

A Fairy Godmother Novel

WISH OF THE WICKED

Revenge
is pure
magic.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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BLOOMSBURY



WANTED—DEAD OR ALIVE!
REWARD FOR THE CAPTURE
OF FUGITIVES

By edict of Her Royal Highness Queen Magrit, members of the Entente and all users of magic are now and hereafter considered outlaws of Hinter and the Thirteen Queendoms. All enemies of the Crown will be burned at the stake. Protecting any such outlaws is considered high treason, punishable by death.

PART I

THE PAST

*The Entente will rise again. We have
a plan, and you are just in time.*
—Galatea, La Soeur of the Past

PROLOGUE

The End. And Also the Beginning.

The Queen created the word “witch” and cursed my people in one breath. And in the next she condemned Hecate, my Hecate, to die.

We had been walking through the square when the Queen’s guards grabbed her. Hecate went with them, even though she was stronger. Even though she could have stopped them with a breath, a whisper, or a turn of her wrist. She let them lead her to the square and tie her up. She let them start a fire beneath the pyre. She kept her lips sealed. She did not move a muscle in protest. She let them take her from me. From all of us.

From me especially.

Hecate was the most powerful of us. She was the Future of Les Soeurs, my mentor, and sister to us all. But I didn’t know she was my mother until the moment before her last breath.

When I could move again, I touched my face. It was wet. I realized that I was crying. I had never seen another member of the Entente cry—not Hecate on the pyre, not Galatea as she was watching her. But I was crying now.

I should have known she was my mother, but Hecate had always been so powerful that her wishes were opaque to me—like she never wanted or felt anything other than what she was doing at the

time. But as she burned, her eyes met mine. The flames curled around her. She should have been screaming—instead, she spoke to me in a voice I could only hear in my head.

I wish I'd told you, Farrow. But it is not our way.

I tried to scream, to get to her, but I was paralyzed where I stood. As a man dressed in the livery of the Queen's guard read off a list of offenses, saying things like "malevolent sorcery against the Queen" and "treasonous inciter," my mouth would not open; my legs would not move. I didn't know if Hecate was using what power she had left to stop me from fighting when she should have been fighting to stay alive.

Don't fight.

Suddenly Galatea, my older sister and the Past of Les Soeurs, appeared in the center of the square. If Hecate expired, there would be only two of them left. The three Les Soeurs led the rest of the Entente, each with a different gift. Iolanta, the Present, was in isolation. But she would feel Hecate die the moment it happened. Galatea, as the Sister of the Past, would remember every second of Hecate's death without the kindness of time to help it fade. Even though it was thought that my gift would be the Present someday, it felt like I would be remembering every detail of it forever too. I prayed for them to be able to stop it, but that was all for naught.

The other sisters began to appear. The army raised their swords against them. I still could not move.

Iolanta was there suddenly—Iolanta, who never left the confines of her isolation. Iolanta, who knew the Present and clearly could feel Hecate on the pyre.

South and Amantha and Bari were there too, making their own desperate attempts at saving her while I stood frozen.

I had no choice. I did not blink once as I watched the flames

engulf her body, her face, and her hair. As her skin charred black and her eye sockets filled with fire, and as my eyes stung and teared from the smoke, I could not unsee. But I didn't know why Hecate would have wanted me to have this be the last image that I would have of her, my mother.

Iolanta raised her wand, and Black Fire coursed out of it. Unfortunately for all of us, that fire met with the store of cannon fire nearby. Everything was chaos; everything was burning and ash in an instant.

When it was over, when the Entente were all ash and the Queen's guard had left on horseback, I tried to turn and leave, to get away. But something stalled me. I wanted, I needed, to take her home. I waited until dark; I waited until every last onlooker had dispersed.

I gathered the ashes from the pyre and put them in the pouch I wore around my neck, making sure I left no part of her behind. When I was done, I held her in my hands. I could not feel her—not her power, not her essence, not her electricity.

My mother.

In the Entente, we were all sisters. There were no mothers. But now I knew mine, and I didn't know how to feel about it. I slipped my wand out of my pocket and tried to use it to make a path to the Hiding Place. But it was no use. The wand did not work.

I had to go on foot. I ran the whole way to the Hiding Place. It was where we had been born, where we were raised until we were ready for placement, and where we were to go if anything catastrophic ever was to happen. Losing Hecate was worse.

The interior of the Place mirrored that of the palaces we were sent to—marble floors, high ceilings, opulent silks—but everything here was made of magic.

It wasn't until after the ashes were in the glass coffin in the center of the room that I realized something I could not reconcile. How had any of this happened without Les Soeurs stopping it? How was it that we could correct the fates of others and not do the same for ourselves? My mother saw this coming.

"You could have stopped this," I said as I closed the lid with a spell. "We could have avoided the square today altogether."

She was gone, and the Queendom wants us all dead, not just her. How is that Fate's plan?

We were Entente. For centuries we had been at the side of every queen and king in every Queendom, as advisors, confidants, leaders. We were the whispers. We were the details, tiny arrows that you couldn't ignore. We were strings of moments, coincidences, and happenstances that led you to yesterday and today and tomorrow. We were the Fates.

Nothing was the way it was supposed to be. There had always been the three of them directing us: Past, Present, and Future. Though no one ever saw Iolanta except for Hecate and Galatea, we always felt her influence in the directives we were given. It had always been the three Les Soeurs, but now . . .

"Hecate," I whispered to the glass casket. "I know there isn't a happily ever after for us, but I never expected this." As I looked through the glass before me, something seemed to . . . stir.

I closed my eyes tight, doubting them.

But when I opened them again, the ashes were indeed moving, forming the shape that I knew so well to be Hecate's.

"Hecate?" I said, feeling slightly foolish. Despite a lifetime of magic up close, I had never seen anything like this. Dead was dead. There was no "after," we all knew that. But as I watched Hecate's ashes swirling around in the glass coffin, what I knew slipped away.

The ashes began to swirl around the case in a frenzy. They formed a kind of funnel that increased in velocity.

I leaned in just as the glass shattered and the funnel tornadoed out of the case and smashed about the room. I landed on the floor, pushed by the force of air that the ashes had created.

“Hecate!” I screamed, wondering if the ashes were conscious, wondering if the ashes were dangerous, wondering if the ashes were still Hecate.

I got back to my feet, my eyes still on the swirling gray. Glass clattered around me, and yet somehow I had not felt a single cut. I half expected the ashes to try and escape. Perhaps the coffin disagreed with her. Perhaps, they/she was seeking peace. But as they spun down from the ceiling they began to form the Hecate shape all over again. And when the ashes had settled completely into her form, they finally stood still, and I took a step toward them.

I had not known that she was my mother, but I had always felt closer to her than the other Older Sisters. It was her favor I sought, her approval I wanted. For a moment, the ashes began to make up her face, and then her neck, her shoulders, and so on, until my Hecate was before me, completely formed.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” I blurted.

My mother made of ash did not answer. Or maybe she could not. Then the ashes broke apart and came back together in the shape of a heart.

Was this her way of telling me that she loved me? Or was this her way of saying goodbye?

The ashes broke apart again and came back together as her silhouette.

“I don’t want to say goodbye to you,” I said finally.

I didn’t know magic could do this. That it could continue beyond

the grave. There were rules and limits. Things that we did and did not do. But here was Hecate, my mother, standing in front of me made of ash.

Suddenly, behind me I heard footsteps against the marble. I turned back. Someone was coming. Lots of someones.

Hecate beckoned me closer with a wave of her arm. I stepped forward, and she lowered down beside me. Her ashes brushed my ear.

Leave everything behind, the ashes whispered in Hecate's voice . . .

Run!

This time the voice was louder, and the ashes burst apart.

RUN!

I ran.