

JODI MAY'S



HSA vs IT

Copyright © 2020 Jodie May Mullen

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the author, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

*All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental*

## FOREWORD & DISCLAIMER

First and foremost, I do not own the characters of 'IT' nor the original concept. All rights remain with the original author, Stephen King. It's important to note that this is a homage to the original story, which happens to be my favourite book. I was inspired by every single page and read it once a year, every summer, to be whisked away to Derry all over again. It occurred to me, after the two recent films (I prefer the 1990's television series) that a lot of people love the story and adore 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' but they never get the chance to read the book. Put off by its length, they miss out on the magic of the tale as King wrote it. With this crossover homage fan fiction I wanted to bring a piece of that magic (and horror) to life and it's my hope, above all, that I'll be able to encourage just one person to pick up the original book.

Secondly, the '*Hillside Academy*' characters featured in this fan fiction are all my own. The only character I took from King's story was 'Pennywise'. The rest are mine and all belong to me by law. I will also add that much of the main characters' backstories have been changed to fit this specific 'alternative universe' and several of the minor characters of the story have also been altered. To conclude, there are no spoilers to the main '*Hillside Academy*' series. Rather, it is a way for me to highlight the main eight (Erika, Dominic, Sam, Anna, Emily, Will, Elivia and Tom) in this horror fan fiction that is dedicated to not only Stephen King for inspiring me to keep writing all these years, but also to the people of Lancaster, Lancashire.

Thus bringing me to the penultimate point of this disclaimer. Throughout the book, Lancaster is referred to not always kindly and sometimes in a negative light. This is fiction. I wanted to set this gruesome fan fiction homage in this city because for one, it's truly beautiful and has a rich, fantastic history, and secondly, because I love it. I moved here just over two years ago and fell quickly in love with the history and architecture. My babies were born here and in a way, so was I. By leaving the place I grew up and all its ghosts, I was liberated. This city has quickly become not the place I was raised but the place I was born. And the people? The people of Lancaster are wonderful. They're community-orientated, kind and generous, and during a rather arduous period, the community of Greaves specifically aided us greatly. My partner and I are eternally grateful for their generosity and kindness during this time and this is my strange way of saying thank you; of bringing Lancaster to the forefront again and displaying it in all its glory. So whatever you may read, remember it is fiction and that Lancaster, UK is my favourite place in the world. So to the people of Lancaster, thank you.

And last but not least, a disclaimer to say that the content of this chapter and all the following contain strong language, violence against children, sexual references, scenes of gore and peril and is quite frankly inappropriate for young readers or anyone easily offended. But if this is all to your taste, go ahead and read.

I hope you enjoy reading this 'alternative universe' fan fiction homage as much as I enjoyed writing it. All comments are welcome (though don't be mean), shares are encouraged and remember –

Once you begin this story...*you'll float too.*

# CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

## The Drain

When Anna closed the door to the police an hour later, she was still pissed off.

“Well I hope you’re all very pleased with yourself,” Anna said, sliding the bolt lock across and going over to panel beside the door to set the outside alarm.

The remaining seven stood in the hallway, all in varying degrees of guilt, shame and upset.

“Delighted,” Sam grunted.

“Fucking victorious,” Dominic grumbled.

“Just fantastic,” Tom murmured.

“I, for one, feel great,” Erika said, still somewhat drunk.

Anna turned on her heel to shoot Erika dirty look. She spotted Erika and Emily’s hands still entwined. “Did you have to *headbutt* her?”

“She had it coming,” Erika replied, suddenly sounding very sober indeed. “Nasty bitch.”

“Yes but not only were the police pissed we were having a party after curfew but now I’m stuck with the lot of you for the night and I’m gonna have to deal with Samantha Rose come September talking about the time someone headbutt her,” Anna huffed. She folded her arms across her chest and viewed the seven of them in turn.

They looked exhausted. Perhaps a party hadn’t been a good idea after all.

“As I said, she was asking for it. If you’d heard the things she was saying to Ems, *our* Ems, you would have done the same – or at least, I hoped you would,” Erika said with a slight sneer to her tone.

Anna dropped her arms. “What the fuck does that mean?”

“Hey! Stop it,” Tom cut in. “There’s been enough arguing tonight. Can we all just chill and try to get some sleep?”

“I’m not tired,” Erika grumbled.

“No, you’re drunk, honey. Go get some water,” Tom said and while it sounded like a kind suggestion, they were all aware it was a gentle command instead.

Releasing Emily’s hand, Erika stalked off to the kitchen, Anna on her tail.

The police had fined her one hundred and fifty pounds for the party. It was a lot but not enough that she had to tell her parents. It was a small price to pay for breaking curfew, considering curfew was put in place to protect people. Then again, if the police truly cared, they would have found the thing killing the children. Or perhaps not. Adults couldn’t seem to see it; as if they’d lost all imagination and, since reaching adulthood, been locked out of the real world altogether. All that mattered to them were their jobs, their bills and satisfying their own personal greed. Why would they be able to see a monster that changes its shape to become your worst nightmare?

After clearing out the party guests, the police had agreed to let Anna’s friends stay the night. Emily had quietly objected to this but was soon soothed when Erika offered to walk her home in the early hours of the morning once it became light, so Rupert wouldn’t even notice she had gone. Anna’s only worry now was cleaning up the wreckage of the party and getting some sleep. She hadn’t even considered where she would put these seven losers tonight.

Following Erika into the kitchen, she found the girl with her head under the tap, cold water pouring straight into her mouth.

“You could have least got a glass out,” Anna tutted, placing one beside Erika and the sink with a firm crash.

“Just more washing up and you’ve got plenty,” Erika said, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. She turned off the tap and watched as Anna swished out a bin bag and set about dumping empty cans and bottles and crisp packets into it. “Can’t you hire someone to do this?”

“Who do you think I am? The Queen?”

“I think you’re a princess,” Erika murmured.

Anna paused in her cleaning to give Erika another sour look. “Just because I don’t live in a squalor, doesn’t mean I’m a princess. I’m not going to apologise for my wealth.”

“And why should you? It’s not like you earned it.”

“If you want to leave, leave!” Anna bellowed, her exhaustion and frustration for the evening getting the better of her.

Erika rested back against the counter, arms folded below her breasts and just above her stomach which had become increasingly larger over the few weeks since Anna met her. Clearly, a few home cooked meals and Erika was filling out.

“I can’t come tomorrow,” Erika said.

Anna stopped once again, crumpling a can of Stella Artois in her grip as she peered across at the girl. “Excuse me?”

“I can’t come.”

“Why not?”

Erika shrugged.

“Well it’s not as if you’ve got something else going on,” Anna huffed, slamming the bin bag down on the kitchen island with a clatter than made herself and Erika wince.

“Fuck off, Anna,” Erika sighed.

“No! No, you don’t get to just pull out. We’re in this together whether we like it or not and you promised!”

“*Pinkie promise?*” Erika mocked. Reaching into her leather jacket pocket, she produced her battered packet of cigarettes. Anna dared her to light one.

Removing one of those white sticks, Erika popped it between her lips and stopped.

“Not got a lighter?” Anna scoffed.

Erika gave another shrug. She crossed the kitchen to the stove where she lit one of the hobs and leant down to those blue flames, which flickered too close to the short strands of her sharply cut hair, lighting the end of her cigarette. With a puff, smoke filled the air. Erika twisted off the flames and turned back to face a seething Anna.

“You know, I’m starting to believe everything I’ve ever heard about you, Waterstone,” Anna hissed.

“Good. It’s all true,” Erika replied, tapping the ash of her cigarette to the floor of the kitchen. “So about Monday, you good going with Sam?”

“No! You said you would come. You said you could pick the lock –.”

“Just smash it open.”

“Are you for real?” Anna said, one hand to the counter to steady herself. “What happened to the girl who was rallying us all together last Sunday? *It started here, it’ll end here. We will end it.* Eh? What happened to that girl? I *liked* that girl.”

“Oh! I’m *so* sorry, Anna,” Erika faked a gasp, her faultless acting never ceasing to surprise and terrify Anna. “*I’m dreadfully sorry!* I’ve let you down? Well, good. We got that over with nice and quickly.”

“Is this because you fucked him?” Anna said as Erika made her way past, still puffing on her cigarette. When Erika ignored her and carried on walking, Anna snatched the cigarette from her clutches and tossed it into the sink.

At once, Erika was in her face and while Anna towered over this girl, in those moments, they were the same height – Erika perhaps taller as she glowered up into Anna’s defiant face.

“I didn’t take you for that type of girl,” Anna said. It took all of her strength to remain calm in the face of Erika’s fury.

She was exactly who they needed to help them fight It. If only Erika could stop behaving this way.

“Yeah? And what type of girl is that?” Erika questioned, her eyes narrow and her face hard.

“A girl who gives a shit.”

“I don’t.”

“About what a man thinks. A *boy*. So what? You fucked him?”

“You don’t get it,” Erika scowled.

“No?” Anna coughed. “You think I don’t get what it feels like? To be used and tossed away like a used condom? You think I don’t get it?” She shook her head, viewing as Erika’s face softened ever so slightly.

Erika realised quickly, like the smart girl she was, that Erika and Anna? They weren’t so different after all.

“Who was it?” Erika asked.

“No one you’d know,” Anna said, her eyes dancing away from Erika’s penetrating stare. “And Sam? Was he the first?”

“No.”

“Didn’t think so.”

“What does that mean?” Erika sneered.

Anna turned back to look at her. “You’ve been hurt before. Used before. You thought you were used to it but the truth is, you’ll never get used to it. You will always feel hurt. Pain. Rejection. Because you’re not a bad person, Erika Waterstone. You’re just a person who’s had bad things done to her.”

“You don’t know shit, princess,” Erika hissed.

Anna didn’t flinch this time. “But I do know, Erika. And the sooner you realise that, whether we like it or not, we’ve all been thrust together for *this* reason. For this purpose. And you can’t walk away from it now. We need you.”

“You can find someone else.”

“No,” Anna interjected, silencing Erika. “No, we need *you*. You’re a fucking bitch but we need you. Now, are you going to help me Monday or not?”

Erika’s mouth twisted with thought. Her focus drifted away as a shadow passed across those emerald eyes. Eyes which revealed such devastation and horror, it made Anna’s life look like a picnic.

“Fine. But Sam doesn’t come.”

“Fine.”

“Fine.” At that, Erika left the kitchen, the smoke of her cigarette lingering long after she’d gone.

\*\*\*

“Emily?”

Her ears pricked up at the sound of his voice. It travelled down the garden to where Emily was sat on a bench near a rockery of alpine flowers and plants. It was pretty and no doubt beautiful in the daylight. However, in the shadowy gloom of that July evening, it was just shadows and lumps of blackness behind her.

Soon after the police arrived, Emily had taken herself outside to calm down. Long after the noise of the commotion inside had died down and the party had officially finished, she'd retreated inside to face the music. None of them seemed in the mood to talk and after Erika had stomped off to the kitchen, Emily had returned outside. It was the only place that seemed to make sense then.

Looking up from her handful of torn, sodden tissues, Emily peered at the tall silhouette making its way down the expansive lawn toward her. She knew, without seeing his face, that it was Will. With a snuffle, she wiped her eyes and nose and tried to compose herself. He couldn't see her this way.

“Ems?”

“I'm here,” she called out weakly. She wasn't entirely sure she even wanted to talk to Will but she wouldn't dare tell him to leave. She didn't have that power inside of her.

“Hey.” He came to halt in front of her, hands stuffed into the pockets of his borrowed jeans.

“Hey,” she mumbled.

“Do you want me to walk you home now? So you don't have to wait?”

“No,” she said around a tight swallow. One glance around at the oppressive summer darkness sent shivers across her body. The warm lights shining from Anna's house was a comfort then. No, she didn't want to leave just yet; even if the threat of Rupert discovering she'd snuck out was hanging over her head.

“No, it's okay,” she said more softly upon catching sight of Will's downtrodden expression. She wasn't sure why he cared.

“Okay,” he replied. Chin low, he gestured to the space on the bench beside her.

Awkwardly, Emily shuffled along to make more room, though on this wooden bench there was plenty of room for the both of them to sit comfortably. She needed that space between them now. Being too close would mean reigniting that flare of yearning that had led Emily – *fat Emily Fox* – to believe she was worthy of someone like Will. Last Sunday, she'd been brought back to reality. She didn't need that soul crushing pain again.

“Are you okay?” Will asked after a long period of silence where only the bats above filled that horrendous quiet that occupied the space in between them.



“Fine,” she croaked.

“I saw erm, that girl, you know the one who was chasing you that –.”

“Samantha.”

“Yeah, her. I saw she was –.”

“It doesn’t matter. I’m used to it.” Emily kept her eyes down in her torn tissues. She didn’t want to be talking about this. Not with Will. With him and the others, she had almost forgotten who she was really.

Samantha had been sure to remind her tonight.

Coming to Anna Clearwater’s party had been a mistake. Or perhaps, it was the wakeup call Emily needed. She wasn’t one of them. She never would be.

“You shouldn’t have to be,” Will said.

She felt his gaze on her profile; his penetrating stare that tore through her chest, swollen with upset, and straight to her heart. It was suddenly difficult to breathe and she wished for nothing more than to be alone.

*Fat Emily Fox...*

*Emilia the Pig.*

*Pig...Piggy pig PIG!*

“You shouldn’t have to put up with it,” Will said again, sounding oddly frustrated this time.

Emily looked up from her tissues to see his gaze had moved away from her and was cast outwards across the shadowy lawn. From this distance, she could just about make out the line of tall fir trees which marked the edge of the property before the tall brick walls. There could be anyone or anything stood there watching them and the two teenagers wouldn’t know.

Another wave of shivers passed across Emily’s body, every hair standing to attention as Will twisted around to look at her. Long forgotten was the treeline as Emily stared back into his kind cinnamon coloured eyes.

“You’re stronger than all of them bitches put together. And it’s about time they knew that,” Will said.

“You don’t get it,” Emily spluttered, hardly able to believe what she’d just done. Closing her mouth, she blinked quickly as her breaths came in short raspy bursts. “You don’t have to live in that hell.”

“You don’t think I know what *hell* is?” Will said, his eyes darkening with anguish.

“No, I didn’t mean that –.”

“I know what hell is, Emily. I know what it feels like to be stared at like I’m different, like I’m worthless. To be treated like I’m nothing but a dog. But I don’t stand for it! I don’t just lay there and take it!”

Emily chewed on her bottom lip to stifle the onrush of hysterics as Will's voice grew louder and louder.

"You need to fight," he panted, his wide eyes searching her face contorted with hurt. "You need to stand up for yourself."

"I try," she squeaked. "It's not easy."

"No, it's not," Will said softly this time as he closed that gap between them. "But you're strong, Emily Fox. And it hurts me that you don't know that."

"Hurts *you*?"

"Yes – it hurts –."

Will didn't get a chance to finish his words before a loud gurgle of water broke them out of this private moment.

Like a great burp, followed by an earth-shuddering rumble that shook the bench the two teenagers sat upon. Neither one moved as their focuses slipped from each other's faces and turned once again to that treeline. It wasn't the shadows of those formidable fir trees that drew their attention, but that black outline of something odd looking; something completely foreign in amongst all this greenery.

A drain.

The metal of which glimmered in the silver moonlight. The rumble, the great yawn of water – that dread-inducing noise – it was coming from the drain and before either Will or Emily could say or do anything, the drain lid began to move.

With a gruesome, long drawn scrape of metal across metal, the heavy drain lid slid backwards to reveal a fathomless black hole. Like a wound in the earth, it would weep.

Ooze a slick silhouette that slithered out, scaled arms first, claws dragging its cumbersome body out of the drain and onto the manicured lawn of Anna Clearwater's family home. And yet still, Emily and Will didn't move. Couldn't find it in their bones to run – to get out of there!

*"William...sweet William...Emilia...fat Emilia Fox...I'll strip the meat from your bones and lay your skeletons together... Would you like that?"*

"Will," Emily stuttered, reaching for his hand on the bench beside her.

He grasped it strongly, his large body trembling as he sat on the edge of that wooden bench ready to take flight and yet paralysed in his fear, in their shared terror as the Merman slid and wriggled toward them, its red stringy hair hanging down across its grisly grotesque face.

"Will," Emily squeaked, "that's it. That's what I saw. It's come – *It's come.*"

It was these words that snapped Will out of whatever trance he'd fallen into; whatever haze or manipulated stupor he'd been caged by. It was Emily's fear that pushed back Its tendrils around him and made him move.

Grabbing Emily's hand, he practically pulled her arm from its socket as he yanked her to her feet.

"Run! Towards the house!" Will bellowed, attention solely on the Merman slithering its way towards him with impressive pace, hissing between its pointed razor sharp teeth –

*"William...come here...let me feast on your flesh!"*

"No!" Emily didn't move. She stayed right behind him, fiddling with the front of her dress.

Will didn't have the same amount of faith in that golden cross as Emily and the ball of tin foil in his fist didn't seem like enough tonight. This thing – they'd outrun It too many times and from the looks of Its ravenous expression, drool hanging in sticky dribbles from its lips peeled back from its shark-like teeth, wouldn't let them get away as easily tonight.

"Get back!" Will said, pushing Emily behind him as he reached for the back of the bench.

Perhaps any other fourteen year old boy would have struggled to uproot a heavy solid wooden bench from where it had sat for the past twenty years. Perhaps they would have given up at the first sign of that Merman, that *thing*, that creature crawling ever closer to him. But not Will. And so as Emily removed the golden cross from the front of her dress and held it up with unwavering belief, Will tore the bench from its spot and launched it towards the Merman with impeccable, frightening strength.

*"Run!"* Will roared back at Emily.

Yet still she didn't move. She continued to stand there, silhouetted in the warm lights of the house where their other friends emerged to witness the commotion. She held up that cross, eyes closed and possessing every ounce of her faith in those seconds.

To Will, she was the strongest person he knew. If only she realised. If only she knew what kind of courage she possessed as she stood in the face of the monster – a creature that could bat away an entire wooden bench with a wave of Its hand.

They'd run out of time. It was coming. And there was nothing they could do to stop It.

"Emily!" Will yelled, the world slowing down in those seconds as the Merman turned all of Its attention to Emily.

*My Emily.*

It slithered. It wriggled and crawled. It pulled Itsself through the grass with such pace Will was certain It would take her. It would get to her first.

*Over my dead body.*

Propelling himself forwards, Will snatched Emily out of the pathway of It, just as Its scaled hands caressed the pretty floral skirt of her dress. With an oomph and a breathless exhale from Emily's lips, Will grasped her around the waist and hauled them both toward the house; toward the comfort of the lights and away from It – away from the gaping wound in the earth that threatened to swallow them all. And he didn't look back.

Mustering all of his strength into keeping Emily in his clutches, Will sped toward the house, up the small incline and onto the patio. And just as he felt the warmth of the house stroke his face, as though teasing him with its safety, Will felt something tight around his ankle.

The ground slipped out from underneath him.

Emily toppled onto the patio as Will chucked her away from It and into the safety of their friends. It brought him small comfort, the sight of them all stood there, watching as he was dragged backwards across the lawn on his front, the Merman's claws piercing the skin of his calf.

"Will!" Emily screamed, her shrill howl piercing the night.

Falling to her front on the patio, she grasped his outstretched hand and held on. The exertion and power was almost too much; she felt her fingers slipping through Will's as she stared down into his terrified eyes and pleaded her to hold on.

*Don't let go!*

"Will!" she squeaked just as their fingers lost grip.

But before the Merman could take him and devour him, Sam's hand was reaching forwards, grabbing Will's wrist. Then Dominic's; his fist in Will's t-shirt at his shoulder, dragging him away from the Merman, who still didn't relinquish Its hold on their friend. Soon, Anna and the rest were throwing themselves forward, grabbing parts of Will – his arm, the back of his t-shirt, his shoulders and even Emily herself who got a hold of his hand once again and pulled.

They pulled with all their might; withstanding the pain through gritted teeth and howls of exertion as Will beseeched through his tears to –

"Please! Don't let me go! *Don't let me go!*"

Through his screeches of agony as the Merman's purchase on him loosened, Its claws dragging through his trouser leg and down to his skin; dragging deep gaping gashes as proof of Its effort. As a mark.

*I almost had you.*

*And next time, you won't be as lucky.*

Like that, the Merman let go. They didn't win. It let them have Will. It let him go.

For now.

As they hauled Will onto the patio, into the light, the eight gathered close on their knees and backsides, gripping onto Will and each other and watching as It wriggled backwards across the lawn towards the drain leaving a sticky, slimy trail on the grass like a slug. With a slick oozing sound, It sloshed back into the drain. With a painful, ear-splitting shudder, the drain lid closed and all was once again silent.

All but for Emily's tears.

"I thought I'd lost you," she sobbed, throwing her arms around his shoulders.

Will accepted the embrace, burying his face deep into her hot neck. The throbbing ache in his leg, the blood pouring onto Anna's patio, none of that seemed relevant then as Emily Fox held him in her tender grasp. The pain, it all disappeared for those minutes as Will lay in her embrace, surrounded by his friends. The people who had saved him.

His family.

"I thought – I thought – I'd lost – you," Emily hiccupped, cupping his face in her dirty hands.

He gazed up into her eyes and shook his trembling head. "I'm here."

For as long as Emily Fox was in his life, Will wasn't going anywhere.

\*\*\*

"Why didn't you just run?" Sam tutted.

"Yeah? What did you think you were gonna do? Kill off an ancient all-powerful god-like creature with a bench?" Dominic teased, sitting on the sofa across from where Emily was treating the gruesome wound on Will's leg.

It was late and while it was the same night as the party, it felt distant now. All of Anna's effort to try to help them forget for one night had been in vain. *It* had made sure they could never forget.

"It was worth a try," Will said with a wince as Emily dabbed an antiseptic-sodden piece of cotton wool over the deep gashes on his calf; his foot propped up on the coffee table and several towels beneath to protect the carpet.

*Bad enough you bled on the patio*, Anna had tsked when the boys had carried him in. As annoyed as she had been, no one dared go outside again. She had locked and set the alarms. No one was leaving until dawn.

"You were almost killed," Erika said from her position on the arm of the sofa, a cigarette between her fingers.

Anna had given up trying to stop them from smoking. After all, they'd just faced *It* and almost lost one of their own. A cigarette was the least they could do to steady their nerves. Anna had even cracked open one of her dad's bottles of priceless whisky. She hated the taste but it calmed her as she sat on the coffee table, legs crossed and watching as Emily and Tom cleaned and treated the gut-wrenching wounds on Will's leg. She'd given him a whisky too; for pain relief.

"We've all almost died," Tom said, "but we learnt something tonight."

"What?" Elivia asked from the armchair. She was almost as pale as her hair.

"The drains," Dominic spoke up from beside Sam on the sofa. He looked from each of them as Tom nodded keenly.

“The drains,” Emily sighed, sitting back on her legs, a bloody ball of cotton wool in her hand. “Of course! How could I have missed that?”

“Someone explain?” Sam urged, pointedly ignoring Erika who rolled her eyes behind his back.

“Think about it. Where did my brother die?” Dominic said.

“The drain on Bridge Road,” Sam replied.

“And what connects all of these places?” Dominic asked them all.

“The sewers?” Anna suggested.

“It’s how It moves. Don’t you remember in that vision the Witches showed us?” Dominic said, moving to the edge of his seat, colour returning to his cheeks. “It landed here. It was buried here. It’s beneath us.”

Slowly, their eyes drifted down to the plush carpet beneath their feet. Elivia tucked her legs up beneath her and Emily shifted awkwardly where she knelt on the floor.

“That’s where we find It,” Dominic said.

“In the sewers?” Elivia grimaced.

“We can’t just crawl into a drain,” Anna scoffed.

“I, for one, wouldn’t fit,” Sam smirked, though no one laughed. All their attention stayed upon Dominic, but it was Tom who spoke.

“The old pumping station.”

“Where?” Elivia frowned.

“Near the asylum. Remember? I pointed it out to you that day? And the photo? It was there with us that day after the rock fight,” Tom said, recalling his last experience with It in his very own bathroom. He shuddered and received a weary reassuring pat on the back from Will who looked ready to pass out.

“This needs stitches,” Emily mumbled to herself as Tom went on.

“It must have access to the sewers,” Tom said.

“I hate that place,” Erika shivered.

“And why do you think that is?” Sam said with a slight sneer to his lips.

“Because that’s where It lives. And that’s where we need to go,” Dominic said quickly before Erika and Sam could bicker. They had more important things to consider than a lover’s quarrel.

“And the knife? We still need that?” Anna said, hoping Dominic would say no, though she already knew she was lying to herself.

“It’s key,” Emily nodded.

“Right.” Anna downed the glass of whisky with a grimace. “Castle, dagger, pumping station then sewers.”

“Sounds delightful,” Sam smirked and this time, there was a small unison of titters.

Frightened titters. Nervous chuckles. For now they had the where, they needed the knife. And once they had that, there would be nothing stopping them.

It was time to kill It. Once and for all.