



a **LITTLE TOO**
LATE

Listen to silence.

It has so much to say...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1-----PG. 2

CHAPTER 2-----PG. 4

CHAPTER 3-----PG. 10

CHAPTER

1

It all started one brisk October morning in 2026, when my sister, Karalin, and I walked to our school, Eagle High. We were fighting a lot, and couldn't agree on what to do after school in our beautiful city koala, Australia.

RRRRRRRRRIING!

Oop! There's the bell! We dashed into the school, straight to English, Algebra, History, and .l (finally,) lunch. At lunch, Karalin and I sat together in the far right corner of the cafeteria, next to a table with some other kids who were whispering very suspiciously.

When we sat down, I heard a blonde girl whisper to the group, "Let's sneak into the school at 4 pm." She sounded VERY serious, and the other three kids

nodded in agreement. Just then, I nudged Karalin's arm, and said, "Hey, let's take a "stroll" at 4 pm around the school, okay?" I tried to sound casual and nonchalant.

Karalin saw right through me. "Caralina," she says with a warning tone. "We talked about this. You can't eavesdrop on other people's conversations!"

"Fine. Whatever. But can we? Can we PLEASE?" I beg.

"I guess so. But no more eavesdropping on other people's conversations...without me." Karalin's eyes sparkled. "This should be fun."

By lunch, we had to go to Science, then PE crawled by, and then, FINALLY the end of the day!

As we were walking out of school, we saw those other kids rush off into the forest. Being the stupid teenagers that we are, we follow them. About half an hour later, we ended up at the edge of the most beautiful, sparkling lake. On the other side of the lake, there was a not-so-pretty abandoned elementary school with the words Canyon Creek Elementary etched on the front of the building. We watched as they entered the abandoned building, talking loudly. I glanced at Karalin, who had already begun to enter the building. I followed her, feeling unnerved.

CHAPTER

2

When we entered, it was a LOT bigger than I expected. We had barely had enough time to look around before suddenly, the lights flickered off. The last thing I remember was getting blindfolded, and then getting hit on the head with a frying pan. When I woke up, I had a REALLY bad headache. Groaning, I opened my eyes. What seemed to be a gym blurred before me. I wiped my eyes and looked around. It seemed like I was sitting in the middle of a dark gym. Then again, everything was blurry, because I had just gotten hit on the head with a frying pan, blindfolded, then brought to this dark, dusty, crusty, musty, gym. Anyways, I saw me, and five other teenagers

(including Karalin,) sitting in a circle with candles lit around us. That's when I blacked out again. "You are the Mafia," said a cool female voice inside my head. I groaned and tried to open my eyes, but they wouldn't budge, almost as if they had been glued together. A shiver ran down my spine.

Then suddenly, my eyes were forced open and I noticed that I was sitting in the middle of the circle. I looked at Karalin's pale face, her eyes shut, then moved on to the other faces. I counted four girls and one boy, including Karalin.

"You are the Mafia," said the female voice inside of my head again. "Who do you wish to kill?" I looked around, thinking over the words carefully. I hoped she wasn't being serious about the *killing* thing... I avoided Karalin and pointed at a random brown-haired girl before blacking out again.

After about five minutes, I woke up in a dusty, old classroom. I was sitting in the middle of the classroom. The chairs were all stacked neatly against the walls. Cobwebs peeked out in every corner.

As I got to my feet, exhilaration was rushing through me, from my head to my crusty musty toes. This was a game of Mafia. I knew how to play. And I intended to

stay hidden so no one knew that I was the Mafia. Whatever this was, my main goal was to stay alive and find Karalin.

I walked into a random classroom and closed the door behind me. Not long after, I started looking for hiding spots. Suddenly, the door opened, and the teenagers entered the room. Karalin, one girl, and one boy. They all introduced themselves (not Karalin, of course) to me. Liam and Sarah were their names. They seemed friendly.

With my hand up, I stopped them from getting any closer to me. “Wait. Why are there only three of you? Who’s missing?” I counted again, but still. There were only three, including Karalin. There should be five.

Two victims were missing.

A scream suddenly met the air, shocking us frozen.

“Who was that?” asked Karalin in a shaky voice.

“I don’t know,” I said honestly. Suddenly, a bone-chilling feeling filled me. I was supposed to be the Mafia. Something was wrong. Maybe something had changed, and I was no longer Mafia.

“I don’t know,” replied Karalin. “Just be glad it’s not us.” I could see that her hands were shaking, as she looked around anxiously. “Look, Caralina, we need

to get out of here.”

A lump dropped into my throat and weighed heavily in my stomach. I had made a mistake. A massive mistake. I could have gotten us killed, just by eavesdropping on the teens’ conversations.

What had I done?

“So, have you gotten a good idea who the Mafia is?” Karalin said, interrupting my thoughts. Her searching eyes stayed on my face a moment too long before she looked around at the others, her eyes narrowed with suspicion.

I shook my head as I got to my feet. “Let’s enter... but we should all stick together. I can’t get through this alone, can you?” My hands shook, as I looked into my sister's eyes. I was afraid, but her eyes were full of determination as she looked at her newfound friends and sister. “And no, I don’t know who the Mafia is, Karalin. But we’ll learn, right?” I hesitated, thinking about the moment in the gym when the voice had proclaimed *me* Mafia.

“You might, but you probably won’t before the Mafia gets to you,” said Karalin.

“Fair enough,” said Sarah. “But if we stick together, the chances are higher.” She gave us a hopeful smile, and we smiled back.

We all entered the building through the back door. An eerie silence filled the suspiciously still air. Cobwebs were in every corner, and we were covered in dirt and webs. And when I say covered, I mean C-O-V-E-R-E-D. The whole place was a maze of cobwebs and dust. It was NOT a good look for us. We crept in quietly.

“Stop. I think I hear something!” said Karalin in a high-pitched voice.

At the same time, I was busy looking into a classroom. I saw some weird shapes moving about inside it. Interested, and again, being the stupid teenager that I am, I opened the door and entered. “Caralina!” exclaimed a brunette, jumping out from a bunch of stacked yellow chairs. “I’m Alice! I’ve heard so much about you.”

Instantly, my eyes switched from Alice to the grinning freckled boy emerging from the stacked yellow chairs. With dark eyes full of an unknown intent, he put out his hand. “Ethan Storm. How nice to meet you.” There was only one thought in Caralina’s mind. One of these two was the Mafia.

Terrified, I started backing slowly toward the door, but it was locked. “Karalin!” I yelled, wishing more than anything for her to answer back.

“Stay, please. I only want to chat!” Ethan said, batting his eyelashes. (which BTW did NOT look very pretty on him.) He moved closer, eyes darkening.

“Listen, I know your deepest, darkest secrets. And if you don’t stay with me and Alice, then there will be consequences.” He warned.

“What? You’ll leak the fact that I once peed myself in my bed? Yeah, everyone does that,” I replied. “Let me guess, you still wet yourself and need comfort?” I had no clue where my cockiness was coming from, but I knew I had to keep trying to distract him.

Anger filled Ethan’s eyes. “I didn’t. And I still don’t.”

His voice was tense.

“Okay then. So you’re a bully who kidnaps people for fun,” I said rudely, which was a BIG mistake.

“How dare you!” snarled Ethan. I glanced toward the door again, hands shaking. I wish it wasn’t locked right now.

“You shouldn’t have said that,” said Alice. She stepped forward, shaking out her wrists revealing long, growing nails. I cried out in horror.

CHAPTER

3

So this is the end, I thought dully. At least I will have died heroically (well, kind of.)

Suddenly, the door pushed open and I fell on my butt. I quickly got up, now humiliated, and dusted off my aching butt. Then, of course, like any other normal person, I...

RAN FOR MY LIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIFE!

After running for a while, I slowed and stopped. Panting and gasping, I stood in the middle of the hallway leading to the gym. Karalin appeared behind me, her face pale.

It was so silent and eerie that I edged closer to Karalin. “No ghosts are living here, right?” I whispered.

“Ghosts aren’t real,” said Karalin, but her voice was shaking. “This is so freaking scary, Caralina.”

I swallowed and gathered my courage.

“Only one thing to do,” I said, pushing open the gym doors and entering the dim gym, the lights dimmed and cobwebs were in the corners.

It was a mistake. A BIG mistake. I thought I would never unsee what I saw then and there.

A shriek bounced off the walls, later that mixed with mine and Karalin’s cries of horror. Ethan was dragging Alice into a closet by the hands, her long blonde hair trailing behind her.

He had double-crossed his teammate. And there was no doubt about it - we were next.

His head turned, and he smiled maliciously at us before disappearing into the closet with Alice. Just then, a loud song turned on in the gym, and all the lights turned on.

Our parents entered the gym, chanting a happy birthday song. It was mine and Karalin's birthday! That day was so hectic, I forgot! I stared at them disbelievingly.

“Was this all planned?” asked Karalin, disgruntled. “Yes. Sorry for the shock, but I know you guys like a little bit of adventure,” confirmed our dad. “Don’t

worry, you weren't going to die." He smiled. I felt WAY better now that I wasn't running for my life. I glanced to the left and saw a table with a beautiful pink and blue cake, with flowers, sprinkles, and everything! There were also matching cupcakes that looked DELISH. "I'm so hungry. Do you have pizza?" I said in my sweetest most high-pitched voice. More tables were brought out, full of pizzas and gifts. Aunty Susan and Uncle Dan both smiled and gave their gifts to Karalin and I.

"This was all an act!" said Karalin after a pause. "But..."

I

still don't get it. Why was Caralina made mafia?" The door to the storage closet opened. Alice came out looking normal. She smiled at me, and I noticed that Alice's nails were back to normal. "Hi, guys. Sorry about all this. I hope y'all have a happy birthday."

Liam and Sarah appeared in the doorway. Sarah smiled at us. "Nice to see you guys again... Thought you died," she joked.

As the sun began to shine again, and our newfound friends celebrated mine and Karalin's birthdays together, and everything we had been through together seemed to melt away. The day had been imperfect, hectic, and even terrifying, but in the end, everything had turned out just fine. ;)

THE eND

