

Hunted

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last moments on earth must have been like. "Maybe we should all do something for the family?" Devyn suggested somberly. "I mean...they weren't that well off. Maybe we could take up a collection to help with...you know, expenses." "That's a good idea," Johnna agreed. "We can have a car wash or a bake sale or something." "I'll call the girls and see what we can put together the fastest," Devyn offered. *The girls* were the Fells Pointe High Spirit Squad and they could throw together a fundraiser faster than most people could say Fells Pointe High Spirit Squad. They were quick, they were efficient, and they were very good at raising money for the purpose at hand. It was actually quite impressive, if not slightly frightening, the way those girls could get people to hand over their hard earned cash. "Whatever you guys come up with, we'll get the team in on it," Finn stated. "And I'll stop by...her...family's house and see if we can do anything for them. Mr. Miller has his feed store business downtown. Maybe he could use some help there for a few days. It'd give him one less thing to think about." Lanie again glanced around the table at her friends, feeling a sudden sense of pride washing over her. She had no idea they could be so thoughtful and compassionate. "I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Miller will appreciate anything you can do to help. But, you don't have to be in too big of a hurry. Stacy was...the body has to be sent for an autopsy down state, so it'll be a couple of weeks, maybe more, before the family can have...it...for burial." She wasn't sure how to refer to...what was left of her friend. Somehow, calling...what was left...by name seemed wrong. It wasn't Stacy. Not anymore. Stacy was gone. At least, not thinking of the body in the woods as her friend made it a little easier, a little less personal. "Well, a couple of weeks is more than enough time for us to scrape together something to help the family," Devyn stated, pulling her phone from her purse and pecking out a text at warp speed. "I'll have the girls all meet at the field this afternoon. Some of us were going to practice our routines today, anyway." "I'll be there if my granny will let me," Johnna spoke up, depressed. "No promises, though." "She'll let you come if you tell her that it's for Stacy," Devyn stated. "I'll pick you guys up and give you a ride there and back," Finn offered seriously. "They can't have a problem if we travel in a pack." "Lanie? Will you be coming?" Devyn asked, giving Lanie a sympathetic look. Lanie shrugged. "I'm not sure. It depends. I-I may go back to the Miller's house. I'll let you know after while." Brady nudged her with his elbow. "Call me if you decide to come. I'll give you a ride. I don't think you're in much of a condition to be driving around." Lanie nodded, though she disagreed with Brady's assessment of her mental state. She wasn't the one he should be worried about. Stacy was her friend, but she was Mrs. Miller's *daughter*. Any concern should be saved that poor, haunted woman with the tormented eyes. "I still can't believe something like this happened in Fells Pointe. It's too...awful!" Johnna whispered, shivering. "Things like this just don't happen here!" Lanie had always thought that, too. In fact, everyone who called the town home thought that. Bad things just didn't happen in Fells Pointe. That was part of the charm of the place. It was a safe, quiet, well-kept hamlet filled with hard working people who took pride in keeping the town as secure and livable as possible. It was the sort of town with neat, tree lined streets, tidy sidewalks, tidy homes sitting on tidy lawns, and a tidy town square with a bubbling fountain in the center. It was the sort of town that had Fourth of July parades in the summer and tree lighting ceremonies at Christmas time, the sort of town where no one remembered to lock their doors and neighbors stood outside on Sunday mornings talking to one another over the fence post. Fells Pointe had a long and prosperous history behind it and that history was still visible in the historic homes and the colorful storefronts that lined Main Street, as well as in the collection of four historic churches that made up what was affectionately called Church Circle, which was a roundabout at the very end of Main Street where the four churches sat on their tree scattered lawns. Those church bells sounded out every Sunday at noon sharp, reminding the God-fearing people that they had been blessed and should be thankful for the Eden they were being allowed to live in. The townsfolk truly believed they had, indeed, been given their own Eden, which had not yet been tainted by the ills the rest of the world had been forced to suffer. Life was good, things were grooved and comfortable, and crimes were a rarity. Most of the calls to the Sheriff's Office boiled down to neighbors squabbling over a dog that was barking too loudly, or old Mr. Krueger threatening someone who cut across his yard on their way to the Jiffy Market. And even the most heinous offense was usually in the realm of a kid shoplifting from Mr. Wallace's Newsstand or someone

getting caught in the speed trap out on Old Chapel Road. Truly awful things did not happen in Fells Pointe. Lives were not snuffed out before their time. If someone died in Fells Pointe, it was not by the hand of another. God brought life into the town and only God took it away. Lanie had lived in Fells Pointe for every day of her nearly eighteen years and never once during those years had she given a thought to one of her friends dying so brutally. Sam Bancroft, the Sheriff of Fells Pointe and also Lanie's father, had always made it his personal mission to keep the streets as clean and safe and livable as they always had been. Things were so steadfast and settled that the Sheriff's Office had only two cells and one holding cell, which was mostly taken up by the people who got a little too tipsy at The Pub or Stoney's Bar on Friday nights. Sam just let them sleep it off and then sent them on their way home. Sam Bancroft had taken it personally when Stacy Miller had been found in Borden Park, lying next to one of the swing sets with her throat slashed, Lanie had heard. Her father wasn't saying much yet, but someone had committed a monstrous crime in his town. Someone had killed a young girl, an innocent child, and with her life had gone the feeling of security that everyone in Fells Pointe cherished. Lanie had been a witness to the look on Sheriff Bancroft's face when he'd gotten the call. That look had been...chilling. It was at that moment she realized that she would not want to be the person who had tainted Sam Bancroft's town by spilling the blood of an innocent girl. Lanie brought herself out of her thoughts and glanced around The Pub, which was the oldest bar in town and served the best chili cheese fries in the state. Usually, the atmosphere in the place was lively and easy, with music and laughter spilling out onto the sidewalk, but not today. Today, the air was oppressive and the people gathered at the tables and booths and at the gleaming wooden bar were all talking in hushed tones and casting wary glances at their neighbors. Today, there was no music flowing from the old fashioned juke box, no pool balls cracking against one another, no waitresses flirting with the football players. It wasn't fair. That one horrible act had already changed things for everyone. It had only been a few hours and people were already suspicious of one another, they were whispering behind their hands and glancing around as if they thought they could spot the person responsible sitting at the table across the way. People had never regarded their friends and neighbors with anything less than light hearted cordiality and fondness. But, it was all...different now. And a little piece of Lanie feared that it might never go back to the way it used to be. Lanie hoped her dad found the person responsible and she hoped he threw them *under* the jailhouse. Not just for what they'd done to Stacy Miller, but for what they'd done to everyone else along with her. "Hey! Who's that!" Johnna's voice sounded out just as her elbow landed in Lanie's ribs. Lanie let out a loud *oof!* and brought her gaze up to Johnna, who was looking straight ahead, across the bar. Glancing in that direction, and trying to ignore the fact that she might now have a fractured rib and a punctured lung, it took Lanie a second to spot the person Johnna was referring to. And when she did, she heard herself let out a little gasp of surprise. The person, a young man, was sitting at a small table in the far corner of the bar, away from the pool tables and the bustle of the main floor. The table was nearly hidden in the shadows and if Lanie hadn't had her attention brought in that direction, she wouldn't have seen him at all. And that would have been a shame because the young man actually took her breath away. Even from across the room and through the dim light Lanie could see just how...staggeringly handsome he was. He was the most...*staggeringly handsome*...person Lanie had ever seen! His features were a study in rugged perfection. His jaw was square, his chin strong and proud, his nose straight, but not perfectly so. His mouth was full and hard, his cheekbones were high, his forehead broad. He had a headful of unruly wheat colored hair that was just mussed enough to look appealing, and thick, wheat colored brows that sat low over his eyes, giving him a rather somber, brooding sort of look. He had matching wheat colored stubble covering his chin and jaw, and there was something about his look that she couldn't put her finger on, but which gave him a very outdoorsy, masculine, capable sort of air. Lanie couldn't see what color his almond shaped eyes were from that distance, but she could see that he was on the pale side, though still healthy looking, which sort of spoke against that rugged, hardy, outdoorsy vibe. He wasn't exactly dressed like someone who spent a lot of time in the outdoors hiking or camping, either. On the contrary, his clothes would imply that he was very...urban and had probably never even seen a tree up close before. He was wearing dark jeans,

tall combat boots that seemed to be only half laced up, a dark red shirt, and over that a dark brown, obviously well-worn leather coat that, even from a sitting position, Lanie could see must at least hang down past his knees. Everything added together, the young man—who looked to be in his early twenties—struck a very handsome picture. *Staggeringly handsome!* Yet, once Lanie managed to get over the initial shock of just how good looking the young man was, she began to notice other things about him, things that gave her the impression that he perhaps wasn't exactly...well off. His mussed hair was maybe a bit too long. His wheat colored stubbled maybe a bit too untrimmed. His red shirt appeared slightly rumpled, his leather coat maybe a bit too well-worn. He sat slightly slumped in his chair, the only thing on his table a white coffee cup and saucer. He was gazing alertly around, his eyes scanning the people coming and going from the bar, but there was a weariness about him that was unmistakable, that made Lanie think he was on the brink of falling asleep right there in his chair. "Who is that!" Johnna repeated, again elbowing Lanie in the ribs and causing her to let out another pained *oof!* "He's cute!" Devyn and the boys all turned to glance at the young man half hidden in the shadows, the boys shrugging their shoulders and quickly turning back to the plate of chili cheese fries. "Oooh! He *is* cute!" Devyn agreed heartily, looking the young man up and down. "And he's certainly not from town. He's probably passing through on his way to Richmond or someplace." Lanie agreed. He certainly wasn't from town. And they did get their fair share of people stopping by to refuel before heading onto bigger places like Richmond or Virginia Beach. "Humph," Brady stated, reaching for another fry. "He's not that cute. And he looks like a bum." Brady had a thing for Devyn, which was why he was so opposed to her finding another man attractive. Devyn narrowed her eyes at the young man, a slightly unpleasant expression wafting across her features. "He is a little...*nebbish*," she said, turning her attention back to the table. "Moving on." Lanie tried not to roll her eyes. Devyn Barnes was about as white bred Southern Baptist as a girl could get, yet she seemed to think she was Jewish and never missed an opportunity to toss out a Yiddish phrase or two. Lanie had known Devyn her entire life and had learned to translate; therefore she knew *nebbish* meant a person who was less than, a loser, in essence. "You're not Jewish, Devyn," Finn reminded the girl, appearing vastly more interested in the chili cheese fries than the young man at the table in the corner. Johnna let out a sigh and brought her own gaze back to the table. "It's too bad. He's really, *really* cute." Lanie, still regarding the young man, saw him pick up his coffee cup and drain the last swallow, then place the cup back onto the saucer and run his hands through his mussed hair. A waitress came out of the door that led to the kitchen and walked by his table, carrying a plate heaped with chili cheese fries and his eyes went to the plate, freezing there for a second before dropping back down to his obviously empty coffee cup. A shard of conscience pierced Lanie and she was suddenly glad she hadn't eaten any of the chili cheese fries. As one of the waitresses happen to pass by, Lanie shot out a hand and grabbed hold of her arm, stopping her short and nearly causing her to slosh the glass of soda she was carrying all over the both of them. "Crap! If you want something you could just *ask* for it!" the buxom girl snapped, shooting Lanie a hateful glare. "Uh, sorry," Lanie said off handedly, keeping her gaze on the young man, who was now sitting with his head in his hands. "I want to order some food for that table over there." She pointed at the young man and the waitress followed her finger, her brows shooting upwards in surprise. "He looks like he could use it," the waitress said, looking back to Lanie. "What do you want to give him?" "Uh, a cheeseburger with the works, the biggest plate of chili fries you have, and whatever soda he wants to drink," she answered, picking her purse up from beside her and pulling out her wallet. She removed a few bills and handed them to the waitress. "This should cover it." "Do you want me to tell him it's from you?" the girl asked, stuffing the bills into her apron pocket. "No," she answered, thinking that the young man might be embarrassed if he knew the person who had bought his meal was sitting right across the room, watching him eat it. "Well, this is very nice of you. I'm sure he'll appreciate it," the waitress stated, hurrying off to deliver the soda to a booth before going to place the order for the young man's food. Lanie put her wallet back into her bag and then looked back to her friends, who were all watching her with raised eyebrows. "What?" she demanded, suddenly feeling defensive. "He looks hungry." Brady gave her a suspicious glare. "You've never cared who looked hungry before. Why do you care now?" "I don't

know," she shrugged, casting the young man a quick glance and feeling her stomach clench. Mercy, he really was the most ruggedly handsome person she had ever laid eyes on! Even sitting there half asleep he looked so good that it almost hurt her! "She cares because he's hot!" Johnna pointed out with a huge smile. "She wouldn't even think about buying him food if he didn't look...like that!" Lanie declined to comment on the truth or falsehood of that accusation and instead took a sip of her soda, which *she* could do with a clear conscience, unlike the rest of the people at the table. "So, back to the subject at hand," Finn began, giving his head a disappointed shake, "I'll talk to the team this evening and see who's up for helping out at Mr. Miller's feed store." Lanie couldn't exactly remember if they'd already settled that matter or not, so she just nodded and kept quiet. Seeing the staggeringly handsome young man in the corner had thrown off her train of thought completely, which actually made her think a little bit less of herself. "Right. And Lanie, you can call me if you decide to come to the field," Brady stated. "We already decided that," Johnna pointed out, flipping her long black hair over her shoulder. "Oh. Well, then," Brady huffed, shoving another fry into his mouth. "Do you guys think we should set up a memorial for Stacy in the park? Where she was...you know?" Devyn wondered seriously. "That way everyone around town can...say goodbye without having to bother her family." "That's a good idea, Dev," Finn told the girl with a smile. "I'll have my mom call Mayor Wylie to make sure it's alright." Finn's mother, Mary Gellar, was the head of the Town Council, thereby was one of the privileged few who had the Mayor's personal number, which was seen as a fairly big deal around Fells Pointe. "Alright, well, if he says it's okay then we'll need some poster board and a few candles to start with," Devyn began and Lanie turned her attention back to the young man sitting in the corner. She didn't want to be involved in the planning of the memorial for her friend. She just...couldn't. It had been hard enough going to visit her family. She felt as if that was all she could handle for one morning. While the others discussed flowers and where to find the right kind of candles, Lanie let her gaze settle on the young man, who honestly was *staggeringly handsome*! His unkempt mop of wheat colored hair, his stubble covered chin, the strong planes and angles of his face, the whole rugged, masculine air he had about him. He was...well, staggeringly handsome, which she knew was repetitive, but she couldn't think of another way to describe him. Just looking at him actually made her *ache*! As she was watching him practically nodding off in his seat, the waitress she'd waylaid approached the table with a tray of food, setting the plates down in front of the young man, which seemed to startle him into wakefulness. He glanced down at the food, his eyes growing wide as he opened his mouth to tell the waitress he hadn't ordered it, but she held up a hand to stop him. After a few brief words from the woman, the young man let his gaze slide around the restaurant and though Lanie tried to drop her eyes to the table, she couldn't quite manage it. It was hard to look away from someone who was that...*staggering*! The young man's gaze suddenly landed on Lanie, locking with hers, and she felt her entire body go rigid and her heart leap up into her throat and for a split second, she found that she couldn't remember how to breathe. But, then the young man's gaze moved on and Lanie felt her taut muscles relax and her heart fall back into its rightful place. She instantly felt silly for getting all...*clenched* just because someone had made eye contact with her, but that still wasn't enough to force her to look away from him. He really was beautiful. Yes, beautiful. Ruggedly beautiful, if that was even possible. The young man's gaze returned to the waitress and then to the food in front of him and without hesitation, he picked up the burger and took a huge bite. Seeing that made Lanie feel...better. Not wanting to sit and stare at a perfect stranger while he ate, Lanie grabbed her purse and got to her feet. "I'm going to head home, guys," she said, willfully not glancing back at the young man. "Do you need a ride?" Brady asked her, his brows lowered. "You probably shouldn't be walking around alone right now." Lanie smiled at Brady, the sight of his handsome face and large blue eyes giving her a surge of warmth. He was a running back for the football team and even though he was one of the most popular boys at school, he was the nicest person that Lanie knew. He was sweet beyond words and would give a person the shirt off his back if they really needed it, which Lanie thought was a rare thing in an eighteen year old boy. "I'll be fine," she told Brady. "It's only a fifteen minute walk and I doubt that whoever...did this...is out there trolling the streets right now." Stacy had only just been found a few hours before, so whoever did it would have to be crazy to be out skulking around looking for

another victim, especially with everyone in town so on edge and wary. But, then again, they probably were crazy. They'd killed a girl and left her body right out in the open, hadn't they? "Well, text me when you make it home," Devyn told her nervously. "I want to know that you made it alright, *fershtay?*" "Yes, Devyn, I understand. I will text you as soon as I get home," Lanie promised and turned to head for the door. "Devyn, you *are not* Jewish," Lanie heard Finn say as she walked away from the table, and she couldn't help but smile a little.

CHAPTER TWO

Stepping outside into the cool, crisp October afternoon, Lanie pulled in a long breath and let it out again, tasting the change of the seasons, the dying grass, the just turning leaves, the smoke from fireplaces. The summer had been the hottest one on record and she was glad it was over. She needed to be able to breathe in air that wasn't thick with humidity or go for a walk without feeling like she was being burned alive. She'd thought this Fall would be one of the best of her life, the last Fall before the end of school, the last Fall she'd get to spend with her friends before everyone graduated and went their separate ways. But, it wasn't turning out like that. Finally finding herself alone, Lanie allowed her shoulders to droop and her insides to unknot. She hadn't been alone since last night, when her dad had gotten that phone call. Her Aunt Gretchen had come over to stay with her and Aunt Gretchen was very...in touch with her feelings. And very concerned about everyone else's, whether they needed her to be concerned or not. "How does that make you feel, sweetie?" was her aunt's favorite question. As much as Lanie tried not to let her aunt's touchy-feely personality, as well as the woman's need to talk every single thing to death, bother her...it did. She wasn't proud of it, but...Aunt Gretchen got on her nerves. However, despite her protests against it, Aunt Gretchen had stayed all night with her while her dad was out, and then she'd gone to see Mrs. Miller that morning and had stayed there for a couple of hours before meeting her friends at The Pub. She hadn't had a moment alone just to think and...absorb things. Which was why she wanted to walk home instead of accepting a ride from Brady. Lanie pointed herself away from The Pub and started down the tidy brick sidewalk that ran along Broad Street, passing by all the colorfully painted storefronts that she'd stopped seeing long ago, and letting her thoughts run loose. They didn't run too far, though. They stopped running at the night before, when she'd found out that Stacy had been found in the park, murdered. She still couldn't seem to come to grips with it. She'd just been with Stacy yesterday evening. They'd met at Green Sleeves Ice Cream Parlor and had talked about the theme for their float for the Harvest Festival and Homecoming Parade. Stacy had come up with the idea for a Mardi Gras theme. They'd gone over all the ways they could pull it off so that it would look better than the cheesy Western theme from last year. They'd had fun, eating Sundaes and talking about where to find Mardi Gras masks for everyone on the Spirit Squad and then they'd said goodbye and went their separate ways. Just like that. She'd said goodbye to Stacy just as if it was a normal day, just as if she'd see the girl again in a few hours. If only she'd known...if only she'd had an inkling that something was going to go wrong for Stacy. She almost felt as if she should have known, as if she should have somehow sensed that Stacy was in trouble and should have warned her. But, she hadn't known. She'd just waved goodbye and walked away. For some reason, that was stuck on a continuous loop in her mind. Waving goodbye and watching Stacy walk away down the sidewalk, looking all happy and excited. That was the thing that was...haunting her. That happy expression on Stacy's face. The girl had no idea what was coming. Lanie found that, deep down, she was glad that...what was left...of her friend had to be sent away for a while. She didn't think she could get through a funeral right now. Maybe in a few weeks it would be easier, but for now, she didn't think she could stand looking at Stacy lying in a coffin and remembering how excited and bright she'd been...before. Lanie passed by the little parking area at the end of Broad Street and glanced in that direction, her gaze instantly getting drawn to what was the biggest car she'd ever seen in her life. She had no idea what make or model it was, but it was enormous! A four door monstrosity that could have held at least half a dozen people, it looked like. It was a faded yellow color, with a bit of rust in a few places and a crack along the back windshield. The word jalopy came to mind as she looked at it. The enormous, faded yellow car was parked right next to the sidewalk and just passing by, Lanie could see into the back of it. There was a pillow and a crumpled up blanket lying on the backseat and a large black duffle bag lying in the floorboard. Someone was sleeping in their car, that much

was obvious. And then it dawned on her that the staggeringly handsome man from The Pub was most likely the one sleeping in this car. She'd never seen it before and there were no other unfamiliar faces around, so it must be him. The thought of that stunningly good looking young man sleeping in the backseat of a jalopy sent a sharp pain through her. How unfair the world was. People were being forced to sleep in their car and rely on the kindness of strangers for their food. Other people were now being sent away from their family so they could be dissected and studied when they should have been having lunch with their friends instead. Suddenly having a hard time keeping her eyes from filling with tears, Lanie picked up the pace and moved along Broad Street until she reached the intersection and then turned the corner onto Vine Street. She crossed her arms over herself and huddled into her oversized cardigan to chase the sudden chill away, though the cold seemed to be coming from inside her rather than from the environment surrounding her. Walking up Vine Street, past the Second Time Around Consignment Shop and the Elite Lady Day Spa, she kept on until she crossed over onto Cherry Street, which was the start of the residential area. Walking along beneath the canopy of large oak trees that were just tinged with oranges and yellows, she passed by all the stately, well-kept homes that lined the street, so used to them she didn't even see them anymore, but she was still aware of them looming there, the same as they had for centuries. She made it to the four-way stop at the end of Cherry Street and then took a left onto Rosetree Lane, which was where her house was located. The third house from the stop sign belonged to Sheriff Bancroft and in Lanie's opinion, it was the prettiest house on the street. It was a two story clapboard painted bright white with forest green shutters, sitting on a neat lawn surrounded by a white picket fence. Aunt Gretchen had planted colorful fall mums and pansies all around the house and along the front walk and since it was October, her dad had set a few bales of hay, a pile of bright orange pumpkins, and a fancily dressed straw scarecrow by the front steps. It was a lovely old home place and usually walking up the street toward it gave Lanie a sense of homecoming and joy. Not today, though. Today, there was no joy to be found, no warmth in her heart at the familiar sight of her family's home. Today, there was only a need to get inside, get up to her room, lie down on her bed and...try to process things. Turning in at the gate of the white picket fence, Lanie hurried up the cobblestone walkway, past the bunches of russet and gold mums planted there, past the fancily dressed straw scarecrow and pile of pumpkins, and up the front steps and across the wide front porch that was filled with comfortable rocking chairs and several dozen potted mums. Aunt Gretchen clearly had a thing for mums. Lanie turned the doorknob, fully expecting the door to open, but the knob wouldn't turn. Gretchen must have locked the door when she left. That knowledge stung Lanie. She'd never come home to a locked door before. Not once. Feeling oddly rattled, she dug her key from her purse and let herself inside, firmly shutting the door and then leaning against it and letting out a hard breath. The house was silent around her and for a long minute, Lanie stood, just listening to the nothingness pressing on her ears. The silence was so much better than someone asking her if she was okay every five minutes. She wished everyone would stop worrying about her and start worrying about Stacy's family. *She* would be fine. Mr. and Mrs. Miller were the ones who needed to be worried about. Lanie hung her purse over the coat tree by the front door and turned to go toward the staircase, but caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror hanging on the wall of the foyer. She paused for a second, the way she always did when she accidentally glanced at her reflection. She wasn't one of those girls who pretended they were hideously ugly just to have something to whine about. In fact, she didn't talk about it at all. She was pretty and she knew it, so there was no reason to discuss it. Her mother had been Italian American, her father was Romanian American with just a soupçon of Bulgarian thrown in for good measure, and the child those two people had created was quite a striking looking person. She had skin that was slightly olive toned, giving her a healthy, sun kissed glow, even in the winter when everyone else was as white as snow. Her hair was a deep brown, so deep and dark it was almost black, and it hung down her back in a wavy, sometimes stubbornly unmanageable, curtain. She had fine, sharp features, high cheekbones, high forehead, sharp chin and a bow shaped mouth. Her eyes were large, almost too large for her small face it seemed, and were fringed by thick lashes and framed by dark brows. The color of her eyes was quite striking. They were a clear, vibrant blue, the blue of the Caribbean Sea her dad

always said. Add in her slight frame, some not so slight curves in all the right places, and she was fairly well put together. She might not be runway model material, but she was never lacking a date when she wanted one. That thought brought her around to her date with Chase that night. She was supposed to go out with him to catch a movie or something, but it didn't really seem like an appropriate thing to do under the circumstances. She had to cancel, and she felt bad about it. Chase Wylie, Mayor Wylie's son, had been hounding her to go out with him for the past year and for some reason she couldn't even explain to herself, she had finally relented and agreed to a date. Canceling might hurt Chase's feelings, but she just couldn't go and sit through a movie or go to The Pub for a plate of fries and think about having a good time after...what had happened. Well, she'd either call him or tell him at the field, if she decided to go out there and watch practice. They could always go out next weekend, if things were better. Lanie turned away from the mirror and moved through the bright entryway over to the staircase, her next thought going to the young man from The Pub. She hoped he'd eaten what she'd bought for him. He really looked like he could use it, the poor guy. The poor, staggeringly handsome, ruggedly beautiful guy. Whew! That boy was one hot potato! His rugged features, his stubble covered jaw, his head full of mussed hair, his leather coat and combat boots...he was absolutely gorgeous! And what an intriguing and...lonesome figure he made, sitting in the shadowy corner all by himself, looking all worn and weary. Remembering him sitting there with nothing but a coffee cup in front of him, did something very strange to her insides, something that made her want to stop thinking about him. Whatever was happening to him, she hoped it got better. It seemed that someone that good looking shouldn't be living so poorly. It was hard to accept a beautiful person sleeping in his car or having to rely on the kindness of strangers just to eat. Beautiful people were typically The Haves, but that poor guy had somehow wound up getting shuffled over into The Have-Nots. It seemed *everything* in the world was getting all turned upside down. Lanie went down to the kitchen to grab a bottle of water and found Aunt Gretchen there, buzzing around like a humming bird trapped in a sack. She was putting groceries away in the cabinets and stuffing things into the fridge, while simultaneously checking on something in the oven and whisking a pot on the stove and making enough racket to alert the neighbors. How had she not even known the woman was in the house! Her Aunt Gretchen was her mother's sister and the spitting image of Angelina. She had long black hair, olive skin, a lovely face with fine features and large brown eyes. There were times when looking at Gretchen made Lanie's heart ache and her eyes fill with tears. Seeing that mirror image of her mother made it very hard to come to terms with the fact that her mother was gone, even though it had been nearly three years. "Hey, Lanie. How ya' doing?" Gretchen asked as Lanie stopped to survey the goings on. Lanie tried not to grimace at her aunt's sympathetic, sorrowful tone. *She* didn't need sympathy! "I'm alright," she answered, walking across the bright yellow kitchen and sitting down at the center island, which was currently heaped with so many plastic grocery bags the Butcher Block top was barely visible. "What are you doing?" she questioned, keeping her tone light. "I'm bringing you some groceries, heating up a lasagna, and making you some hot cocoa," Gretchen answered, flitting back to the stove and madly whisking the pot there. "I figured you could use some comfort food right now." "You...really don't have to do this. I'm fine," she assured her aunt, who *really* did not need to be doing this. "I don't need you to make food for me. You should take all this stuff to Mr. and Mrs. Miller." Gretchen shot her a wide eyed, mournful look. "You do need this, honey. And I've already taken the family some food, along with nearly every other person in town. They're kitchen is so full it looks like a five pound bag filled with ten pounds of stuff, so you shouldn't be worrying about them. You should be worrying about *you* right now." "But, I'm *fine*," Lanie asserted, meaning it. *She* was not the one who'd had her throat slashed by a maniac! *She* was not the one who'd lost her daughter. *She* was absolutely fine! "Lanie, you might think you're fine, but you really aren't. You just aren't letting yourself cope with what happened to your friend," Gretchen stated knowingly, shooting her another mournful look, this one was laced with a touch of pity. "It'll hit you soon and then you'll realize that you *do* need people here for you." Lanie felt like screaming. Clearly, no one was ever going to believe that she was doing fine, so why keep saying it? "Have you heard from Dad?" she asked, trying to shift the subject away from herself. "I have. He's out there...dealing with things,

but he said he'd try to be home at a decent hour," Gretchen answered, going back to stuffing things in the cabinets. "I'll stay here with you until he gets home." Again, Lanie tried not to flinch. She loved her Aunt Gretchen, but she really was not in the mood for company. Usually, it was only her and her dad around the house. Even though Gretchen lived three streets over, she was busy with her own life and usually only came over on Sundays to have family dinner. Which was how Lanie liked it. She liked the peace and the quiet, the time to think and sort out the thoughts in her head, the time to just...be. She was the Sheriff's daughter, after all, and when she was with her friends or out having a coffee or sitting in The Pub scarfing chili cheese fries, she always had eyes on her, people were always watching her or wanting to talk to her about some thing or other that they were having trouble with—the neighbor's yipping dog, the stop sign on Fifth Street that was hidden by the shrubs that Mr. Lansbury refused to trim—so that she could then run the complaint to her dad. But, at home she didn't have to worry about that. Lanie pulled in a breath and cast a glance at Gretchen, who was back at the stove whisking madly. She didn't want to feel annoyed with her aunt. The woman was only trying to help. Everyone was only trying to help. And this would soon pass. Things would go back to normal, life would go back to normal, and she wouldn't have her aunt hovering around, looking at her with those sorrowful, sympathetic eyes. But, that would mean that Stacy would be laid to rest and...forgotten. Which didn't exactly sit well with her, either. "So, do you have any plans for this evening, Lanie?" Gretchen asked, finishing up putting the groceries away and going back to check the oven. Shrugging, Lanie made a non-committal sound in her throat. "I dunno. I had a date, but I have to cancel that. I thought about watching practice, but I don't know if I'll go or not." Gretchen glanced over her shoulder, her brow furrowed in thought. "I think you should go out. I mean, sitting around the house isn't good for you. You need to spend time with people who'll support you." Grrr! *She was fine!* She did not need support! "Maybe I'll go to the field for a while," Lanie told her aunt. She would *definitely* go if Aunt Gretchen intended on staying for very long. "I'll be here when you get back," Gretchen smiled at her. "We can watch some TV and have some popcorn and talk about things." Yep. She was going to watch football practice. "I want you to eat before you go, though. You don't want to deny yourself food. You're so thin already it wouldn't take much to make you sick," Gretchen warned and Lanie gritted her teeth to keep from making a sound. *Grrr!* She was not denying herself food! She'd eaten two pancakes and some fruit for breakfast! How was that denying herself food! "Do you need a ride over to the field?" Gretchen asked, opening the oven and pulling out a pan of bubbling lasagna. "I don't think you should be driving right now." *Grrr!* Brady had said the same thing to her! What was with everyone! *She was fine!* *She was not the one who was suffering!* And she was the exact same person she had been before her dad had gotten that phone call! She had not suddenly morphed into some weak and helpless little girl who needed everyone to do everything for her! "Brady said he'd give me a ride," she answered, surprised that her voice was steady and even. "That was nice of him," Gretchen smiled, her eyes twinkling. "That Brady is a cute boy! Has he asked you out yet?" "No." And he wouldn't. She and Brady Fletcher were just friends. End of story. "Eh, I'm sure he will. Maybe he's just working up to it," Gretchen offered, placing the pan of lasagna on the center island and bending over it to take a whiff. Lanie nodded, but said nothing on the issue. Again, she loved her aunt, but she did not want to discuss this sort of thing with her. She was perfectly capable of managing her own social life. "Why don't you pour us some sweet tea and I'll cut some slices of this bad boy," Gretchen beamed, straightening up and going for a knife. Lanie obeyed, going to the cabinet for a couple of glasses and pouring out some of her famous sweet tea from the pitcher in the fridge. She'd learned how to make it from her Granny and it was as sweet as nectar and smooth as silk and would put about ten pounds on a girl's thighs if she drank too much of it, but it was worth it. Once she had the glasses back on the center island, she pulled her phone from her back pocket and knocked out a text to Brady to tell him to pick her up on his way to the field. He almost immediately texted her back, saying he'd be there at 4:30. Well, what the text actually said was, *I'll b thr arund fur thrity*, but she could decipher it. Poor Brady. He was so technologically inept that it was scary. Lanie sat with Gretchen and ate a plate of lasagna while listening to Gretchen jabber away about how it was perfectly normal to be emotionally overwrought after losing a close friend, that it was just a part of the stages of grief. Lanie just

smiled and nodded and watched the time, waiting for Brady so that she could escape and trying very, very hard not to let her annoyance show on her face. She did not need a talk about the stages of grief. Firstly, she was not emotionally overwrought. She was perfectly clear headed and calm. She was sad and upset, yes, but she was not overwrought. Secondly, she knew all too well about the stages of grief. She'd already lived through losing her mother to a sudden heart attack, so she knew all about sorrow and being distraught. This was not that sort of situation. She was absolutely fine, even though no one wanted to believe her. She and Stacy were friends, but they didn't exactly have sleep overs and do each other's hair. She liked Stacy Miller, but it wasn't like when she'd lost her mother. This was hard, but she knew she would get through it with more ease than when her mother had passed away. After finishing the lasagna that was foisted upon her, Lanie helped clean up the kitchen and then discreetly slipped out of the house to wait for Brady on the front porch, feeling a sense of relief as she closed the door behind her and dropped into one of the rocking chairs. Maybe she shouldn't cancel her date with Chase after all. Going out with him would keep her out of the house for a while longer and maybe by the time the date was over, Aunt Gretchen would be gone. She actually thought about that for a minute, but that would mean she'd have to be with Chase, who'd probably want to talk about...things, which was exactly what she *did not* want. Despite what her aunt thought, she didn't want to have people around to support her. She really just wanted to be left alone for a while. She needed some space and some time to breathe. Outside, the afternoon was quiet and peaceful. The world was nodding beneath the pale blue sky, being soothed off to sleep by the soft wind that was whispering through the tree tops and the plaintive sound of a few lonesome birds who had not yet decided to join their friends in a far off land of sunshine and endless waters. It almost felt strange that everything seemed...the same. It almost seemed as though things should be different, darker. There should be storm clouds hovering low overhead and thunder should be booming over the tree tops. Nothing should be bright or cheerful or pleasant. But, she'd felt this way before, when her mom had passed away. It had seemed as if all the world should look as dark as she felt. But, that feeling had passed. Lanie knew it would pass this time, too. Once everything had been settled and she'd gotten to say goodbye to her friend, that feeling would fade. Trying to push the dark thoughts away for a few minutes, Lanie tried to focus on the trees that were barely tinged with color and the powdery blue sky that was swept with wisps of lacy clouds, but her mind began to drift away from those things and toward a ruggedly beautiful face and a mop of perfectly messy wheat colored hair, which instantly filled her with a sense of guilt. Her friend was...gone...and she was daydreaming of a cute guy? She felt as if she was betraying Stacy somehow, though she tried to push that thought away, too. She knew she really wasn't being disloyal to her friend by thinking about something else. Stacy wouldn't want her to obsess over what had happened and let it drag her down into despair. She wouldn't want Stacy to do that if things were reversed. She'd want Stacy to move on and...live. Lanie felt a sudden surge of anger rise up inside her. She couldn't believe that someone would do something like that to Stacy Miller! Stacy was the sweetest, most innocent girl Lanie knew. She still slept with her stuffed animals, for pity's sake! She'd never had a boyfriend, she'd never even been kissed! She blushed when someone said a curse word, she always said please and thank you. There was no good reason for someone to want to...do that...to Stacy Miller! She didn't have an enemy in the world. Not one. Which was unusual for a girl who lived in a small town and who also happened to look like Stacy Miller. Stacy was...had been...beautiful. Golden hair, pink cheeks, large hazel eyes, and the svelte figure of a cheerleader. Yet, she had not one adversary. She wasn't from the most wealthy family and she seemed to know better than to step on the toes of the girls who were higher up on the totem pole, the girls who dated the football players and the popular guys. Though, any of those boys would have dated Stacy if she'd only said yes to them. But, she didn't. She was beautiful, but also smart enough to know her place in the pecking order at Fells Pointe High. Lanie simply could not imagine who would want to hurt her or why. It would have made her feel slightly better to think that it was someone Stacy didn't know, a shadowy and faceless stranger that had swooped in from out of the darkness to do such an unspeakable thing to such an innocent girl, but she knew that wasn't all that likely. Other than a few people passing through on their way to someplace else,

there were no shadowy strangers in Fells Pointe. It *could* have been someone just driving through town that had spotted the girl and decided she would be their next...victim, so they'd seized the opportunity, had left her in the park, and then driven on their way. However, she was the daughter of the Sheriff and she knew the statistics. Nearly fifty percent of homicides involving females were committed by family members or other acquaintances. Odds were, Stacy was killed by someone she was at least familiar with. And that was the most bothersome thing of all. Someone who lived in Fells Pointe, someone who ate chili fries at The Pub, someone who walked through the Town Square and bought the morning paper from Mr. Wallace's Newsstand, had killed Stacy. And that person, that friend or that neighbor, was still walking around town as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER THREE

The sound of a car horn split the air and Lanie let out a shriek, jumping in her chair. Jerked out of her morbid thoughts, she whipped her gaze toward the piercing noise, feeling more annoyed than frightened, and finding Brady's black Honda pulling up into the driveway, with Brady waving to her out his window. Trying to force her heart out of her throat and back down into her chest, Lanie got out of her chair, put her bag over her shoulder, and headed off the porch. Once she was belted into her seat and they were on their way to the game field, Brady turned his kind blue eyes to Lanie, smiling at her. "I didn't think you'd feel like coming to watch practice today," he said to her. "I wasn't going to," she answered with a shrug, noting that Brady seemed to have slapped on a bit more cologne than was necessary. It was actually starting to choke her. Probably he had dabbed it on for Devyn, the poor girl. "Well, I'm glad you decided to come," he told her. "You shouldn't be sitting at home all depressed. It...it won't change anything." Lanie nodded, but didn't feel the surge of annoyance that she had when her aunt had said the same thing. It was just...different coming from Brady. "Are you okay?" he asked her, shooting her a quick glance that was filled with worry. "I mean *really*?" "I'm okay," she answered honestly. "You shouldn't worry about me. You should be worrying about Stacy's family." Brady lifted a broad shoulder. "I am worried about them, but I don't really know them. I didn't really know Stacy. But, I do know you. We're all worried about you because...well, you know." Lanie looked at the boy, whose blonde hair was falling about his face in a disarray of sandy curls, feeling confused. "Know what? What do you mean?" "I mean...well, your mom...you know, and then your grandma...and now your friend. It just seems like you've lost a lot of people and...we're all just worried about you," Brady told her, looking highly uncomfortable. Lanie considered his words for a moment. He was right. She'd lost her mother and her grandmother both in the past three years. But, as horrible as it had been to lose half her family in such a short time, it was part of living. Bodies were fallible. Bodies grew old and bodies failed for no reason. She'd come to terms with those losses. "I'm okay. Really," Lanie assured Brady. "You don't have to worry about me." "Eh, that's what friends are for, right?" Brady said to her. "Right," she agreed easily, smiling. "So, let us do our job. I know you'd do the same thing for one of us," Brady avowed. Lanie felt a sudden and unexpected stab of guilt pierce her. She'd been annoyed with Aunt Gretchen for doing her job, which was worrying about her niece, who'd lost two people already and had now lost a third in the most hideous way possible. She was an ungrateful snipe. There was a space of silence in the car as Brady navigated the streets through town and toward Fells Pointe High, but Lanie didn't mind. Silences with Brady Cooper weren't awkward at all, but were instead just...comfortable. Maybe because Brady was just...comfortable. "Lanie?" Brady suddenly spoke, turning a quick glance to her. "Yeah?" she said, not quite liking the look in his eyes. "Do you think someone in town killed...her?" came the question. Lanie pulled in a breath. "There's a big probability that it wasn't a total stranger who killed her," she stated. "It doesn't even make sense," Brady stated, shaking his head. "Who...who would do something like that? Someone that we *know*...it just doesn't make any sense." Lanie agreed. It didn't make any sense. A seventeen year old girl had her throat slashed and it was in all likelihood a friend or an acquaintance. It did not, nor would it ever, make sense. "Do you think your dad'll find them?" Brady questioned seriously. "He will," Lanie answered. She had absolutely no doubt that Sam Bancroft would find the person responsible. Brady was silent for another short space. "Do you think it'll only be Stacy?" Something slightly cold went through Lanie. "What do you mean?" "Do you think whoever it was...will stop? Do you think they only wanted Stacy?" Brady questioned. Lanie hadn't considered anything like

that. It was not a very comforting thought. "I-I...I don't know. I-I mean...nothing like this has ever happened before, so...I mean...I doubt it will happen again." Brady nodded, but said nothing and the conversation was dropped. Lanie was glad. Even considering the possibility that it would happen again was sickening. She did not want to talk about it. "You'll be careful for a while, right?" Brady asked her as they turned onto Fairview Drive, which was the street that led to Fells Pointe High and the game field beyond. "I know you like to walk into town for coffee or whatever, but...you'll be careful, right?" Lanie couldn't miss the nervous, worried tone lacing Brady's words. He really was worried that whoever had...done that...to Stacy might not stop at her. "I will. I promise," she assured him. The last thing she wanted for herself was to wind up like Stacy. It was such a strange thing to have to think about being careful walking around town. It had never been a second thought before. Fells Pointe was so safe, so removed from the trouble that the rest of the world was having, that it seemed like an affront, an abomination, to have it desecrated in such a heinous manner. Brady drove past the familiar brick building that housed Fells Pointe High and continued onward down the tree lined street for a ways before coming to the gravel parking lot belonging to the Harvey Fell Sports Field, named after the great, great, great...great?...grandson of the founder of Fells Pointe. Mr. Harvey Fell had donated the money to have the game field moved away from the school house and onto a location that was better suited than the small, barely useable field that had been used for decades. Brady wheeled his car into a space and Lanie noticed there were a lot more vehicles in the gravel lot than there usually were for a Saturday afternoon practice. There seemed to be twice as many cars filling the lot. "What's going on?" Brady questioned, throwing the car into park and climbing out. Lanie followed suit, getting out of the car and waiting for Brady to pull his enormous duffle bag full of gear from the trunk. They both headed across the lot and through the stand of trees that separated the game field from the street. Lanie felt her heart thumping hard in her chest. Her mind was racing, coming up with all sorts of scenarios as to why there would be so many people at the field. She tried not to think of anything bad because there were no police cars anywhere around, yet, but she couldn't help but dredge up a picture or two that caused her to feel sick. Brady, his duffle bag over his shoulder, put his hand on Lanie's back as they moved through the shadowy stand of oak trees. Brady was thinking the same things that Lanie was thinking. That something bad had happened at the field, maybe to one of their friends. Cautiously, they exited the tree line and stepped out onto the game field, both of them letting their gazes sweep around, both of them expecting the worst. However, there didn't seem to be anything...bad...going on, other than the stands on both sides of the field being filled with a lot of...parents? Yes, there were an *alarming* number of parents sitting in the stands, talking with one another and watching the team out on the field, goofing around. "What the hell?" Brady said, sounding dumbfounded. "It's just practice today, right? We...we don't have a game?" Lanie shook her head. "No. There's no game. I-I...guess they're all here because..." "Of what happened," Brady finished for her. "Oh. So, they're here to what? Keep an eye on us?" "Probably," Lanie answered as they walked down the field, past the concession stands and the rest room building and toward the center of the field. "So, they're just gonna be sitting there...*watching us*? This sucks! I mean, this is our place! This...this sucks!" Brady complained, shooting an angry glare toward the stands. Lanie agreed. The parents hardly ever came to watch practice, which meant the game field was a place the kids could hang out and do whatever they felt like doing without having to worry about getting caught. There weren't that many places around Fells Pointe where the parents weren't hanging around and watching, and now, thanks to whoever had...done that...to Stacy, there was one less place they could escape the all-seeing eyes of their families. "What's next? Are they going to start hanging out with us at The Pub? Or the Drive-In?" Brady demanded, clearly upset by the very prospect. Lanie shrugged, having no answer for him. Things were different now, at least for the moment, so there was no telling what the parents would do in an effort to make sure their children were safe and didn't wind up like Stacy. Though, it would be a shame if no one could hang out at the Drive-In for a while. The old, decrepit drive-in theatre on the outskirts of town was the preferred hangout spot for the kids around Fells Pointe. Without that place to run to in an effort to escape, everyone might just lose their minds. "Devyn and Johnna are here," Brady pointed out, nodding toward the opposite end of the field, where the Spirit Squad

were all huddled around one another, their pristine white and royal blue uniforms seemingly over-bright against the back drop of trees. "I'll give you a ride back after practice, okay? Don't go off on your own." Brady veered off in the direction of his teammates and Lanie kept going down the field, but a deep voice calling her name stopped her. "Lanie! Hey, wait up!" Turning around, Lanie saw Chase Wylie coming toward her, his helmet under his arm and his dark hair mussed. As he walked, Lanie couldn't help but notice the head of every girl in the stands turning to watch him. And she honestly didn't blame them. Chase Wylie was a very tall, *very* good looking quarter back with vivid blue eyes, a crooked smile, and a face that could have been used to sell very expensive men's cologne. He was, hands down, the most attractive boy at Fells Pointe High, which was why he had throngs of girls chasing after him. Of course, it also didn't hurt that he was the son of the most influential and wealthy man in town. Even seventeen year old girls could keep an eye toward the future. Chase had been through his fair share of girlfriends, which Lanie found rather offensive on some level. And that was why she had turned him down so many times over the past few months. She wasn't into being just another notch in someone's bed post, and good looks and a charming smile could not change her mind on that. Yet, when Chase had asked her out last week, she'd said yes. She was still confused about that decision. "Hey, Lanie," Chase greeted as he came to a halt in front of her. "I didn't think you'd come out here today." Lanie lifted a shoulder. "I decided to stop by for a while," she told him. "Are you doing alright? I mean, you know, are you okay?" Chase questioned, his sparkling blue eyes filled with sympathy. "I'm alright," she answered, trying to keep her annoyance level to a minimum. "Listen, do you still want to go out tonight? Or would you rather cancel?" Chase asked. A little wave of relief rolled over Lanie. At least she wouldn't have to reject him again. "I think we should probably wait a while. It...it doesn't seem right, going out and having fun." Chase nodded his dark head, his handsome face set with a serious expression. "I was thinking the same thing. But, we'll do something in a few days?" "Okay," she told him with a nod. "I'll talk to you later, then. I have to get back," Chase said and surprised Lanie by leaning down and dropping a quick kiss onto her mouth. With that, he spun around and hurried away down the field, leaving Lanie to stare after him. What was that? What the hell was *that*! They hadn't even had their first date and Chase was already kissing her? Maybe she would re-think going out with him, after all! Feeling slightly rattled, Lanie turned back to head down the field toward the Spirit Squad, resisting the urge to reach up and swipe her hand across her mouth. It wasn't like she hadn't been kissed before. She had. She'd had a steady boyfriend or two during her high school career and there had been a couple of instances when she hadn't behaved as chastely as she should have, but those instances had been *her* choice. Clearly, Chase Wylie thought those kinds of moments should be his choice, probably because there wasn't a single girl who attended Fells Pointe High that would turn him down. Well, there was *one*. And Chase Wylie was going to figure that out pretty quick. Lanie meandered down to the end of the field, where Johnna caught sight of her and waved her over to the group. Lanie tried to put on her game face, which was necessary when in the presence of a dozen gorgeous, perky Spirit Squad-ers who despised anyone who wasn't one of them, yet who was just as attractive. Those girls did not like anyone they perceived as competition and Lanie Bancroft was in that category, so they always had their claws out. "Hey, Lanie," Johnna greeted her brightly. "We were just talking about fundraiser ideas. Do you want to help?" Lanie caught all the cold glances from the rest of the Spirit Squad and actually felt the temperature around her plummet a good ten degrees. Yikes. Even in the midst of a crisis, they were still...cheerleaders. "I'll just go and hang out on the bleachers," she told Johnna. "I don't want to interfere with you guys doing your thing." "Are you sure?" Johnna questioned. "You can help if you want to." There were more icy glares from the Spirit Squad—well, all but Devyn, who was smiling reassuringly at her. "This is your thing. Just let me know if you need me to help once you've figured it out," she told Johnna. Lanie turned and headed for the bleachers, leaving the Spirit Squad to discuss the fundraiser amongst themselves. Far be it from her, a lowly non-cheerleader, to interfere in official Spirit Squad business. She didn't want her eyes scratched out, now did she? The bleachers were fairly crowded, so Lanie found a seat on the bottom row at the very end, wanting to put some distance between herself and everyone else. The number of parents who'd shown up to watch practice seemed a little much.

Did they think that whoever had...done that...to Stacy would show up at football practice and try to nab one of the players or the cheerleaders? It seemed unlikely. Whoever was responsible for what had happened to Stacy Miller would be wise to lay low for a while instead of coming to a crowded football field to try and snatch another victim. Besides, statistics said the person responsible for...doing that...to Stacy was someone she knew and in all likelihood, that person would not commit the offense again. Hopefully. Sitting on the metal bleachers, Lanie watched the Fell Pointe Panthers line up on the field and start their warm up exercises, led by Coach Rossi, who was really laying on his whistle this practice. The team fell into their routine and it wasn't long before the Spirit Squad began shouting out their cheers as their own practice started up. Lanie tried to pay attention to both groups, but she quickly lost interest. She just couldn't focus on push-ups and pyramids when one of her friends was...gone. Stacy had always loved to sit and watch practice. She'd wanted to be a cheerleader more than anything, she was always at every single tryout, and she was pretty good. She was athletic and could memorize a routine quicker than anyone else, but that never mattered. She wasn't one of the privileged people, so the Spirit Squad always froze her out. It made Lanie angry thinking about it. Just because Stacy wasn't as well-off as some people, she wasn't allowed to do something she'd always dreamed of doing. Stacy had only been allowed on all the school committees because Lanie was on them and she'd refused to let anyone strong arm her into keeping Stacy out. Maybe if the Spirit Squad would have allowed Stacy to join them, Stacy would still be alive. Everyone had met at Devyn's house last night to watch movies and talk about making up some new routines. If Stacy had been there instead of...wherever she'd been when it happened...she might still be alive. Lanie felt the irrational urge to get up off the bleachers, stomp down the field, and punch Heather Langley, the head cheerleader, right in the mouth. Heather hated Stacy most of all because her boyfriend never missed an opportunity to flirt with the girl. In Lanie's opinion, Heather should have been mad at her boyfriend and not Stacy. Stacy always shot him down right away and had never done one single thing to encourage him. But, Heather had always blamed Stacy instead of putting the blame where it belonged. Stupid, jealous cheerleader!

If someone died in Fells Pointe, it was not by the hand of another. God brought life into the town and only God took it away.

Someone has killed a young woman, an innocent soul, and with her life has gone the feeling of security the residents of Fells Pointe have always cherished.

Lanie Bancroft knows exactly who - or what - is behind the bodies piling up around town. She knows because she's seen it and now it's coming after her. And the only person who can keep her safe is Kyle Vincent, the handsome stranger who showed up in town just as the killings began to happen. Kyle knows how to kill the monster that's terrorizing the town and Lanie hopes he can manage it before she winds up like the other girls. Or worse. Before she winds up like the monster that's killing them.

However, Kyle Vincent has been hunting this shadowy figure for years, yet he hasn't been able to stop him. With time ticking and Lanie's friends and family in danger, she begins to wonder if anything can stop the monster that's taken over her town.

Of course, it's not easy to kill someone who's already dead;

This Trilogy is complete and ready to read!

Hunted I

Hunted II

Hunted III

Enjoy!!!!

What happened in Ever the Hunted by Erin Sumerill? (Clash - Beautifully written and wildly haunting, HUNTED will captivate readers with its unique Beauty and the Beast retelling as it weaves a dazzling How to catch bobcats in live traps - Roadshow des SpÃ©cialistes - A new book by lion researcher Andrew Loveridge reveals He didn't deny that he'd hunted the lion, nor that the hunt had taken place in a Hunted (Cast novel) - Wikipedia - Though Sussman realizes there will still be critics of the Man the Hunted theory, he believes the book's new version will help to quiet some of Montrose colorado elk hunting - MeatEater produces articles, videos, recipes and more about hunting, fishing, cooking, conservation and everything in between. Montrose colorado elk hunting - Hunted. Author/Guide: Carla Norton. Hunted Seattle in the book and Red Bluff in real life (c) Google. Colleen J. Stan (born December 31, 'Man the Hunter' theory is debunked in new book - Hunting in Georgia. Hunting Regulations E-Book. Our 2019â€”2020 Hunting Regulations contains rules, seasons, limits and other information. If you plan to hunt Missing 411 the hunted netflix - Things differently - MetaMetrics Inc. READ - Hunted book. Read 4131 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Beauty knows the Beast's forest in her bonesâ€”and in her blood. Though she... Cecil the Lion's Final Hours Revealed by Oxford Scientist in - The New Yorker Deer Hunting In Deep Snow - Hunted. Author/Guide: Carla Norton. Hunted Seattle in the book and Red Bluff in real life (c) Google. Colleen J. Stan (born December 31, 4 Hunting Books for You and Your Kids - Wide Open Spaces - Hunting

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