

Chapter One

The Listing

The eviction notice was pink. Isabela Torrez had seen a lot of documents in her twenty-four years but she had never before received bad news in a color that cheerful, and she found it personally offensive. She sat in her car outside the apartment building she no longer lived in, the notice folded on the passenger seat next to a gas station coffee that had gone cold an hour ago, and she took a long slow breath through her nose.

Forty-seven dollars.

That was what her bank account said when she checked it, and she had checked it four times already as if the number might change its mind. It had not changed its mind. Forty-seven dollars, a 2009 Honda Civic with a busted left turn signal, every single thing she owned jammed into the backseat and the trunk, and a PhD program in folklore that had just informed her, in the most professionally bland email she had ever read, that her funding had been terminated effective immediately due to what her department head called a reallocation of resources.

She had worked three jobs to get into that program. She had written the application on her abuela's kitchen table the summer after her grandmother died because her grandmother had been the one who told her the old stories were real, and someone needed to prove it, and apparently that someone was Isabela. She had moved to this city knowing no one. She had learned to eat pasta four nights a week and smile about it.

And now she had forty-seven dollars and a pink eviction notice and a cold coffee, and honestly, it was a lot.

Her phone buzzed.

Dani had the sixth sense of a person who had been best friends with Isabela since they were seven years old and had never once minded being the person Isabela called when the world went sideways. The text was a link. Below it: found this on craigslist lmaooo this is absolutely haunted but the rent is insane. you could write your thesis in there. ghost folklore realness.

Isabela clicked the link.

The listing had three photos. The first was a wrought iron gate half-buried in climbing ivy. The second was a stone facade that stretched up three floors and had actual gargoyles on the eaves, small ones, carved into the corners like they had been watching the street below for a very long time and had opinions about what they saw. The third was a room: high ceilings, dark wood shelves built into every wall, a window seat looking out over what appeared to be a private garden.

The rent was two hundred dollars a month.

Isabela stared at the screen.

For a room in a gothic mansion on the edge of the city, in a neighborhood where the coffee shops charged eight dollars for an oat milk latte and the parking was a blood sport, two hundred dollars a month was not a rent. It was a trap. Or a joke. Or the setup to a horror movie she had seen enough of to know she should not be the protagonist of.

She read the listing again. Furnished. Private bath. Library access. All utilities included.

One condition: no questions after midnight.

That was it. That was the only rule. No questions after midnight.

Isabela looked at the pink eviction notice. She looked at the listing. She looked at her forty-seven dollars.

She started the car.

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The gate was even taller in person. It stood at the end of a narrow street that the rest of the city seemed to have quietly agreed not to look at directly, and the ivy was thicker than the photos suggested, dark green and dense and climbing all the way up the fence posts to curl around the arch at the top. Beyond the gate, a stone path cut through a front garden that had the energy of something that had been beautiful once and had since developed opinions about being maintained.

The gargoyles were watching her. She was not being dramatic about this. Their carved eyes were oriented toward the street in a way that meant that wherever you stood on the path, you were in their sightline. Isabela had spent four years studying folklore and she knew enough about architectural protective symbols to recognize that whoever had commissioned those gargoyles had not done it for decoration.

She pressed the buzzer on the gate post anyway.

Nothing happened for long enough that she started composing her next text to Dani in her head. Then the gate swung open.

No one was on the other side of it.

She walked up the path. The front door was dark wood, old, with a brass handle shaped like a coiled serpent. She raised her hand to knock.

The door opened before her knuckles made contact.

The man in the doorway was the most physically overwhelming person Isabela had ever stood in front of in her life, and she had been to Puerto Rico for carnival, and she had once sat in the front row at a fashion show on a dare, and she had met athletes. None of that had prepared her for this. He was 6'4" at minimum, broad across the shoulders in the way of something built rather than trained, dark hair, a face that had

the geometry of something very old and very precise. He was dressed simply, dark pants, a charcoal shirt with the sleeves pushed to the elbows, and he was looking at her the way you looked at something you had not ordered and were not sure what to do with.

He said nothing.

She said: "I'm here about the room."

He looked at her for another moment. Then he stepped back from the door.

She took that as an invitation and walked in.

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The inside of the house was not what she expected, which was saying something because she had expected quite a lot. The entry hall was tall, two stories at least, with dark wood paneling and stone floors and actual candelabras on the walls that held actual candles rather than bulbs. A staircase curved up to the right. To the left, a doorway led somewhere darker and quieter. Straight ahead, a hallway ran deep into the house and disappeared.

The mirrors in the hallway all faced the wall.

There were four of them, gilt-framed, heavy-looking, and each one had been turned to face the plaster. They were not broken. They were not covered. They had simply been rotated ninety degrees to stare at nothing.

Isabela filed this away.

The man, who had still not introduced himself, was watching her take in the house with the same expression he had worn at the door. Not hostile. Not welcoming. Evaluating.

"Viktor Wright," he said, finally. His voice was low and unhurried, the kind of voice that had learned a long time ago that it did not need to compete for a room's attention.

"Isabela Torrez." She shifted her bag on her shoulder. "You have gargoyles."

"I do."

"Protective symbols. Most people don't commission those anymore."

Something moved in his expression. Not a smile. The possibility of one, maybe, seen from a distance. "Most people haven't needed them for as long as I have."

She did not know what to do with that, so she moved on. He showed her the room.

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It was the room from the listing photo. In person it was even better. The bookshelves ran floor to ceiling and held more volumes than she could begin to count in a quick scan, and she could tell at a glance that several of them were old, not decorative-old, actually old, the kind of old where the spines were fragile and the pages had gone amber and the titles were in Latin and Greek and at least two languages she didn't

recognize on sight. The window seat was deep and cushioned. The bed was a four-poster, because of course it was, and the mattress, when she pressed a hand to it, was better than anything she had ever slept on.

The private bath had a claw-foot tub.

She looked at Viktor Wright, who was standing in the doorway of the room with his arms crossed and the evaluating expression still in place, and she said: "Two hundred a month."

"Two hundred a month."

"And the only rule is no questions after midnight."

"Correct."

She looked at the bookshelves. She looked at the window seat. She thought about her forty-seven dollars and the pink eviction notice and the fact that two of those books on the shelf were bound in what appeared to be genuine vellum and she had been trying to get access to documents like that through proper academic channels for two years.

"I'll take it," she said.

He produced a lease from somewhere, a single page, simple language, month to month, two hundred dollars, one rule. She signed it. He countersigned without looking at it. She got the sense he had not needed to look at it because he already knew exactly what it said.

"The kitchen is at the end of the hall," he said. "Help yourself. There are two other residents. You'll meet them in the morning."

"Other residents," she said. "Okay. Anything I should know about them?"

"They keep unusual hours." He moved back from the doorway. "The basement is locked and is not part of the rental. The east wing on the third floor is also not accessible. The library on the ground floor is available between nine in the morning and eleven at night."

"And after midnight, no questions."

"Correct."

She nodded. He left.

She stood in the middle of her new room for a moment, looking at the bookshelves and the window seat and the four-poster bed, and she thought: something is very strange about this house and the man who owns it. Then she thought: I have forty-seven dollars and nowhere else to go, and also those books look incredible, and the window seat has a cushion.

She started unpacking.

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By eleven she had her books arranged on the lower two shelves, her laptop set up on the writing desk under the window, and her clothes distributed between the wardrobe and the dresser that smelled faintly of cedar. She had found the kitchen, which was large and well-stocked in a way that suggested someone did the grocery shopping regularly despite the fact that the refrigerator held almost nothing that required cooking. She had made herself a plate of cheese and crackers and fruit and eaten it standing at the kitchen counter because the kitchen had a window that looked out over the back garden, and the back garden at night was something out of a painting, silver and dark and overgrown in the specific way of a place that had been loved a long time ago and had been allowed to go its own way since.

She had texted Dani: moved in. it's gorgeous and extremely weird. will report back.

Dani had responded: I'm choosing to believe you're fine and also please don't get murdered.

By eleven-thirty she was in bed with one of the books from the shelf, a slim volume in English that turned out to be a collection of Victorian-era folklore documentation from urban areas. Dry reading by most standards. Isabela found it riveting. She had always found it riveting, the way ordinary people in ordinary centuries had mapped their fear and their wonder onto the world around them, the way the same creatures turned up in story after story across cultures that had never made contact, as if the stories were not invented but reported.

Her grandmother had said: the old stories are old because they survived. Things that are not true do not survive that long.

By quarter past midnight she was still reading.

She told herself she would just finish the chapter. Then she told herself she would just check one thing. Then she found herself standing in the hallway outside her room, barefoot on cold stone, looking at the mirrors that faced the wall.

She reached out and turned the nearest one.

Her own face looked back at her, dark eyes, dark hair loose around her shoulders, an expression that her mother would have called your abuela's stubbornness and that Isabela preferred to think of as thoroughness. Behind her reflection, the hallway stretched back the way she had come.

Nothing strange. Just a mirror.

She turned it back to face the wall.

The study at the end of the hall had light coming under the door.

She stood in the hallway for a moment. The clock on the wall said 12:19.

She knocked.

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Viktor Wright opened the door with the expression of a man who had been expecting this and was not sure whether he was annoyed about it.

Behind him the study was dark wood and books and a desk the size of a dining table covered in documents. Two lamps burned on either side of it. The room smelled like cedar and old paper and something underneath both of those things that she did not have a reference for, something older and darker and not unpleasant.

He looked at her. She looked at him.

She said: "Why do the mirrors face the wall?"

He was quiet for a moment. The kind of quiet that was not absence of thought but presence of it, a person actually considering a question rather than just waiting for their turn to respond.

"You lasted longer than the last one," he said.

He closed the door.

She stood in the hallway for a moment, staring at the closed door, and then she started to smile. She pressed her lips together to stop it. It did not entirely work.

She went back to her room. She turned off the lamp.

She lay in the four-poster bed in the dark and the house settled around her with the particular sounds of old wood and old stone doing what they had been doing for longer than she had been alive. The mirrors faced the wall. Viktor Wright had closed a door in her face at twelve nineteen in the morning and told her she had lasted longer than the last one, and she had gone back to her room feeling something she had not expected, something that had nothing to do with the vellum-bound books or the window seat or the two hundred dollars a month and everything to do with the way he had looked at her in the hallway and the quality of his stillness and the low unhurried sound of his voice when it did not need to compete for space.

She had not anticipated the way her body would register that stillness. She had filed it the way she filed everything, beside the gargoyles and the turned mirrors and the cedar smell that seemed to come from the study rather than the shelves, and now in the dark her skin felt too warm under the sheet and her pulse had taken on a rhythm that had nothing to do with sleep. She turned onto her side and then onto her back again and stared at the ornate plasterwork on the ceiling, the interlocked leaves and the shapes that might have been vines or might have been serpents depending on how long one looked at them, and she told herself this was only the disorientation of a new place and a strange day and forty-seven dollars and a pink eviction notice that had made every decision feel urgent.

It was not only that. She knew it was not only that. She had spent enough time studying patterns in old stories to recognize when her own body was telling her something the rest of her had not yet decided how to name. She let her hand rest on her stomach and then slide lower, under the thin fabric of the tank top she slept in,

and she noted the way her nipple tightened under her fingers without deciding in advance that this was what she was going to do. The sensation was precise and immediate. She thought about the hands that had signed the lease without looking at it, the broad span of them and the economy of the gesture, and she imagined those hands on her skin with the same unhurried attention he had given to the library shelves earlier that day.

She had seen very little of him. She knew almost nothing. That did not stop the image from forming: the way he had stood in the doorway of her room with his arms crossed and the evaluating expression that was not hostile and not welcoming, only precise. She thought about the six inches of space that had been between them in the hallway and what it would feel like if that space closed without either of them announcing it. Her fingers moved lower, slipping beneath the waistband of her underwear, and she found herself already wet in a way that surprised her with its directness. She noticed that too, the involuntary response, the way her body had oriented toward the heat source of his presence without conscious permission.

She moved her fingers slowly at first, then with more intention, and she let the fantasy stay within the bounds of what she had actually observed: the low timbre of his voice saying her name, the stillness that made every small movement significant, the sense that he had been standing in rooms for so long that restlessness had worn away. She imagined him in the doorway again, this time not closing the door but stepping inside, and the fantasy was hers entirely, shaped by what little she knew and by the specific quality of her own want after months of it lying quiet. Her breath changed. She pressed her lips together to keep it quiet and she felt the accumulation of sensation build observation by observation, each one layering onto the last until the tension resolved in a sharp, clear wave that left her staring at the ceiling again with her heart beating in her ears and a rueful awareness settling over her like the sheet she pulled back up.

This was going to be a problem. She already knew she wasn't going to do a single thing to stop it.

Chapter Two

Housemates

Isabela woke up to sunlight cutting through the gap in the curtains and the very specific disorientation of not knowing where she was for about four seconds before it came back to her. Gothic mansion. Two hundred dollars a month. Mirrors on the wall. Viktor Wright closing a door in her face at twelve nineteen in the morning.

She stretched out in the four-poster bed, which was, as advertised, the best mattress she had ever slept on, and stared at the ceiling. The plasterwork up there was ornate, a border of interlocked leaves and something that might have been serpents and might have been vines depending on how long you looked at it. She decided not to look at it too long on her first morning.

She had slept better than she had in months. She was not sure what to do with that information.

She got up, found the bathroom, and stood under the shower for longer than she needed to because the water pressure was extraordinary and she was twenty-four years old with forty-seven dollars to her name and she was going to take the small wins. When she came out she put on jeans and a yellow top that her mother said made her look like sunshine and her ex-boyfriend had once said was too bright, and she had worn it constantly after that on principle.

She followed the smell of coffee to the kitchen.

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The woman at the kitchen counter was not what Isabela had pictured when Viktor said other residents. She was small, fine-boned, somewhere between forty and ageless, with silver-streaked dark hair pinned back and an expression of such thorough indifference to the world that it had looped back around to become interesting. She was reading a newspaper. An actual printed newspaper. She turned a page without looking up.

"You must be the new tenant," the woman said. Her accent was something European, old and layered, the kind that collected other accents over centuries and kept traces of all of them.

"Isabela Torrez." Isabela went straight for the coffee pot because she was not functional before coffee and she was not going to pretend otherwise on her first morning. "And you are?"

"Petra." She turned another page. "I manage the house."

Isabela poured her coffee and leaned against the counter and looked at Petra. Petra continued reading the newspaper. The newspaper was in French.

"How long have you lived here?" Isabela asked.

Petra considered this with the seriousness of someone doing actual math. “A very long time.”

“That’s not a number.”

“No,” Petra agreed. “It is not.”

She turned another page. Isabela drank her coffee and decided she liked Petra, which was not a thing she had expected to decide before eight in the morning on day two.

The back door burst open.

The person who came through it was young, or looked young, somewhere around nineteen, with dark skin and natural hair and the specific restless energy of someone whose body had more enthusiasm than it knew what to do with. He was carrying a paper bag from a bakery down the street and he stopped when he saw Isabela with an expression of pure delight.

“You’re the new tenant,” he said. “Oh, this is great. This is so great. I’m Cash.”

“Isabela.”

“She reads Latin,” Petra said, still behind the newspaper.

Cash looked at Isabela with the reverence of a person who had just been told something genuinely impressive. “Seriously?”

“And Greek. Working on Aramaic but it’s slow going.”

Cash set the bakery bag on the counter and pulled out a pastry for himself with the focus of someone who was very used to acquiring food for one. “You’re a PhD student?”

“Folklore. Urban mythology, specifically. The way supernatural belief systems embed themselves in city infrastructure over time.”

“That’s so cool.”

“Cash,” Petra said, “stop vibrating.”

“I’m not vibrating.”

“You are vibrating. You have been vibrating since you came in the door. It is giving me a headache.”

Cash visibly made an effort to vibrate less. He pulled out a stool at the kitchen island and sat on it and looked at Isabela with the undisguised interest of someone who did not have a lot of people to talk to and had just been handed a new one. “How long are you staying?”

“Month to month for now. Longer if it works out.”

“It’s going to work out,” he said, with a certainty that felt less like optimism and more like a statement of fact he had already decided. “Viktor doesn’t let people stay who don’t fit. The last three lasted less than a week.”

“What happened to them?”

“They asked too many questions.”

Isabela looked at her coffee. “After midnight?”

Cash pointed at her. "See. You get it. It's a reasonable rule."

"It's a very specific rule," Isabela said. "Most landlords just say no smoking."

Petra turned a page. "Viktor is not most landlords."

That was the understatement of the morning, possibly the week, possibly a larger period of time that Isabela did not yet have enough data to calculate. She finished her coffee and rinsed the cup and thought about the closed study door and the mirrors on the wall and the way Viktor Wright had looked at her at twelve nineteen like he had been waiting for exactly that knock.

"Is he usually awake this early?" she asked.

Petra and Cash exchanged a look over the newspaper. It was brief and said several things that neither of them put into words.

"Not typically," Petra said.

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Viktor appeared at half past three in the afternoon.

Isabela had spent the morning in the library, which was exactly as good as it looked from the doorway and possibly better. It was a proper room, not a hallway with shelves, with two leather chairs positioned near the window and a reading table in the center and a rolling ladder on a brass rail that ran the length of the longest wall. The collection was extraordinary. She had identified three incunabula in the first hour, books printed before 1501, which should not have been on an open shelf in a private house and which she handled with the kind of careful reverence that made her feel like herself in a way she had not felt since the funding got pulled.

She was deep in a seventeenth-century text on urban ecclesiastical geography when she heard the library door and looked up.

Viktor walked in and went directly to the far shelf without looking at her. He was dressed the same as the night before, or similarly, dark and simple, and he moved through the room with the ease of a person who knew every inch of it. He pulled a book from the shelf, checked something in it, replaced it. He pulled a second book. He read a page. He replaced that one too.

He had still not acknowledged her.

"Good afternoon," she said.

"Miss Torrez."

"Isabela. You signed my lease, you can use my first name."

He looked at her then. In the afternoon light from the library windows he was, if anything, more overwhelming than he had been in the candlelit entry hall the previous night, which she would have said was not possible. There was something about the quality of his stillness that she kept coming back to. Most people had a baseline of small movements, weight shifts and blinks and the micro-adjustments of a body that

was constantly processing the world. Viktor Wright had none of that. He stood in the library like he had been standing in rooms for so long that the habit of restlessness had simply worn away.

“Isabela,” he said, and something about hearing her name in that voice did something to the back of her neck that she was going to think about later when she was alone.

“You have an extraordinary collection,” she said, because she was a professional and she was going to behave like one. “The incunabula on the east wall are remarkable. The 1489 Schedel especially. That should be in a controlled environment.”

“It has survived this long without a controlled environment.”

“That’s not how preservation works.”

“Perhaps not.” He moved to the reading table and set down the book he had been carrying and for a moment she thought he was going to leave again. Instead he pulled out the chair across from her and sat down. He opened his book. He read.

She looked at him for a moment. He did not look up.

She went back to the seventeenth-century text.

They read in silence for forty minutes. It was the least uncomfortable silence she had sat in with a near-stranger in her adult life, which was interesting information that she filed next to the mirrors and the gargoyles and the very specific look that Cash and Petra had exchanged over breakfast.

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She found the manuscript at six in the evening.

She had been working her way along the east wall in a systematic way, pulling books by spine, checking dates and languages, building a mental catalog. Most of what she found was what you would expect in a private collection of this age and quality: history, natural philosophy, theology, classical texts with handwritten marginalia. All of it extraordinary. None of it surprising.

The manuscript was between a 1612 Jesuit history of the New World and a bound collection of what appeared to be personal correspondence in Italian. It was slim, vellum-covered, the pages hand-stitched. The writing inside was a combination of Latin and what she recognized after a moment as an early modern Spanish variant, the kind used in official documents from the colonial period. The hand was careful and formal. This was a legal document, or had been written to function as one.

She recognized it.

Not the physical object, she had never seen this specific document before. But the content. She had spent six months of her second year tracing references to a document described in three separate secondary sources as the Cailán Accord, a supposed agreement between what the sources called the old families of a major American city

and the civic infrastructure of the time, granting certain rights and territorial recognitions in exchange for protections that the sources described in terms so vague as to be useless for academic purposes. Every scholar who had tried to trace the original had concluded it was apocryphal. Allegorical shorthand for something else.

She was holding the original.

Her hands were very steady. She was proud of that.

She carried it to the reading table and sat down and began to read.

The Latin was formal but clear. The Spanish passages were more personal, occasional, appearing in the margins and between sections as if a second voice had been annotating the primary text. The document established something it called territorial legitimacy of the nocturnal community within the boundaries of the city, in exchange for protections offered to the signatory bloodline in perpetuity. The signatory on behalf of the nocturnal community was listed with a title she did not have a reference for. The human signatory was listed by name.

Cailán, I. F.

She stared at that name for a long time.

Her grandmother's name had been Florencia. Her grandmother's mother had been Inés. The family name before the Torrez marriage, the name her grandmother had mentioned once and only once, the name that went back further than her grandmother could trace, had been Cailán.

The room was very quiet.

Her phone was in her pocket. She had it out and was photographing pages before she had consciously decided to do it, moving quickly and carefully, the document flat on the table, even light from the window, every page captured. She was on the seventh page when she heard the library door.

She did not stop photographing.

She finished the last page, slipped her phone into her pocket, and looked up.

Viktor Wright was standing in the library doorway. He was looking at the manuscript on the table and then at her and his expression was the most she had seen on his face since she arrived, which was not a lot but which was, compared to his baseline, significant.

"Those are not for tenants," he said.

"Then they shouldn't be on an unlocked shelf," she said.

. . .

He crossed the room in the way he moved through all rooms, without hurry and without wasted motion, and he picked up the manuscript and looked at it and then looked at her and she looked back and did not blink.

"How much of it did you read?" he asked.

“All of it.”

“How much did you understand?”

“Enough to have questions. Not enough to answer them.”

He set the manuscript down on the table between them. He was standing and she was sitting and the height difference between them was considerable and she was still not blinking. She had grown up the shortest person in most rooms and she had learned early that the moment you let someone’s size become their argument, you had already lost.

“What questions,” he said.

“The Cailán Accord. My academic field has three references to it as an apocryphal document. Every scholar who looked for the original concluded it didn’t exist.”

“Scholars have been wrong before.”

“Yes. What is the nocturnal community?”

He looked at her for a long moment. The afternoon light was going, the library dimming toward evening, and in the low light his eyes were very dark and very still.

“That,” he said, “is a question for a different hour.”

“It’s only six-thirty.”

“I am aware of the time.”

She looked at the manuscript and then at him. “I’m not going to publish anything without understanding what I’m looking at. I want you to know that. I’m not here to expose whatever this is. I’m a folklorist. I study these things because I think they’re real and I want to understand them, not because I want a headline.”

Something shifted in his face. She could not have said what, exactly. It was like watching a very still body of water register the passage of something beneath the surface.

“I know,” he said.

“You don’t know me.”

“I know enough.” He picked up the manuscript and moved toward the far shelf. “Stay out of the restricted section. The west alcove. The books behind the iron gate.”

“There’s a restricted section.”

“There is now.”

He replaced the manuscript, in a different location than it had come from, she noticed. He left the library without looking back.

She sat at the reading table in the dimming light and thought about the name Cailán and the agreement written in Latin and old Spanish and the way Viktor Wright had said I know like it was a thing he had verified rather than a thing he was choosing to believe.

She pulled out her phone and looked at the photographs.

Every page was perfectly clear.

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Dinner that evening was Isabela cooking for herself while Cash sat on the counter and talked at her about everything and nothing in the relentless, generous way of someone who had been waiting a long time for a new person to talk to. She learned that he had lived in the house for eleven years. She learned that he had been nineteen when he moved in and was still, apparently, nineteen, a thing he mentioned so casually and without further explanation that she filed it directly into the growing folder in her mind labeled things to understand later. She learned that Petra had opinions about every book ever written and that Viktor had read most of them and that the house had a garden that was better in summer and a basement that Cash had only been in twice and did not want to discuss.

She did not ask about the basement. She was saving that one.

“What was he like when you first got here?” she asked instead. “Viktor.”

Cash thought about it with real seriousness. “Exactly the same. He doesn’t really change. I think he stopped changing a long time before I got here.”

“How long ago is a long time?”

Cash opened his mouth. Petra appeared in the kitchen doorway with the timing of someone who had been listening from the hall.

“Cash,” Petra said.

Cash closed his mouth.

Isabela looked at Petra. Petra looked back with the serenity of someone who had been managing situations like this for longer than Isabela had been alive and had developed a very good poker face about it.

“Right,” Isabela said. “Longer than a long time. Got it.”

She served herself dinner and ate at the kitchen table while Cash stole bites off her plate and Petra read another newspaper in another language and the house settled into its evening sounds around her, old wood and old stone and somewhere deep in the building, the quiet that lived in places that had kept secrets for a very long time.

She was home by eleven. In the library, she meant. She thought of the library as home already, which told her something about herself that she already knew.

At eleven-fifty-eight she closed her book and went upstairs.

At midnight she was in bed with the lights out.

At twelve-oh-one she was staring at the ceiling thinking about the Cailán Accord and the name written at the bottom and the folder in her mind that was getting heavier by the hour.

She did not knock on any doors.

She did not knock on his door. She lay there a long time listening for the sound of his footsteps in the hall anyway.

