

Chapter One



Oranges and Lemons say the Bells of St. Clements

FLICKERING AFTERNOON SHADOWS gathered around fifteen-year-old Katie Lennox as she strode barefoot across the shaggy white carpet of her London bedroom.

Stepping over mounds of crumpled T-shirts, wrinkled jeans, and school blazers strewn across the floor like a giant jigsaw puzzle, Katie picked up the pace and began to hop from one foot to the other over the piles of dirty clothes, careful not to topple them. *Step on a crack and you break your mother's back.*

Halfway across the room, she bent down and, balancing on one leg, scooped up a wicker laundry basket filled to the brim with vintage trolls — the soft, rubbery kind with round bellies, pinhole belly buttons, and heads sprouting tufts of rainbow-colored hair.

Clutching the prickly handles, Katie swung the basket past her bureau with its purple lava lamp and plunked herself down on one of the twin canopy beds. Her sister so rarely came home — if their

grandmother's house here in London could be called home — that Katie alternated between the beds, using first one, then the other, for homework and sleep, depending on her mood. The headboards were carved with the family crest of a unicorn flying over a large stone, with the Latin motto *Alta Alatis Patent*, “The sky is open to those who have wings.”

Katie lifted a troll from the top of the pile and breathed in its worn eraser smell. *If I had wings, I'd fly far, far away.* Just then, the clock on the fireplace mantel chimed the half-hour. Twelve-thirty. Still plenty of time before her cousin Collin arrived. He was taking Katie to Madame Tussauds, the wax museum, to see the new multimedia extravaganza — *Jack the Ripper. See It If You Dare!* — about a serial killer who terrorized London in the nineteenth century.

Katie glanced from the clock on the mantel to the oil painting above it. Yesterday, her grandmother had taken the painting down from under the eaves in the attic and, after dusting it and polishing the frame, had hung it above the fireplace. The portrait, unsigned but dated 1888, showed a beautiful young woman smiling mischievously out from the canvas.

Katie's eyes wandered around the room, taking in the glass-fronted bookcase in the corner and her bureau with the purple lava lamp. On the window wall was a poster of the Metro Chicks. With blotchy red lipstick, fried white hair, greasy eye makeup, and a safety pin in her cheek, the lead singer, Courtney, was the antithesis of the girl in the painting. Courtney also happened to be Katie's twenty-three-year-old sister.

Feeling the all-too-familiar pang of sadness twist up in the pit of her stomach, Katie tugged her gaze away from the poster and stared out the window at the line of crooked chimneys skimming across the London rooftops like a row of blackened teeth. The chimneys, dark with age from centuries of soot, brought to mind the smoky black lipstick her sister wore at concerts.

I miss you, Courtney! I miss you so much.

If only Courtney would come home, Katie thought. But that wasn't about to happen any time soon, and not because Courtney was as famous as Lady Gaga now and constantly on tour, but because Courtney and Grandma Cleaves weren't speaking to each other. Their grandmother, though outwardly charming, with silky white hair framing a face unlined by wrinkles, was, on the inside, as prickly as the bejeweled scales painted on the dragon tails of Courtney's electric guitar.

Grandma Cleaves disapproved of Courtney's seemingly drug-induced lifestyle (which Katie felt sure was just media hype) and outlandish lyrics.

"Your sister's songs"—Grandma Cleaves's ice-blue eyes had flashed daggers at Katie only this morning—"are illiterate, ill informed, and historically inaccurate! Her latest travesty of an album, or CD, or whatever you young people call records these days, makes ridiculous reference to Napoleon's wife saying, 'Let them eat cake.'"

Katie, trying in a neutral tone to defend her sister, had answered that Courtney was merely poking fun at historical figures. "Everyone knows it was Marie Antoinette who said that. Courtney is just goofing on —"

"Goofing! Is *that* what you call it? Anyone would think your sister hadn't a brain in that miscreant skull of hers. I shelled out what amounts to a king's ransom for your sister to attend a proper girls' academy in Boston because your parents could ill afford it at the time. And this is how she uses her top-flight education? By joining a rock and roll band?"

"Technically it's not rock and roll —" Katie had tried to explain, but her grandmother cut her off.

"Why I even bothered financing her schooling at the Winsor School is beyond me, especially when I knew perfectly well that it was you, Katherine Lennox, who would be the academic one. A natural-born historian down to your teeth. Just like your poor, dear parents, *God rest their souls*. You have a gift, Katie. An innate appreciation for history and the way the past informs the present."

Katie didn't know if this was true, especially about the past and present, but she did love reading historical novels. And like her parents, she planned on majoring in history when she went to college. Her mom and dad had met at Oxford when her mother, an American, spent a year abroad. They'd fallen in love and moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where her mom taught history at Wellesley College and her dad wrote award-winning books on the American Civil War (though he was British). Katie and Courtney had been raised on Beacon Hill until a car accident killed their parents. Now, living with her grandmother, and a year ahead of herself at school, Katie was going to apply to Wellesley next year. If she got in, she'd search the campus for the beech tree where her parents had carved their initials.

Katie smiled at the thought of their initials carved deep in the bark of a tree. She wasn't sure where the tree was, except that it was near a lake.

Last year, Courtney had written a song as a sort of ode to their mom and dad, but with a name Katie hadn't really liked, "Dangerous Love." The lyrics were pretty creepy, especially since it was supposed to be a tribute, but at least Courtney had included Katie in the music video.

My one minute of fame, Katie chuckled to herself. DreamWorks had filmed the video in LA last summer. Slathered from head to foot in blue body paint, feathers dangling down over her face, Katie had sprouted out of Courtney's digitally enhanced backpack, only to fade into the background moments later with the rest of the blue-painted dancers.

Katie didn't crave the limelight the way her sister did. Courtney sought publicity as relentlessly as a hungry cat chases mice. Katie liked nothing better than to curl up with a good book. *What does that make me?* she wondered. *A total dork?*

The eraser smell of the troll wafted upward as Katie squeezed its pinhole belly button. "If only Courtney would come to London. Just to visit," Katie whispered into the troll's orange hair. *I wish we could be together again, like the old days when Mom and Dad were alive.*

Katie hadn't seen her sister since last summer. *I love you, Court. I miss you so much. I'm so lonely without you. Why don't you ever call me? Or Skype? Or text? I wish you were here!*

Katie clamped her eyes shut and rubbed the troll's round belly. "If wishes were unicorns, maidens would ride," she muttered under her breath. Then her eyes flew open. Why had she said that? It was an old nursery rhyme their father used to recite. She hadn't thought about it in years.

*If wishes were unicorns
Maidens would ride
If you call forth dead ancestors
They shall abide
But long ago ghosts
From their graves shall collide
So if wishes be unicorns
Please do not ride.*

Katie smiled, remembering her father's baritone voice as he recited that poem. Maybe Courtney could use those lyrics in one of her songs, with a more edgy intonation and a steampunk beat. Courtney had used children's rhymes in the past, changing the words slightly and using menacing double entendres. "Music by the Metro Chicks is sickly twisted," posted one blogger before the band became famous.

From the open window now came a burst of sunlight that streamed across Katie's lap and spilled over the side of the bed onto the white carpet, then splashed against the glass-fronted bookcase, illuminating shelf upon shelf of leather-bound books. As if through a magnifying glass, the light grew and blazed with such intensity, Katie could easily pick out three of the titles: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson.

The sunshine flared to an almost blinding glare, then rippled away as if tugged by unknown forces outside the window. The bright

light, gone now, left a void against Katie's eyes, inexplicably painful. She dropped the troll and clamped her fingertips to the throbbing skin above her eyelids, still puffy from yesterday's crying jag.

Yesterday was the third anniversary of her parents' deaths. She'd waited all day for a phone call from Courtney. But it never came. "Stiff upper lip, Katie," Grandma Cleaves had chided. "All the crying in the world won't bring them back."

But it wasn't her parents Katie wished to bring back, it was her sister. *My parents are gone forever.* Katie plucked the troll from the folds in her bedspread and placed it on top of the jumbled pile in the wicker basket. After the accident, Katie was shuttled off to London to live with her grandmother. And it was here, in this bedroom (her father's when he was growing up), that Katie began immersing herself in old books, trying to lose herself in the past. She'd read so many Victorian novels that she was starting to feel she'd have been better off in that time period. It was safer and much more romantic.

What would it be like to live in the nineteenth century? Katie wondered, not for the first time, as she stared out the window at the long row of chimneys stretching across the city skyline. This townhouse had been in her grandmother's family for generations, and though smaller than the original Georgian mansion because it had been cut up into condos, it still had a turret room with a secret passageway and lots of old woodwork.

Her own fireplace was carved with garlands and roses and flanked by stone gargoyles—looking more like sad, skeletal trolls than jagged-tooth beasts meant to guard the hearth. When Katie's eyes flashed to the portrait above the mantel, she was struck once again by the contrast between the girl in this painting and her sister in the Metro Chicks poster. Total opposites. Or were they?

Katie jumped off the four-poster bed, strode to the fireplace, and read the brass inscription on the ornate frame. *Lady Beatrix, 1865–1888.*

Both Courtney and Lady Beatrix had beauty marks above their top lips, but their hairstyles and clothes were different. Courtney's

bleached white hair spiked straight up from the top of her head, and she was dressed all in black leather studded with metal nails and chains. The girl above the mantel had golden curls cascading to her shoulders and full, satiny sleeves on her lace-trimmed gown. Coiled around her throat was a black velvet band pinned with an oval cameo.

Katie stared hard at the portrait. Though it was faded, with tiny cracks in the surface, the face appeared animated, with a haunting, disturbing sort of beauty, like Courtney's. And just like her sister's music star persona, Lady Beatrix had an arrogant air, chin raised defiantly at an angle that accentuated her beauty mark. And there was something about the eyes. Did a hint of accusation look out from those eyes, so dark a blue they were almost black? The same as Courtney's. "Blueberry eyes," her father had called them.

A shiver of apprehension tingled up Katie's spine. She took a step closer. The face in the painting was arresting, but it was the attitude and expression that drew you in. The golden hair, flowing in thick ringlets to the girl's shoulders, seemed almost too heavy for her slender, velvet-banded neck . . . similar to the spiked dog collar around Courtney's throat, too heavy for *her* slender neck.

Lady Beatrix, 1865–1888. She had died at twenty-three.

Was Lady Beatrix an ancestor? Katie wondered. Who was the artist? Why was it unsigned? When she'd asked Grandma Cleaves yesterday, her grandmother didn't seem to know, which was odd because Katie's grandmother knew the history of every painting, every antique vase, all the tapestries hanging in the entrance hall, the swords and old armor in the library, and even the tiniest of the porcelain figurines in the drawing room.

"Katie!" She heard Collin's voice in the distance. "Hurry up! We're meeting my friend Toby at the Chamber of Horrors at one o'clock sharp! I don't want you to make me late — *again.*"

"Coming!" she shouted back, tugging off her flannel pajama bottoms and wriggling into a pair of rumpled jeans that she snatched off the floor. She jammed her feet into red high-top sneakers,

scrunched her long, brown hair into a messy ponytail, and headed for the door.

A draft from the open window made her glance back. White eyelet curtains billowed above the window seat, then fell back, only to swell out again with the breeze. Katie wrapped her fingers around the crystal doorknob, turning it slowly.

A floorboard creaked beneath her sneakers as she trotted down the hall. Wood snapped again as she leaned over the carved oak banister. "Can we stop at Starbucks, Collie?" she hollered to her cousin who paced impatiently below. "I'd kill for a mocha Frappuccino," she shouted, enunciating her words in a playful, mock-British accent.

Though raised in Boston for the first twelve years of her life, Katie could easily affect an English accent, but she couldn't give up her American addiction. *I guess I wouldn't make it as a Victorian*, she chuckled, envisioning a plump Queen Victoria sucking down a Starbucks Frap.

"Don't call me *Collie*. I'm not a bloody pet dog." Her cousin scowled up at her, his thatch of red hair catching the light from the domed glass ceiling high above. Large brown freckles dusted his sunburned face, as if someone had gone over his pink skin with a nutmeg grinder.

"Sure, *Collie*. Whatever," Katie whispered, biting back a smile. Her cousin, though two years older, was way too serious. And as fond as she was of Collin, she was fonder still of kidding around with him, hoping he'd lighten up. He never did.

Katie was halfway down the oak staircase when she remembered her grandmother's warning that it might rain. "Hold on a sec," she called out, and bounded back up the stairs. Grandma Cleaves was adamant about shutting windows and locking them if the forecast predicted storms.

After closing the diamond-paned window, which snapped shut like a small door, Katie glanced over her shoulder and watched a glob of purple plasma in the lava lamp heave and split in two.

Just like my life, she thought. Split apart from the people I love. And she hadn't even been back to Boston to visit her best friends. Not since the double funeral.

Katie turned to look at the portrait above the mantel. "I wish I lived in *your* century," she said to Lady Beatrix. "Life was so much easier back then."

The blue-black eyes in the painting seemed to shift and flicker. *A trick of the light?* Something soft as a kiss brushed against Katie's cheek. She jerked back. The muscles in her shoulders tensed. A strand of hair falling from her ponytail had skimmed her face. *That must be it*, Katie thought, and raced out of the room.