

Eventually, we park in a lay-by and get out. The air is damp and heavy, and it's almost pitch black. Leaves rustle behind me. Or is it the sound of an evil beastie snuffling through the trees on its way to make us its breakfast? Cass hands me my things from the boot and grabs a pile of blankets and a big torch, turning it on and casting a beam out in front of us so we can see enough to cross the road.

'Where are we?' I whisper, because it feels like that sort of a place. Or maybe it's just because it's the middle of the bloody night.

'Haldon Forest.'

'May I ask why?'

'You'll see,' he says again. He tucks the blankets under his arm so he can take my hand, and I almost stumble. It's not as though our fingers are entwined – it's the way a child would hold hands with a parent – but even through our gloves, there's an intimacy to it that makes my heart stutter.

'I hate surprises,' I manage, my words thick.

'Me too.' He pulls me alongside a wooden fence, then stops and lets go. 'Over here.'

My hand feels colder, now. 'You want me to climb a fence?'

'It's not particularly tall. Although you should mind out for the barbed wire along the top.'

'Are you serious?'

'No,' he says, and I breathe a sigh of relief until he grins. 'Not about the barbed wire, but I am about the climbing. Come on.'

Juggling the torch and blankets, he clambers to the top, then shines the torch down to my side. He's right, it's not tall, but nor am I elegant.

I make it over, stepping down onto mulchy ground. If I pretend to slip, will he take my hand again? 'I assume you'll bail me out if I'm arrested for trespassing?'