

Blood drips down from the cuts on my arm, still fresh from when the mirror almost crashed on my head. It's so bad I'm leaving red smears on the paper I clutch between my fingers. Audrey steps closer and reads over my shoulder. She wraps her arms round her body, trembling – whether from fear, or cold, I don't know.

Dear Clover,

You are invited to become a part of THE MAGPIE SOCIETY.

Do you agree to uphold the values of the school, protecting it from corruption, and keeping it and its students safe, no matter the cost?

If so, sign here – and await further instructions.

'There's no signature. She didn't sign it!' I flip the paper over, but there aren't any markings on the other side. I inspect the words, reading them again and again, trying to decipher some sort of clue as to who left the note.

One thing's for certain: the Magpie Society is real. It's not some relic of Illumen Hall's past. It's active, and

they – whoever they are – wanted to recruit Clover into their group.

I'm almost jealous.

Audrey, on the other hand, is freaking out. 'What could this mean? Did she even see it? Surely she would have signed it,' she babbles, barely taking a breath.

'That means something happened to her.'

'Or did she choose *not* to sign and is now paying the price?'

'I don't know,' I say. 'I don't know anything.' I fold the letter up and shove it under my bra strap, being careful not to rip the lace on Audrey's dress any more. I send a text to Teddy.

Tell Mrs Abbott to come to
Clover's room in Polaris asap.
Make sure she comes alone.

I wince when my hand catches on the clasp of my bag as I slip the phone inside. There's blood drying in the cracks of my palms.

'Be careful! We should get your hands looked at for shards of glass. Should I go get the nurse?' Audrey inspects my palms, which only makes them hurt even more. I snatch them back.

'No, I'm fine. The housemistress has a first-aid kit back at Helios. This is the least of my worries right now. Clover's gone!'

'How long will the cops take?' Audrey paces the room, stepping over the mess as she does.

‘I don’t know. Mrs Abbott should be here any minute hopefully. She needs to see this.’

I look around. It’s disturbing to think of Clover struggling with someone here. I cast my mind back to the party and the flash mob of magpies. With all that chaos, it would have been so easy for someone to slip through the school gates and into the building. The people in the magpie costumes weren’t Illumen Hall students either. Potential threats were everywhere.

‘She’s gonna freak out when she sees the note. Do you think the police will investigate the Magpie Society?’

‘Well . . . we know Clover thought she was in danger – she warned us in her podcast that something like this would happen, didn’t she? *One of you is next*. She just didn’t realize that she was going to be the victim.’

‘Jesus,’ says Audrey. She looks like a trapped rabbit, wanting to run away, but unable to find a way out. The note scratches against my chest. My mind is whirring at a thousand miles an hour.

I exhale a sharp breath. ‘Let’s leave the Magpie Society note out of it for now. It’ll only distract the police.’

‘I don’t know, Ivy. I think they need to be aware of everything.’ Audrey bites at the edge of her nail. I’m not going to be the only one with bleeding hands if she keeps that up. ‘I don’t wanna hide evidence from the cops. What if – what if this is a potential murder case?’

‘It’s not a murder, Audrey. Clover is missing.’

She gestures around at the mess. ‘You don’t know what happened! The blood, her cellphone, that freaking terrifying recording she left? C’mon, this is bad!’

I take her hands, holding her gaze. ‘Audrey, we need to be on the same page here. Telling them will only complicate everything. We want the police to focus on finding Clover, not on some secret society, right? If she still doesn’t show up . . . *then* we let them know.’

After a long second, she nods. ‘OK. I’m with you.’

I breathe a sigh of relief.

‘At least Mr Willis has gone,’ she mutters.

‘He’d be an idiot to ever show his face around here again now we know about the relationship he had with Lola. What a sicko.’

‘But you burned the photo . . .’ Audrey avoids looking at me.

‘Yes,’ I answer quietly. ‘He had a relationship with her, but his alibi proves he didn’t kill her. That would have complicated things too.’

‘But if it wasn’t him then who *did* kill Lola? The same person who attacked Clover? I feel like we’re sitting ducks right now. What if whoever did this comes back?’

Audrey’s panic rises and she paces towards the door. As she reaches it, she comes face to face with Mrs Abbott.

There’s a sharp intake of breath from the headmistress, who stares in horror at the room. She tiptoes through the piles of stuff and eventually reaches the desk.

‘We called nine-nine-nine,’ I say. ‘The police are on their way.’

Mrs Abbott has her back to us, so I can’t see her expression. But her shoulders tense beneath her blazer. ‘Please go downstairs and meet the officers, then bring them to my office. I’m sure they’ll want to talk to you first

of all. I'll make sure no one disturbs this room. This is a crime scene now; we mustn't contaminate it.' She turns back to us. 'Have you touched anything?'

'Well, we –' Audrey starts.

I interject. 'No. We didn't touch anything. We just sat on the bed.' Audrey raises an eyebrow at me.

'OK, thank you, girls. I'm sorry – you must be so worried for your friend.' She frowns at me. 'Ivy, are you hurt?'

'I'm fine. We'd better go see if the police have arrived. They could be here at any moment.' I grab Audrey's arm, and we walk down the corridor away from Clover's room.

My head starts to throb. I start to feel faint, flashing back to narrowly avoiding being crushed by a falling mirror at the party, pulled through shards of broken glass on the floor.

It must be pretty obvious because Audrey grabs my hand and slows me down. 'How are you feeling? You must be exhausted. I bet you're still in shock.'

I put my hand to my head, and she rubs my arm.

'Got a headache and my hands sting. I'll be OK, honestly.' I smile, but I can feel my lips trembling. I know Audrey isn't convinced.

And neither am I. Suddenly the dress feels too tight, the drying blood now crusting over and making my skin crawl. I don't think this is the best look with which to greet police officers – covered in blood, even if it is my own.

'Actually, do you mind if I meet you downstairs in a couple of minutes? I just want to take this off and pop a few painkillers.' I start in the direction of the corridor leading to our room and Audrey hesitates.

'Shall I come with you?'

‘No, I’ll be quick. The police could be here at any minute. We shouldn’t keep them waiting. You go ahead and I’ll be right behind you.’ I smile a lot more convincingly this time. She nods and carries on down the next set of stairs.

As I walk, I examine Audrey’s beautiful black lace dress, now torn and much worse for wear. I feel terrible. I can only guess how much this would have cost and it’s completely destroyed. No tailor will be able to fix it. I pull a small purple feather from the ripped lace near my collarbone. It must have come from the flash mob.

I can’t wait to take the dress off and shed tonight’s events. It hasn’t gone as planned at all. As I walk alone along the darkened hallway to our room, I can hear laughing, singing and hollering from the rest of the Illumen Hall students continuing their Samhain celebrations across the school grounds. Most of them will have already forgotten what happened to me at the party, some won’t care, and none of them have any idea that Clover is missing and the police are on their way. I twirl the small feather around between my thumb and forefinger.

The magpies are taking over.

I unlock our room with my pass, but instead of changing straight away I walk to the window. *Clover, where are you?* I think as I stare out across the grounds. I think I see a whisper of movement out of the corner of my eye – but it’s nothing.

No, not nothing. It’s a magpie. I bring two fingers to my forehead and give a small salute.

And I know in that moment that nothing is going to be the same again.

AUDREY

I watch Ivy as she retreats towards Helios House and our shared dorm room, waiting until she's disappeared from view. I exhale sharply. There's a tightness in my chest that won't go away – but I know exactly what the cause is. I don't know Clover very well, but I heard that message on her phone's recording app: *Get away from me . . . No . . . stop . . . help!* I felt her terror. I hope we find her soon.

Please be OK.

I can't think about the blood in her room, or the warning that Clover left for us on her podcast. I wanna kick myself for not listening to her.

Maybe then Ivy wouldn't have burned the photo of Mr Willis and Lola. I hope he's running far, far away from here, and we never see him again. Yet two questions still ring in my mind:

If Mr Willis isn't the murderer, then who killed Lola Radcliffe?

Who else is out there?

I give myself a shake. The cops are coming now. They're the ones who need to sort this out. It never felt right – not going to the authorities and letting them deal with Mr Willis. Especially after what had happened to me back home . . .

I don't wanna be on the side of hiding things from the law ever again. Our part in this is over now. Ivy and I can concentrate on just being ourselves again, not mastermind detectives. For a moment, I let myself wonder what our friendship would be like without the Magpie Society. It could be something really great.

My legs are on autopilot as I follow the winding staircases down to the entrance hall. A couple of times I find myself turning round; although I know the school much better now, Clover's dorm is in a part of the building I haven't had much time to explore. I wish I'd stayed with Ivy. Seeing her so scared has spooked me.

It's eerie with no one roaming the hallways. Whenever I pass a window, I look out towards the rear grounds of the school. The Samhain party rages on, my fellow students milling around a huge fire pit. What are they all thinking? Do they have their own theories about the flash mob? I guess rumours will fly when the cops roll up to the front door.

I hate the way that the hallways seem to shift and change, so I'm caught by surprise when I find myself somewhere familiar: the main staircase. I breathe a sigh of relief.

I rush down the stairs, past the decorations – the pumpkins and the autumnal wreaths. It all seems so out of place now, with the harsh lights on, the atmosphere ruined.

'Audrey!'

I spin around as I'm crossing the tiled entrance hall to the front doors, my heels clattering on the stone. Teddy

rushes towards me, concern on his face. ‘Did Mrs Abbott find you?’

‘Yeah, she did. In Clover’s room. I’ve come back down to wait for the cops.’ I can’t seem to stop my hands from shaking.

His face drains of colour. ‘The police? Why?’

I cast an anxious glance around us, but the hall is empty – apart from the strange sculptures of pumpkins and gourds, and the bushels of hay that are stacked in the corners. Suddenly I catch my breath as the bundles of dried grasses seem to sway as if there’s someone there. But, as I stare, they go utterly still. I’m just imagining things. Paranoid Audrey.

‘You OK?’ Teddy reaches out and grabs my hand, bringing me back to the present. I blink.

I pull his hand close, and then he’s engulfed me in a hug, his strong arms wrapping around my shoulders. I’m teetering on the precipice of a breakdown because this is how present-day Audrey reacts to trauma. She used to be strong, but now she can’t keep a lid on her emotions. *Fuck her*. I have to be tougher than this. Somehow I wrench my emotions right back from the edge, gaining control of myself. There’s no way the cops will take a sobbing girl seriously.

The first face that flashes to the front of my mind is Ivy’s: strong and serious, but always ready for action. If I lose it, I’ll be letting her down. So I pull myself together and push away from Teddy.

‘It’s Clover,’ I say. ‘She’s gone missing.’

‘Are you serious?’ Teddy’s eyes are wide. His hair is plastered to his forehead; he’s obviously been running around, trying to act as a go-between for us and Mrs Abbott. ‘I’ve been waiting for you girls to get back to the party. How’s Ivy?’

‘She’s . . . shaken up. But we’re not going back to the party. I’m to meet the police here and take them to Mrs Abbott’s office.’

‘I’ll wait with you.’

‘You don’t have to do that. You can go back . . .’

He scoffs. ‘No way. I’m worried about you.’ He brushes the hair away from my face. I bet I look a complete disaster.

‘Let’s go check outside, see if the cops are here.’

He nods, takes my hand and pushes through the double doors.

It’s cold outside – the frigid autumn air chilling me right down to my bones. I wrap my arms around my body. Beside me, Teddy shrugs off his jacket and throws it over my shoulders. I almost laugh at how stereotypical that is – but I’m not above accepting a little gentlemanly behaviour.

The front of the school is dark, the road stretching out into pitch-blackness before us. In the distance, across the field, there’s laughter and music, smoke drifting up into the sky. Someone’s passing around sparklers too.

‘What do you think happened to Clover?’ Teddy asks.

My head’s a muddle. ‘I have no idea.’

‘Come on . . . you must know something. Or else why did you go to her room?’

I squeeze my eyes shut. That’s the worst part of it. We went there to confront her. When all the while she was in

danger. ‘We think . . . we think she figured out the identity of Lola’s murderer, and whoever it was threatened her. Attacked her.’ I let out a sob. ‘I’m so worried – she must be terrified. You heard her last podcast too.’

Teddy is quiet for a moment. ‘Perhaps it’s not as bad as you think . . .’

I blink at his cool tone. ‘You’re not worried?’

He grabs my hand. ‘No, it’s not that. It’s just that Clover has done this before. Last year she disappeared for, like, three days. Turned out she’d gone up to Manchester to participate in a protest and just didn’t tell anyone. It’s kind of her thing. Her parents didn’t even file a missing persons report.’

Now it’s my turn to be quiet. Especially as the headlights of a dark sedan appear at the end of the long driveway. There are no flashing blue and red lights – but then there’s no one else on the road for them to warn. My stomach turns – the alcohol unsettling me, making me shake. Ivy must have known about Clover’s tendency to run away. This time was obviously different.

This time there was blood.

I step forward, creating space between us, and Teddy doesn’t follow. The car pulls up, and two people in suits step out: a man and a woman.

‘Are you the cops? I mean . . . the police?’ I say.

‘Yes. I’m DI Shing, and this is DC Copeland,’ says the woman. ‘We got a call about a disturbance and a potential missing person?’

I double take at the male officer’s name. He was the one interviewed by Clover on the podcast. Then I nod. ‘Please come with me.’

‘Wait!’ There’s a shout from the darkness behind me. Bonnie sprints towards us, tearing across the grass. In her bright red party dress and heels, she looks deranged. ‘What’s going on? Why are the police here? Is it because of the podcast?’

‘Go back to the party, Bonnie,’ says Teddy.

The male police officer looks from me to Bonnie and back again. ‘Please come with me,’ I repeat. ‘Our headmistress, Mrs Abbott, asked me to take you to her.’

He nods and they both start to follow me. Bonnie trots to catch up. ‘What are you doing, Audrey?’ she hisses. ‘This should be Araminta’s job. She’s the head girl.’

‘Araminta isn’t involved in this. Tell her she should keep everyone outside for now.’

‘I don’t take orders from you.’

‘Fine, do whatever you want, Bonnie. But I have one job – and that’s to get these people to Mrs Abbott. I’ll see you later.’ I half turn away from her.

Bonnie is actually so furious that she stomps her foot. But she heads off in the direction of the party.

‘Sorry about that,’ I say to the cops.

They don’t reply, and their sombre expressions sober me up as well. I pick up the pace, leading them through the big double doors and into the depths of Illumen Hall. I look up at the portrait that first greeted me only a couple of months ago. I know now that it’s of Lady Penelope Debert, the daughter of one of the school’s headmasters in the nineteenth century, who made sure girls could attend the school.

I pull up abruptly and the cops crash into my back.

‘Audrey?’ Teddy looks at me with concern.

I swallow. ‘Sorry – this way.’ But I can’t ignore what I saw. Above the painted woman’s shoulder is something I swear I’ve never seen before. A magpie.

And it’s looking directly at me.

I shrug into one of my old hoodies, the one where I've cut thumb holes into the sleeves that still smells faintly of Teddy's aftershave – like woodsmoke and sea spray – and pull on a pair of leggings.

I pick up Audrey's dress from the floor. It's a mess. I don't think any amount of dry-cleaning is going to save it: it's covered in blood and now it stinks like soap from the effort of scrubbing my hands. I stuff it in a plastic bag and throw it into the back of my wardrobe. Audrey is so rich she probably won't notice if she never gets it back.

My bed is really tempting. I feel like I've been hit by a truck. I could crawl under my duvet and sleep for hours. But I have to find Audrey and make sure I hear what the police have to say.

I check my phone in case Clover has managed to get a message out. But there's nothing.

I head down to the office where I'm met by the expressionless faces of two police officers standing beside Audrey outside Mrs Abbott's door. One is a fairly broad man, with his pen and paper at the ready (so old-school), and the other is a female officer with a slightly softer face, though still unsmiling. The office and its stark glass exterior

is dark and moody. I feel a lump form in my throat as the seriousness of what's happening creeps up on me. A lump – or I'm about to vomit.

Audrey smiles as she spots me. 'Ivy, thank God you're here. Um . . .' She glances at the two officers. She's clearly forgotten their names. 'This is Ivy Moore-Zhang. She's my room-mate here. We were together when we went to Clover's room.'

'So you're the young lady who called the police?' the man says to me.

I nod. I hate that patronizing 'young lady'.

Mrs Abbott's heels click on the stone floors behind me. She shakes hands with the police and unlocks her office in deathly silence. I pull the sleeves of the hoodie down over my hands. I catch Audrey's eye, who wrinkles her nose as Mrs Abbott turns on the lights and ushers us all inside. Like she's smelt something bad.

'Take a seat, everyone.' Audrey and I sit together on the lilac velvet chaise longue next to Mrs Abbott's grand bookcase, and the police officers both sit in chairs in front of her desk.

The female officer speaks first.

'I'm DI Shing and this is DC Copeland. We're on the criminal investigations team for this area. We received a call about a missing student this evening, is that right?'

I raise an eyebrow. They've sent *detectives*? And not only that – the detective who Clover interviewed. There's obviously more urgency since Lola's death and they're taking no chances this time.

DC Copeland's pen is poised over his notebook, and he's looking at Mrs Abbott expectantly.

‘Yes. Our Year Ten pupil Clover Mirth. As you can see, we are celebrating this evening with our annual Samhain gathering, and Ivy and Audrey here alerted me to the fact that Clover has gone missing during the evening’s events.’ Mrs Abbott speaks with her poshest, most formal tone. It’s like she’s trying to impress the detectives. It’s immediately grating.

‘Do you mind if we ask you a few questions, girls?’ DI Shing turns to us.

‘Uh-huh,’ says Audrey.

‘When and how did you notice Clover was gone?’

‘We went to find her after hearing her latest podcast episode and realizing she wasn’t at the party. When we got to her room, it looked completely ransacked,’ I say without taking a breath.

‘I knew that podcast was bad news,’ DC Copeland mutters. ‘And the theory about some bird group protecting the school? This is why we’re the detectives, not teenage girls.’

‘So it’s only been a few hours?’ DI Shing says, looking down at her watch.

‘Not even that long,’ says Copeland. He breathes out, clearly holding back an eye-roll. This man doesn’t care one jot about Clover going missing.

His partner throws him a dark look; maybe she realizes he’s giving totally the wrong impression. ‘I think we’d better see Clover’s room before all the students come in from the party. Looks like quite the event! We never had anything like this when I was at school. Then again, I was just at the local comprehensive. Nothing so grand as all

this. Do you mind taking us, Mrs Abbott?’ Shing gets up from her chair.

‘Of course.’ Mrs Abbott stands up too, ushering them out of her office. In the doorway, she turns back and stares at us. ‘You stay here for now, girls. I’m sure the police will want to talk to you more when they’ve examined the scene.’

Once the door closes, Audrey and I both slump back down on the sofa.

‘This is bringing back terrible memories for me, Ivy, I’m not gonna lie. Speaking with detectives like that. I’ve not done it since . . .’ She gnaws on the edge of her thumbnail.

‘Oh God, of course! I’m sorry this isn’t great for you,’ I say. ‘We could have done with a few more shots earlier.’ I smile at her, trying to be reassuring.

Audrey shrugs. ‘What do you really think is going on here? Something just doesn’t add up. What about the Magpie Society? They must be involved *somehow*. The magpie tattoo on Lola’s back, that flash mob, Clover’s warning on the podcast and now the invitation . . .’

I scan Mrs Abbott’s office and notice a CCTV camera sitting pretty in the corner of the room. I nod over to it to alert Audrey that we are being watched in here. She catches sight of it and rolls her eyes back at me.

‘We need to be careful, Audrey. We don’t know who’s behind this, or how powerful they really are. If we make things worse, we’re next. You get that, right?’ I drop my voice to a whisper. She holds my gaze, then nods.

We sit in silence for a while. I can still hear students outside and I gaze out of the window, hoping to see

something to ease my racing mind. The stars are so bright this evening, and the moon is shining down on the perfectly pruned bushes lining the driveway. A perfect night for Samhain. But, just as I'm looking at the water fountain, I notice someone walking behind it. It's dark so I can't see properly, but it looks like . . .

No. It can't be.

I whack Audrey on the arm and point outside.

'Is that -?'

'Oh my God! That looks like Mr Willis,' she says with a gasp.

'Why hasn't he left yet? He literally said he was leaving hours ago!'

We watch as he opens the boot of his Mini, tosses something inside, then strolls off in the direction of the party.

'I feel like the timing of this is far too suspicious. We discover that Clover knows about Mr Willis and Lola's relationship, and now she's missing?'

'And he's back,' Audrey says ominously.

We jump as Mrs Abbott and both detectives arrive at her door and make their way back in.

I catch a look from Mrs Abbott that tells me she wants to ask us more questions – but when the police *aren't* around.

DC Copeland holds out his hand for Mrs Abbott to shake. 'As we've said, we'll be in touch if we need any more information or questions answered, but for now we've done all we can.' Mrs Abbott takes his hand and smiles back at him.

‘Wait, you don’t need to ask us anything else?’ I say.

‘No, not at the moment. We don’t have any evidence of foul play here. I’m sure Clover will turn up eventually. We’ll contact her parents and check she’s not simply gone home, but . . . Well, we see this a lot.’ DI Shing puts her hands in her pockets.

‘Especially at these posh boarding schools!’ DC Copeland chirps. ‘We might have to come and give a talk about wasting police time.’

‘Hang on. You think we wasted your time?’ Audrey asks despairingly.

‘I’m sorry, our friend is missing and you’re going to do precisely *nothing* about it? I know Clover – she wouldn’t randomly disappear!’ I say desperately. I can feel Audrey glance at me, but I don’t look over.

‘We’ll do what we can.’

DC Copeland is starting to annoy me; he’s so sure of himself and his crappy detective skills.

‘We’re just worried about our friend. Better to be safe than sorry, right?’ I admit defeat. Clearly they aren’t taking us seriously and I’m not about to put up a fight or give up all the information I have. They seem like they couldn’t care less. The two of them turn to leave, and my shoulders drop.

‘Well, that settles it then. If there’s still no news tomorrow, let us know.’

‘No – you can’t leave!’ shouts Audrey from behind me. ‘What about the blood?’

AUDREY

My heart is pounding. DC Copeland frowns. *'Blood?'*

'On Clover's desk –' I begin, but Ivy kicks my foot. *'Ow!'*

Ivy looks up at the man and smiles. *'On my forehead,'* she says. *'That's what Audrey means. I had blood on my forehead from when a mirror fell and knocked me over, but I cleaned up before you got here. I dripped on Clover's desk – honestly, I was bleeding all over the place.'*

'We didn't see any signs of blood,' says DI Shing, looking from Ivy to me and back again.

'I told you – I cleaned it up,' Ivy says quickly.

'I thought you said you didn't touch anything?' Mrs Abbott says. A vein on her forehead is threatening to burst.

'The only thing I touched was my own blood. I figured I should wipe it all off since it wasn't relevant to Clover being missing and I thought it would just confuse things.'

I can't quite believe what I'm hearing, but I'm too stunned to contradict her.

'You know what? It's late; I'll show you out,' says Mrs Abbott, trying her best to lead the police away from us. DI Shing looks at me strangely. Mrs Abbott ushers her out the door, then turns to look at us. *'I trust you girls can make your own way back to your room?'*

We nod, shuffling out of her office, and she locks it behind us. Ivy and I wait in the doorway until the police are out of earshot.

I open my mouth to speak, but Ivy stops me. ‘Not here – come on.’

She grabs my arm and yanks me into the darkened room opposite Mrs Abbott’s office. I stumble in, catching myself on one of the desks – this must be a classroom I haven’t been in yet – then slump into a chair. ‘What the hell, Ivy?’

She sits down opposite me. ‘I panicked,’ she says, biting her lip. Her eyes flicker from side to side as if she’s trying to solve a math problem that I can’t see.

‘Why did you lie about the blood? It wasn’t you dripping on the desk . . . that blood was already there. We didn’t just imagine it! So how come it’s gone?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘But it was there, right?’

Ivy glares at me and rolls her eyes.

‘So you agree. Good. Then I repeat: What. The. Fuck? Did Mrs Abbott tidy it up before the police got there? Because that’s some cover-up. We have to tell the cops what we saw, exactly as we saw it, if they’re gonna have any chance of finding Clover. I don’t get why you stopped me!’

‘Because – let’s face it – they won’t believe us. You heard them – they already have this vision of us as these prissy boarding-school girls who love drama. They’d think we made it all up for a laugh, or find some way to turn it round so that it’s our fault.’

‘We could tell them about the Magpie letter then. That *proves* someone else is involved . . .’

‘We don’t even know how long Clover’s had that invite. What if it was research for her podcast? And come on – how do you think it would sound to the police? A secret society hiding in the background, protecting the school?’ Ivy shakes her head. ‘It sounds ridiculous. Maybe . . .’ She takes a deep breath. ‘Maybe they’re right. Maybe we’ll have heard from Clover by tomorrow morning.’ She shifts in her seat and pulls her phone out of her pocket.

‘She’s done this before, right? Or something like this?’

‘What do you mean?’ Ivy asks sharply.

‘Run away.’

‘Who told you that?’

‘Teddy.’

Ivy sighs. ‘Yeah, she has. A few times. But I’m with you – I *know* something weird happened in that room. I feel like Clover’s in danger. And I don’t think this is something the police are going to help us with.’

‘Why not? That attitude pisses me off. No one wants to go to the cops and everyone’s first instinct is to cover shit up, just in case they end up in the spotlight or getting accused. But it doesn’t work like that. I’ve *been* there, remember? The police know what they’re doing. They will be able to help. If Clover is in danger, then we owe it to her.’

Ivy’s eyes flash. ‘They weren’t much help with Lola’s murder, were they? Why would it be any different this time? It’s still a missing teenage girl. I can tell you exactly how many fucks the police are going to give.’ She holds her thumb and forefinger up in a circle.

After a few beats, I nod. ‘Fine.’ Then I lean forward in my chair. ‘So what are *we* gonna do?’