

Chapter Two



Bull's-eyes and Targets say the Bells of St. Margaret's

KATIE AND COLLIN stood in the gleaming glass lobby of Madame Tussauds, waiting in a long line to buy tickets for the Chamber of Horrors. This Jack the Ripper exhibition was the most popular attraction in London, with three-dimensional holograms; walls that closed in with spikes and knives; and real actors who “came alive” during the presentation, screeching and screaming.

“There he is. That’s Toby,” Collin said as a guy in a long, black trench coat strode through the revolving door. Collin raised two fingers to his wide mouth to let out a shrill whistle. “Toby! Over here!” He waved his friend over and introduced him to Katie.

“Hey,” she said, nodding a greeting as she slurped up the last gurgle of her mocha Frappuccino. The tall, dark-haired boy looked to be sixteen or seventeen. He had a chiseled face with cliff-hanger cheekbones and penetrating eyes that gleamed like polished chestnuts.

Katie quickly averted her gaze and read the sign over the entrance door:

**In the Chamber of Horrors
evil walks.
See the psychopathic mass murderer
Jack the Ripper
and the disemboweled bodies of his victims.
Don't assume any creature is just a waxwork figure.
The most terrifying sights and sounds in human
history are ready to haunt your steps and reach out
cold, dead hands toward your flesh as you move
through the chamber.**

The line, or queue, as the English said, inched forward. Katie found herself studying Toby, who was talking excitedly to Collin about some new, supersonic jet that ejected a microfiber parachute from its fuselage if it took an unexpected, terrorist-induced nosedive.

The two boys were total opposites, Katie thought, as the pair discussed the merits of titanium versus Teflon microfiber. Collin, with his red hair, sandy eyebrows, and beakish nose, was what their grandmother called “a level-headed” young man. His high forehead and narrow jaw showed intensity, but those solemn eyes reflected no humor, and his face was seldom animated *except* — Katie smiled to herself — when he was angry. Then he’d screw his face up, go bright pink all over, and rail at the top of his lungs like a malevolent gnome.

Toby, on the other hand, was tall and muscular. A mass of black curls framed his strong, dimpled chin and the crooked smile that played around his generous mouth. Unlike Collin’s serious, coppery eyes, Toby’s dark ones shone with a sort of secret amusement. He reminded Katie of one of those characters in the books she liked to read, carrying with him an energy that drew others into his sphere.

He was definitely hot, Katie had to admit, but maybe she thought so because she didn't meet many boys. She attended an all-girls school, which was okay, but sometimes she yearned to hang out with a guy, other than her cousin who was totally self-absorbed. Whenever she texted Collin, his messages (when he got around to texting her back) were short, dour, and to the point.

Poor Collin. It wasn't his fault he took himself so seriously. He couldn't help being the favorite, coddled son. Collin was the model of soft-spoken integrity and unerring exactitude, according to his mum, Aunt Pru, whose greatest delight in life was poring over picture albums of infant Collin.

Courtney liked to joke that if Collin wasn't careful, he'd grow up to be a "decayed little prig." Katie laughed at the thought.

Hearing her laugh, Toby looked at her, his face breaking into a wide grin. Katie bent her head and began to suck furiously on the tip of her empty straw.

"So you're American," Toby said. "Lucky you."

"Lucky because —"

"Hmmm. Let's see. . . ." He stroked his chin. "You Yanks have J-Lo, Beyoncé, and the super hot Courtney of the Metro Chicks. Need I say more?"

Katie shot a furtive glance at Collin, who motioned back a barely perceptible no. Katie let out her breath. Collin hadn't told his friend he had a famous cousin. Two points for Collin. Or two points against. It was possible Collin was embarrassed by Courtney's music, especially the lyrics of her hit single "Dangerous Love."

Toby turned back to Collin and began to compare American and British actresses. By body type, not acting ability.

So much for Toby's eyes, Katie thought, feeling the unpleasant sensation of heat creeping up her face. *I pegged him all wrong!* He was obviously the type who knew everything about movie stars, rock stars, and super models and nothing about current events or world politics. She'd met plenty of boys like him in LA. Shallow and empty-headed.

“Smashing set of bacon and eggs on that one,” Toby pronounced, nodding toward a girl in line who wore a polka-dot miniskirt, fishnet stockings, and high-heeled ankle boots.

“Bacon and eggs?” Katie realized too late she had spoken the question aloud.

“Smashing set of legs. Bacon and eggs. It’s Cockney rhyming slang. You been here before?”

“To London?”

“No. Madame Tussauds.”

Katie shook her head.

“Know how Madame Tussaud got started?” Toby pressed.

Katie shrugged and scanned the room, attempting to look bored. Across the lobby, tourists laden with cameras were asking the guard at the front door for directions.

“It began with the French Revolution,” Toby said. “How many waxwork museums were around back then, do you think?”

“Let me see . . .” Katie rolled her eyes. “I can probably count them on one hand. Zero.”

Toby laughed, a deep, rich but not unkind laugh. *For a boy who probably chugs beer, plays video poker, and reads nothing but comic books.*

“They *do* teach you about the French Revolution in the States, don’t they? No?” He grinned in mock surprise. “They should, you know, because Thomas Jefferson was here in London at the time, secretly supporting the off-with-your-head revolution.”

“No way.”

“Yes way. Bet you a mocha Frappuccino,” Toby said, reaching for her empty cup.

Katie thrust her hand forward to shake on it, but when he raised a fist to bump, she brushed her knuckles against his. “You’re on,” she countered. “And since you’re going to owe me big time, how *did* Madame Tussauds get started? Don’t tell me Thomas Jefferson was in on that, too?”

“If I tell you, you’ll squirm and squeal like a bleedin’ girl.”

“As if,” Katie said with a pitying expression. She glanced at the tourists by the exhibit entrance and with a start realized that the guard on duty wasn’t real. He was a wax figure. *But he looked real.* She had walked past the guard when they arrived, and his skin and eyes *looked real.*

Collin roused himself and, turning to Katie, began in his slow, methodical way to lecture her. “During the French Revolution, Marie Tussaud was thrown into prison. She shared a cell with the future Empress of France, Josephine —”

“As in Josephine and Napoleon,” Toby cut in, grinning at Katie and enunciating slowly as if to say *ever heard of them?*

“I know all about Josephine and Napoleon.” *Duh.*

“Marie Tussaud was forced to make death masks to prove her loyalty to the cause,” Collin continued, his face unsmiling, his voice grave. “She had to pick through piles of corpses, most of them friends of hers.”

“Brown bread friends,” Toby put in.

“Brown bread?”

“Dead. As in: Chop chop. Off with your head.” Toby made a theatrical slashing gesture across his throat.

Collin nodded. “Madame Tussaud took the severed head right out of the guillotine box and made a mold, then plugged the victim’s own hair into the wax skull, and painted and sculpted the face until it looked lifelike. Her most famous heads were of Marie Antoinette and —”

“Her idiot husband,” Toby interrupted, his eyes bright with amusement. “After escaping across the channel, Madame Tussaud set up shop in London, charging people tuppence and a ha’penny to see her heads, and *voilà!* she was off and running like a true American capitalist. Like Donald Trump. But when the pickings got slim and people grew tired of the French Revolution, she opened a special room with gruesome exhibits of famous criminals and weapons of torture, and called it the Chamber of Horrors. Charged extra bread and honey just to enter.”

Katie raised an eyebrow. “Bread, meaning —”

“Money.” Toby grinned, chucking her empty cup over the heads of people in line. Cup, straw, and melted ice sailed through the air toward the ticket counter, landing with a rattling thunk in a rubbish bin overflowing with chocolate wrappers and ticket stubs. “I’m Cockney. Can’t you tell?”

“Is that where the word ‘bread’ for money comes from? Cockney slang?”

“She’s bleedin’ fast, this cousin of yours,” Toby mocked, a gentle smile playing on his handsome face. *Too handsome*, Katie thought, as Collin nudged her forward in line.

“So,” Toby continued. “Are you ready to see the Ripper victims? Up close and personal. In your face, as you Americans say.”

Did Americans say that, or was Toby making fun of her again?

“Katie’s not just here for the Ripper exhibit,” Collin announced. “She also wants to see the London Stone.”

Katie shot Collin an annoyed look. She’d confided in him earlier, thinking he’d keep it confidential. But it didn’t matter. Collin knew that she wanted to rub the stone but not why. There was an ancient legend attached to the limestone rock, that if you rubbed it —

“The Stone of Brutus?” Toby asked. “You want to see the Druid altar?”

Katie shook her head. “It wasn’t a Druid altar. It was part of a pre-Roman stone circle. Like Stonehenge.”

“Bloody Druid altar,” Toby repeated.

“And you know this because . . .?”

“I’m a history buff.”

“And I thought you only cared about —”

“Movie stars?” Toby grinned, reading her thoughts. “History’s my tripe and fashion. My passion. Course I’d trade it all in for Courtney and the Metro —”

“You like history?”

Toby nodded. “But my true passion is crime. Gut-wrenching, knuckle-biting crime. Think Scotland Yard. Think CID.”

“Is that like *CSI*?” British cable TV showed reruns of *CSI Miami*.

“Sort of,” Toby answered. “‘CID’ stands for the criminal investigation division of Scotland Yard. If I pass my A levels, I’ll have a crack at it.”

“And it won’t be difficult,” Collin sighed. “Toby has a full scholarship at Eton. Rocket-scientist brain.”

Toby winked at Katie. “And you thought I liked nothing more than ogling the bacon and eggs of beautiful twist ‘n’ swirls. Well, I do like ogling —”

“— the legs of beautiful girls.” Katie finished his sentence with a throaty grunt. *Hopeless. All boys are hopeless.*

“Cockneys always rhyme. If I say I like your mince pies, it means —” He stared pointedly into her eyes.

“Eyes,” Katie said.

“Right.” He pronounced it *roit*. “And if I say my strawberry tart belongs to you,” he clamped his hand to his chest. “It means my heart belongs to you. If I say I like your harper and queens, I like your jeans. Rum and coke means joke. I’m having a good rum and coke with you right now. Tit for tat means hat. Got it?”

In spite of herself Katie smiled, then hastened to add, “It’s not exactly rocket science. I’m a twist ‘n’ swirl —”

“Or a lamb to the slaughter.”

“Lamb to the slaughter?”

“Daughter.”

Katie shied back. She wasn’t anyone’s daughter. “How do you say . . . dead?” she asked quietly.

“Brown bread.”

I’m no one’s lamb to the slaughter, Katie thought, because my parents are brown bread. . .