that I was correct, and she died minutes after my mom and I arrived at the nursing home. We went home, I sat down at my laptop, and wrote the Thanksgiving scene dream from Chapter 1 as condolences poured in through Facebook.

The second event was about a year later when I had another dream about my grandmother. This one took place in a city townhouse where my birthday party was happening. She led me through the building, allowing me to see that each floor was a different scene, representing my different hobbies as if I had chosen each for my career path. I asked what it all meant, but woke up without an answer.

That was just the beginning. It took me 2 years to write a first draft of *The Belgrave Daughter* (what was going to be Book 1 of *The Belgrave Legacy* trilogy). During that time, Ann Brashares (author of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* series) critiqued it, and then I revised it for another year. As I was going through more than eight different revisions, I also wrote first drafts of *Tears of an Angel* and *The Witch's War* (which became *Prophecy*).

I “finished” *The Belgrave Daughter*, revised *Tears of an Angel*, and based on feedback from my early readers, I then decided to forget the trilogy idea and make it all into one book. And that involved moving bits from Part 1 to 2, deleting extraneous subplots from Part 2, and heightening the tension in Part 3. This penultimate stage took place during the second half of my high school senior year and first quarter of my college freshman year.

And then the tweaking began anew in January 2016 as I tried to refine the story to its fullest potential and to the best of my ability before sending it to critique partners, making more changes, sending it to an editor, and the final cleanup. It wasn't until May 2016 that I was able to officially call this manuscript completed. September 2016 is when the eBook cover was designed, and the rest is history (kind of).

It's taken over 5 years (starting from *The Belgrave Daughter's* first draft) for the finished eBook to be published. And even longer for this print edition due to some personal issues on both my and my cover designer's sides. But it's in your hands now, and what a wild journey it's been.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zara Hoffman is a college student and has been writing since she was eight years old. She spends most of her time doing homework and writing new stories because if she didn't, her head would likely explode. She writes to share the crazy products of her imagination with the world and hopes that you find them as entertaining as she does. Her books are for young adults or the young at heart. After all, growing up is overrated. When she isn't wrapped up in projects, Zara can be found listening to music or hanging out with friends.

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