

The Book

By Courtney Snider

It was my 16th birthday and all my mom got me was a book. And for some reason this was a *very* big deal.

My mother was a famous author before she passed 14 years ago. It would be very out of character for her to *not* want someone to read her book. Yet as soon as I opened the bright yellow and blue wrapping paper and Grandma saw the sandwich of words, she snatched it right out of my hands and started mumbling to herself.

“Dang it, Holly.”

“I thought I had more time.”

“What do I do from here?”

“Grandma?” I ask warily. “What’s going on?”

She stood up abruptly. “Get your shoes on. We need to leave now.” She grabbed me by my black school uniform blazer and practically dragged me to her car. She shoved me into her tiny green convertible, giving me just barely enough time to slip on my loafers.

She had yet to answer my question, and her aggressively typing into her gps only added to my confusion.

“Grandma, what’s going on?” I asked again.

“It is not my place to explain,” she stated simply. “I didn’t even know it was *time* to explain. I thought she’d wait until you’re eighteen.”

“Who would wait? Where are we going?”

She didn’t answer. I’m not even 100% sure she heard me. She turned on the car and practically sped down the driveway into the street.

The gps said we would be at our destination in forty-five minutes.

It took us twenty.

Grandma parked at the base of a hill where a house stood. The house wasn’t apart of a neighborhood, there wasn’t anyone nearby for miles. It was just a house, sitting on it’s own on top of a hill.

The house itself wasn't anything extravagant. Cabin would be a better way of describing it. It was made of dark oak. A staircase let up the hill and to the front door. Two little rocking chairs sat on the front porch by a large window. The décor I could see on the inside was nothing fancy, a dark green floral couch and a little coffee table with a variety of notebooks, papers, and pens scattered along its surface. It wasn't a place where you'd expect a butler to open the door.

"Good afternoon sir, madame." He said, giving us a small bow. "How may I be of service to you?"

"We need to speak to Holly Dicesere," Grandma said. "This is Carson. We have the book."

The butler held his hand out for the book and Grandma handed it to him. He flipped through a few pages before doing a once-over on me. There was something off about him. He looked almost like a moving wax statue. His blue eyes looked as if they were made of glass.

I didn't fixate on this. People have said the same thing about me before.

"Of course," the butler finally said. "Follow me, sir." He stepped into the house, assuming I'd follow. And I did.

The cabin was small, nothing extraordinary. There was the living room with the green couch, the kitchen had granite countertops, and there was one bedroom that had the door shut.

He led me to the end of the hallway where a large portrait of the former Queen of England hung. He swung open the portrait to reveal a spiral stairwell leading down to the basement.

"Lady Dicesere!" the butler called down to the basement. "Carson has arrived. Would you like me to bring him down?"

"Bring him down, please!" a voice called back. I haven't heard that voice in 14 years. *It was my mother.*

I practically shoved Mr. Butler out of the way and dashed down the winding steps.

The basement was a giant library that looked straight out of a medieval castle. There were etchings of old Greek myths sketched into the sides of old bookshelves.

"Mom?" I call into the isles of books.

A little girl, maybe 9 years old, poked her head around the corner. She had the same wax statue look to her and glassy violet eyes. She looked unreal, like I could reach out and my hand would pass right through her.

"I'll get her for you," she told me. "She's been waiting for you."

"Where is she?" I demanded, watching her walk away.

She must've not heard me, so I impatiently follow her into a small office. A woman sat at the desk. She had my dark hair and gray eyes, yet they lacked the glassiness.

"Mom..."

She smiled and stood up. "My Carson..." she walked over to me and grabbed my face. "I've missed you so much."

I pushed her hands away. "What is going on? Where have you been for the last 14 years? What's with the book? What's with Grandma?"

"Lady Dicesere," Mr. Butler said. He held the book out to her, to which she gratefully accepted.

"Thank you, Hezekiah, You may return to your room now." She waved Mr. Butler—Hezekiah—off before turning to me. "You."

I paused. "Me..."

"Sit with me," she ordered, taking up her spot on a nearby velvet couch. I sigh and sit next to her.

"Let me tell you a story," she told me. I suddenly feel like I was 2 years old again, her telling me my last bedtime story before she "died".

"When I wrote my first novel, I found out that my characters would *physically* come to life," she told me like it was the most normal thing in the world. "I never understood why, but when I found out I couldn't have children, I thought I would use this blessing, or curse to it's full potential." She placed the book in my lap. She nodded toward it. *Read it.*

So I did. I opened the first page and my eyes scanned the pages.

My name is Carson Dicesere, son of Holly Dicesere.