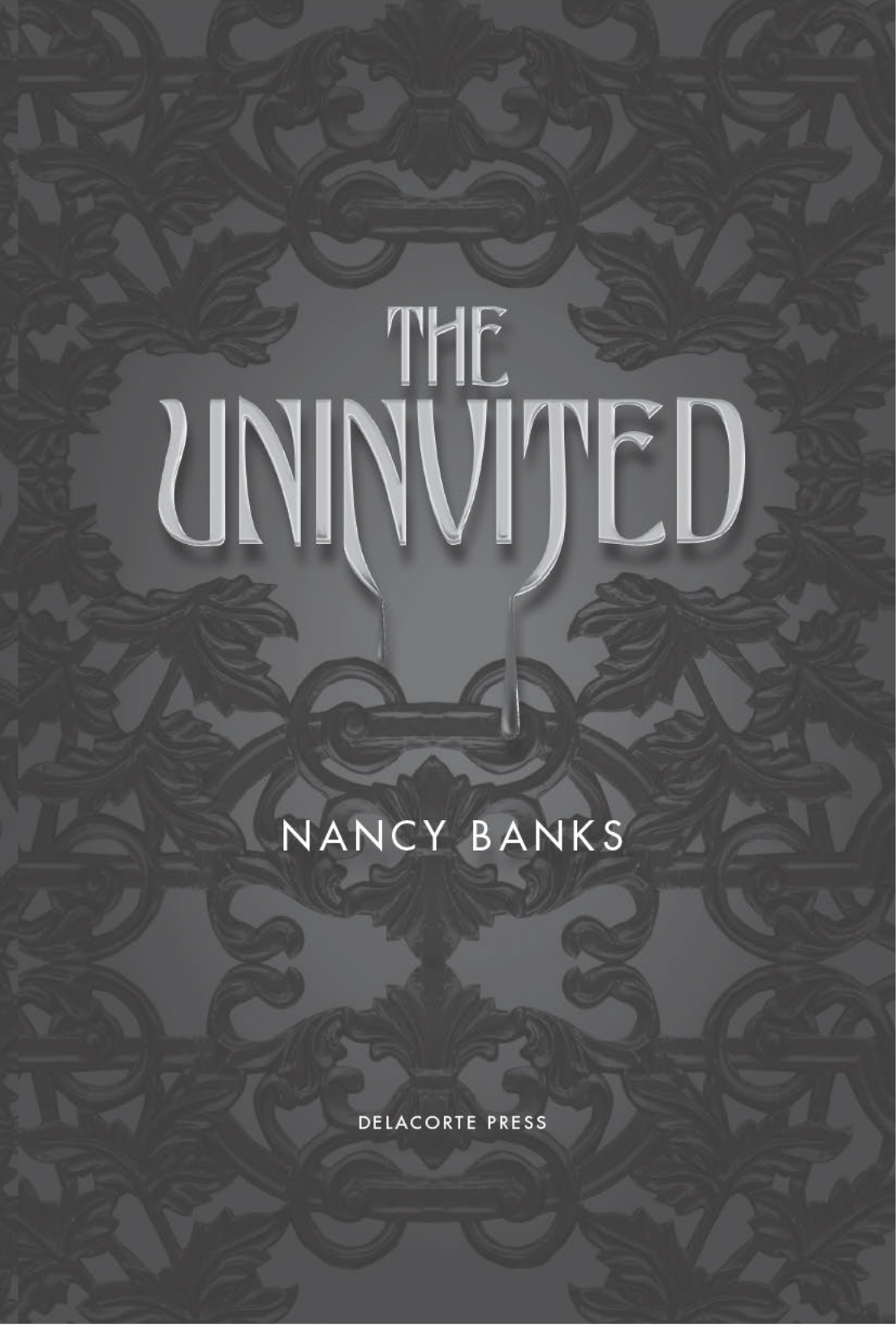


The background of the book cover is a dark, repeating pattern of ornate floral and scrollwork motifs, reminiscent of a damask or brocade fabric. The pattern is centered and covers the entire surface.

THE UNINVITED

NANCY BANKS

DELACORTE PRESS



SIX WEEKS AGO

I was twenty-some meters under Paris in a room hacked out of limestone, huddled against the farthest wall, shivering. I didn't know what to do next. A frantic voice in the back of my head kept shrieking, *Run!* Like that was a solution. Where would I go? I didn't have any money with me. I didn't have my passport. I didn't have a plan. What I did have: My phone. A pack of cigarettes. Some matches. A set of lockpicks. Also shame. And guilt. And blood soaking my shirt and stiffening my hair.

Besides, running was what had gotten me here, to the farthest dark corner of this sour-smelling room in the cellar of a forgotten church. I'd been running, and I didn't see its steps rising out of the sidewalk until I went sprawling. As I got to my feet, I noticed the church's weather-beaten door with its clumsy medieval lock that I could have picked with a damp twist of paper. It looked like a good place to hide.

Inside, soot-crusted stained glass held the dark in. Dust coated the floor so thickly that my steps threw up little puffs. Automatically, I looked for the votive stand, but it held no candles, just a few blackened wicks trapped in grimy pools of wax. The tiny nave contained several disorderly rows of chairs and a thirdhand table, bearded with dust, that must have been the altar. The place was as dead as last year's leaves. Near the altar in a grubby little grotto stood the only saint in the place, leaning casually on his club. His specialty was lost causes, but the dour look on his face said my troubles were beyond his powers. In the space before the ambulatory, the floor opened, and a wide stair descended into the dark. I followed it down and found myself in the crypt. Another set of steps took me down again, to a room that harbored a sad little regiment of rush-bottomed chairs—amputees all, too damaged to repair and return to the nave. I needed to make a plan, but I was too weary to think or even to cry. I sank to the floor, pulled my knees close to my chest, and rested my head on them.

A stylized, light gray illustration of the Eiffel Tower serves as a background for the chapter title. The word "CHAPTER 1" is written in a large, black, serif font, centered over the tower. Two small, dark teardrop shapes are positioned on either side of the tower's base, just below the chapter title.

CHAPTER 1

TWELVE WEEKS AGO

Three days before we were supposed to move to Paris, Dad's company had a major supply-chain disaster, and he had to fly to London to meet with a new supplier to make sure its waterproof fabric was up to Great Outdoors' specs. It was kind of ironic. He'd started working for GO part-time in college because one of the perks was a discount on hiking boots, and now he spent half his time flying to places where a hike meant walking to the subway station.

"I can't believe this," he said, scheduling his Uber. "You know I'd send someone else out to deal with it if I could, right?"

"It's okay, Dad. I know how airports work." I'd flown to meet him for long weekends when he'd had business in fun cities—Barcelona, London, Prague, Ljubljana.

"I know, but I was looking forward to starting this adventure together."

“Me too. But I’ll be fine.”

“Nina”—our Portland housekeeper—“will take you to the airport, and I’ve scheduled a car in Paris to pick you up. Our new housekeeper, Madame Dupuy, will be at the apartment when you arrive, so you’ll be fine.” He sighed. “But I didn’t want you to do this by yourself.”

I smiled at him. “I’m really okay.”

He gave me a quick hug. “I hate that my work means I have to leave you like this.”

I hugged him back. “On the other hand, your work means we get to live in Paris.”

On the flight to Chicago, I had a row all to myself, and I hoped I’d have the same kind of luck on the Paris leg. But not long after I settled into my new seat, texting Dad that I was on the right flight and that it was on time, a guy in a business suit put his laptop down onto the seat next to me. I sighed. Business Guy shucked off his jacket and looked around for a flight attendant to hang it up for him. I went cold. He was wearing the same blue-and-gold-striped tie my debate partner, Cole, wore to meets. That stupid lucky tie. Business Guy handed off his jacket, then did the tie-flapping thing that guys do—why? What is the purpose of it?—and all I could see was Cole, smoothing his tie before a round, almost petting it, attributing every win of the season to its magical lucky powers instead of my research skills. I tried to reassure myself that hundreds, maybe thousands, of people wore that tie. It was probably the third-most-common tie in all of menswear, and of course I’d see it. It didn’t disappear from the world just because I was putting a whole country and an ocean between

me and Cole. I was stupid to let it make me miserable. But I felt the way I felt.

I fumbled my earbuds into my ears, hoping Business Guy would ignore me. I'd been looking forward to getting some sleep on this flight. The past few weeks had been exhausting—finals, packing, saying goodbye to Lily and Mina. But I wasn't falling asleep next to someone wearing that tie. I concentrated on my phone's screen, stress-watching Buffy kick vampire butt until Business Guy closed his laptop, reclined his seat, and went to sleep. I pulled my legs up close to me and turned so I could keep an eye on him, the armrest digging into the small of my back.

By the time we landed in Paris, half an hour before our scheduled arrival, I'd been awake for twenty hours straight. My body said it should have been the middle of the night, but the morning sun glowed confusingly through every window. The floor bobbed under me as I walked through customs, and my eyes slipped in and out of focus. People zoomed their luggage-laden trolleys by, buffeting me as they passed. Signs morphed as I tried to decipher them, so that *Contrôle de Passeports* became *Controversial Parrots* and *Arrivées* turned into *Archrivals*. And it was so loud. The PA system kept up a nonstop “bargle bargle bargle” of important unintelligible announcements, while people meeting passengers called out names, little kids collapsed onto the floor and screamed, and strained-looking travelers scouted for restrooms.

I finally made it to the “archrivals” area. Just like Dad had promised, a bunch of dark-suited car-service guys stood there, holding up signs with people's last names on them. I

found my driver and followed him to the car. He put my bag into the trunk and held the door open for me, then waited calmly while I fumbled with my phone so I could tell him the address. I really, really needed coffee, but I didn't know if I could ask him to pull off the autoroute at the nearest Starbucks. I didn't know if there *was* a nearest Starbucks, or what the French equivalent was.

After almost an hour on the autoroute, we exited into Paris; dodged through an enormous, chaotic roundabout; and finally turned into a narrow street lined with straight-edged, modern-looking apartment buildings and crammed with parked cars. Dad and I'd traded postcard-Paris architecture for a light-drenched apartment in a plain, six-story box in a redeveloped area three blocks from the Eiffel Tower. We chose it for the large park in the center of the block, an almost unheard-of amenity in the city. The view on Google Maps showed a long rectangle of green—the park—which took up almost half the area. Surrounding it like walls surrounding a medieval city were four apartment buildings. Six openings between the buildings gave you street access on all sides from the interior while maintaining the peaceful feel of a sanctuary.

The driver got my bags out of his trunk, wished me good day, and drove off. I looked around, blinking hard, because the street kept going out of focus. I wanted to lie down right there on the sidewalk and go to sleep. Instead, I pulled my phone out and found the text Dad had sent with our address, the apartment number, the two security codes I'd need to get into the building, and Madame Dupuy's cell number. I'd never lived in an apartment before, so I wasn't

sure how to work the codes. My head felt like eighty pounds of wet cardboard, and things were blurring at the edges. But I found the code box, so yay me. I punched in the first code. Nothing. I punched it in again. Nope. I squinted at the keypad until the numbers were in focus and then punched them in, slowly, consulting my phone for each one. Nothing happened again.

There was a button on the box marked Guardian, so I pressed that, thinking somebody would come. Somebody didn't. I tried the second code. Dad could have gotten them reversed, right? But that didn't work, either. I didn't have a French SIM card for my phone yet, so I couldn't call our new housekeeper or Dad, and he wouldn't be back for three more days in any case. Madame Dupuy should have already been there, but when I pressed the buzzer for our apartment, nobody answered. I didn't know anyone in Paris. I had an emergency credit card, but I didn't know where to find a hotel. I told myself I didn't need to cry yet; maybe Dad had just typed the numbers in backward. I punched in a different combination. It didn't work. Tears filled my eyes and slid down my face.

"It's fine," I muttered to myself, wiping my eyes with the back of my hand. I'd just failed again with the codes when Nick walked up with his little sister, Sophie. I didn't know he was Nick then, of course. He was just a random boy with a cute little sister.

She pointed at me and said something in French that I didn't understand.

"Mademoiselle?" he said.

Oh, God, I thought. I'm going to have to talk to an actual

French person, and I can barely remember how to speak English.

I would have pretended that I was leaving if he'd been alone, but the gap-toothed six-year-old smiling tentatively at me made me decide it was safe to ask him for help. I tried frantically to remember the words for "door" and "It doesn't work." I didn't even know what you'd call the code box in English, let alone French. In the end I failed to say anything at all.

"Je peux vous aider?" he asked, and through the fog of exhaustion and frustration and anxiety, I realized he'd asked if he could help me.

I took a deep breath and gestured at the code box. "It's broken," I said. I'd meant to say it in French; I did remember the word for "broken." But I opened my mouth and English came out, which was humiliating. I was still crying, too. I felt like such a loser.

"You speak English?" he said in a very friendly sounding American accent. I nodded.

"Hi!" the little girl said. "Don't cry. We'll help you."

I gave her a weak smile. "Thanks."

"You're American?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Us too," she said. "You look like Princess Merida."

"Thank you," I said, smiling bigger. "I love her."

"Me too!" she said, bouncing in excitement.

He noticed my suitcase and backpack sitting on the sidewalk. "Did you just get in?"

"Nick!" She pulled on his arm. "Help her open the door."

"Oh. Yeah, of course." He smiled at me, and I noticed his eyes were chestnut brown with glints of amber in their depths. He punched in some numbers. The door buzzed, the

latch released, and he took my suitcase in one hand, opened the door with the other, and said, "After you."

"The code is three-six-one-nine," she informed me as she led us across the lobby to the second security door.

"Oh, that explains it," I said. "My dad added a zero when he texted the codes. Big thumbs. Thanks for helping me."

"You're welcome. This one is two-two-two-three," she said, reaching up to punch in the code. Nick held the door open again. We walked through, and she pressed the elevator call button. Then she took my hand, and I felt a burden lift. I already knew two people in Paris. I wasn't alone.

"What floor?" Nick said when we were on the elevator.

"I'm on four," I said. "Four-oh-one."

He smiled at me. "Five-seventeen. I'm Nick, by the way. And this is my sister, Sophie."

I smiled back. "I'm Tosh."

"Do you have any brothers or sisters?" Sophie asked.

I shook my head. "It's just me and my dad."

"Don't you have a mom?" she said.

"That's kind of personal, Soph," Nick said.

"It's okay." I smiled at her so she'd know I wasn't mad. "She had cancer. She died when I was six."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Nick said. He looked uncomfortable.

Sophie's eyes were wide. "Six is how old I am."

"It was a long time ago. I still miss her, but she's always in my heart." I squeezed Sophie's hand, and she squeezed back. The elevator doors opened. Nick took my suitcase for me because Sophie hadn't let go of my hand.

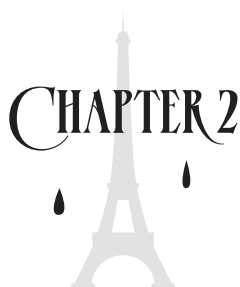
"You should come meet our mom," she said. "If you get lonely. She's really nice."

“I’d like to do that. Thanks for helping me get in.”

“You’re welcome.”

Nick smiled at me. “Remember,” he said, “we’re in five-seventeen if you have any more problems with locks.”

The strangest things can change your life. If Dad hadn’t been in a hurry when he sent me the codes, I might not have met Nick. If I hadn’t met Nick, I wouldn’t have seen the Paris that lives underground. I wouldn’t have climbed the Eiffel Tower and seen it sparkle in the twilight. I wouldn’t have fallen in love. I wouldn’t have killed somebody.

A stylized, light gray illustration of the Eiffel Tower serves as a background for the chapter title. The word "CHAPTER" is written in a large, black, serif font, and the number "2" is slightly larger and positioned to the right of "CHAPTER". Two small, black, teardrop-shaped marks are placed on either side of the tower's base, just below the chapter title.

CHAPTER 2

TWELVE WEEKS AGO

Nick and Sophie rang our buzzer the next morning while I was scavenging a breakfast of jam and a leftover baguette. I'd thought I'd be by myself for the two days until Dad got back, but our new housekeeper had shown up half an hour after my adventure with the code box, just when Dad had asked her to. If I hadn't been so jet-lagged, I'd have remembered that my flight had arrived early and not panicked about her not being there.

"Hi!" Sophie said when I opened the door. Nick grinned and waved. In the fog of yesterday, all I'd really noticed about him were his eyes, his skill with a code box, and his friendliness. Now I took in his height—almost a foot above my five feet and three inches—his adorably messy dark hair, and the warm smile that made his eyes crinkle at the corners. And then I remembered what I was wearing. Dad went to U of

Oregon—go Ducks!—and I have a large and embarrassing collection of duck-themed clothing.

“Hi,” I said, hiding as much of my yellow-and-green T-shirt as I could behind the door and trying to keep my mouth closed because I hadn’t brushed my teeth yet.

“Mom said we could invite you and your dad over for dinner. Can you come tonight?” Like Nick, Sophie was dark-haired and brown-eyed, but her hair was straight, cut in a chin-length bob, and pushed back with a yellow-and-black polka-dot headband that matched her capris.

I smiled at her enthusiasm. “My dad doesn’t get here till tomorrow. Can I tell you what day would work for us when he gets home?”

She made a “tchu” sound. “Just text him, silly, and you can tell us now.”

“That’s rude,” Nick told her. She frowned at him.

“I don’t have a French SIM card for my phone yet or I would,” I said.

“We can help you get one. Right, Nick?”

He nodded. “Absolutely.”

“Wow, that’d be excellent,” I said. “I can’t do anything without my phone. I’m about to lose my mind.”

“Okay, but we have to go to school now.” Sophie took Nick’s hand and pulled him toward the elevator.

“Hang on,” Nick told her, turning back to me.

“You have school?” I stepped out from behind the door. Sophie giggled.

Nick gave me a smile and an eye roll. “The French believe in the maximum-torture method of education. We’ve got three more weeks.”

“Ouch.”

“We can help you after school,” Sophie said. She leaned close to me and stage-whispered, “Do you have a shirt that doesn’t have ducks on it that you can wear?”

“*Sophie*,” Nick said. “That’s rude.”

I laughed. “It’s okay. This is just for at home. I would never go out into Paris looking like this. There’s probably a law against it.”

One corner of Nick’s mouth quirked upward. “Decree number 177 of 22 April 1693. It is forbidden upon pain of death to go forth into the streets, avenues, boulevards, passages, alleys, byways, or other ways paved or unpaved wearing clothing upon which humorous waterfowl are emblazoned.”

I snorted out a laugh, and he grinned at me.

Sophie tugged his hand. “We’re gonna be late.”

“Just a sec,” he told her. Then, to me: “Is after school today okay? Like a little after five?”

“They make you go to school till five p.m.?”

Nick’s face went tired and serious for a moment. “Like I said, torture is a curriculum component here.”

“Wow. Okay. Yeah, a little after five sounds great.”

AT SIX p.m., we were having Cokes in a sidewalk café with a red awning on a busy, tree-lined boulevard. My phone worked, I had a booklet of Métro tickets, and Nick and Sophie had shown me how to navigate the closest station. I took a photo of them and texted it to Dad over the caption, “Nick and Sophie—our neighbors who helped me get my phone working and figure out the Métro.”

"I can't wait to meet them," he texted back. I told him we were invited for dinner with their family as soon as he got home, and then Sophie wanted to know what he looked like, so he texted a very dadly selfie of himself in an office.

"He's got a big nose," she said when I handed her my phone.

"Rude again," Nick said.

"Dad's terrible at selfies. His nose is fine in real life," I assured her.

"Tell him I think he looks . . . friendly," she said, handing my phone back.

"Good save," Nick told her. She smirked at him.

AND THE first thing she said when we walked through their door Friday night for dinner was "Tosh was right. Your nose is fine."

"Thank you," he said solemnly. "I've always felt that way about it."

"We're having un apéro," she informed him. We followed her into the living room and discovered that it was French for "an appetizer." Nick's mom handed around the olives and charcuterie, which Sophie translated for us as "salami and stuff," while his dad poured wine for the adults and Orangina for Nick, Sophie, and me.

"What's your favorite thing about Paris so far?" Mr. Wallace asked as he handed me the glass.

I thought for a minute. I'd barely arrived, but Paris had

already embraced me. “It feels like a city that really likes its people.”

“Intriguing,” Ms. Wallace said, putting her arm around Sophie, who snuggled next to her. “What is it that makes it feel that way to you?”

“It’s really easy to get around on foot.” She nodded. “And it’s built on a human scale. Buildings don’t tower over you looking down their noses at you because they’re immense and you’re not. I haven’t seen a building yet that was over six stories. And so many of them have pretty details—carvings or wrought iron work or doors—just so people have something nice to look at. There are so many street trees. There are unexpected tiny parks. The best thing, though, is the light. The buildings seem to glow.”

Dad and I had come to Paris in March to find an apartment. We’d left sodden, dreary Portland and arrived in rain-soaked Paris, and the first thing I’d noticed was how bright it was despite the rain. Unlike in Portland, the gloomy sky didn’t hang a foot over my head leaking an endless drool of rain. We didn’t need streetlights at noon. When I pointed this out to Dad, he gestured to the cream-colored stone buildings that surrounded us. “Paris is built of limestone,” he said. “And the pale color reflects light.” Portland was made of wood and brick and glass and metal, and they all seemed to get darker in the interminable winter rains. Maybe it was the way moss and mildew crept across their surfaces. Decay was a constant in Portland.

Nick grinned at me. “I have a friend who talks about buildings like that. It’s one of the reasons we’re friends.”

“Paris just seems so alive and vital.” I sipped my Orangina, which was so fizzy it made my head bubble.

“It is alive,” Nick agreed. “That’s why it’s such an incredible city.” I smiled at him, feeling a tug of connection between us.

The Wallaces were from Minneapolis, and they’d been in Paris for three years. Nick’s dad was some kind of manager for 3M, and his mom did freelance tech support for small businesses. Dad told them about how Great Outdoors had just acquired a French recreational gear company and had sent him here to manage the European supply chain.

Ms. Wallace turned to me. “Where will you be going to school, Tosh?”

“École Jarret.” I jiggled the ice cubes around in my glass.

“Oh, Nick goes there. It’s a great school; I’m sure you’ll enjoy it.”

“My school’s just down the street,” Sophie volunteered, “but Nick has to walk twenty whole minutes to go to school.”

“So you speak French already, if you’re going to EJ,” Ms. Wallace said.

“Well, I thought I did. I took the entrance exam remotely, back in Portland, and they told me that I’d have to take an accelerated French class over the summer so I could keep up when school starts.”

Nick grimaced. “Ouch.”

“Yeah. I had totally different plans for this summer.”

“Like what?” Sophie asked.

“Oh, you know,” I told her. “Frenchy stuff like sit in cafés and buy glamorous shoes and eat all the pastries. See the Louvre. Get a beret.” Nick made a choking sound.

“Only tourists wear berets,” Sophie informed me, her face serious.

“I see,” I said, matching her solemnity. “Well, I’m going to be in class for half the day and studying for the other half, so I wouldn’t have time to go buy one even if I wanted to look like a tourist.”

“I could help you with your homework,” Nick volunteered. “And if you want to see the Louvre, I could take you tomorrow.” He smiled, and my insides went fluttery.

I smiled back at him. “I’d love that. Thank you.”

“The Nick Wallace Tour Company is at your disposal.”

“You’re not a tour company,” Sophie said.

“I am if Tosh wants me to be.”

“I’d love to tour the Louvre with the Nick Wallace Tour Company,” I said, and we arranged to meet next morning just as Ms. Wallace announced that dinner was ready.

The adults talked about work and the exchange rate and where to find kitchen cabinets over the salmon in butter sauce while Sophie told me about visiting the Astérix theme park. We’d read some Astérix comics in French class this year, but I didn’t know there was a whole park. I asked her what her favorite ride was.

“Les petits chars,” she said. “I smashed everyone.”

Nick saw my blank look and translated. “Bumper cars. She’s a demon in those things.” She told me about her bumper-car strategy, which was to bang furiously into another car until she scared the driver away, as Ms. Wallace brought dessert out.

“Yum,” Sophie said, and looked at me with a sly smile. “Do you know what this is?” She pointed to the plate in front

of me, which held a slice of chocolate cake surrounded by a ruby-colored pool of sauce.

"Looks like chocolate cake?"

"In *blood sauce*." She widened her eyes at me, smiled, and nodded hard. Nick groaned.

"It's your fault," Mr. Wallace told him.

"It was *Halloween*," Nick said. "I was just trying to make it festive for her."

"Yes, and now every time we have raspberry coulis with anything, it's blood sauce."

"It looks like a vampire bit it," Sophie said around a mouthful of cake. "Did you know that there's a vampire in Paris?"

Mr. and Ms. Wallace looked at each other. "Where did you hear that?" Mr. Wallace asked.

"Clémence said. She said he bites people on the neck and makes them bleed, and it looks like blood sauce." She had a ring of chocolate and raspberry around her mouth.

"Clémence is exaggerating, sweetie," Ms. Wallace said. She looked uncomfortable. To me and my dad, she explained, "Somebody with a mental illness bit some people recently, although he seems to have stopped now. He's not a vampire, and the police will find him and help him get treatment so he doesn't do it again." She addressed the last bit to Sophie, who said, "Can I go watch Princess Merida now?"

"Yes," the Wallaces said in unison, looking relieved.

"Who wants coffee?" Ms. Wallace asked, getting up and starting to clear away plates. Nick and I rose to help.

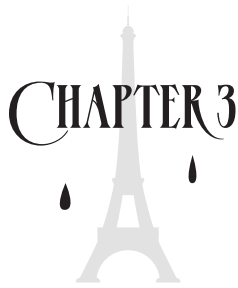
"Sorry about that," Mr. Wallace said in a quiet voice. "We had no idea Sophie knew about the attacks."

Nick and I followed his mom into the kitchen, carrying

glasses and silverware. "I'm sorry my sister was annoying," he said.

I shrugged. "It's okay. I like cake with blood sauce."

He grinned. "Next time you come over for dinner, we'll have ice cream and blood sauce. It's even better."



CHAPTER 3

TWELVE WEEKS AGO

Saturday morning, as I was battling my hair into a braid, Nick rang our buzzer. Madame Dupuy invited him in, and their voices receded down the hall to the living room. I wrapped an elastic around the end of my hair, slipped on my baby-blue platform Vans, found my phone and purse under my bed, and trotted down the hall, ready for the Louvre.

I felt like I'd stepped into a job interview when I entered the living room. Madame Dupuy sat in Dad's chair, looking polished and professional in her crisp white blouse, slim black ankle pants, and gleaming black loafers. A scarf in Starbursts colors knotted casually around her neck relieved the severity of the outfit. Her dark hair fell around her face in a stylish shoulder-length layered cut that emphasized her gray eyes. She looked both intimidating and striking. And amazingly, she looked like that every day, cooking and cleaning in outfits like the ones my friends' moms wore to work and