

CURSED



Ashley Elder

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by

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Dedication/Acknowledgments

I want to dedicate this book to a few special people in my life. First off, my mom, I want to thank her for raising me right and for all of her reinforcement and encouragement throughout this process. I would have never had the courage to share my creativity with the world without her. Also to my husband, thank you for all of your love and support. And most importantly, to the Lord, without Him none of this is possible.

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Prologue

Allie Jacobs is a twenty-one year old college student engaged to her high school sweetheart, Riley. She's lived her entire life in Charleston, South Carolina. What she doesn't know is that on her sixth birthday her mother, Leah, who is a witch, put a curse on her.

The curse predestines Allie to fall in love with and marry the great sorcerer Darmouth's son at the age of twenty-one.

Long ago, Darmouth had been in love with Leah and wanted her to be with him, even though he was already married. Leah, however, was in love with a human, which was then forbidden in the kingdom. She married him in secret and became pregnant with his child, Allie.

Darmouth's wife, Gisella, a vampire, was also pregnant at the time with a son later to be named Aiden.

Because Leah betrayed Darmouth, he made her promise to place a curse on her daughter or he

would find the child and kill her. He also forbid her to have contact with her husband ever again, or he would kill him as well.

Gisella, unaware that such an agreement had taken place, despised Leah because she knew Darmouth loved her. She took advantage of Darmouth's anger and ordered that Leah be banished from the kingdom in England and sent to the United States.

Leah is distraught because she knows the curse will take effect soon and Darmouth's son will find Allie.

Meanwhile, Gisella found out about the curse and will do anything to stop Aiden and Allie from being together.

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Chapter 1

Stranger

It was 6:30, Monday morning, and I awoke to a persistent beeping noise going off beside my head. I opened my eyes with regret and remembered it was the first day of the second semester of school.

“Oh, yay.”

It’s my junior year at the College of Charleston. Unfortunately, I have a year and a half of school left. Trust me, I’m counting. As I sat up and stretched I saw light streaming from under the bathroom door. Evidently Madison was already up, stealing all the hot water.

Madison is my college roommate and my best friend since kindergarten. To say we’re inseparable is an understatement. Of course, if you look at us separately, you would never put us together. Madison is a 5’6”, blond-haired, blue-eyed beauty queen and she’s on the dance team here at school. Her parents

have tons of money and love to spend it on her. She lives for shopping and looks like a supermodel every time she walks out the door.

On the other hand, I'm 5'8" with brown hair, brownish-green eyes, a girl next door look and an okay fashion sense. I grew up on a farm, love horses and ride on the championship equestrian team here at school. So you see, we are two very different people, beautiful dancer and average horse-girl; best friends forever.

I rolled out of bed and went to the closet to pick out my clothes for the day, settling for my favorite jeans, a purple turtleneck sweater, and my reasonable black flats, cute and simple. Of course, Madison had bought a brand new outfit for the first day back to school ... so lame.

She finally opened the bathroom door and brought all the steam into the room with her.

"Good morning, Sunshine," she said cheerfully.

I grunted back.

Another little side note, Madison's a very cheerful person, which includes mornings. Her cheer had been sidetracked for a while, though. We were in an accident over winter break; she was driving and totaled her car. We both came out fine, not a scratch on us. Of course, her parents bought her a brand new car right before we started back to school, so her cheer returned.

I, on the other hand, need a couple hours before even an ounce of cheer comes out. I grabbed my clothes, brushed past her and headed into the

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bathroom to take my lukewarm shower. It actually turned out a little warmer than usual, which I'll take as a sign that today won't be so bad after all. I stepped out of the shower and rubbed my hand across the mirror, erasing the fog and stared at my reflection.

"Allie, you're so plain." My hair just hangs there, wet and tangled. I'm skinny, not a lot of curves, and the only really pretty thing about me, in my opinion, is the necklace I never take off. It's a silver cross, well, a cross shape made out of two long ovals, nothing special, just pretty.

My mother gave it to me on my sixth birthday and I haven't taken it off since. I don't know why, I just can't take it off. She says it's because it's a part of me now and I wouldn't be whole without it, whatever that means. She says some really random things at times, but she's my mom and I love her.

After snapping back to reality, I put my clothes on and ran a brush through my wet hair to get the tangles out. I walked back into the room and saw Madison applying her makeup. She wore a skintight cream-colored sweater-dress with a brown belt, brown leggings and brown high heeled boots. She looked hot and I looked boring.

"You like my new outfit?"

"Yeah, you look great." *If you're going out on a runway for Ralph Lauren.* I have to remember she's my best friend because otherwise I'd want to slap the perfectness right out of her. As a non-violent person, that thought shakes right out of my head.

After putting on my makeup and blow-drying my hair straight, Madison and I headed to our favorite coffee joint before going to first class.

My phone beeped in my bag. The message on the screen made me smile. *mornin c u @ the spot n 5*

“Let me guess. Riley’s meeting you for coffee.” Madison whined, rolling her eyes.

“Jealous much?”

“Why would I be jealous of a twenty-one year old in college who’s engaged when there are so many lovely boys here to have fun with?”

I just laughed at her jabbing comment. Madison wasn’t exactly the long-term relationship type. We had an inside joke for her, *always a bridesmaid, never a bride*, and that’s how she liked it.

On the other hand, I’ve dated Riley for five years, through most of high school and now college. He is extremely sweet, understanding, and considerate; the list goes on and on. I have never met a guy quite like him and that’s why I love him so much. He’d asked me to marry him on my twenty-first birthday last October and I accepted under the condition of a long engagement. No one got too hysterical about the whole thing because I keep my word.

We got to the coffee shop and smooshed ourselves inside. It was definitely the first day back at school. A good hundred people crowded into a place meant for fifty. I inched my way to the counter to

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place my order. Before I even opened my mouth, someone yelled my name.

“Allie, Allie, over here.”

I stood on my tiptoes and glanced over the room. A large hand with an even larger cup of coffee rose above the crowd. I’d recognize that hand anywhere - it was Riley’s. He made his way through the mass of people with a cup in each hand.

“Here, I already got yours. I didn’t want you to have to wait for all these people.”

Riley was your classic surfer good looking guy, tall, blond hair, blue eyes, chiseled build, and yes, he was on the school’s surf team. “Thanks, that was sweet.”

I kissed him on the cheek, took my cup and inhaled the magnificent aroma. Coffee is my vice, one of them, though I don’t have many. I don’t drink, smoke, do drugs or sleep around.

Even though she can be odd at times, my mother instilled strong morals in raising me. There are three things that *must* be in my life: coffee, sunbathing, and horses. Oh, and the occasional shopping trip with Madison.

Madison joined us after getting her order and we maneuvered our way back outside. It was a chilly morning, about forty-five degrees and the hot coffee was welcome. I cannot wait for summer. With coffee in hand, we headed to the other side of campus and our first class of the day. Madison had Anatomy. Riley, being a year older and beyond his core classes, had Business, and I had Calculus.

He was the first to branch off from the group while Madison and I headed to the Math and Science building. Her class was on the first floor and mine on the second, so after dropping her off, I walked up stairs.

As the third person in the room, the choice of seats was mine, and a good thing, because the one I picked would stay mine for the rest of the semester. My choice is always in the far back corner, but it's not so I can fall asleep. Just being a back-row Baptist kinda gal.

I took my seat and finished my coffee while looking out the window. It's amazing that it was so cold out there with all that sunshine. Did I mention I cannot wait for summer? The class started to fill as it neared eight o'clock.

The professor walked in right before the bell rang.

"Good morning, everyone. I am Professor Clark. Welcome to Calculus 102. Please get settled while I pass out the syllabus."

The professor walked to each desk and handed out the syllabus individually instead of giving a stack to the first person of every row to pass back. He returned to his desk and there was a knock at the door.

"Come in."

The door opened and a guy stepped into the room. I was too busy getting my books to pay attention to him. Then I heard the girls in the room whispering.

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When I did glance up at the stranger, my heart stopped. He was a little over six feet tall, with dark disheveled hair and liquid blue eyes. He wore faded jeans, a grey sweater and a black wool coat.

Why am I paying attention to all of this?

Who knew, but I couldn't look away. It was like I had to take in every part of him. I felt my heart pounding and for some reason my necklace seemed hot on my skin. *That's weird.*

I snapped back to reality when Professor Clark finally spoke. "And you are?"

"Aiden. Aiden Drake. Sorry, I just transferred here and I'm still trying to find my way around."

His voice sent chills down my spine. He wasn't from around here because he sounded British or something.

"Okay, Mr. Drake, you can take a seat by, ah, what's your name, dear?"

Was he talking to me? If so, I needed to speak and wondered if any sound would come out.

"Allie," I squeaked. *Oh, that's cute. I sounded like a countrified little mouse.*

"Yes, yes, Mr. Drake, take the desk by Allie, thank you."

Aiden stared straight through me, not like he didn't see me, but more like his eyes wanted to burn a hole in my skull. He had the strangest expression on his face. It was a look of recognition, almost. Okay, maybe that's my imagination. He probably just needs glasses or something and wanted to see which seat he'd been assigned.

Well, whatever it was, he wouldn't stop looking at me. He came closer and closer and wouldn't take his eyes off me, but what made me stare back, unable to look away? My mind worked, but my body did not.

He took the seat next to me and I actually felt the heat coming off of him. Or maybe it was just me. I don't know, but my necklace seemed determined to burn a hole through my skin, and as I pulled it out of my sweater, his eyes widened.

He stared intently at the necklace for a moment, pursing his lips as if studying it and then he turned away. What was his problem? What was my problem, for that matter?

I decided to focus on Calculus and act like Mr. Drake was not there. At least that's what I kept telling myself. It was the longest hour in recorded history and feeling him stare at me like he wanted to enter my soul unnerved me. I needed to ask him if he had an eye problem when class was over, something, anything just to talk to him.

Maybe he thinks I'm someone else or something about me reminds him of someone. This was probably all in my head. It does get crazy in there sometimes.

When the bell rang, everyone jumped up and ran out the door except Aiden. I put everything in my backpack, including my courage to actually speak to him, and started to get up to leave. He grabbed my arm and pulled me back into my seat.

"Hey! What's your problem?" Shocked, I yelled at him, pulling my arm away.

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“I didn’t mean to startle you, sorry. It’s just, well hi. I’m Aiden.”

“Look, I don’t know where you’re from, but around here we don’t go grabbing people by the arm and jerking them down in their seat when we want to introduce ourselves.” I snapped at him, not sure about my hostility, although he did kind of hurt me and I do not put up with that.

“I’m sorry. Can we start again?” He extended his hand. “I’m Aiden.”

“Allie,” I said, taking his hand.

We touched and it was like a lightning bolt struck us. My face went up in flames, my heart thudded out of my chest, and the heat from my necklace burned through the top of my sweater. I pulled back quickly. He jerked his hand away and ran it through his hair. He was gorgeous.

We stared at each other for a few awkward moments before he broke the silence. “Umm, where are you headed next?”

“Economics.”

“Oh, me, too. Do you mind walking together? I don’t know my way around.”

“I told my friend, Madison, I would meet her after class.”

“Oh, okay. Can you tell me where I need to go, then?”

“You can just come with me, I guess. We’ll meet up with Madison and then go from there.”

I’d already regretted that decision because Madison would be all over Aiden like a lion attacking its prey. Not that I cared or anything.

Aiden smiled and we made our way back down to the first floor. Madison stood at the bottom of the stairs, and when she looked up and saw me, she also saw Aiden standing next to me. Her eyes got huge, like they were going to burst out of her head.

“Hey, Madi, this is Aiden. He’s a transfer student in my Calculus class. Aiden this is Madison,” I said, getting the introductions out of the way.

Aiden said a polite hello while Madison flicked her hair and smiled her flirty smile. I rolled my eyes and began to walk.

“So, Allie, what class does Riley have next?”

That was her less than subtle way of making sure Aiden knew I was taken so that she could move in for the kill. Even though she’s my best friend, she can be annoying at times. “Not sure. Probably won’t see him again until lunch.”

She stared at me, china-blue eyes wide.

We dropped Madison off and headed to Economics. It was pretty much a repeat of our last class. Aiden sat beside me again and bored more holes into the side of my head.

Why did I even notice him? Well, when a ridiculously gorgeous guy stares at me, it’s very hard to pay attention to anything else. I sat there wondering if I looked all right, and acted like I was listening to the teacher. Every once in a while, I’d scribble a few things in my notebook, like I was taking notes.

The bell rang, but I remained seated, wanting to avoid being slammed into my chair again.

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Aiden smiled as though he could read my mind. “I won’t do that again. I promise.”

“Do what?”

“You’re afraid I’ll pull you down in your seat, but it won’t happen again, promise.”

“Oh, I wasn’t thinking about that.”

“So, what do you have next?”

“History, unfortunately,”

“Me, too. You don’t like history?”

“I find it kind of boring.”

He smiled and the room lit up. “You’d be surprised at how interesting the past can be.”