

The old English Tudor house sat high on the property, looming over the neighborhood in all its glory. Lavender grew wild in a river of deep purple along the edges of the treed property. Nellie had returned from her visit with Father Nash feeling optimistic.

Nellie wrapped herself in a well-loved throw and sat in one of the mismatched chairs scattered around the unkempt yard. She sipped from a chilled glass of *Albarino*. Julia would be arriving in a few hours and she looked forward to discussing the plans with her. Her sister was the sensible one, even if she was loquacious.

“Hey you!” Julia walked up behind her sister, her voice louder than necessary.

Nellie jumped at the booming voice. “You startled me, I thought you weren’t coming until tonight.”

“Couldn’t wait another minute to see my baby sister,” Julia teased. “This place is even more amazing than I remembered!” She did a full turn, hands to the sky, taking it all in. “Shit, this yard needs some work though.”

Nellie had purchased the house six months ago to be near her self-indulgent aging Mother.

“I’m glad you’re here, there’s lots to tell you,” Nellie pulled the tartan throw tighter. “Did you stop at Mum’s on the way?”

The girls grew up in a cozy stone cottage a few doors down, where their mother resided.

“Uh-uh, came straight here from the ferry, wouldn’t mind a drink or two first!”

“I’ll second that!” Nellie stood and headed towards the house. “Okay, ready for the grand tour,” she called over her shoulder.

“Right behind you, can’t wait to see what you’ve done on the inside, cause the outside--”

“Enough already Jules!” Nellie opened the main level french doors to a room, which had only ever existed in her mind before now.

“Oh my God Nels,” Julia exclaimed. “This is like something out of a ‘Cabin Living’ magazine.”

The west wall was lined floor to ceiling with a solid mahogany bookcase. The southeast corner had a vintage ivory airtight, set on a stone landing. The North end had a bar converted from a Tonk piano, bought for next to nothing. The room gave space to two oversized black leather recliners, which sandwiched a burrow table that had once belonged to their grandparents. A matching clock hung on the wall above.

“Do you like?” Nellie beamed, “Haven’t done much with the rest, but who needs anything else?”

“I love it, I may never leave.” Julia joined her sister at the bar. “What gave you the piano idea?”

“*Cabin Living Magazine*,” Nellie laughed, spilling some of the wine she was pouring.

“So, are you going to fill me in about Mum?” Julia asked.

“Well, we have a meeting on Tuesday morning with Father Nash.”

“What for?”

“Interven--”

The women didn’t hear Alice come into the room. “Inter what?”

“Oh, hi Mother, aren’t you going to say hello to Julia.”

“First, I’d like to know exactly what the two of you were on about,” she snapped. “It was me, wasn’t it?”

“Mother, not everything is about you!” *I’m really not in the mood for her narcissistic bullshit!*

Alice put her hands on her hips, “You should get down on your knees every morning, noon and night Helen Rae and thank the good Lord that you are so much better than the rest of us!”

Nellie’s stomach tightened and her vision blurred.

Julia intervened. “Come on Mum, let’s sit down.” She led her to one of the chairs. “I’ll get you a nice glass of wine and we’ll have a pleasant visit.”

“Do not patronize me, Julia Mae.” Alice glared.

*More booze, just what she needs!* Nellie grabbed the edge of the piano to steady herself. *Pleasant visit, my ass!*

“And you,” she wagged her index finger in Nellie’s direction. “I hope you like what you see when you look in the mirror, Helen Rae!”

Nellie and Julia shared a familiar look. It was going to be a very long night.