

Lily's Daughter

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For my daughter, with love,

and

for daughters everywhere

Chapter One

The Dodge rounded another corner. The road was a grey snake. Looming over them on both sides, dark and ominous, were Douglas firs and cedars. The understory consisted of salal, kinnikinnick, and pink-blooming rhododendrons, along with small trees, vines, and saplings.

The sunlight was waning. Annie braked as she entered yet another curve and then accelerated the SUV—and suddenly, the two women found themselves in a clear-cut, and there before them were the Olympics.

The shadowy grey mountains seemed to hover in the sky, disconnected from the land below. Their jagged peaks still bore snow. The clear-cut was studded with mounds of slash and debris, but it was the sky that struck Kali.

It was bloody.

Seeing Kali's look of apprehension, Annie laughed. "Red at night is a sailor's delight."

The dying sun was trapped between two mountain peaks. Kali watched as it, large and ominous, sank below the V.

The bloodshot sky deepened, incorporating strands of purple. As darkness began to envelop the sky, Kali felt it was consuming her. It felt like a profound death, a death deeper than death. But of course, that didn't make any sense.

She glanced over at Annie. How in the hell was Annie managing to steer the car with only one eye? Especially now, in the dark? She was sure the older woman would kill them both.

"Slow down!" she pleaded.

Annie just laughed again and shook her head.

The SUV rounded another curve and plunged back into the dark evergreens. Its headlights now illuminated the gray, winding road. They passed a sign: FORGOTTEN GATE LANE.

“It’s not far from here,” Kali said.

Annie slowed the Dodge.

“It’ll be to your left.”

They passed another sign—NO NAME ROAD—and Kali leaned forward in her seat. “Only a little farther; there will be two roads on the left.”

With her good eye, Annie searched the left side of the road. The two lights beaming from the Dodge were not very helpful; even Kali couldn’t make out much. But when they rounded another slight curve, there they were, impossible to miss: two dirt roads.

A sad-looking sign sat between them: POINT NO POINT.

“Take the second one,” Kali instructed.

Annie turned left.

As they continued onto the unpaved road, the ride became crooked and bumpy, and Annie had to steer around a few broken tree branches and potholes.

Finally, a small house came into view. A sinking sense of dread and foreboding went through Kali. “We’re here,” she said.

The cottage sat on a level lot facing west, with a porch that seemed to be waiting for a railing. Without one, it looked naked and incomplete. The forlorn porch led to an impressive, albeit overly large, front door made from two vertical wooden planks that occupied most of the front side of the building. Only one solitary window had managed to squeeze itself into the space left of the massive door.

Dark forest surrounded the entire house, except for where a garden held space on the south side. Although small, the garden appeared to be successfully warding off the wilderness with its simple wire fence.

Annie turned off the engine and pressed a button to open the SUV's back hatch as Kali rummaged through her backpack for the house keys.

"Got a flashlight?" Kali asked as her hands closed around the keys. "Yep, give me a sec," Annie said, already pulling a suitcase, sleeping bags, two pillows, and a grocery bag from the back of the car.

Kali slung her backpack over her shoulder. She grabbed one pillow and one sleeping bag from Annie, who leaned back into the car and grabbed a flashlight from the glove compartment. After they slammed all the doors shut, she snapped on the light, and they made their way to the front door together.

Now that she was finally here, Kali felt like a weight was pressing against her chest. The past, with its suppressed memories and oppressive darkness, was overwhelming. She had to force herself to ascend the porch stairs.

"I don't want to do this," she whispered to Annie, her heart pounding.

"I didn't wait in a ferry line for over an hour and drive another hour just to stand here," Annie responded, unmoved.

"I don't . . ."

"These things are heavy."

"No, I—"

"In!"

Stiff with nerves, Kali took a deep breath and inserted the key—then paused for a moment to gather her courage.

Annie sighed.

Kali turned the key, and the latch clicked.

Annie stepped in front of her and pushed the heavy wooden planks open.