

# FAMILY SECRETS

## PROLOGUE

Great Barrington, Massachusetts is known for its quaint, friendly town, scenic mountains, lush woods and vast, open waters. Those are the things that the natives like to think about as opposed to the fact that, within the last ten years, kidnappings have risen scarily. Imagine living in a place where it's no longer safe to go for an afternoon walk or ride your bike to get a snow cone on a hot, summer's afternoon. Twenty-year-old Amy Patrick has been trying to prove, for the last eight years, that her sister's car accident, which claimed her life and her husband's life, was no accident at all, especially given the fact that her newborn twins, Emily and Tate Simpson, have been missing since that day. The name Fisher is practically a household name around Great Barrington. Former neonatal nurse, Paula Fisher and her architect husband, Roman, started The New Home Foundation, an organization in which abandoned children are placed in loving homes. What Amy found most puzzling was how their success and wealth within the community seemed to happen overnight. One minute they were an average family living next door and the next, they sold their two-story home in town and built a house in the woods. Something about the couple never set right with Amy, and what better way to get insider information than to become an insider yourself? The more time Amy spent as a sitter for Hannah and Caleb, the Fisher's eight-year-old twins, the more she realized how they looked just like her sister and her husband, Luke. Deciding it was now or never to affirm the vow she had taken when she was twelve, to prove her sister's car accident was not an accident and to find her missing niece and nephew, she managed to get a DNA sample from them both as well as her own, and sent it off to a lab for comparison. It took almost a month to get the results back from a lab in New York and she couldn't believe her eyes when she saw that her suspicions had been correct. But now what did she do? How did she prove it? She was about to go up against two well-respected members of their community

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and well-funded at that, with a team of lawyers at their beck and call. She was a nobody. With no one to turn to except her boyfriend, Kyle Pogue, she filled him in on her sister's death, the kidnapping of the twins and now the confirmed DNA results. Kyle was an out of work felon who had been released from prison two years earlier. He was always looking for an edge to make a quick buck and he had a plan to get the twins back and to make them rich in the process. Amy was lucky to have a high school degree and wasn't looking to get into anything illegal. Her plan was much more simple. She planned on calling in sick, sneaking into the house and taking the twins then going to the police with them and the DNA results.

"Kyle, I need your help. I can't be there when the kids go missing. We have to go in and take them, then go to the cops," she told him.

"I don't do cops, Amy. I mean, your plan is simple enough. We can just work out the details along the way. I got this friend, Lester Casey. I know he's fresh out of prison, but he could help us," he told her, though in the back of his mind, he had already formed an entirely different plan. Amy tapped her long, manicured fingernails on the worn, leather armchair as she watched her boyfriend, Kyle, pacing the floor. She studied the imprints his large boots left in the worn green carpet then looked around their tiny, one-bedroom mobile home and sighed. The song *Is there life out there* came to mind, though she wasn't married and didn't have any children of her own. She knew if she let Kyle do it his way, they'd have money and could afford a much nicer place, something they could definitely be proud of, but she didn't believe in using children as pawns. She suspected that the Fisher's were behind most of the kidnappings the community had seen over the last several years. Where else were they getting all of these 'abandoned' children from? She made a solemn vow that she would find out the truth as well as a way to save her niece and

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nephew then prove to everyone that Paula and Roman Fisher killed her sister and her husband, then kidnapped her niece and nephew, even if it killed her.

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## CHAPTER ONE

Sixteen-year-old Kindle Abbott stretched out across her full-sized bed and ran her fingers over the fluffy, pink comforter. She swung her feet behind her as she flipped through the magazine laid out in front of her. Marc Jacobs released his new leather boots and if she only had two hundred extra dollars, she could buy them. They'd go great with everything in her closet, but convincing her mother to buy them was out of the question. She let out a sigh of frustration when her phone rang.

"Coroner's office," she laughed as she answered.

"You bag em, we tag em," her best friend Kayla finished, making them both laugh.

"So, let me guess. You've thrown yourself into a pit of depression while staring wishfully at the new Marc Jacob's boots," Kayla told her.

"Ah, how well you know me. Then again, my bet is that you're looking at the same boots," she laughed.

"So, would a girls' night with pizza be out of the question?" Kayla asked her.

"I'm down with a girls' night. I'm sure our parents will spring for food. It's a total necessity," Kindle laughed.

"Great, so I'll be there in an hour then," Kayla told her. There was a knock at Kindle's bedroom door. She looked up to see her mom standing there holding the house phone in her hand.

"Hey, mom. Kayla is coming over for pizza and movies."

"Five minutes ago, it would have been no problem at all but Paula Fisher is on the phone and wants to know if you're available tonight to watch the twins," Kindle groaned.

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“Seriously? Mom, it’s Friday night. Tyler was going to come over for pizza and movies too,”  
Kindle whined.

“Kayla and Tyler can come over tomorrow and spend all day. I know you’ve got your eyes on those new Marc Jacob boots. I’ll cover whatever you don’t have if you go sit for the Fisher’s tonight.

“Marc Jacob’s? Absolutely. I’ll just get Kayla to go over there with me,” Kindle agreed.

“Grab your stuff. Let’s get you to your first job.” She clapped excitedly while Kindle groaned.

“I’ll call you when I get to the Fisher’s,” Kindle told Kayla then hung up.

“Marc Jacob, you will be mine.” She clutched her small hands to her chest and sighed with satisfaction.

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## CHAPTER TWO

“Are you so excited?” Candace looked over at her daughter and beamed.

“Mom, it’s babysitting. I’m excited about the prospect of the new Marc Jacob’s boots,” Kindle told her.

“If you do a good job, perhaps they’ll call you to sit for them since you’re clearly the reliable one. Paula said Amy had known for two months they needed her to sit tonight.” Kindle shrugged then stared out the window into the darkness. It was eight o’clock in the evening and the moon was casting a white glow over the treetops and the black top road as they drove deeper into the woods.

“Why would they choose to live in the woods?” Kindle asked her mom.

“To hear Paula talk, it’s beautiful, quiet and peaceful.” Kindle felt a chill creeping up the back of her neck as she watched the eerie way the tree limbs danced in the wind and cast shadows on the Fisher’s two-story, log cabin style home. Kindle glanced at her mom who was leaning forward over the black steering wheel and taking in the house as if it was the most magnificent thing she’d ever seen. Kindle couldn’t help but notice the rustle of leaves and the smell of rain in the air. Her concern was loss of electricity due to a storm. She could barely handle the thought of being trapped in the middle of nowhere with no lights or the ability to charge her phone. At this point, her phone was her only lifeline to civilization. She watched her mom walk up the wooden ramp that glowed orange from the lighting along the bottom of it, and pondered whether or not the boots were really worth this. She was already traumatized and hadn’t even met the kids yet.

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“Kindle,” her mother sang her name over her shoulder. Kindle groaned and pulled her phone out of her back pocket then froze mid-way up the walkway.

“Um, mom! I have no service!” she yelled frantic. Her mom gave her an amused smile.

“Well, just think of it as a job. You can’t have phones while at work.”

“You do,” Kindle refuted.

“Well, you’re in customer service and I’m not. Plus, I’m the boss.” Kindle rolled her blue eyes and finished walking up to the front door. Candace rang the doorbell and waited. The large, mahogany front door reminded Kindle of something out of mid-evil times with the large bolts around the frame and a square dead center to the top made out of iron, resembling that of tic tac toe.

“Candace,” a petite woman with short auburn hair and long red fingernails squealed and pulled her in for a hug. Kindle watched curiously.

“Paula, this is my daughter, Kindle. Kindle, this is Paula Fisher,” Candace introduced them.

“Nice to meet you.” Candace extended her delicate, ivory hand out to her.

“Oh no, we go in for hugs here.” Paula grabbed her and hugged her.

“I am so sorry about the short notice. We just couldn’t believe Amy canceled on us at the last minute. We are so grateful you dropped your plans to help us out. I remember being a teenager. Babysitting was not on my list of highlights for Friday night fun.” Paula kept an arm around Kindle’s small waist as she led them inside. To her amazement, the inside was extraordinarily decorated and was completely modern with a white furniture set and marble tables. When she had kids, she was never getting anything white. Maybe not even white shirts.

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“Okay-” Paula started just as a rather tall, attractive man with light brown hair and blue eyes descended the stairs fixing the cummerbund at his wrists. Paula smiled up at her husband.

“Now, don’t you look dashing in your black tux,” she told him.

“I knew, one day, you were going to get me to dress like a penguin.” Roman teased, making everyone laugh and easing some of the tension in the room.

“I was just telling Kindle that Hannah and Caleb are already in bed upstairs. They watch movies in their rooms until about ten. Their TV’s are set on timers so you don’t have to worry about turning them off. They’ve already had dinner and they keep a bottle of water on their bedside tables. Basically, you’re just here to make sure they don’t bum the house down while we’re gone,” Paula joked and made Kindle laugh.

“I’m pretty sure I can handle it,” Kindle told her with a smile, though she wasn’t really smiling on the inside.

“We have a landline since it is nearly impossible to get cell service out here. We left our numbers on the fridge. Feel free to call us for anything. If we don’t answer right away, don’t worry, we’ll call you back. If it’s an emergency, call your parents. They have our permission to handle any emergencies,” Paula told her as she hugged Candace on her way out and then Kindle before slipping her arm through Roman’s.

“Call me for anything,” Candace told her, then hugged her bye again. Before Kindle could even blink, everyone was gone and she was left standing alone on the top step of a shiny, wood floor, three-stair drop that led into the living room. She let out a long sigh and made her way downstairs and bypassed the living room and headed straight for the kitchen. She opened the “smart” stainless steel fridge that informed her when she had the doors open for longer than a



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minute. The monotone, female voice startled her and elicited a yelp. She grabbed a can of coke out and slammed the doors in protest. She turned and leaned against the black and grey marble island top and stared into what looked like a rainforest with a pool.

“Fascinating,” she murmured and opened her drink as she walked through a set of double glass doors into a hallway and through another set of glass doors that opened up into the indoor pool area. She turned in a circle on the rock that made up the walkway, admiring all the greenery and flowers. She listened to the trickle of the waterfall that was built into the top portion of the pool and flowed into the crisp, clear water below. She was fascinated at the steam rising up from the water and then evaporating into thin air. She bent down and ran her fingers through the water, surprised to find it so warm. She was just getting to her feet when she heard what sounded like a door slamming behind her. She spun, almost losing her balance and falling into the pool. She looked around her as the steam from the pool seemed to be getting thicker, making it difficult to see. She hurried toward the doors, coughing as the air turned thin. She tripped over something in front of the doors on her way out but didn't stop to see what it was. She spun, slammed the glass doors closed, listening to them rattling as she pressed her back against them and gasped for a breaths of air. To her left, she heard a creaking sound that made her play the best statue ever. She held her breath and focused her eyes in the direction the sound had come from. Her heart was beating so hard she could feel it pounding in her ribs.

“Hannah? Caleb?” she called out in a shaky voice. She pushed off the doors and walked slowly, putting one foot in front of the other as if walking a tight rope with no mat beneath her. She walked into the living room, which was noticeably dark and creepy for lack of a better word. She walked with purpose to the remote sitting on the top of the white marble table top and turned on

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the flat screen. She could hear the howl of the wind outside followed by a scratching sound at the windows. She closed her eyes and exhaled slowly.

“It’s just the wind, Kindle. It’s just the wind,” she told herself over and over again. She spotted the cordless phone across the living room next to an oversized, white, microfiber chair. She all but ran to it and pulled it out of the base. She dialed Kayla and was relieved when she answered.

“So, how’s work?” she teased.

“It’d be great if it wasn’t in the middle of nowhere and creepy as crap. I mean, I don’t know if it’s just me or the fact that I’ve watched entirely too many murder shows, but get your butt over here, like now,” Kindle told her.

“Text me the address. Consider me on the way,” Kayla told her then hung up. Kindle bit her lip and dialed her boyfriend, Tyler, next.

“Hello?” he asked confused.

“Hey Ty, it’s me,” she told him.

“Hey, babe. Where are you?” he asked curiously.

“At the Fisher’s house doing a last minute sitting job. Their regular girl canceled last minute and my mom was nice enough to volunteer me and then bribe me with Marc Jacob boots,” she told him and made him laugh.

“Text me the address babe,” he told her.

“If I can get freaking service out here. Otherwise, it’s 2 Private Road,” she told him.

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“My dad said I could take his truck, so I’ll be there in a few. Hang tight,” he told her. She loved him. She really, really did. She hung up, feeling better. She took her phone out of her pocket and did a balancing act next to the front door and finally found service. She typed in the address frantically to Kayla and waited for it to get through.

“See you soon,” she replied back. Kayla put her phone back in her back pocket then walked over to the couch, feeling reassured that her reinforcements were on their way. She was about to sit down when she heard a door open and close upstairs. She looked like she was about to leap forward, from the partially bent position she was in. She stared up the stairway into complete darkness. Her dad was most likely in his office still or she hoped that he was. She picked up the house phone again and dialed his number.

“Abbott,” he answered.

“Hey, daddy,” she told him.

“Kindle?” he said it confused.

“Yeah, mom volunteered me to sit for your friends, the Fisher’s,” she replied.

“Well that was nice of her,” he chuckled.

“Tell me about it. Meanwhile, I’m at their nice but rather creepy house and daddy, I keep hearing doors open and closing,” she told him.

“I see. Well, I’m actually in the middle of a case and won’t be home until late pumpkin; otherwise, I’d volunteer to come and stay with you,” he told her.

“Daddy, you’re my hero. Thank you, but I called Kayla and Tyler from the landline and they’re both on their way,” she said.

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“You think you’re going to be there later than ten?” he asked her.

“Oh yeah. They had some benefit to go to tonight for their organization,” she told him.

“Oh, that’s right. That’s tonight. Okay, well, I’ll check back on you in a bit to make sure you’re okay. Did you take your pepper spray?” he asked her.

“It’s in my bag on the couch,” she told him. “But my cell doesn’t work really well out here, that’s why I called you from the house phone but daddy, something doesn’t feel right here. You said to always trust my instincts and I’m telling you, there’s something not right here,” she told him. He listened intently as she talked.

“Call me when Tyler and Kayla get there. I want to know you aren’t alone and I’ll call your mother and talk to her about this. I’ve almost got this case wrapped up. As soon as I’m done here, I’ll be on my way there, but if anything else happens, anything at all-“ He was midsentence when another door slammed from behind her. She yelped and spun.

“Kindle!” he yelled.

“Someone’s here,” she told him just as the line went dead. There was a knock at the door.

“Who is it?” she called shakily.

“Kayla and Tyler!” they yelled through the door. She exhaled slowly and opened the door.

“Boy, am I glad you’re here. Crap is freaky here; I had my dad on the phone I’m so freaked out and then it went dead,” she told them.

“Must have been bad for you to call your dad at the office.” Tyler kissed her softly then hugged her.

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“Doors are just opening and closing all over the house. It’s the creepiest thing ever. At first, I thought it was just the wind, but now-” She paused as they stared at her quietly.

“Now I just feel like something is off. I’ve felt it since the second I walked in the door., she told them. We’ll check it out, babe. There’s three of us here, now. We’ll go upstairs and start with the kids’ rooms and make sure they’re safe and sound. After that, we’ll check the rest of the house.”

Tyler kissed her forehead and hugged her tight. He slipped her hand into his as the three of them headed to the steep staircase and ascended the darkness ahead of them.

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## CHAPTER THREE

They reached the top of the stairs and pressed their bodies together as they took another step into the darkness. The floorboards creaked beneath their feet, sending chills up and down Kindle and Kayla's backs.

"Tyler." Kindle's voice trembled as she whispered his name.

"I got you, babe. I got you." He wrapped an arm around her waist and held her close to him.

They stopped in front of the first door. Tyler could just make out Kindle's worried face as he reached for the brass doorknob and turned it slowly. The door swung open, blowing the girls' long hair over their shoulders. They peered into the room and frowned at the empty bed. Kindle was on the verge of hysteria as she ran into the room. Tyler flipped the light switch up and down.

"Um, Kindle, there's no electricity," Tyler said it slowly. Kindle ran to the bathroom and opened the door. She pulled the dinosaur curtain back and peered at the empty bathtub while Tyler opened the bathroom cabinets.

"Empty," they told one another. While Kayla stood in the dark bedroom, a large, cold hand that wreaked of smoke slipped over her mouth while another wrapped around her waist and tugged her backwards silently.

"Kayla can you check-" Kindle turned around to talk to Kayla but she wasn't in the room now.

"Tyler, where is Kayla?" Kindle asked worried.

"Calm down, baby. Calm down. She probably just walked down to Hannah's room," he told her gently, then took her hand in his. They left Caleb's room then walked two doors down to Hannah's room and opened her door.

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“Tyler!” Kindle yelled, panicked when her bed was empty too. Tyler didn’t want to admit this was beginning to scare him just a little bit, but he had to be the stable one considering his long-time girlfriend was about to lose her complete cool. Kindle let him lead her back down the steep stairway in the hopes they would find Kayla and the twins downstairs. She noticed immediately the TV was off.

“We didn’t tum that off,” she told him. He walked over and tried turning it on and shook his head. The house was in darkness now with the exception of moonlight spilling in through the uncovered windows downstairs. Tyler picked up the cordless phone and pushed the talk button. It beeped then gave no indication of a dial tone.

“And this phone just worked, right?” he asked her. Kindle nodded quickly and chewed her lower lip then jumped and screamed when a door slammed. Tyler took her hand in his and led her down the hallway then paused outside the doors that led to the pool room.

“What’s in there?” Tyler pointed to the steam filled room.

“The pool and like a rainforest,” she told him. He opened the door slowly, letting white smoke billow into the hallway. Through the thick smoke, they could make out something floating in the water and both ran forward.

“Kayla!” Kindle screamed and reached forward, grabbed the girl’s body and turned her over then screamed bloody murder and fell backwards away from the pool. Tyler grabbed her and ran to the hallway and slammed the doors closed.

“Get out of here now, Kindle! Run! Take my father’s truck!” he yelled and shoved the keys into her hand then pushed her to the front door.

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“I’m afraid no one is leaving here.” They spun to face the deep male voice. Kindle screamed and leapt backwards away from the barrel of the gun.

“Who are you? What do you want?” Tyler demanded and pushed Kindle behind his tall, muscular frame.

“Who I am is not as important as what I want. I want the twins. Tell me where they are and I might let your friend live,” he told them.

“Kayla,” Kindle cried.

“Pretty girl. She’s with my friend right now. Just FYI, he’s an escaped convict and these twins are our meal ticket to an island with no extradition.”

“We don’t know where the twins are. Just get your friend and leave,” Tyler told him.

“I wish I could believe you. I really do,” the stranger told him then shoved him backward and grabbed Kindle, pointing the gun at her temple.

“Now, you will play ball with me or I’m afraid this night will be the last night you see this beauty queen alive,” Kyle told Tyler. Tyler held his hands up in the air.

“Now, my friend Lester Casey overheard your girlfriend on the phone with her daddy. Turns out, he’s the man who sent him to prison and he wants revenge. So, we’re going to give Agent Abbott a call and let him know we’re holding his daughter hostage.” Kyle went on as he nudged Tyler toward the stairs with his big booted foot. The three of them walked up the creaking staircase. Tyler glanced at Kindle and nodded his head slowly. She threw her elbow back and landed it to Kyle’s jaw then ran as Tyler wrestled with the gun. She heard it go off and screamed as she ran into the first room she came to. She sprinted to the bedside table and opened it. Inside, she found



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a black handgun and pulled it out then dropped to the floor and said a silent prayer that her phone would work this one time. She called her dad and waited.

“Kindle?” he asked panicked.

“Daddy! Daddy, help me! Daddy! Daddy! There’s an escaped convict named Lester Casey and he’s in the house with his friend! And there’s a dead woman in the pool, the kids are missing and they have Kayla and I ran and the gun went off and I don’t know what happened to Tyler!” she screamed. She looked up briefly then down at her phone and felt sick. Her phone had lost service and she had no way of knowing whether or not he had heard anything she said.

“Kindle Abbott! I have your friends!” she heard Kyle taunting her from the hallway. She crawled under the bed and came out the other side just as Kyle walked into the room.

“Get up!” Kyle yelled at her. Kindle clutched the gun in her hand as she stared at the barrel of Kyle’s, which was pointed straight at her.

“Drop your gun!” she yelled at him.

“You don’t have the guts to pull that trigger!” he laughed at her. She squeezed the trigger then flew backwards as the gun kicked. As she sat on the floor at Kyle’s head crying, she heard a door slam downstairs then yelling and feet pounding up the stairs.

“Federal Agents!” she heard the yells.

“Daddy! I’m Kindle Abbott! In here!” she screamed from her place on the floor.

“Kindle!” Her dad slid on his knees and pulled her into his arms. Another agent took the gun from her hand and put it in a bag.

“It’s okay, baby.” He held her face in his hands then kissed her forehead.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

The moonlight was not the only light outside the Fisher home any longer. Now, red and blue lights flashed and radios crackled. The twins had been found in a secret wall in their playroom. Lester Casey had been apprehended and Kayla was scared but unharmed. From the safety of Tyler's arms Kindle watched her father working. They watched as Amy and Kyle's bodies were taken out on gurneys. Just when she thought the night of horrors was complete, Paula and Roman Fisher were put in handcuffs and charged with two counts of murder and kidnapping in connection with the mysterious deaths of Danielle and Lucas Simpson and the kidnapping of their newborn twins, Emily and Tate Simpson, AKA Hannah and Caleb Fisher. Her father made his way over to them and hugged them both then kissed the top of Kindle's blonde head.

"Why are you arresting the Fisher's?" Kindle asked him.

"The case we were working on was a kidnapping that happened several years ago when Paula Fisher was still a neonatal nurse. This afternoon, we received DNA results that proved the Fishers' children were, in fact, our missing children from an ongoing murder investigation of their parents. The crazy thing was, Amy Patrick, the woman you found dead in the pool used to be their sitter and she is also their aunt. She's the one who sent us the DNA results. I'm only sorry we weren't able to get here sooner and save her.

"Kindle!" She heard her mother yelling her name as she ran toward them.

"Candace," Reed Abbott pulled his wife into his arms and kissed her.

"She's all right. She's all right." He told her gently as the three of them hugged.

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“I’ve decided you’re not working. You might not ever leave the house again. Not ever. I’ll buy your boots and Tyler and Kayla, if their parents let them, can come to the house tonight for pizza and movies. After all of this, everyone needs to unwind.” Candace told her. Kindle couldn’t help but laugh at this as Kayla and Tyler both agreed a night of pizza and movies was definitely in order.

“I started to say I couldn’t wait for this night of horrors to end, but now, I can’t wait to go home and eat pizza and watch movies with you,” she told Tyler. Tyler cupped Kindle’s face in his hands and covered her mouth with his, enveloping her in a much needed kiss.