

Chapter 2

Family history

Evangeline was now in her room unpacking her clothes on the bed. It was a big room with a heavy bed made of newly polished rosewood and a floor that was carpeted with fine thread bared rugs. Evangeline had been very young when she first came to this house with her parents, she remembered playing hide and seek with her mother and those old town fables that her father told her before bedtime.

It made her feel hollow and empty knowing that her family would never be together like that again and that it was her fault. Evangeline was with her parents inside the car during the accident she had been in the back seat of the car while her parents sat in the front. Her dad was driving that day they had been arguing about something though Eve could hardly remember what it was when she saw the truck coming their way.

She had shouted for her father to stop the car but before he could turn around and see the truck it was too late, their car had turned upside down due to collision and Eve had gone unconscious for nearly an hour and when she woke it was to find her parent's bodies dangling upside down while blood dripped from them forming a puddle on the ground.

She had tried to shout for help, tried to jerk her parents awake but no matter what she did she was stuck there to watch her parents bleeding to death until finally the ambulance and police arrived on the scene. Even after five months she still woke up in the middle of the night in cold sweat from nightmares filled with dead bodies, blood, and death.

She had started losing sleep and throwing up after waking up from nightmares and it was only the medicines she and Jasmin's therapist suggested that she could now sleep better than before and not have panic attacks while sitting in the back seat of a car.

Jasmine and the rest have done everything they can to help her including taking turns in spending the night holding her and cuddling her when she had fits of fear and panic attacks. Rossi came in from the door "Are you finished? Chris and Jazz are waiting in the library, they want to get started right away." said Rossi smiling at Eve.

"I wish I could share some of their enthusiasm. Don't you think we should fresh up first." said Eve trying hard not to show her grief with a fake smile. she should have known better, that her friends would see right through it and so Rossi did. "We already have, you are the one running late" she said with an understanding smile and walked up to Eve to give her a gentle hug.

"You should know that all we want is for you to share some of our enthusiasm and stop acting to be happy for our sake but be happy because you feel like it." she said letting her go "I am trying to." said Eve. "I know." replied Rossi.

"Let's go." and with that, she took Eve's hand and they both went out the room toward the library. They reached two heavy doors on the second floor of the house and entered through the oak doors. "Well they are finally here." said Christine looking up from one of the books she and Jasmine had spread on the polished ivory table that was placed in the centre of the room.

The library was vast with shelves covering the walls. One wall had two large glass stained windows in front of which there was a small round table and two chairs beside the table stood a staircase leading to the landing above to reach the upper shelves. There was also a one-armed stylish couch in one corner behind the long ivory table while a fireplace below the mantelpiece stood on the opposite wall behind the couch.

Jasmine was lying down on the couch reading one of the books from the library. “So what have you two found until now.” asked Eve coming in the library. “Nothing much, we have just started.” said Jasmin from the couch.

“We were waiting for you two. I wanted to ask you, there are no maps of the servant pathways in these documents and the new adjustments that had been made in the house?” asked Christine.

“I'm not sure there are any detailed maps of the servant pathways of the house since they were built a long time ago and the rest, they must be with the architectures. I can ask them to bring it back once the renovations start.” replied Eve.

“The servant pathways, you mean there could also be hidden rooms in this house and nobody would know about them. Talk about lack of professionalism.” interjected Jasmin now raising up from the couch and coming up to stand next to Christine. “So about this lost treasure you said you would tell us the family history once we arrive, now that we are finally here I think you should get a move on.” said Christine.

“Very well but know I can only tell you the main points of the story that I heard from my parents and some facts are still unknown as the whole thing is quite a big mystery.” said Eve “Now, in the early 18th century one of my ancestor Nicklaus Wilber the lord of this land met a wealthy heiress who had only just returned from France.

The family financial state was not good those days. So it was essential that Nicklaus married for wealth at least that was what lady Wilber, Nicklaus's mother had intended but Nicklaus fell in love with Charlotte and much to her mother's disdain was quite happy with his wife whether she came with or without a handsome dowry.

Lady Wilber wasn't fond of Charlotte because of her lineage as Charlotte's family had only just become wealthy due to industrialism and didn't have a proper title like herself. Regardless of her dislike the marriage took place and Charlotte indeed came with chests full of gold, jewels, and lavish cloths.

The family financial state did not only improve but thrived due to Charlotte's father's contacts with foreigner merchants and within a year the family business was at its peak and to cap it all up the couple were soon blessed with twins.

Everything was perfect but Nicklaus's mother still held her grudges against Charlotte. She did all she could to persuade Nicklaus to leave Charlotte now that the family business was stable and marry someone of proper family background but Nicklaus would not hear of it as he was just as loyal to Charlotte as she was to him.

So now Lady Wilber did the next worst thing that one could think of in that age of time. She spread rumours about Charlotte being mentally distressed and possibly though I could not say

for sure she used drugs to turn the rumours into reality and soon Charlotte started having hallucinations and tried to hurt herself.

After seeing her wife's behaviour, Nicklaus decided that it was best for their children's safety that Charlotte keeps her distance from them. So they moved Charlotte to the north tower of the house away from the children though the children were permitted to come and meet their mother whenever she was feeling well but Charlotte was worried for her children. She did not trust her mother in law to leave the children in her care

She begged to be moved back to the main house but Nicklaus assured her that it was for the best. Soon her state became worse as she started having fits of panic but worse than her state was the rumours that had started poisoning the minds of the people living in the nearby village. That Charlotte was either possessed by a demon or she was a witch.

These rumours became so wild that the people begin fearing their lord and his manor and one day a riot break out in the village as people were demanding that Lord Nicklaus should send her wife away to an asylum or leave the town.

Though the riot had been ended as Lord Nicklaus agreed to send her wife away the horrors of the night weren't over yet. When he came home to give her wife the news about his decision he found her hanging from the ceiling while a letter was found near her that said that her soul will protect her children and their children for centuries to come but it will also haunt those who try to hurt those who are of her blood.

Although the letter was written in Charlotte's handwriting Nicklaus suspected foul play but he had no means to prove it or accuse someone of her wife's death. Due to the letter It seemed to everyone else that Charlotte had committed suicide because of her fear of being burned at the stake by town people.

So no one backed Nicklaus's suspension and as days went by Nicklaus's guilt and grief made him so drunk and unreasonable that he trusted no one, not even his mother and isolated himself from everyone. For the mere thought that his wife had indeed committed suicide because of him locking her up in the tower was more than he can bare so he lived on in denial.

A few months later Lady Wilber died from a heart attack but Nicklaus was afraid that the curse that Charlotte had put on the house would haunt his children as well so he moved to London with his children and left the house for safekeeping.

It is said that in her suicide note Charlotte had also mentioned keeping a part of her fortune for her children but it did not say where had she hidden. It just said that only her heirs would be able to find it when the time comes. Many people searched the house in vain though no one succeeded in finding the hidden treasure.”

Chapter 3

The lost boy

After hours of rummaging through the documents and books of the house, the four of them were called downstairs to have dinner by Mr. Krum while the rest of the staff worked in the kitchen. The dining room was large with a polished rosewood table in the centre surrounded by chairs on one side of the wall were long windows draped with heavy curtains while at the foot of the table above the fireplace on the marble mantelpiece stood a large mirror.

Eve had placed herself at the head of the table while both Rossi and Jasmine had taken a seat on either side of her and Christine had seated herself beside rose on the left of Eve. They were hungrily digging through their meal of roasted turkey with mashed potatoes and red wine served by Mr. Krum a young woman came in the room bringing the desert.

She was dressed in a maids uniform and had straight brown hair tied in a tight bun over her head and had dark brown eyes that had a wary look about them though judging by her face she seemed to have a kind nature.

She placed the dessert on the table and began to introduce herself. "My lady its please to make your acquaintance. I'm Mary the head maid of your estate. I hope the food is to your liking? The chef has spent quite some time preparing it." said Mary with a slight smile.

"Yes it is very delicious and I must say I would like to meet the rest of the staff as well before they leave the estate and would there be any staying in the servants quarter." asked Evangeline.

"No my lady only the chief John and Mr Krum are staying in the servants quarter since most of the staff heads home before dark but you can rely on them both to fulfil any of your wishes." replied Mary.

"Is there any particular reason that the staff does not prefer to stay at the estate perhaps we can improve the state of servants quarters while we renovate the rest of the house." asked Jasmine.

"No miss the servants quarter hardly needed any improvement in the first place. It's just that most of the staff members live in the nearby town so they prefer heading home to there families instead of staying here." replied Mary trying to convince them that everything was alright but Evangeline had a knack for pointing out a lie when she heard one so she asked tactilely "Is that all I thought that people of the town still believed the rumours surrounding the estate but if you say so a shame though it would be quite lonely after dark."

At this Rossi raised her eyebrows and said. "Lonely, Eve one would think that the three of us might as well be invisible." "I agree." chimed in Christine.

"that's not what I meant to you to I was just worried that our staff believes in superstitions." "What kind of superstitions." asked Jasmine now looking up from her plate and giving her full attention to the conversation.

"I think its best if Mary told us as I did not no much about it myself would you not entertain us with the chilling story." said Eve with a soothing voice. The four girls were now looking at the poor maid with curiosity and Mary realizing that their was no way out of if resigned to tell the tale.

"Well if you insist my lady, the thing is that there are so many rumours surrounding the house and its grounds most of it are just stories and superstitions created by towns people but there are some well known facts in the town history that are the main cause of all these stories." said Mary.

"Like the suicide of Charlotte Wilber." said Eve. "Yes that and other such stories." continued Mary "For instance it is said that the estate had underground tunnels that were used to store slaves in the

old days and that the grounds are still haunted by the spirits of those tortured souls, so no wonder everyone likes to leave the estate before dark and there is also a very particular incident you see. A few years ago a couple of kids broke into the north tower of the house as a prank and one kid went all the way to the top of the tower and other kids locked the doors he kept screaming but the kids left him there however a little while afterwards they heard his screaming when the other kids went up to look for him there was no one to be seen the child was declared to be missing, for five years the whole town searched for the kid but nothing was found at last the police declared the young boy dead and with time people started to believe that the ghost of Charlotte Wilber had took the child's soul as a punishment for breaking in the house."

The table had gone completely silent as a chill welled down their spine then Rossi asked while mustering up as much courage as she could. "So they didn't find the boy and his body till this day what do you think would have happened to the boy, I mean ghosts are not real so there has to be a logical explanation for it."

"Rossi is right." said Christine regaining her courage after hearing this chilling tale. "Well we don't know, no one does it could that the child never came to the house and they just made an excuse rather than telling what had really happened." said Mary trying to subtle the tension in the room as the four girls were now deep in thought exchanging nervous glances with each other.

They had been so fully consumed in the tale of the lost boy that they did not notice as Mr. Krum came in the room and said "Good God Mary!" at this all of them jumped out of their skin and looked at the man now holding a bottle of wine in his hand.

He had startled them by coming unannounced. "You have frightened these young ladies with the cock and bull stories of the town, they all look as pale as a ghost." said Mr. Krum. "Not as much as you did by sneaking up on us." Said Christine and they all laughed.

"Well I apologize for that here allow me to cheer you up." said the man apologetically while pouring the wine in the glass and handing them one each. "But I must say you ladies need not worry yourselves about anything. These myths are natural to occur around an empty countryside mansion and as for the missing kid whose to say that the kids weren't lying about him ever coming here."

At this Jasmine protested "But the police must have questioned those kids. Did they say anything about why they were here and if any of them had a grudge against the boy."

"The police did all they could yet we never found out what really happened, it was quite tragic. The whole town talked about nothing else the whole year but you all need not bother yourselves, I don't want you all having nightmares." replied Mr. Krum.

"We are not kids Mr. Krum. It would take more than a few stories to scare us." said Rossi with a smile. "Of course, it would but I am an old man, it is a habit to be worried about young people such as yourselves. I have a daughter a few years younger than our Eve here." said Mr. Krum now lost in thought of his daughter a sense of pride and love on his face.

"Really you should bring her to the mansion and your wife its been ages since I last saw your family." said Eve grateful that the conversation had taken a cheerful turn. They talked through the desert while Mr. Krum entertained them by telling embarrassing stories of Evangeline's childhood. After dinner, the girls went up to their rooms as Mary bid them goodnight and departed for home.

