

Chapter Seven:

Trouble in Paradise

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I hold Clay's coat tightly around me. The hallways backstage are quiet. I walk the cold tiled floors searching every nook and cranny for any possible clue.

My heart beats faster with each passing minute. I don't like investigating by myself. I could've stayed with Clay, but I told them that I was fine on my own. It made more sense for all of us to split up. It's easier to find potential evidence, and we can't afford to waste anymore time.

I've already checked a few of the dressing rooms but didn't find anything. I fidget with the sleeves of my coat as I reach the end of the hall. All that's left is a small storage closet.

I'm about to walk back to the theater, when I notice a flash of color on the ground.

I crouch down on the floor by the storage room door. A small shoe print is embedded onto the tiles in a bright green paint. I reach out and brush my fingertips across the surface. The color is dry.

I stand back up. I can recall Clay mentioning that the cast had to paint some props last minute last night, which would've happened before Lewis's death. Whoever had been to this storage closet had been at rehearsal the whole night.

The door is locked when I pull at the handle. I frown and tug out some bobby pins from my hair. It takes several minutes, but after prodding with the bobby pins the door finally clicks and pops open.

"Bingo!" I say triumphantly. Clay is much better with locks than me. I know they'll be proud to know that I picked a lock all by myself. Their teaching has paid off.

I swing the door open and step inside.

My stomach immediately plummets to the floor.

"Oh my God," I breathe.

The storage closet has been converted into some kind of weapon storage. Bottles of chemicals litter the floor. The shelves are covered in different knives, duct tape, and various ropes.

I take a step further inside, fighting the nausea climbing into my throat.

A piece of paper is taped to the wall. I freeze as my eyes travel over a list of names:

Lewis MacGartney

Andrea Hawkins

Clay Easton

“No,” I whisper, taking a halting step backward. “Oh God.”

Lewis’s death wasn’t the only one planned. Someone created a hit list...and Clay’s on it.

Clay.

I have to warn Clay!

Before I can take a step back, someone’s arms fold around me. A scream escapes my throat, but a cloth is quickly pressed against my mouth. The sickly sweet scent of chloroform fills my nostrils.

“Lights out, Sherlock Holmes,” someone whispers in my ear.

I feel my eyes fall shut and everything goes dark.
