Death

For

Centuries

By Madisyn Murray

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Prologue

November 1st, 2008

Time doesn’t run in the family, that I don’t know what’s real anymore. People I know, people I’ve seen, tend to think time is something you need to understand to get through the day. I feel as if mine is a ticking time bomb, but not everything is about focusing on getting through the day…it’s getting through time. For more than 200 hundred years, my family has been suffering from not only gruesome deaths, but a curse.

Last month on my twelfth birthday, my grandma gave me a book about our family tree for one of my upcoming school project. I remember vividly how worried, yet excited she was to finally share the story that scarred me for life.

*‘In 1707, Aaron McCourt and Stephanie Jones became best friends at the age of 7 and 8 years old , they did everything together to make life count. 15 years later in 1722, Stephanie and Aaron secretly eloped, and later on got an invitation to the ‘National Biology Meeting’ hosted by Stephanie’s great uncle.*

*Since they both were into science and nature, they decided to tell their parents about the trip. Unfortunately, Stephanie fell ill and had to send Aaron away to continue the trip without her. He promised to write to her once a week with all the stuff that happens during the meeting. 9 months later, Stephanie gave birth to a baby girl named Angel Rose and wrote a letter to Aaron about her situation, he then agreed to come home once they come back from the research her great-uncle assigned him and to help out with their child as soon as possible. When Aaron came home the following 2 months, he was given a ‘Welcome Home’ celebration hosted by his mother.*

*His mother can be strict and often wants him to marry another woman besides Stephanie, so she set up an arrange marriage the following 3 weeks and forced to marry a girl, named Mina, to please his mother. When Stephanie overheard about his mother’s vicious plans, she wanted to get away from anything that will forced her and Aaron to separate. That night, Aaron and Stephanie secretly met up at the lake and came up with a plan to run away the day Aaron is supposed to marry Mina that very night. He said ‘Once the coast is clear, I will secretly grab my belongings and meet back at the lake with my closest friend that can take us to the family boat.’ 3 weeks later, Aaron met up with his Aunt Olive, the town’s witch, to have tea with her and talk about his future marriage. What he doesn’t know is that his mother had arranged his aunt to make a spell that will force him to love another woman. After tea, he quietly grabbed his stuff and ran across town towards ‘Arcadia Lake’ to meet with Stephanie. He was so thrilled to hear that his daughter and his new wife are finally getting out of the town. When they kissed, something was off. Aaron’s eyes turned blood red, his claws started to come in out of his hands and sharp teeth grew larger and larger. He grabbed Stephanie by the throat, choking her until she turned blue, pushing her to the bottom of the lake until her body became lifeless. Since that day, no one knew what happened or where Aaron have gone to. But legend has it that for whom who has the ability to break the curse will be the daughter of a Jones’. Centuries later, nobody knows for sure if the curse will ever be broken, because time is running out.’*

She finished reading the story as I just sat there with sweat rolling down my back, palms all sticky, and as dizziness kicks in, my eyes start to widen when reality hits me that I only have 8 years left to solve this curse affecting my family or so I thought.

Lyra

October 5th, 2016

5:08pm

"Andy, you're such a pig! Eat normal or I’ll call the food police." I said as Andy wipes away the chili off his face. Andy and I are like a couple you expected to see in college, but really we are best friends who like to tease or find crazy things to do. I've had a crush on Andy since we were in the 3rd grade, he was a shy kid sitting all by himself on the swing set during recess one day and offered him my last lollipop to get him to talk and I also met my other best friend, Julia, who happens to be Andy's cousin, she’s a year younger than us. As we’ve gotten older, we both applied to OSU to stay close to home and still have our adventures together. "Lyra, you're the one who suggested the hotdog eating contest and now who's the pig." He said as he grabs a napkin to wipe the chili off my face, I started to blush a little when he touches me. Quickly shaking off my embarrassment, I pulled out my phone to check and make sure I submitted the correct homework on d2L. "Did you happen to finish the essay Mrs. Belleview gave us last week, because the last thing I need to hear from her is how many countries we need to choose from and what land has the most stuff blah, blah, blah." I said when gathered our things as we got up to throw away our lunch. “Unlike you who enjoys being lectured by our professor, I enjoy my naps in back of the class.” He said trying to make me stop complaining and shift our focus on our bigger assignment. “Alright, slumber jack, I get it. Your mind may be smart with your reading powers, but that won’t prevent you from-“ I stop in our tracks when we got outside the café. The gentle wind begins to pick up this high pitch noise causing me to flinch, my legs start to tremble, I close my eyes for a split second, clenching my teeth and suddenly, I can hear the crickets chirping, the smell of dead fish roaming around my head, the familiarity of what I call my dreams ‘nightmares from the red eye monster’. I open my eyes and noticing that I’m caught between the trees and the well-known lake that has haunted my ancestors for 200 years. There, I see a man. Red eyes glowing behind the fog surrounding the lake, a bloody smile coming closer to my view, I can’t move as if someone or something is holding me down. I’m screaming as loud as I can, but no sound is coming out. Next thing I know, I’m under the black thick gloomy lake seeing bubbles coming out of me. I’m scratching my neck as I begin to suffocate, slowly start to lose my mobility to move or swim above and blackness washes over my body.

"Lyra...Lyra...wake up!” Andy said as he shook my shoulder to get me to focus. I blink twice to get my vision to stop being blurry, I can feel the warm concrete on my back, and my head is pound like I developed a concussion “What happened?" Andy picked me up as I try to stable myself. He placed me carefully on the bench and gives me my phone. "Are you ok?" he asked. "Yeah, I don't understand why this is happening to me, this has been going on for more than a week. My powers are starting to tingle because that means something is coming, and it's getting worse." I said as I put my phone back into my purse. "Let me shoot Julia a text and have her meet us at our dorm since her class ended early today." He said as he pulls out his phone and started texting her the location. We start heading down to one of the dorms called ‘Bright Star’, it’s a coed dorm where the girls are on the first, third, and fifth floor, while the boys are on second and fourth floor. As we enter the dorm, we headed to the third floor to my room and luckily I have the room to myself since I won the dorms’ contest over the summer and was provided free room and board of my choice. Andy puts his bag down and takes out his computer, he pulled out all the notes we have collected over the years. Little back story, the gang and I have been told about the family curse dating back to my fourth great-great grandmother, that also involved some diary since she was 10 years old. The story goes that every 20 years, the daughter of the Jones family must solve the riddle of the curse before midnight on their 20th birthday, if they fail, the towns witch will resurrect and take their soul. So far, only 5 members of the Jones family have passed away, but then started to have sons the next few decades, until I was born. 15 minutes later, a knock came to the door, I opened it and Julia comes barging in with popcorn and 3 sodas, typical of her to bring junk food on a Thursday afternoon. "I got the 411 from this dude, so you’re telling me that you are starting to see the red eye man again, only this time it isn't a dream?" she asked as she sat down on the bean bag chair. "It was something I didn't expect to happen outside of my dreams, only my visions are stranger than ever, this time it was blurry not clear as usual." My head still hurts from blacking out earlier now that I think of it, I took some pain medicine to get rid of that throbbing ache in the back. I walked over to my desk and pulled out my computer, I typed in the ‘McCourt family history’ while Andy and Julia are nagging about who will eat the most popcorn without throwing up. "Can you two quit griping about the popcorn and help me find what we're looking for." I yelled across the room. "Sorry!" they both said back and came up behind me pulling up chairs to sit on. "Julia, did you happen to have the care takers number?" I asked as I looked up the address again to make sure it doesn’t lead us the ‘McCourt Manor Museum’, instead it should give us directions to the actual family plot. "I think so, Archer got mad at me for chasing his phone yesterday, while I was looking for his dad's contact and do you know what he put it under as?" she said smirking. Andy and I shook our heads, "Mr. Bitch" she said as she started to laugh her butt off. "Ok, enough of that, now let me see it and call him." Andy said, he scribbled the number on paper, then dial the number. "Hello, Mr. Black, I'm Andy McCourt and I was wondering when and what time does the tour open tomorrow... Yes, that's him and yeah he's still working with Joe and Taylor..... Perfect, thank you Mr. Black we'll see you tonight, bye." "Well?" Julia asked. "Our grandpa told him about our situation and he kind of knew we were coming and I mean after all he did Mr. Black a favor 12 years ago so he’s returning us a favor." He said smiling like a kid who got something brand new for Christmas. "Do you think we should stop by your dad's office and see if he can offer some of the tools he uses?" I asked Julia. "I'm pretty sure he wouldn't mind and I am planning to be a part of the FBI soon." She said being all smart. Julia been working with her dad as an intern to get a degree in criminology so she can have better knowledge with which crimes she’s able to get her hands on and other stuff just like her dad. "Well, let's pack all the stuff we need since he's letting us sleep over and allowing us to scan the house, but warnings are there might be areas that are fragile from the sale Mr. Black is currently doing, so let's keep things squeaky clean."

We packed our stuff that we may need along the ride, including portable batteries, flash lights, and small notepads just in case we see anything that needs our attention, we hopped into Andy’s red F150 and quickly stopped by Julia's dad's office to grab this massive brief case that contains who knows what that solves crime. As we drove into the quiet afternoon, listening to 'Walk the Moon', I get a text from mom saying she and dad are traveling to Morocco for a huge meeting that deals with the law. My parents are partnered with the one of the biggest CEO company and have to travel the world to help deal with major stuff I still don't understand about. "Hey, we’re making a pit stop at IB's since I need gas and you two can grab a few snacks since we still have another hour to go until we settle at our destination."

Andy pulled up to the gas pump while Julia and I grabbed a couple of mountain dews, beef jerky for Andy and a big bag of Cheetos. We hopped back into Andy's truck and headed south to our next destination.

7:32pm

La Bella, Oklahoma. It's a town that has absorbed a lot of history, growing up here I can tell you so much from the day I was born towards the time I met my two best friends. Each corner of the streets you’ll see more antique stores and diners than any strip mall. It was sunny, bright with a little bit of wind to make the day go slower. As we arrive in the middle of town, Andy got a text from Mr. Black to meet us at his office near the mansion, he said he wants to give us a few things before our lock down. We pulled up to a small office by the town square near a few gift shops. His office was small, but rather perfect for a guy like him who wants his own space provided, what I find interesting is that his office gives a 1940s detective set up. You can see his sturdy wooden desk with claws clutching the floor, a record player to your left, and a dark brown coat hanger as you stare into the big glass window. Mr. Black opens the door wearing a tight white button up shirt with black khaki pants, and leather shoes. "Ah, come on in lads. You must be Andy, I'm Mr. Black. Please sit." He said as he motions us to sit in his leather couch. "Thank you for having us Mr. Black, you said that you wanted to give us something?" Andy asked. "Yes, I was given permission by the town to allow me to access the documents containing anything related towards the heirlooms or owners that have lived in your family’ home.” He said as he pulls out his leather brief case and plopped it on his desked, unlocks the hooks with a key and opens the case with a thick folder inside. He hands it over to me and boy it weighs more than your school science book.

“Here you will find four documents that’ll help you get more information about the place, trust me when I say this. Many of them folks around here have been asking about the whole curse thing and why it happened in the first place, honestly I know nothing about this curse or the history of the diary y'all are looking for, but based on your family and your grandpa, I believe somewhere in that house there might be hidden clues or secret passage ways since the house is the size of well, let's say the 'Haunted Mansion' if y’all have seen the movie." He said with a chuckle. "Now somewhere inside the folder, holds a blue print of the original house and decades later they decided to add another part to it, it will show you different locations of the rooms and maybe it might show you m- " he was interrupted by someone barging into his office, making us fly out of our seats, making my heart skip a beat and hairs standing up on the back of my neck, it was none other than Archer. "Dad, why did you have to drag me all the way to this filthy place that has something to do with-" Archer stopped talking when he saw us and saw Julia. She waved and laughed nervously, did I forget to mention that she has a small crush on the boy. "Young man, I called you up here because you will be helping out these three young pupils with the house tour and I'll give you a deal, I'll let you work for me for the next couple of weeks, if you do well, then I will find a way to get you that new guitar you were asking for." He smirked, Archer groan but shook his dad's hand sealing the deal. “Oh! Don’t let me forget.” Mr. Black turned around in his chair and opened up this small safe that’s hidden behind two dressers. He pulls out what looks to be a metal box, shuts the safe and double checks to make sure it’s securely locked. “I only have two spare keys that opens the iron gate, I would hook it to your car keys young man.” He hands over the keys to Archer, he puts it in his back pocket and proceeds to exit the office. “Now remember folks, be on the lookout for anything funky, I don’t believe in ghost, but I believe in karma, so be careful out there and good luck!” he said. We scooted out of our chairs and grabbed the folder. “Thanks again, Mr. Black for doing this for us.” I said as I shook his hand. “Not at all and Hey! Archer my boy, text your mother that you’ll be home tomorrow so she knows to save you a slice of that grilled steak!” he said as we were leaving.

“Yeah, yeah, see you later pops.” Archer said. As we shut the door, I turn around and see Archer motioning us to come to his motorcycle. "Ok, people let's move out and follow me, there's a secret trail we can go through than dealing with traffic since around this time it's bad." He said as he gets on his motorcycle, he looked at Julia and they both blushed at each other, I have a feeling they might work out someday.

He revved his engine, checked to make sure no one is coming behind us and signaled us to get going. All three of us hopped back into Andy’s truck and started follow Archer down the back roads into an abandoned trail.

           As we pass by a couple of broken down houses, the sky was coming to an end, giving us a glow of orange-yellow pink shine fulfilling the sky with twinkling lights. Nearly 10 minutes later, we stopped by at the rusty tall gates with an arch sign "Edge Water", an old neighborhood holding eight different size mansions that belongs to the Jones’ and McCourt’s family.

It gave off an eerie feeling which made my body tingle. "You guys wait here, I'm going to unlock the gate." Archer said as he climbed off his motorcycle and reached in his back pocket a set of keys, he unlocks the gate and with ease he carefully pushed the iron gates wide open making an awful screeching noise. He hopped back on his bike and led us down the rocky pebble road.

"Andy, who did you say was the last family that lived here?" Julia asked. "The Henry family, they only lived here for about 5 years, then one day they disappeared due to a storm and that was way back in 1984. Rumor has it that something spooked them and drove them away, but that’s just rumors and who knows what they actually saw." He said, we made a sharp turn then straight to the last house standing in the back.

The mansion looked off. It was made of white stones, broken glass windows and a sign that says 'No Trespassing'. "Wait a minute, I thought the place was polished? Doesn’t Mr. Black take care of the place?" I asked unsure of why it looked more destroyed.

"He's in charge of the museum that contains the last bit of the place that used to hold most of its treasures. But he is in charge of making sure no one breaks into the actual mansion, he has some cameras set up in different sections so he can scan the area at night." He said, well that makes sense. We parked in the 'U' shaped driveway made of cobble stones and went to the back to grab our equipment and duffle bags that holds our personal items. "Alright, goonies, listen up. My old man gave me the copy of the museum’s handbook that shows what each room holds, he also mentioned most of the owners who bought some of the original crafts are still inside so whatever you do, don't break anything. Got it?" Archer commanded, we all nodded and headed up the stairs made of old concrete.

The door was huge, the knobs spark of gold with a bit of rust, the smell of old pine wood is strong that’s coming from one of the broken windows. When we opened the door, birds flew out making us scream and jump at the same time. Andy pulled out the flash light and led the way to the center of the ground floor. Luckily, we bought candles to light up the place and put them in each corner of the room, including some of the equipment we each got to use. "Julia, Andy. You two will search the first floor, set up night vision cameras and thermos cameras to help us get a good view. Here are the walkie talkies.” He handed us all charged radios. “Lyra and I will do the same on the second floor. Now turn on your radios to channel 4 so we can reach everyone. Meet back here in 2 hours." Archer said, we all split up and began our search.

9:10pm

As Andy and Julia took a right towards the back of the kitchen, Archer and I grabbed our bags and headed up the creaking stair case. The grand stair case split into two, then up to the balcony to look over the landing. We put down our bags and set up our cameras facing the stairs. Suddenly, I felt a wave of dizziness. I sat on the floor next to the large wooden door, I'm starting to see two people dressed in Victorian pleated gowns going down this very hall, making a sharp left turn toward the book case. One of them pulled a book out slightly, making the book case slowly open revealing another room. Everything went black.

                "Lyra...can you hear me?" Archer shook my shoulder slightly, he looked concerned until I looked around and grabbed his hand. "Andy explained to me earlier about what you do, but never came to the fact that you had to pass out on me." He said as he helped lift me back to my feet. "Sorry, I just saw something. Something about this hallway and a book case covering another room! What weird is that it was two ladies dressed in 1800s clothing and I could smell some kind of aroma that reminds me of a cocktail party I went to last year." I said excitedly.

"Ok, show me where to go." He said as I grabbed the folder and make sure I had my radio on me. I slowly walked down the hall as Archer sets up the camera to take pictures of any clues we find. We turned the corner and came across a small office containing a few old dusty books which seems to be in great shape.

"I don't remember which book they pulled, but let's carefully go through all of them until one of the books opens the door." I said, we began to rampage through the shelves, as I got to the middle I suddenly remember the book they pulled was red. I started to pull every red book I could find, then the second to last book I pull made the book case screech wide open. Archer and I quickly ran into the other room, as the door closed behind us, we turned on our flashlights in order to find what's in the dusty old room. "Dang, I can't tell if I enjoy being spooked by this creepy old room or seeing a lot of liquor bottles all over the place." Archer laughed as we went over and gone through all the papers on the floor to the pictures on the walls. I came across an old photo of two young couple holding hands while standing behind the house that we are now in.

I started to read the engraved writing saying, 'from our love, to yours' –the Jones. I decided I wanted to keep this small portrait with me to college in memory of my great grandparents that dealt with so much in the last 200 years. "Alright, this is crap, I can't see anything that has to do with the curse or whatever you guys are looking for." Archer groan as he puts down his flash light. I sat down on the wooden chair and observed the desk covered with dust and old newspapers. I picked up the one with big letters saying, 'McCourt Family in Jeopardy after losing their son.' In writing, the news article explained that after a few days of being missing, they found Aaron McCourt and Stephanie Jones' body at the bottom of the lake.

"Archer, do you think Aaron and Stephanie had something in common with the after effect, because I know Stephanie died first, but who killed Aaron even though there was no marking on his body?" I asked as Archer grabbed the paper from my hand. He examined it until he gave it back to me. "Maybe he was so depressed from Stephanie's death that he took his own life." He said. "But it says here that they're no markings on his body, how do you think he killed himself, plus the autopsy confirmed no poison from drinking or eating something." I said as I get up to collected the papers and carefully folded them. "Julia, did either you or Andy find anything? Over." Archer called on the radio. "So far nothing, but we did notice a room filled with old stuff, want to meet by the stairs and head that direction? Over." Julia replied. "Meet in 5." Archer and I gather our things, carefully closed the bookcase and marched our way to the bottom of the staircase. "I feel like there's more clues we haven't covered, that includes finding the diary." I said. "Don't think too hard about it, we have all night to cover the whole building, we only discovered a room behind a room. In fact, we can use the blue print to check off the rooms we been into."

Archer explained, he's right, I'm thinking too much about a book that may or may not reveal the riddle of the curse my family has been trying to solve for generations. I immediately see Andy and Julia waiting for us at the bottom of the stairs. "You won't believe what we found right after calling you guys." Andy said as he led us to the room he and Julia discovered.

Andy

10:58pm

My heart is pounding. It's a ticking bomb about to explode every time I see her. Lyra. She's so caught up in her world of terror, that I wish I could take it all away. Her beauty is natural, she tries too hard to look beautiful, but she doesn't know she already is. I've seen her weakest point to her most excited hyper self.

I remember one night while Julia and Lyra were having a sleepover, Julia called me and we had a chat about what the next step was to solving the family's curse. I sort of mentioned to her I had a big imprint on Lyra. "Dude, she likes you like crazy, as her best friend and your cousin, I suggest you wait for the right moment to ask her out and even tell her how you really feel about her. Plus, I know how Lyra is about boys she likes, so just give it more time." Julia said and I can tell she was smiling on the other end of the phone. "Ok, I will. But only after we uncover the curse we need to get off of our chest." I said and we agree to keep my love life hidden once this messed up curse is gone for good.

Right now, Julia and I are at the bottom of the stair case waiting for Lyra and Archer to come down. When they finally showed up, I told them we found something really strange in this small room. We took a sharp right and spotted the last door by the kitchen area. When you walk inside, you can smell old cigars and see bottles of wines that are too old to drink.

The room looks like the rec room with fancy floral chairs and white dusty couches. The coffee table in between the furniture is smooth with a dark brown wood texture, it also has graphic designs on the legs holding the table together. Three giant windows with lavender curtains draped down making it more elegant for the guest to look at.

"Okay, goonies, what is it you wanted to show us?" Archer asked. "There, the painting behind you." Julia pointed at this great big mural painting that has a Victorian era scene. The painting looked like it was brand new only the room made it seem older the farther you get. "Is that who I think it is?" Lyra ask as she gets closer to the painting to get a better view. When we got closer the painting, a small metal plaque, made of gold, carved two names. 'Stephanie Jones and Aaron McCourt 1719.'

They've must have been in their early twenties since they were only a couple of years apart. "This is crazy, I feel like I'm looking at a mirror of myself frozen in time just by the painting." Lyra ran her fingers over the plaque like she is memorizing every detail before she forgets.

"Something is off. Lyra, didn't your parents ever mentioned you looking like someone they knew? I mean you do look a lot like Stephanie, but you have a light strawberry blonde hair and she has light chestnut brown hair." I said as I compare who is what to Lyra as we all try to connect the dots. "Actually, my dad did mention me about my grandma, Lucille, she and I have the same personality and looks only she was a blonde with blue eyes. I can ask him to send me a picture of her in her early or late teens."

She said as she texted her “Ok, it’s been two hours, let's settle down in here to eat." Julia said as we opened up our duffle bags with our lunch bags we packed earlier before the trip. "I gotta say, this sandwich is way better than Subway, are you trying to tell us something?" Archer asked. "Nah, it's my mom's recipe, she wanted to spice up the flavors to make the meal more interesting." Lyra said in a proud manor, note the sarcasm. After finishing the sandwich, I decided to go up to the portrait of Stephanie and Aaron that we viewed earlier. For some odd reason, I feel as though the painting is staring into my soul, like it's wanting me to know something more about what they've experienced.

Without hesitation, I grabbed the painting, lift it up and shifted it to my right side. I wanted to see if there was a safe behind it, but it's not like the movies, the wallpaper looked brand new when it was first put up but it was a bit scratched when I moved it. I noticed there was black ink, like someone scribbled something inside. I started to gently peel the paper slowly not to ruin the writing.

"Dude, what are you doing, you can't do that." Archer said as he starts putting away his dinner. "Seriously, Andy, are you trying to ruin our promise to Mr. Black?" Lyra said as she gets up to see what I was really doing. "Guys, I think I found another hidden clue." I said as I finally reveal the last sentence on the wall. 'Tá mé chomh ciúin, go socair ach níos mó , beo fíor , is féidir croí.' It's some sort of language, it looks like German or Irish, but still, I don't know what it means, it looks frightening the way we all read it. "Does anyone here know how or what this means?" I asked. "I'm taking Spanish right now, but I know that Celia is taking Irish and is acing it, maybe she knows what it means." Julia suggested.

"You guys are dumb, you know you can whip out your phones, go to google and type in the language by using google translate." Archer said in a cocky voice. "True, but for now, someone needs to take a picture of it so we can continue on our investigation." Lyra suggested. I took out my phone and had Julia take the picture before I can place it back to its original spot. We packed up the rest of our stuff and headed up to the next room.

October 6th

12:00am

I still continue to hear my cousin and Archer arguing silently, my head still hurts from getting my powers later than usual. Julia developed her powers when she was 5 after moving our dad’s lawn mower across the neighbor’s yard while it was still going. When we went back into the room, I get a hunch that something in the room has changed. Nothing has moved, but it felt as if someone or something is tugging me to go back into the main entry way of the house.

"Where are you going?" Lyra asked in her mind as she puts her phone back into her jean jacket. "I'm headed back to the stairwell, as if someone or something is calling to me, but I don't know what though." I said. The gang and I started to walk down the eerie dark red hallways and came back to the main entry by the staircase. "Alright, put everything down and start searching the room and see if you can find anything suspicious like a secret door way that leads to a hidden room." I said as we began our search, after searching every inch of the room, we still couldn't find anything. Until Archer trips over the carpet, making a hard thud echoing towards the high ceiling. "Shit man, are you ok?" Julia ask as she helps Archer back up. "Yeah, yeah I'm fine. This carpet seems to develop an extra skin because it felt hard when I was coming towards the stairs." He said.

"Okay, I believe carpets don't grow an extra skin, not unless there is a secret trapped door that I've seen on one of the tv shows." Julia said as she distracts herself with her phone. We were all staring at her, then we proceed to remove the carpet, and low and behold there is a trap door with a big lock. We turned back around to stare at Julia in disbelief. "What are you staring at you- Oh! I found a trap door!" She said as she points towards the door. We shook our heads and continue to investigate what we've just discovered. "You can be a weird smart noodle Juju." Lyra said and starts to laugh out loud. "Okay, enough with the corny jokes. Now, does anyone have a tool or bobby pin I can use?" I asked. "Here, use this." Lyra said and hands over her long bobby pin she just used to keep her bangs out of the way. After twisting and wiggling, I hear a loud click and we're able to pry open the door. The creaking sound made it more eerie and it revealed a pitch black, hollow, and kind of cold unknown basement.

"Everyone, grab your bags and turn on your flashlights, I'll go first just to be sure it's safe." I said, then everyone grabbed their stuff and turned on their flashlights. There is a ladder attached to the wall. It gave me a weird chilling vibe, to where I can feel the hair in the back of my neck stand up. "Be careful and flash you lights two times to signal us to when it's safe to come down." Lyra said and gave me a reassuring smile. "So when I get down there, I want you to come down as well. Julia, Archer. I need you two to stick around up here to keep an eye on anything that may come our way. You got that?" I said. Julia and Archer started to bicker about who's in charge. I swung my legs onto the ladder and proceed to climb down the steps. It's made of wood and smells old. Lyra has her light shining down so I can have a better look of where I'm going.

As I continue to climb down, the temperature begins to drop, it getting colder and colder with every step I take. 15 steps later, my feet are back on solid ground, I pick up my flashlight from my back pocket and started to survey my surroundings. All I can see were three book shelfs and a long wooden desk with stuff covering it. The room feels big and it seems alright to let Lyra know she can come down. I flashed my light two times, letting her know it’s safe. "Hey be careful on your way down, it's a bit slippery." I said.

I shined my light to the ladder so I can carefully watch Lyra make her way down. After she got down, she managed to find two lamps to help light up the room to have a better look of what we’re dealing with.  "Is it just me or did we jumped into the 'Hocus Pocus' potion room?" Lyra said when we made our way towards the desk. Not going to lie, it does look like the room is from the movie 'Hocus Pocus', but much bigger and has an odor, making everything seem uncomfortable. On the desk, were old newsletters and papers dating back to the late 1600s to early 1720s.

The writing on it seems to have a similar language like Irish we've seen earlier on the walls. "Look!" Lyra said and points her light towards what looks to be an old metal jail cell with a small window frame. "How can there be a door like this? I mean I've seen doors similar to this in my 1900s history book, but I haven't seen one in this state during my 1700s search." She said. "I agree, but what's holding in there?" I said as we pointed our lights into the small frame bars, it's all pitched black. "I can't see a damn thing, not even the walls. It's like we have to be in there ourselves and the door is locked." She said. As I turned around to my left, I was frozen. There, on the wall, was the diary, in a framed box with gold rims. The diary was silver like sword with an ocean blue coloring on the inside, the design has swirls that reminds me of Camelot. "No way! You found it! You found the diary!" Lyra screams with excitement. "Careful not to break it." I said as she carefully takes down the frame from the wall and prides open the box and took it out. "This is unbelievable! Let's go show Julia and Archer so we ca-" Lyra was cut off by a blood curdling scream coming from the jail cell, then heavy wind knocked us off our feet.

"Go, go, go!" I screamed as I helped Lyra back up and quickly climbed up the ladder back to the main floor. "Julia! Archer! Run! Get out of the house!" Lyra screamed, after getting out from the floor, I quickly shut the door, covered it with the red and white designed carpet, and made a beeline towards my truck. "Hurry!" Julia said. I'm scrambling to get my keys, I revved the engine and slammed on the gas.

“What the hell is that thing?” Archer screeched as he is looking out from the window, leaving his motorcycle to deal with whatever evil the house is dealing with. I looked at my rear view mirror and all I can see is black smoke rising out of the house, quickly taking over the drive way. I panicked and continue to speed up towards the gate, hitting 101 mph on the speedometer. Finally, after passing a bunch of thick trees, I see a big gas station, pulled into it and parked by one of the gas pump.

As everyone is getting out of the truck to breathe the fresh air and wiping away sweats, I can hear Julia’s thoughts. ‘I feel like I went through a nightmare of some horror flick’ she said in her mind while looking at me for reassurance. “I feel the same way, but thankful that we made it out.” I said as I hugged her tight. “Ah shit, we left the cameras!” Archer said as he’s leaning against my truck and takes out his cigarette. I never knew he was a smoker, let alone someone who only cares about his rock star fantasies. “Forget about the cameras, we have this.” Lyra says as she pulls out the diary while still out of breath from running the bloody scream in the basement. “May I?” Julia asked as she levitates the book out of Lyra’s hand to carefully read the last page. She’s scanning the pages and has her serious studying face when it comes to concentrating.

“That’s something I didn’t expect to see.” Julia said with wide eyes. “What did you find?” I asked. “The last entry was about 8 years ago, but that’s impossible? And it looks like the diary hasn’t been touch in, I don’t know, 50 years?” She said as she hands the book over to me. “She’s right, but according to the date before that it was August 28, 1966, by a lady name Lucy Rose age 18. Anyone in this circle know who this is?” I asked. ‘Granny?’ Lyra said in her mind. “Wait, this is your grandmother?” I asked Lyra. She nods and I hand her the book to see for herself. “This can’t be, I’ve heard the story over and over again that whoever has written in this diary dies before or the day of their 20th birthday, yet she gave birth to my dad that same day, and it says here.

*‘To my daughter who I’m carrying at the moment, my fear of dying is increasing each day as I write in this damn book. Your father will do his best to help solve the curse before your life is taken away by this family curse. I pray you will take down the witch and burn this book once and for all. With all my love.’* That’s the last thing she said, but she only gave birth to a son and is still alive today.” She said with a confused look on her face. ‘The only way to figure this shit out is talking to Lucy now’ Julia said in her mind. “Great idea. Lyra, any chance we could talk to your Granny about this curse?” I asked. “Of course! She’s the one who helped me face my powers and to understand what it means to be a Jones.” She said with a smile across her face. “Awesome, let’s grab a few things and if it’s okay with you if we can spend the night at your place? That way in the morning, we can drive over to your granny’s house?” I asked Lyra. She nods and we head inside to grab water and snacks. I grabbed my favorite blue lemonade drink and hop in line behind Archer.

“Dude, is it just me or does the cashier have yellow eyes?” He whispered into my ear, I looked passed his shoulder and see a pale woman with black hair and presents a thin figure. When she looked up, I froze as her eyes were piercing into mine as if she’s scanning my soul. “Let’s quickly check out before things start to blow up.” I said quietly to Archer. Thankfully, Archer got pulled into a different lane and sadly, I’m dealing with demon-snake lady. “Find everything you need?” she said. “Yes ma’am.” I said softly. “Okay, your totally is $1.55, cash or card?” she asked. “Cash.” I said as I hand her $5, when she grabbed it, I felt her boney fingers touch my hand, they were frozen, like dipping your hand into the artic, her smile was evil. After ringing up the cash register, she handed me the change.

“Thanks, have a good day.” I said as I grabbed my bottle and started headed towards the truck. “Your welcome, Andy.” She said with a deep tone in her voice. I was shocked she knew my name, but refused to turn around, feeling like I might be caught in her trap. Her voice though, that gave me chills and started to feel sweat running down my neck.

3:41am

We returned back to my parents place and spent the next hour resting our bodies, trying to understand what we’ve witnessed back there. “Gosh, I think I’m going to puke from all that running and adrenaline. Where did that wind coming from?” Asked Julia. “I think it was from that dungeon in the basement that was next to the diary, I’m telling you there’s something in there I want to see that could be a hint from the diary, getting closure to solving this crap.” Lyra said as she came out with her comfy pajamas Julia let her borrow.

“My mom just texted me to come home since dad is bringing over clients in the morning and needs my help.” Archer said. I walked him back to my truck with my keys in hand. “Hey man, don’t worry about driving me home, I put my skateboard in the back. I’ll pick up my motorcycle tomorrow morning with my dad, let’s hope the black fog calms down.” Archer said as he pulls out his skateboard and adjust his backpack. “Here’s my number so you can text me about any updates on whatever you’re trying to find.” Archer hands me his business card with his band name ‘The Freaks’. “Thanks man, get home safe.” I said as a watch Archer take off down the windy streets. I come back in to hear Lyra and Julia cracking up about some show they’re watching.

“Hey guys, I’m going to hit the hay, so y’all better get some rest too if we want to get things moving before tomorrow night.” I said. “Okay, sleep tight Andy.” Lyra said. I walk down the little corridor and made my way up the stairs to the first door on the left, not even bothered to take off my shoes, I slumped into my bed and immediately drifted off.

‘*I’m trapped. The room is dimly lit with scented candles in all four corners of the room. It’s giving off a familiar vibe, the smell is broiling with herbs and a hint of vanilla. I see a dark figure lurking towards me. A woman with long silver curly hair, a dark prune night gown being dragged on the floor with soft footsteps, skin white as snow with blue veins popping out, and dirt smeared across her body. As she passes one of the candles, it revealed to me that she has no face, but she opens her eyes and showed me her dark soul. Slowly but surely, she inches her way to me, extending both of her arms ready to choke me. In a panic, I tried to wiggle my way out of what appears to be chains wrapped around my arms, as my anxiety starts to heightened, I hear her chanting.*

*It’s too quiet for me to pick up on what she’s saying, then the room begins to shift and I’m suddenly dropped to the ground. I feel a burning sensation on my wrists as I sat up to see that I’m now by the edge of the lake. I can smell the wet grass and crickets chirping nearby as the sky begin to light itself up. For a second, everything went quiet, I see some trees being ruffled that’s across the water. There’s that figure again, this time it was a young innocent woman. She seems lost and looking for something, I wanted to run around the lake to help her, but I was yanked into the dark cold lake. I was screaming the life out of me, seeing bubbles coming up to the surface and no sound was made. I feel weak and darkness swallows me whole.’*

“Dude…Andy…asshole, wake up you’re sweating like a donkey” Julia said as she shakes me. I slowly sit up from my bed, feeling my shirt stick off of me like glue from the sweat. “What bad dream did you have this time?” She asked as she lifted a cold soaked cloth from my bathroom with her powers. “Thanks. It’s nothing really, I think I’m just stressing about the next twenty-four hours.” I said, pretending not to have a horrible nightmare involving the crime. ‘Lyra’s 20th birthday?’ she said in her mind.

“Yeah. I’m hoping sometimes in the next few hours we can go through the diary and see if there’s any patterns I can collect and then have you meditate to find the scent that can be traced back to maybe the early 1900s?” I asked as I started to stretch from being in an awkward position. “I’ll do my best, but promise me you’ll catch me once I’m done? Because I don’t want to find myself breaking another bone.” she said and chuckles a bit knowing the risk she has to take to save both of our family. I take a quick shower and change into more decent clothes. I hurry downstairs to see Lyra now napping on the couch and Julia going through her brief case.

“What are you looking for?” I asked. “I was able to sneak into my dad’s computer and snag this USB under a secret code in his drawer and thought maybe he might have something that we don’t.” She said as she shows me the USB casing with tape that’s labeled ‘haunting 2.5’. “You told me once that he used to be invested into the whole curse thing, what happened? Did he give up? Did he find something and was sworn not to reveal it like the special FBI he is?” “All I know is that after the trial set to make sure all items belonging to our family shall be put up for sale, he seemed off for about a week and then poof! He’s back to his normal self.” She said. “Sounds like he did see something, but was more worried it’s going to get out with consequences.” I said as I make my way to the kitchen to fill a glass of water, I chug it and come back to the living room to start reading the diary.

“What are the possibilities of us finding something in diary that’s more useful than the house? I mean think about it, there are no right or wrong answers at this point, all we have to worry about is making sure Lyra stays alive and put her misery to rest.” Julia said. She’s had it with the whole family secrecy and wants to go back to focusing on solving regular crimes than have to face one that deals with loved ones. As I’m flipping through the pages, they all have a similar entry, yet different dates. But one stood out.

“Take a look at this, according to the date and the way it was written, someone by the name of ‘Jess’ in 1903, she recently wrote the riddle on the wall after having a dream about Stephanie! Oh my gosh! But you can see most of her writing has been scratched out as if she’s afraid someone is going to find out about the clue she put together.” I said. “I knew it! See, I was right about that diary holding something more special!” Julia said with excitement.

“Looks like Lyra is waking up, I’ll make us some coffee and coffee cake I made yesterday before we left, while you tell her what we think we know so far.” I said. Julia nodded as I head back to the kitchen to start brewing medium roast coffee while I take my special coffee cake from the fridge and warming it up in the oven.

Julia

5:15 am

“Hey, are you okay? Like really okay after what we’ve just experienced back there?” I asked. Lyra sits up and picks up the popcorn bowl from the floor and places it on the coffee table. “Honestly, I’m not 100 percent sure. The whole idea of us finding this dang thing was to create closure and put an end to this curse! All I asked for is some peace and quiet.” She said in frustration.

“What even more confusing is that how did our task become too easy when Andy and I found the diary? Was this a trap all along? Were there cameras down there waiting for us to get spooked?” she said as she cups her face with disappointment written all over her face. “Look chica, I dido on this and as your best friend, it’s my job to also find closure and your family isn’t the only one suffering from this curse.” I said to reassure her. The only way we can be sure this curse will be destroyed is to do some quick research at the town’s library in hopes that the USB can shed some light to lift the weights off our shoulders. Andy handed us his famous coffee cake and hot pot of coffee with flavor creamers to help us regenerate our bodies for the next phase in our investigation.

“Hope you ladies have something to think about as you enjoy my famous cake.” Andy said with a smirk. “Thank you, Andy. I really appreciate you keeping us a float during this madness.” Lyra said as we both take a big bite of the cake. It’s warm and crumbly, soft with a hint of brown sugar. “I’m telling you man, you should open up a bakery downtown because everyone will for sure buy this cake and your homemade coffee!” I said with excitement. “My mom and dad said the same thing after I baked them an anniversary cake a few months ago, they were willing to help me kick start the business if I wanted to take a break from college, but we shall see.” He said as he chuckled. I finished up my coffee and head into the guest bedroom to take a quick shower and throw on some cozy fall outfit with my running shoes. I packed up my bag with the USB, flash light, headphones, charger, notebooks, walkie talkie, and pens. I grab my helmet and headed back to the living room.

“Hey guys, I’m going up to the library to see if I can find anything in the historian files with the USB. They should be open in about 10 minutes. I have my phone and radio if y’all need to reach me.” I said. “Do you want me to make you another batch of my coffee?” Andy asked. Giving him the go ahead, he rushes over to the kitchen and grabbed my favorite to-go mug, he poured the coffee and added a drizzle of caramel to make it more sweeter. “Thanks dude. Lyra, I’m serious when I say this, if for some reason you have flashbacks of that dream, don’t hesitate to have Andy contact me, I’m in no hurry.” I said while giving her a sympathetic smile. “Juju, don’t be uptight about it, I’ll be fine. Andy here, I have everything I need at the house and when you get back, we need to find a place where you can trace back the scents from this diary.” Lyra said. I nodded and went out the front door to grab my scooter. I put on my helmet, adjusted my bag, and turned on the scooter. I revved my engine and headed down south towards the library.

I pulled into the parking lot and parked my scooter near the entrance. Since I was 11, I was obsessed with coming to this library after school, just to explore my curiosity for any unsolved mysteries or crimes that have happened in our town in the last fifty plus years. I walk through the revolving door and was hit with the smell of old books, dust, and of course coffee provided by the library.

“Why Julia! I didn’t think I would see you until next week. How’ve you been?” asked Miss Cho. She’s been our librarian since 1990, she may have a scratchy accent, but her knowledge for history is beyond me. “Hi, Miss Cho! So far, it’s been a very interesting week I would say.” I said while walking towards the computer room in the back. She giggles “I sure hope so! Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help. And you know where to find my famous snacks in case you get hungry.” I waved as a thank you to her offer and found an empty cubical. I carefully shut the door and locked it.

Getting myself comfortable, I pulled out the USB, my notes and pen so I’m ready to scribble anything important. I plugged in the USB into the computer and wait for it to load. Once it was complete, I notice there were only three tabs on file. All under a specific code. I clicked on the first link, it just shows a couple of pictures of the family’s yard and group photos in front of the mansion. I clicked on the second link and same thing, only this time I spotted a picture I’ve seen many times before, but it looks edited or someone has added a few things to it. In the photo, you see the backyard with a few pansies and rose bushes all sprawled out, beautiful white designed fence circling the yard, and a black poodle running towards the camera. You can see the lake in the far back of the photo, but off to the left on a small hill is a young woman. She has her hands together close to her chest, eyes closed and her mouth wide open as if she’s singing or chanting something. I pulled out my phone and quickly took a picture so I have it saved to send to the group later.

A knock startled me and I said “Hold on, Miss Cho, I’m coming!” I exited the files and unlocked the door. As I opened it expecting to see the librarian, it was a teen with dark long hair, dark brown eyes and very pale skin. “Oh! Sorry, I thought you were Miss- never mind, can I help you?” I asked. “I’m sorry to bother you, I’m Livvy, Miss Cho’s stepdaughter. She sent me to come find you and told me about you sticky situation. She said I’m able to help if that’s alright with you?” She said with excitement. “Well that’s very kind of you to offer I-“ she cuts me off. “I’m wanting to become an interior designer someday and have been studying most of the properties of this town, including the one you and your friends are currently investigating, I actually have an idea of what could of cause the curse to take place-“ I stopped her. “Okay, I’m going to stop you right there. Earlier, I planned on coming back to see my friends, but now that you mentioned about possibly knowing what may have caused the curse, I do have a job for you.” I said. She nodded in agreement.

“Give me a few to gather my things and then we can head down to the mansion to continue our search.” I said. She closed the door on her way out, I quickly pulled out the USB and put it back in my bag, I gathered my things and put my helmet on. I waved to Miss Cho letting her know I’m headed out. “We’re going to take a short cut to get there, why don’t you grab that scooter over there and follow me.” I said as I pointed to the rental scooter nearby. She pulls out her phone to scan the scooter and it lights up letting her know it’s ready to take off. Slowly backing out, I put on my headphones and turned on my favorite playlist and motioned Livvy to start following me.

Whipping towards the abandoned road with leaves flying behind us, our scooters zips through a line of trees. With Livvy in tow, she doesn’t see me using my powers to lift all the broken branches Andy has driven through earlier when we were escaping that horrid smoke and bloody scream charging us. We passed by the opened gate and carefully parked our scooters by the fountain.

“Man, it sure does have a haunting vibe, I have my journal that contains information about this house.” She said as she pulls out her little black book and feathered pen from her small book bag. We started heading up the stairs and into the main living room. “Glad I came back, Archer and my dad would be pissed if I didn’t return their cameras by tomorrow.” I said. “That’s neat that he lets you borrow his equipment! I want to find a camera that can help me get a better view of whatever interior designs I created and post it to the company website.” She said. I grabbed the duffle bag that was left behind and told Livvy to go ahead with her search as I grab all the cameras in the house. As she took a left towards one of the bedrooms, I levitated myself up to the second floor and onto the landing. I carefully placed the camera and stand into the bag, making sure it was turned off. I came back down and grabbed the other two cameras near the door and one pointing to the kitchen.

I pulled myself up and notice the room was slowly getting darker by the minute. I look at my phone and it barely even 9 am. Something was screaming inside me to look for Livvy, I haven’t heard a peep out of her since I gave her the go to search. Leaving my duffle bag and backpack behind, I put my phone in my back pocket and used my right hand to light up my powers into an electric shield to produce blue lights. “Livvy. Livvy!” I whispered. ‘Geez, I hope she didn’t get swallowed up by that black cloud or a ghost.’ I thought to myself.

9:07am

Seven minutes have gone by and no Livvy. I decided to levitate myself back to the second floor and headed towards the room Archer and Lyra were exploring earlier to see if Livvy has gone inside there. ‘Okay, I think this house either doesn’t like me or is trying to show off their spooky side.’ I thought, using my other hand to make quotations. The red hallway looks like it’s beginning to stretch as I inch my way closer to the room with the hidden bookcase.

Each door I open, I can sense Livvy is not present. As I open the second to last door on the right, I can feel a gentle breeze coming from one of the bookshelves, I close the door behind me and pulled my way into the hidden room. Careful not to step on any broken bottles as I approach this humongous wooden desk, covered in newsletters, pictures and some files. I started to tug on one of the drawers, assuming Lyra and Archer didn’t get a chance to thoroughly look into it.

It’s locked. Using my left hand, I used a small of amount of electricity to get the drawer to open. Hearing two clicking noise I know I’m in. Slowly pulling it out, I see a couple of dark red files, each labeled with names I recognized, yet one of them screams curiosity. Pulling it out and laying it on the desk, I opened it up and immediately I was smacked with shock and terror, I quickly took a couple of pictures of the few pages in her document and sent it to the group.

Once it was sent, I began to read everything, skimming through non important things, her picture and her eyes glaring into my soul makes my stomach drop. Before closing her file, a small folded up piece of paper was sticking out and decided to see if it’s worth reading. It’s a letter addressed to Aaron McCourt’s mother.

*‘Dear Mrs. McCourt,*

*We thank you for your generosity on taking in our daughter. We extend our apologize on behalf of our family that continues the loss of my dear husband. She will follow orders, willing to learn how to be a classy lady, diminish her attitude, and control her powers well before midnight. We have included $1,000 in the envelope to help purchase her needs. Once again, thank you for looking out for her.*

*Best regards,*

*Mrs. Black’*

When I tell you I hit the jackpot, my insides were jumping up and down, telling me that there’s a possibility that Archer is related to Aunt Olive. I hurried to put all the files away and locked the drawer. I go over and opened the door to this mysterious room connected to the other secret room. It’s a set of stairs twirling down to what looks like a basement. Checking for any cobwebs, I switched my globe to my left hand to us my right to hold onto the railing. Few minutes later, I wind up in a dark hallway, there were different designs of old paintings that represents the family tree, but it looks like it’s made of dried blood. The smell of spoiled rotten eggs starts to fill up my noses as I get closer to what appears to be another door. I tugged and pushed it several times with no luck.

“Welp, worth a shot, do I have any WIFI to call Andy?” I said. Before I pull out my phone, the same blood curdling scream made my heart skip a beat and it was coming from the dark, I turned around so fast that I almost lose footing. My globe goes out as I panic to try and find the door as my anxiety heightens. Right as I find the door handle, it easily opens and I zoomed into the pitch black room and locked the door behind me. Trying to catch my breath, I revamped my powers to ignite my shield to get a better view of the room. All you could see were chains dangling against the wall on the far right, a small desk with a wooden chair and a worn out candle stick, a bed with way too many quilts piled up, and a small door with three bars as a window to the other side.

‘I believed this used to be a jail cell that Lyra and Andy found earlier, if so, I know how to get out.’ I said in my head, I creeped up to the door only to feel another breeze hitting my back. Instantly sweating and shaking, I took a big gulp and turned around to face the darkness. Red eyes pierce through my soul, a pale arm with blueish veins popping out, extends with sharp like nails pointing at me. I couldn’t move, I can’t breathe, as I tried to scream nothing comes out but a gasp for air. Suddenly, my body levitates on its own and the red eye creature is controlling me with their powers.

Out of nowhere, fog begins to consume me, making me pass out, cold to the touch. *‘That should shut her up, nighty-night, my love’* a faint voice echoes.

11:21am

My arms feel heavy where my body feels light as a feather. I opened my eyes, it’s a bit blurry at first and took some time to adjust to the dim lights or so I thought. I’m still in the jail cell, but I feel like I’m hovering over it and everything is upside down.

“Didn’t think it would take you that long to wake up.” A voice said near the door, them my body was slowly being pulled upright, to face whoever did this to me. “This family has gone hay wire since I’ve killed off those two.” It spoke again. ‘Wait, two? As in the couple who wanted nothing but peace-‘ my thoughts were cut off. “Those two ruined my daughter’s chances of living that high class and earning her spot as the member of the town. I went through so much trouble all for this?!” she said, it was Livvy. Her eyes were blood shot and her skin appears to be light than usual. “Aunt Olive? What possessed you to torture our family, let alone coming back in the first place?” I asked, holding my tongue from raising my voice.

“Now young lady, what you’re missing is the buildup of my long overdue creation.” She said as she pulls the chair from the desk to sit closer to me. “You see, long before Aaron was born, as a sixteen year old, my powers were beginning to get out of control, nearly killing everyone I love, yet the person who tried to stop me was killed on impact. My father.” She said. So it wasn’t a disease or some war that killed her father, it was her.

“In order to cover up the crime and prevent me from being burned at the stake, my mother sent me away to stay with a family friend until things start to calm down. I’ve spent nearly forty years with this family, treating me like one of their own. They even helped me raise my only child out of wedlock.” She continued. “After overhearing Mrs. McCourt discussing the wedding plans with his father, I developed hatred and felt betrayed for not reaching out to me to see if my child, Mina, could marry their son after everything I’ve done for them!” spitting out with anger. “So, I decided in order for things to be my way, I came up with a spell with a light touch of control to get Mrs. McCourt to agree with me of having my child marry Aaron and have hatred towards Stephanie, that way my daughter can experience that luxurious life.” She said, scooting closer to me. “When that wasn’t enough, I came back to my potion room and pulled out an experimental spell I was working on and found the opportunity to use it on Aaron the night before the wedding.” Now I see what she’s so uptight. “But what is with you cursing both families? Didn’t the couple die on the spot?” I asked.

“After he killed Stephanie, my daughter found him passed out on the lawn and brought him back down here, so I can wiggle out that spell and replace it with the love spell. However, it created an electrifying shield that exploded and killed both Aaron and my daughter.” She said with anger. “As you can see, that moment on I came up with a curse that will affect every women of the Jones’ family to live up until they’re twenty, the same age my daughter passed, where I can watch them from a far trying to find a loop hole into breaking my spell. When one dies, I collect their soul into my potion bottles I’ve been saving for the past 100 years, prepping them for tonight with a touch of a few ingredients.”

Smiling from ear to ear, Olive proves satisfaction and little to no hope for me. “You’re literally wasting time on this spell, Olive. It’s been little over 200 years, I understand your pain, but man haven’t you even thought for a second what your daughter was feeling or thinking about what she really wants? Did she ever mentioned or express how it affects her too?” I asked. Shocked by my question, she sat up straight to readjust her posture. She hesitated a little before moving on to her speech.

“She may have brought up something about wanting to keep her life as simple as possible without this chaos, but she doesn’t know what’s been going on behind closed door. All I ask of her is to look beautiful and follow Mrs. McCourt’s orders.” She said huffing out her fumes. “Unlike you, my mother always checks to make sure that I’m happy with how things are going for me and have open arms when it comes to advice, but you? Nope! You care more about your status and pride in this fam-“ she threw a non-worded spell to shut my mouth. “Enough! While you enjoy the sad small cell, I’ll be next door to finish what I started.” She hurried to the door and locked it behind her, with a snap of the fingers, I was dropped to the ground causing my knees to buckle. My mouth is free and gave my final words. “You know the bad guys always loses, right?” I said with a snooty remark. “Say whatever you want, maybe this time we win and you have to sit back and watch.” Voice echoing with an evil laugh.

Archer

October 7th

1:52 am

“I’m telling you dad, I’ve been feeling off and it doesn’t have to do with the work we did today.” I said as we’re throwing away boxes from the supplies we used to put together the show room for tomorrows event at the museum. “Son, I understand that you and your friends have been on edge for the past 48 hours. All I can do right now is to make sure you’re not over stepping the plan and staying focus on solving the case.” He said.

“Look here son, there’s something worth mentioning.” He said as we enter the head office. “Have a seat. I got something you might considered to be helpful in this case.” He opens the bottom drawer and pulls out a sealed envelope. He hands it to me and motions me to open it. I pop open the seal to reveal a five page document of our family’s history of diseases, each of them have a different percentage of most likely getting what disease. “What are you trying to say? That you have cancer and it’s your dying wish for me to save them?” I said freaking out and breaking out into a sweat ball. “No! Nothing like that, boy. Flip over to the last page and you’ll see what I’m talking about.” I turn over to page five and found a list of four people who had deadly diseases that killed them and highlighted at the bottom is a very familiar name with the word ‘assuming dead’ next to it.

“Care to explain who she is?” I asked. Reaching over, my dad tapping on the name said “That is The aunt Olive that we are sadly related to.” He said, rubbing his face and exhaling hard. “For the past few weeks, my arthritis has been flaring up starting from my back to my knees, so being smart I decided to get some test done to see if there’s better treatment that we haven’t used yet based on how bad it is or anything else besides that, that can be treated right away. This morning, I got an email from the doctor stating that he was able to add any relative of ours that have something similar to what I have that could help us in the near future. I immediately called Beth, the historian, to look into our files and sure enough my great-great-great grandmother’s sister is 100% aunt Olive.” He leans back in his chair, crossing both arms and shaking his head.

“This whole time. This whole time it was our ancestor who started this bull crap of a curse and their family is suffering?” I said standing up and point out towards the door. My heart is racing with frustration and my hands are all clammy. “Your telling me, I was floored and what’s interesting is that I do recall your granny, years ago, telling me and your mom about how one of our ancestor was sent away after an accident that killed their father. Looking back and how things have turned out, it makes so much sense!” He seemed relieved knowing what we know now and how to fix this mess.

“Thanks, pop. I’m going to head out back to Andy’s place and make a new plan.” I said. “Since you’re headed out, lets lock up the place and I need to get home to eat your mom’s famous chicken and dumpling.” He said. Mom’s cooking sure does cure anything we end up having. We both grabbed our stuff and locked the museum. We both waved good bye and I watch dad take off in his beat up truck. I dialed Andy’s number and after one ring he picks up. “Dude, you’re not going to believe what my dad found about aunt Olive-“ “Julia hasn’t come home.” He said with a shaky tone. “What do you mean she hasn’t come home?” I asked. He explained to me how she was at the library and was supposed to come home around lunch time, but not one text or call came from her. He called up Miss Cho and she said she left with some girl. “Oh my god, you don’t think she left with…” I pause. The phone shifted to Lyra. “Archer, my powers feels weak and this only happens when one of us is in danger and I haven’t felt that way since losing my grandpa.” She said. I can hear her voice shake as she give the phone back to Andy.

“Okay, grab your gears and head back to the mansion, stat.” I commanded. I hang up the phone, put on my helmet and started the bike. I took a left out of the lot and headed west. As I take a little detour to avoid a 30 minute trip, my head is spinning with scenarios on how were going to save Julia from that witch.

Once I pass the iron gates, I can see the house is lit up with blue lights, spitting out from every window. Clouds were circling the house, meshing with the lights below. I park right next to Julia’s scooter and notice a rental scooter leaning against the fountain. Putting on a brave face and checking for my pocket knife with my phone in the back, I headed up the stairs and slowly opened the doors, with little to no preparation on what I was going to face. “Archer, no!!” I hear Julia’s cries echoing as my body starts to seize with electricity and darkness takes over.

3:33 am

“Pst…Archer, Archer…oh god…Archer please!” a voice continues to grow louder as I open my eyes and blinked a few times to make my eyes stop blurring my vision. I took a look around and see that I’m staring at a calm lake, the moon is making the water glisten, it even makes our surroundings clear enough to see what we’re dealing with.

“Oh thank goodness you’re alive! Does your body ache?” Julia asked. My body feels sore, especially my back. I tried to move, but nothing budged. “Don’t move, it’s useless, she tied us to an old lamp post.” Julia said as I realized we’re back to back. “Julia! Are you ok? What happened?” I asked frantically. “I’m alright. My knees still hurt from falling on the floor and oh god, watching you get electrocuted made my stomach drop, I thought you died!” she starts to whimper from all the buildup of stress, worry, and of course relief. “Hey, there’s no need to cry, I’m alive right? I believe you figured out that the girl is none other than Aunt Olive, because thanks to my dad she’s my ancestor! I called Andy and Lyra, they should be here by now.” I said, looking around to find them.

“I haven’t seen them since yesterday. What if she’s holding them hostage? What if they already tried to save us and…” she starts crying again. I found her hands and gave them a gentle squeeze. “If you let that get to your head, it will make you lose focus. I doubt that’ll happen, let’s remain calm and hopefully come up with a new plan before midnight. Lyra only has a couple of hours left before it’s too late.” I start to get nauseous after saying those lines. I seriously hope they find us. Suddenly, the lake begins to create a whirl pool as the blue lights shines down on it.

Olive starts rising out of the water, wearing a loose fitted gown, her hair was longer than before as she continues to float higher into the air. She opens her eyes, they are white and glowing, electricity surge through her finger tips, making a zapping noise. “My children. You’ve come a long way to witness my creation.” Olive said in a demonic voice. “Thank you for being my audience on this fine morning. Let’s see how far we can go for this spectacular finale.” She laughs in an eerie way, making my ears bleed by the vibration.

“Remember, being the bad guy is the new hero.” She begins to chant in some odd language as she pulls out the water and forms it into a sphere, filling it with screams and zaps of her electric powers. Those screams I believe belongs to those trapped souls she’s been collecting. I suddenly see Andy running up to us with a big knife, trying to quickly free us from these ropes. “Where’s Lyra?” We asked quietly. “Lyra figured out what the riddle leads to! It doesn’t break the curse, it actually kicks start a new power that can defeat the person who created the curse in the first place. She googled it to translate what it means, whatever it said helped her remember something she found in the diary earlier and is now ready to ignite it.” He whispered excitedly. “But where is she?” I asked again.

Andy covered my mouth and uses his finger to shush me, he signaled us to follow him into the dark forest and hid behind some trees. “Do you see that huge rock near the lake?” He pointed to. “The trees located behind them is where she’s currently at.” He said. A piercing scream startled us and we crouched down, covering out ears. “What the heck?” Julia asked. We got back up to see Olive’s head lean back, mouth wide open as her skin brightens up, the water is rumbling and developed more globes filled with electricity.

“This doesn’t look good.” Andy said with a concerned look across his face. ‘Come on, Lyra. When will you ignite?’ I said in my mind. “She’ll start soon, her thoughts are mentally preparing her.” Andy said. “Looks like you children won’t be hiding for long!” Olive screamed in a high pitch tone. “Crap!” Julia whispered, we ran deeper into the forest and individually hid behind the trees. I can see Julia shaking like a leaf, I can feel my breathing start to shake a bit more. “Someone’s nervous. I can hear y’alls heart beating faster. The smell of your own blood pumping into your veins-“ Olive was cut off mid-sentence by a crackling sound. We turn around to see what else is coming towards us for battle. In the clearing, we see Lyra come out of the shadow to face Olive herself. Olive chuckles “It’s been a long time coming, Lyra. How would you like to be the last ingredient?” she said, extending her arms with a creepy smile.

Lyra smirks and says in Irish “Cuimhnign or mar feadh na gceadta bliain” which translate to ‘remember me for centuries’ in a fast paste. Lyra’s eyes glow red, her veins are creating electric shocks, then we see her claps her hands together and the sound of laser beams come out from her hands and creating flames.

The ground begins to rumble as we see Olive seize in anger. “You evil little…” and shoots all the electric globes towards Lyra.

4:10 am

Lyra dodges behind the large rock for protection, you can hear the shock waves vibrate and the ground begins to shake. “That’s it, I’m jumping in. You two will grab the ropes from that pole and snatch the duffle bag from the truck, it should already have special equipment ready to be use.” Julia said as we watch her levitate a few large rocks and swung them at Olive. Olive senses them and drew a force field around her body. Lyra ignites the rocks that have fallen, they burst into flames as Julia starts spinning them into a ring of fire and continues to fight off that evil witch.

“This would be a good time to start setting stuff up.” I said. Andy nodded and we hurried back to the truck. “Let’s drive back down to the forest and then put the stuff together.” He suggested. We hopped into the truck and went downhill on the other side of the lake. I can still see lights shimmering across the water and flames flying into the air. Once we parked by the lamp post, Andy opened the back of the truck and tosses the duffle bag to me. “Go fetch the ropes over there and meet me by this tree.” I said. Andy looks at the fight scene to make sure Olive is still distracted. I grabs the heavy ropes and drags them to the new spot.

I unzip the bag to find a weird looking gun. I pull it out and it weighs about 20 pounds, lights wrap around the rim, and I check to see where the bullets will be place, yet no compartments. I look to see if there’s a special bullet hiding in the bag and I come across a folded up manual on how to use it. The manual describes it as multi-purpose weapon used to catch a group of thieves and it will trigger the rope into a tight grip. “Ok, give me the rope and step back a little so I have better aim.” I said, instructing Andy to let the process begin.

Right as were about to get into position, in the corner of my eye, I see Julia levitate by Olive. “Huh, what did I say earlier about controlling your powers young lady?” as she continues to bring Julia closer to her. “Aaron seemed to have passed on this irritable gene, did you know that making fun of others with this kind of power, have the ability to turn their heart ugly? Like this face of yours.” She said, grazing her sharp talons across her face, at the last second, she scratches her cheek near her right eye. Julia whimpers in pain. “Now!!” I yelled, launching the gun towards Olive, she lets go of Julia, hitting the cold water and making us land against the truck door. The ropes are wrapping Olive’s body from shoulder down, seeing it get tighter the more she moves and we watch her struggle to get out.

I quickly take off my shoes and dive into the dark lake to try and save Julia. I see her sinking and grab her arm to pull her up. We reach the surface and she begins to cough up some of the water she swallowed. I got us back to shore and we both lay on our backs to regroup. My arms are still pumping from swimming too hard and my heart is beating fast from that adrenaline rush. “Thank you…Archer…for saving me.” She said by coughing in between each word. She rolled over and gave me a big wet kiss with a hug. Still shocked, we got up and ran over to Andy hiding behind the trees. “Y’all good?” he asked, Julia gave him a thumbs up.

“Stop moving, you’re useless, cruel, and someone one who wishes a life full of evil, when in return, nothing is justifiable. You did it for your own sake, not your child.” Lyra said, her powers were starting to build up as we see the flames get bigger, filled with anger every step she took. “Be thankful that the women that suffered and tried to solve my spell, in fact, I did my best to make sure that-“ Olive was cut off. “No! you did your best for no one. I did my best to see my family be happy after what we’ve been through. Being stuck in the past will not make you move on, it swallows you whole.” Lyra said. Then, I see two hazy looking figures show up next to Lyra, Olive looks surprised and scared to see them. “Oh my goodness, it’s them! I can hear their thoughts, they’re plotting something huge.” Andy said excitedly.

Crackling noise coming from behind and a ball of fire increases it size. Hearing that laser sound again when all three of them release the big ball of fire at Olive. She’s screaming in pain and laughing at them thinking there’s no way it will work. Too late. Her skin begins to split open, revealing blue light that’s slowly exposing her true crime. BOOM! Olive exploded with an echo of her screams. All the souls inside of her are finally free, the sun rises and giving us a clear view, letting us know that it’s over.

Lyra turns to thank us, but surprise to see Stephanie and Aaron smiling at her, thanking her for setting them free. They hugged her and disappeared into thin air. She turns to look at us, giving us a sigh of relief, the sun lights up her eyes as the calmness takes over.

The curse is officially broken…forever.

Epilogue: Lyra

April 12, 2019

Getting out of the limo that’s picked us up by my house, news reporters swarm us, asking us ‘thoughts on the witch’ ‘who’s the new owner of the house’ ‘will we be apart of a ghost team for the town’, etc. After everything calmed down from being mauled by the reporters, we enter the back of the court house to meet with historical coordinator, Mr. Hawk. Mr. Black helped arranged a meeting with him to finally honker down the truth behind our family ties. Once we got cleared from security, Mr. Hawk dressed in his best attire, greeted us. “You must be Mr. Hawk, I’m Lyra Jones and this is Andy McCourt. We can’t thank you enough for allowing us to come in on such short notice.” I said after shaking his hand. “No, no, thank you! I’ve always wanted to be assigned to y’all case since it was officially solved three years ago.” He said with a smile. “Follow me, were going to take a detour.” We followed him to the back door, it was a short stair well that led us to the basement that holds all original files, dating back early as 1690.

“Have a seat and here are some gloves for you two to put on.” He handed us surgical gloves as Andy pulls out his new camera, ready to capture what we find that maybe useful for the museum. Mr. Hawk walks over to one of the shelves, pulling out a medium size box covered in dust and has tap wrapped around it for protection. “Mr. Black actually found these documents while cleaning the mansion and thankfully he decided to put it together in this box, for us to look at it later. As you can see, he found the documents sometime in September of 1991.” Mr. Hawk says, showing us proof of the date, letting us know nothing has been tampered with.

He carefully opens the box and pulled out three files containing a list of birth/death certificates, leases for each mansion in the McCourt lot, and blueprints for the land. As I’m going through the list of dates from each page, I come across a very odd document, there were two of them stuck together with the same name ‘Stephanie Jones’ and ‘Stephanie Cotton’. “Mr. Hawk, can you explain to me why Stephanie has two copies of her birth certificate and not just one?” I asked, handing him the papers. He pulled out his glasses from his polo jacket and gets a closer look at the documents. “Oh yes I remember! You see, Stephanie was actually adopted at the age of seven by her next door neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Landon Jones.” He puts the paper down and took a seat in front us to continue the story.

“ Stephanie and her family immigrated from Cuba, since her father was a famous biology professor and got a raise from a job here. Since they were foreign to the town, they decided it was best to go ahead and create will, just in case they run into trouble and gave permission to their next door neighbor to adopt their child. Two years later, her parents died in a carriage accident when they were leaving a party. The Jones didn’t find out until the next morning what happened to them. So they helped Stephanie move next door to them and went through adoption.” He said. That’s really wild to hear! It all make sense now, looking at the old picture of who I thought were my relatives, are actually her adopted parents.

“So what you’re saying is that Stephanie is not their actual daughter and Olive was trying to get rid of her based on her race and not her class?” Andy asked. “Correct. Not to mention, the McCourt family actually welcomed her and wanted her to become friends with Aaron, who had trouble socializing. This also means you two are not closely related, more like tenth cousin removed since Stephanie and Aaron’s daughter, Angel Rose, never married and had twin boys you two know of.” He said. He got out of his chair and removed his gloves. “You two are more than welcome to spend your time exploring the box, I’m going to grab a cup of joe. Call if you need anything.” He said, walking away towards the stairwell.

“This is amazing, yet crazy at the same time. How are you feeling about this news?” Andy asked. “Honestly, relieved and excited about what we’ve found so far. I had a hunch that we were related and how our families don’t match each other.” I said as we continue to examine the documents. “If it isn’t too much to ask and since we finally graduated, would you want go…umm…well.” Andy stuttered. “I would love to have dinner with you.” I said, winking at him. I think he blushed a little and smiled. The three of us finally opened up our own company this past winter, focusing on our towns cases that need to be solve. Once in a while, I can feel my body tingle if a ghost is nearby and maybe…just maybe…she’s still here.

Characters

* Lyra Jones (January 15, 1996-)
* Powers to see the past during present time, even in her sleep.
* Strawberry Blonde hair to her elbows
* 5’1; Hazel Brown eyes
* Lightly tanned skin
* Andy McCourt (April 4, 1996-)
* Powers to read minds.
* Dark Brown hair
* 6’0; Violet Blue eyes
* Dark tan skin
* Julia McCourt (June 10, 1997-)
* Has telekinesis and has the same curse as Aunt Olive
* Black and Blue hair elbow length
* 5’4; Dark Blue eyes
* Fair skin
* Olive McCourt (October 23, 1666-December 28, 1801)
* Lived to be 135 years of age due to a spell she created, until she killed herself to live onto the next generation.
* Silver hair
* 5’9; Blackish Brown eyes
* Light fair skin
* Stephanie Jones (August 24, 1700- June 3, 1723)
* Eloped with Aaron McCourt
* A daughter name Angel Rose, had her when she was 22
* Her family owns a cotton field factory
* A diary with hidden documents
* Light Brown hair
* 5’2; Light Brown eyes
* Light tan skin
* Aaron McCourt (Deceber 12, 1699-July 30, 1723)
* Eloped with Stephanie
* Has a daughter named Angel Rose
* Black hair
* 6’0; Blue eyes
* Dark tan skin
* Manny Black (November 3, 1981-)
* Caretaker of the McCourt Family Manor
* Friends with Andy and Julia’s grandpa
* He and his wife had Archer when they were 16.
* Black short hair
* 5’8; Green eyes
* Fair skin
* Archer Black (June 22, 1997-)
* Son of Manny Black
* Into rock and roll music
* Straight A student
* Blonde and Black hair
* 5’11; Greyish eyes
* Fair skin