

The Holden Hall

Eden Diaz wasn't too happy about how she'd ended up spending her winter break.

About a few steps in front of her, Maia Williams stood chatting to the women at the front desk, good-naturedly. They were laughing about something, and Eden had a sinking feeling it was her.

Eden shuffled around, wrapping her scarf tighter around her neck. *Does this place even have heating?* she thought.

Maia turned around, she seemingly only remembered Eden was there.

"Jo! Meet my good friend Eden. Eden, say hi!"

Eden murmured a quick hello, her cheeks flushing.

The woman, Jo, looked at Eden with a small smile. It wasn't a warm one, just one filled to the brim with dry humour.

"I'll show you your rooms now," Jo said suddenly, breaking the silence. "It's getting quite late. Coffee will eventually fail to keep me awake."

"What time is it?" Maia asked, out of curiosity.

Jo chuckled, "4.00 AM. You guys got here pretty late."

"You don't say!" Maia said, rubbing her forehead. "Show us the rooms. We have a whole day of tourist activities tomorrow!"

Jo smiled and nodded, coming out from behind the desk, her green eyes focused on Maia. She trotted on, and both Eden and Maia followed.

"You called her by her name?" Eden asked, curiously.

"Yeah," Maia whispered back "She's my dad's friend!"

Eden was about to reply when Jo said something, and Maia started conversing with her again.

Eden felt out of her depth. She wasn't even sure *why* Maia had dragged her along to the 'Holden Hall' B&B.

Maia and Jo chatted on, again, seemingly to have forgotten Eden was there.

Eden's eye was caught by the intricate interiors of the building. Each door had delicate swirls on it, elaborated with a fusion of black and gold. They all had beautiful colours on them....until they reached no.27.

This door was a different story. The paint was brown and chipped. There were no elaborate swirls- only two wooden planks, stopping anyone from entering the room.

Curiosity overwhelmed Eden. Before she could stop herself, she asked: "What's wrong with number twenty-seven?"

Both Jo and Maia mindlessly turned to face her.

Maia glanced at the door and shrugged, seemingly not at all interested.

Slyly, Jo looked at Eden, with interest, for the first time, a wicked smile playing on her lips. "Do you really want to know?" she asked. "It's a bit gruesome."

Mystery and intrigue were Eden's Achilles's Heel. In the interest of remaining "cool" in front of the two, she replied nonchalantly, "Sure, why not?"

Jo's eyes twinkled with a wicked sense of humour, bringing out some flecks of gold around the green. It made her look kind of snake-like. She took a deep breath before continuing: "Hundreds of years ago, in the Victorian Era, when this B&B was a Stately Home, it belonged to my ancestors. That part of my family was... a bit strange," she paused, looking into Eden's eyes. "John Holden, the father, had terrible rage. He would get so mad that he would smash anything in his way. One day his ten-year-old son was sent into his study to give him tea while John was in the midst of a particularly bad rage... and the poor boy, Richard Holden, was found days later having a snapped neck."

Eden's eyes widened. How was Jo saying all this with a smile?

"Sarah-Jane Holden, the mom, was quite obsessed with the paranormal. She would claim to have sightings of ghosts... and, one day she went out into the woods and never came back."

At this point, even Maia was listening. Jo nodded, satisfied, and continued.

"And then the little girl. She was only seventeen, was left to fend for herself with her enraged Father. Everything was going fine, until she fell in love with a charming man, who happened to be a gypsy. Her Father found out and killed the boy. Rosalie Holden didn't find out until days later, till he hadn't turned up for their weekly meet. Once she found out... she descended into a demented state... and well, it was said she killed herself, right there in room 27."

All this took a moment to sink in. Eden stared at Jo Holden for what seemed like an age before Maia was pulling her away.

"What date did she die?" Eden asked, breaking the silence.

"May 21st." Jo said, raising her brows.

"Nice story," Maia teased. "But I'm tired now. C'mon, Eden, Jo."

Everything passed in a blur. It was when Maia was fast asleep, Eden started to question the story. *Was it real? No. It couldn't be; could it?* Eden sighed and pulled a book out of her carry-on bag. She just wanted to relax, to stop her mind racing with all these crazy thoughts. The funny thing was, her mind never did stop, and she fell into a disturbed sleep with her head and heart racing.

After a restless rest, Eden wanted to go to the library, and Maia had grudgingly obliged.

Once they were in, Maia sat down straight away on the best armchair, and pulled out her phone. "Half an hour," she announced, "is all you have"

Eden rolled her eyes, laughing a bit, wandering over to the fiction section, in search of a great book. It was then a book from the top shelf came hurtling down, slamming into her head. She winced in pain as the other disapproving readers eyed her with annoyance. *Tourists*, their death glares seemed to say.

Bending down to pick up the book, a realisation struck her. The book didn't look like a story book....*it looked like a diary*. It was old, the cover broken, the pages yellowed- but still a diary. Curiosity consumed Eden as she opened the first page.

If ever lost, it read, please return to Rosalie Holden.

Rosalie Holden? *The* Rosalie Holden?! She hurdled to Maia, not caring about the noise she was making. "Maia!" she hissed "LOOK!"

Maia looked up, annoyed. "Oh my god," she said sarcastically, "a book."

Eden shook her head in frustration. "Not just a book! It's a diary! Rosalie Holden's diary!"

Maia yawned, "Who now?"

Eden felt a scowl coming on. Maia could be so frustrating at times.

"I'm done now anyway," she grumbled. Maia nodded silently, getting up, and setting the armchair the way she found it. She gave Eden a look as they walked to the door. *You're not going to let them know you have it?* Eden shook her head. It wasn't a book, after all... Alright, she couldn't pretend she didn't feel guilty. But she needed to read Rosalie's diary. If she handed it to the library, they'd give it to a bunch of historians. *She* wanted to figure out Rosalie's mystery.

As soon as they got home, Eden rushed to their room, barely pausing to greet Jo. Maia stayed down in the foyer, chatting to Jo. This trip appeared to only strengthen thier bond.

Eden flailed herself on the armchair facing the window. Then, with a shaking hand, she opened the diary.

"6th March" was the date she opened on. She wanted to find the last date that Rosalie had ever written in it. She flicked through the pages, scanning the dates. 3th April, 14th April, 31st 01st May, 20th May, and then.... 30th May. There was no entry under that, but it got her excited.

She was on her feet at once, hurtling down the stairs, screaming Jo and Maia's name. They met her half way up the stairs, concerned. Maia was frantic. When she saw Eden in perfect condition, she breathed out in relief before shouting "WHAT?!"

Eden leaned against the banister, catching her breath. "You," she gasped "won't believe this".

Jo's mouth twitched, as she looked at Eden's hunched figure. "Go ahead, tell us. Don't make us wait!"

Soundlessly, Eden flipped through the pages of the diary, and found the right page. She shoved the book into Jo's hands, wiping the sweat off her forehead. "Rosalie. Holden." She said.

Jo looked down, brows raised. A gasp escaped her mouth as she read the date.

"Oh my,"

"What is it?" Maia asked impatiently, peeking over Jo's shoulder. "Oh.."

Eden smiled triumphantly, enjoying the look on Jo's and Maia's face. But then, Jo looked up, and asked, "So, what do we do now?" Maia nodded, gazing at Eden with a pale eyebrow arched. She leaned back and rocked on her feet.

Jo quickly jumped in, by saying: "I've got some of her trinkets up in the attic, if you want to check that out!" Eden nodded gratefully.

The attic was dusty, and only a little bit of light filtered through the dilapidated windows. She was up there alone, which one might consider unnerving, but she felt entirely at peace. She was ruffling through piles of petticoats and elegant dresses. She tried some of them on too, feeling guilty that she was wearing a dead person's clothes. She was ruffling through a pile of hats when she came across two letters. She eyed them with interest, to see if it could give her any clues. The first one was dated a week before Rosalie supposedly died.

It read.....

To my dearest, Rosalie,

We can go ahead with our plans. I managed to sneak out of the main hall shortly your Father had left, thinking I'd passed. We will meet at Lake Lynn, just before midnight, and we will set off then. I hope I see you soon.

Jackson.

Eden sat back on her bottom, frowning at the paper. The second one didn't make sense. But the first one had said *to my dearest, Rosalie...*

Eden ran towards the lake. She was running so fast, the wind whipped her hair in her face and the branches of trees reached out, as if they were trying to catch her. Lake Lynn was somewhere around here. It had to be! She came to a clearing and stopped. There was the lake, covered over in ice, but still breathtakingly beautiful. She knelt down near the lake and started digging. One of the diary entries she'd read had mentioned that Rosalie had buried something here. Something for her family, to remember her.

After 1 hour of tedious work, she found it. It was a small box, covered in ornate gold designs. She gasped at its beauty, before opening it. Again it was another letter, to... John Holden.

Father,

I know what I have done is dreadful and will bring shame on our family for generations. But please, understand. I loved him. I loved Jackson Rivers. And you've already killed someone I loved- my dear brother. I can't stay with you. I can't let you kill Jackson. I don't think I'd survive if you did. Please understand. And please know, under the layers of love and hate... I still love you.

Eden stopped reading, her eyes bulging out of their sockets.

What did Rosalie do that was so terrible?

Eden sat down on the nearest bench and sighed. She ignored the fact that the bench was cold and slippery, and pulled out Rosalie's diary from her coat pocket. Hoping a mad hope, she went and placed the diary beside the box. *Tell me!* She screamed internally *What happened to Rosalie Holden?!*

When nothing happened, like she'd expected, she leaned down to pick up the diary, fighting off tears. As she picked it up, something fell out of it. Eyebrows furrowed, she picked it up. It wasn't a letter, it was a note.

I have mad hopes for the future. Will Redwood ever let Jackson and I, two fatigued young adults, in to their village? I do hope so. I wish so. Jackson and I are on the first day of our journey, with plenty of supplies. The weather isn't at all rough, thank the Lord. I can't help but wonder what if I didn't leave, what would've happened if I didn't run away? Would Jackson have been killed? I do hope that this, what I'm doing, is truly for the better. Before I left, I kissed Father on the forehead, slightly, so as to not wake him up. I do hate him, I do fear him, but at the end of the day, he is my Father... and I love him. So, who knows what the future has in stock for me. I don't want to be remembered as a girl who "killed" herself and now haunts Holden Hall. Was it dumb to stage my death? I don't know. Hopefully my life story, here in this diary, will be displayed to public. Hopefully I'll be remembered as a brave, daring figure.

Eden's eyes scanned the bottom of the page.....

Signing off, Rosalie Rivers.

Eden stood up, holding the box, diary, and letter. With a small smile, she got her voice assistant on her phone, and asked, "Where's the nearest museum?" And as it explained the directions, she smiled, and announced aloud: "You will be. You will be remembered, Rosalie Hol- Rivers."

