

# *Hallow*

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Jessica Gadziala

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## Hallow

*Hallow*

I wanted to go home.

Okay.

So I was just sitting in my car out front of the actual party, having not stepped foot inside yet.

But that didn't change anything.

I wanted to go home.

And crack open one of the books that were part of my costume, for real.

Fictional people, yeah, they beat the real ones every time. But try telling the real people this, and suddenly I am "standoffish" and "a killjoy" and "antisocial."

Which was why I was at this damn party to begin with.

My best friend - bless her patient heart (or damn it to hell in this circumstance) - has made me her lifelong 'project.' To get me out of my fake worlds, and into the real one. To make me do the normal things like leave

my apartment other than to go to work, the grocery store, or the bookshop.

Evil, I tell you, that was what Margerie was.

But I love her, so I indulge her about once a month, joining along to whatever outing she chooses.

I should have known better than to give her that kind of free rein after what happened last Halloween.

A haunted woods visit, really?

Me, who jump-scares at her own freaking shadow?

Literally, that has happened.

But I had maybe been mostly-distracted by some very devious throne-stealing in my new favorite book series to realize that when she said, "Come with me to a party next Tuesday," that Tuesday was Halloween.

Regardless, though, Margerie was a bit of a ruthless dictator about me not flaking once I agreed, so here I was.

In my car.

Outside of some fancy schmancy estate straight out of F. Scott Fitzgerald with three stories, red brick, columns, and ornate front gardens just begging for parties to be held there.

Which part of this one seemed to be.

People milled everywhere, faux leather superhero costume here, slutty faux animal fur and ears there.

Costumes were mandatory at this party. And when you were richer than God, I guess you could force people to do such things.

Personally, I had stopped dressing up when I was eleven. You know, when I grew up and stopped trick-or-treating.

*Oh, my God, Hallow, stop being such a Debbie Downer. Halloween isn't about candy as an adult. Well, okay, there is totally that too. That's why I can't be allowed down the holiday aisle until two days before, or I will eat everything I buy before Halloween. But no. It's about the partying and drinking and fantasy of it all.*

She said this last year when I had been complaining about adults stealing kid holidays. I mean, what was next? Adults hunting for Easter eggs stuffed with booze and condoms?

*Stop judging.*

She had demanded that about an hour later as I silently rolled my eyes at the sheer amount of Harley Quinn and Joker couple costumes assembled in line just waiting to get the pee scared out of them in the nearly pitch dark woods.

*How can I not judge? I mean, come on. Who romanticizes them? He literally tortured her until she went insane, when she developed an other-level amount of Stockholm Syndrome, and they are calling it love? Ugh.*

Margerie had shaken her head at me. *Not everyone has read Austen and Bronte and all your classic couples, Harlow.*

At least this year, there was no Harley or Joker to be found. This year, *Wonder Woman* finally got the screen time she deserved. I mean, the woman was inspired by the author who had an S&M-style relationship with his wife and a girlfriend, all poly in an era when stuff like that didn't fly. And, well, she kicked butt. We couldn't forget that part. I could get behind all the women scattered around in their black wigs with lassos in their hands.

That was just a little too much skin for me, though.

I took a breath, looking down at my understated blue dress and white apron, wondering if people would get it. Pulling down the visor, I made sure my brown hair was pulled back just-so, the blue ribbon visible from the front, wanting everything to be as close to accurate as possible. There was no point in doing it if you didn't do it right. At least, that was what my mother always told me growing up. About anything I did.

Luckily, the costume didn't take much effort. My eyes were brown like hers, so I didn't need to get contacts. She didn't wear much makeup. The shoes were ballet flats I had in the house. And the books, well, I had those by the truckload.

My phone buzzed in my cupholder, making me reach for it, knowing it was Margerie since, well, no one else ever really texted me.

*M - I'm here. Come find me.*

*- That might be easier if I knew what you were dressed as.*

*M - But that ruins the fun.*

I took a breath, tucking my phone into one of the convenient pockets of my dress along with my car key; I grabbed my books off the passenger seat, and forced myself to get out of the car.

The sooner I found Margerie, the sooner she would be satisfied that I had given the party the old college try, and would let me head home.

She would be fine by herself.

Margerie had always been able to make friends easily. Way back when she moved to town when we were just ten. She had the attention of all the girls in our class within the first two days.

I never really understood her decision to adopt pain-in-the-butt me. But she did. And I was grateful. I might not have loved going *out* with her, but we had a lot of fun together, just the two of us. As much as she teased me about my books, she was a reader as well. She simply had a better fiction/life balance. We watched movies together. We ordered in. We cooked. We did all that friend stuff. But without the unnecessary *other* people around.

But Margerie liked those other people.

She would be friends with half of the party by the time I cut out for the night. And she would call and check-in with me, as was our thing whenever I left a party early.

I was five feet onto the property when the first girl approached, her cranberry vodka sloshing over the rim of the rocks glass - real crystal, this place did nothing by half - as she pulled her boyfriend with her.

"Oh my God. I *love* your outfit!" she declared, cheeks a little red, eyes a little unfocused. I guess Margerie was right about the alcohol thing on Halloween.

"Thanks," I told her, reminding my lips to curve up as I did so. "I have to go find my friend," I informed her, not wanting to lie and say her sexy bunny costume was one I loved.

I moved past a group of guys dressed as cowboys, keeping my head averted, not wanting to engage anyone.

My feet made no noise on the bluestone steps and front porch as I

made my way toward the house, figuring I would do a lap, then head out back if I couldn't find her there.

I bet she wore a mask just to make my life even more difficult. That would be right up her alley.

My breath exhaled out of me as I stepped in through the thrown open front doors.

Now, no one would accuse me of being money hungry. I drove a car that was almost as old as me. I worked at Spines, a local bookstore, because it allowed me a lot of free time to read. Most of my money went to, well, books. I was raised humbly. I never aspired to drive a luxury car, or live in a mansion.

But that being said, with my love of classics, there was no way I could walk into this house, and not be blown away by the other-era of it all.

I half-expected Gatsby himself to walk out at any moment with a glass of champagne, toasting us all.

Before going off to stare at that stupid green light of his.

*The Great Gatsby* was one of the books that had been flung mercilessly at my wall whilst reading. Along with *Atonement*. It wasn't the tragedy of it all; I loved a good unhappily-ever-after. It was just the waste of so much potential.

Greatest American novel, my ass.

Anyway, yeah, the house was, well, impressive.

Directly forward was a horseshoe staircase inviting you to the upper level, seeming to create a wide embrace that put the sparkling, lit, crystal chandelier even more on display than it would already be with the sheer enormity of it.

I couldn't help but wonder how someone got up there to change out the lightbulbs.

There was a table directly in front of me, wide enough that if three people linked arms, they still couldn't encircle it, with a crystal punch bowl set upon it, dozens of the matching glasses around it.

I had been to a few parties in my day, and aside from the stuffy cheese-board and dry-red-wine type boring dinner parties, no one ever handed out glassware.

Then again, I guess I had never been to a party given by some rich person.

I wondered who the owner was, if Margerie even knew them, how she found out about it in the first place. The mansion was situated way out on the far end of town, down a private road, a place I didn't even know existed until tonight despite living in the town my entire life.

I had to ask when I found her.

If I ever found her.

I moved through the room to the right, a sitting room that led into a living room which led into a kitchen made all of sleek quartz, all white with a swirling black, making the massive space seem all the bigger. The island was covered with various trays of barely-touched food. Most people were waiting to get toward the table which was covered in top-shelf alcohol.

Me, well, I was driving.

And I was a terrible drinker.

But food? Food I could get behind. Fancy cheeses and finger sandwiches and dips were almost enough of a reason to be here. Almost.

I loaded up a plate - real China, of course - shamelessly, then moved back through the area I had just come from, going to the other side of the house, walking through an office then finding myself in heaven.

Of course, it had one.

Most old mansions did.

But it still managed to catch me off-guard.

A library.

The bookshelves were built-in, gleaming cherry wood from floor to ceiling, little sliding ladders attached, just begging for me to put a foot on and push off like I had seen countless times in a movie.

I moved forward in the abandoned space, everyone else seeming to want to be with the other people, not the books.

*Their loss.*

My knuckles slid over the spines of a shelf of Austen and Bronte, all hardbound and dated-looking. I had to hold myself back from pulling one off, and opening it up, checking the edition number.



Even if it wasn't a first edition, I didn't want to get my tortilla-finger oils on it.

"Fitting place for you," a voice called, making me whip around, knocking three of my crackers onto the thick Oriental rug.

I would have sworn the room was empty.

Yet there he was.

Yes, he.

Standing just inside the door in a nondescript black suit with a white shirt and a black tie. Tall and wide, he seemed not to be dwarfed by the massive shelves all around him. His inky hair was pushed backward and matched the two-day's worth of stubble on his face.

I would say *What a face!* But the fact of the matter was, half of it was hidden by a mask.

Halloween and all.

There was a sudden, wholly uncharacteristic desire to see his whole face.

Uncharacteristic because, yeah, that 'fictional people are better than real people' thing went double for men. Triple. Quadruple. Whatever was after quadruple, even.

Men in books were hotter, smarter, stronger, and had more depth than any man I had happened upon in my real life. Sad, that. But true nonetheless.

So it was weird that I wanted to walk over there, sneak my finger under the edge of the black mask, and slide it upward, show me what was between the scruff on his chin and the top of his forehead. Aside from the piercing blue eyes, that is.

One of his brows lifted, making the mask slant slightly, which made me realize with more than a small bit of heating to my cheeks, that I had been staring at him.

Great.

"What?" I asked, dropping down to grab the crackers, putting them to the side of the plate along with the hard part of some soft cheese that skeeved me out too much to eat.

"Belle, in a library," he mused, meaning my outfit.

"What does that make you, The Beast?" I asked, tilting my head up, maybe just then picking up on a slight brooding, standoffish vibe to him. He stayed planted by the door. His head was cocked like he was half-listening, half ready to walk away if I bored him. And everything about him was collected, confident.

Kinda Beastly.

Therefore, kinda hot.

"Maybe," he agreed, pushing the door so it closed fully, doing so with a soft click that somehow sounded off somewhere inside me as well. "This room is off-limits. It said so in the invitation."

Welp, yeah, that explained it being empty then.

"I seem to have misplaced my invitation."

His lips curved at that, an imitation of a smile that didn't seem to liven up those icy eyes of his. "You crashed my party?"

So he really was The Beast with his fancy house and stocked library. Interesting.

"So you are Gatsby," I said with a nod as he just kept stalking closer. Yes, stalking. Slow. Languid. But predatory at the same time.

"Everyone loves a Gatsby party."

"Cause a Gatsby party doesn't stop until two people end up dead, and everyone is completely over the jazz age as a whole?"

There was more of that lip curving that was meant to imitate a smile, but wasn't one.

No humor to be found here.

*And that was witty!*

"Anyway, I guess I crashed. My friend dragged me along."

"Dragged?" he asked, now close enough that I could smell the slight spicy scent of what had to be a cologne since he clearly didn't shave.

"You have a nice thing going on out there, but it isn't my cuppa."

"What is your cuppa then?"

*Skin-shifting werewolves* didn't seem like the most appropriate thing to say. Not with him standing so close. Smelling good. Somehow managing to suck up all the air in the room.

Instead, I held up my plate balanced on my stack of books. "Food.

Books. *Actual* tea."

"You come to a party, dressed as provincial Belle when everyone else has as little clothing on as possible; you eat instead of drink from the liberal liquor choices in the kitchen and patio; and you escape to the library instead of socialize."

Why did it feel like he was reading too much into that, into me? That made no sense. It was literally just an observation of what I had done, but somehow, when he said it, it felt like he was finding out more than what was on the surface.

"You throw a party," I said, my weird swirling stomach making me wonder if I was going to be sick, and wanting to cover up my unease. "You put as little effort into a costume as possible while demanding everyone else come fully dressed. You stalk women who innocently stepped into your library while looking for her friend."

If he wanted to act like he could read more about me because of what I had done, then I could play that game too. Even though that was literally all I could tell about the man.

"Innocently," he mused, veering off at the last possible second to move toward the massive cherry executive desk with ornate carvings of what seemed to be a raven up the side, looking forebodingly out at the room, at me. In a library such as this, there was no way that raven wasn't there as a nod to Poe. *And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting.*

The man sat off the edge of the desk, those eyes still on me, still boring into me, still seeming to try to read me, likely how he had read all these books that surrounded us.

And that, well, that made him sexy.

Not the reading me thing; the reading books thing.

A man who read, was there anything hotter?

Even if he did reference *Gatsby* like its shallowness was something to be admired and emulated. Hell, at least he knew of the damn book. And not the *CliffsNotes* version, just enough to pass the tests in high school.

"Are you just going to stare at me?" I blurted out, feeling like he was not only seeing into my head for some reason, but also under my dress. At

my very unsexy beige bra and panties that had freaking rainbow popsicles printed on them because, well, I knew no one would be seeing them.

"Yes."

Oh.

Okay.

Well, that was weird.

Weirder still that he would admit to that.

*Rich people.*

They could get away with being freaks by calling it eccentric. The rest of us would just be called weirdos.

"Alright. Well then. I am going to go and find my friend."

Why weren't my feet pulling me toward the door then? What was wrong with me?

"There's the door," he offered, lifting his chin in its direction.

I shook my head, seeming to break the odd spell I felt in. I had to move past where he was perched to get to the door, and I felt like that was somehow a challenge, though I had no proof as to why that would be.

"You're kind of an ass," I offered as I moved past, then came to a halt as his hand curled around my elbow, yanking me to a stop right in front of him.

"An ass?" he asked as I turned toward him, but for some reason did not yank my arm out of his hold.

"Yes, an ass. I'm sure you're used to people kissing yours since you're richer than God, but in case no one has taught you this, staring at people is rude."

"Maybe it's a compliment, and you're too used to your books to realize when a real-life, flesh-and-blood man is checking you out."

Yeah, okay, he had a point there.

I mean, I wasn't even sure when the last time was that I noticed a guy for more than a few seconds. Let alone flirted with one or had a date.

"Maybe I find real-life, flesh-and-blood men *lacking*."

"Lacking," he repeating, his grip tightening slightly, guiding me closer, pulling me until my hips slid against the inside of his thighs as he situated me between his legs.

Close.

Way, way too close.

Why the hell, then, wasn't I pulling away?

His free hand moved out, taking the books and the plate stacked on top out of my hand, dropping them all down on the desk beside him.

I didn't even try to hold onto them.

What was wrong with me?

I didn't want to be pulled between some masked stranger's legs in a secluded - albeit amazing - library. Especially if that masked stranger was a Fitzgerald wannabe.

I mean... right?

Totally, definitely didn't want that.

Except, for some reason, my heart was skittering around in my chest, and my breathing was shallow, and there was an oppressive weight on my lower stomach.

Let's face it; I had read enough romance to know what unfurling desire felt like.

Maybe he was an ass with bad taste in books, but he was commanding, standoffish, and his voice was pretty much liquid sex.

Also, did I mention how long it has been since I felt the touch of a man? I mean, his hand on my *elbow* was shooting off sparks - for goodness sakes - that seemed to sneak down through my belly, then decidedly lower.

That was all it was.

Untouched skin being touched again.

Nothing more.

"Lacking here?" he asked, his hand gliding down my forearm to wrap over the top of mine, forcing it downward, sliding up his thigh, then cupping over the crotch of his pants. Where his cock was hard and straining and, ah, definitely not *lacking*.

And the feel of his hardness against my palm sent a rush of desire between my thighs, making the muscles there do a hard, pre-orgasm tightening at the idea of him inside me.

Uncharacteristic? Yes.

But then again, I had never come across a man so forward before. A

man like I read about in books. A man who wasn't afraid of rejection, who went after what he wanted.

It was hot in books.

It was even hotter in real life.

"You find me lacking, Belle?"

I had to force myself to swallow, taking a breath, trying to get my brains to send signals to my tongue to speak. Fruitless, that proved, making me have to give a small head shake as his hand rubbed mine over the head of his cock, sending a rush of wetness to meet my panties.

"Didn't think so," he said, lips teased up in a wicked smirk just a second before his free hand went up to grip the back of my neck, dragging my face down to his, claiming my lips.

A shudder moved involuntarily through me at the contact, my entire body on-board with what my brain knew was a very, very bad idea.

But my brain didn't seem to be the one at the control panel right then, as my free hand moved up to grab his arm, fingers sinking in hard as my lips yielded to his, invited the invasion of his tongue.

My hand moved under his, sliding across the rough material of his slacks, feeling a wetness there that somehow made *me* even wetter.

There was a low, rumbling growl in his chest at the sensation, his hand urging mine to encircle him as much as the barrier of his pants would allow. So it did, stroking slightly, feeling the grip of desire so tightly in my core that it was bordering on actual pain.

*There was no going back.*

Somehow, that was the only thought that could break through the swirling of my brain.

I could have stopped it.

I could have run out of that library.

But, well, just this once, I was at the mercy of my body and its wants and desires.

My body, yeah, it definitely wanted this stranger whose name I didn't even know.

Why? I had no idea. I guess hormones and pheromones and whatever weren't exactly rational. They just responded. To hot alpha guys

with masks in a library in the middle of a raging party.

And I couldn't help but rationalize it.

Just this once.

This one time.

I could just go with it.

Hookups might have never been my thing before, but they had also never felt this necessary in the past.

Yes, necessary.

My body was screaming that this had to happen, that I couldn't turn back now, that I had gone too far for that.

Even if I didn't even know his name.

His hand slid out from under mine, whispering up the side of my thigh before curving around, sinking hard into my ass, dragging me even closer, removing any bit of space between us.

My hand lost his cock as my body melded to his, my breasts crushed against his firm chest as his lips released mine, but only so his teeth could sink into my swollen, sensitive lower lip instead, dragging a throaty moan out of me.

At the sound, his hand moved down my ass, then thigh, slipping under my skirt, then moving up again.

But his hand didn't sink into my ass once more.

Oh, no.

At the last possible second, his path veered inward, pressing two fingers against the wet panties covering my slit, moving upward to press firmly into my clit.

"Soaked," he growled as his stubble scraped over my cheek, an action that shouldn't really have been erotic, but somehow was nonetheless. His fingers shifted slightly, sliding under the edge of my panties, then gliding up my slick cleft to circle my clit deliciously for a second. Just a second though, before they were shifting downward, pressing against the entrance of my body without pushing inward.

His head shifted, his lips gliding down my neck as his fingers of his other hand moved up, slipping into my hair near the roots, and pulling just enough to send another rush of desire through my system.

"Are you going to let me in?" he asked, his fingers pulsing against my pussy, making my hips drop down slightly, a silent invitation.

But he wanted the words.

"Y... yes," I managed, ending on a moan because before it was even fully out of my mouth, his fingers thrust deep inside me.

"Yeah, that's what I thought."

What a cocky, arrogant, jack...

But then his fingers were curling inside me, raking over my top wall, putting perfect pressure on a G-spot I was pretty sure no man had ever found before. In fact, certain. Because it never felt like this before, this clawing, impossible pressure.

"Nope," he said, ripping his fingers out of me just as my walls started to tighten, started to promise blissful oblivion. "You only get to come around my cock," he informed me as his hand moved up, yanking my panties until they slid down my thighs, then legs, pooling at my ankles.

And without thinking, I even stepped out of them.

If that wasn't agreement to his plan, I didn't know what was.

There was a sexy, deep rumbling in his chest at my indrawn breath.

Then, suddenly, he was on his feet, moving out from in front of me. I looked over to find him opening his wallet, pulling out a shiny golden condom foil, then bringing it up to his mouth to nip the edge. I watched, oddly fascinated by such a not altogether sexy task, as he unzipped, grabbed his cock, and protected us.

My pussy tightened in anticipation when his hand grabbed my hip, turning me away from him as he moved in behind me. The hand left my hip, sliding up my spine, then pressing me down hard and fast, making my arms fly out to brace beneath me, sending my books (and the plate perched on top) toppling to the carpet beneath the desk.

I only had a second to think of that, though, as his other hand yanked up my skirt, pressed my thighs wider, then moved his cock to slide up my cleft.

There wasn't even a warning before he yanked back then shoved forward, filling me to the hilt on a thrust that was so hard that my hips slammed into the side of the desk, sending a shooting pain across my



center.

Everything about this was dirty and wrong.

Everything about this was so incredibly unlike me.

Why, then, was my body reacting like it was?

My hips rose up as my breathing shallowed out, as the pressure on my lower stomach increased, as my clit throbbed with need.

His hands moved to sink into my hips as he started fucking me.

That was what he did too - he fucked me.

There was no other word for this.

It was hard, rough, primal.

He used his hands to guide my hips, dragging them back as he thrust forward, making me take every last thick inch of his cock each time.

The pace was savage.

It shouldn't have been enjoyable.

But my hands curled into fists on the surface of the desk, my ass slammed backward into him as he settled deep. My hitched breathing became ragged gasping, the air getting caught on loud, shameless moaning.

"That's it," he growled behind me, one hand leaving my hips, and trailing up my spine to sink into the hair at the nape of my neck, curling in, and yanking me upward off the table as he fucked me harder, feeling my walls tighten, sensing how close I was.

And with my back arched like a bow, his cock slamming into me over and over, the orgasm finally exploded through me, starting at the base of my spine, and shooting outward until it seemed to overtake me completely, blanking out my vision for a moment, making a half-scream escape me as the pulsations moved through my core over and over.

"Fuck yeah, squeeze my cock," he growled, thrusting harder, something I didn't even think was possible, dragging it out, milking my orgasm for all it was worth before he slammed deep, and came on a hiss.

His grip in my hair lessened by increments, allowing me to lower down onto the desk, too overwhelmed to even think of standing, of yanking my skirt down, of modesty.

What was the point in modesty now?

I felt him slide out of me, and was vaguely aware of something - the condom, obviously - dropping into the wastebasket lining with a crinkle, followed by a zip as he seemed able to recover himself much more quickly than I could manage.

It wasn't until I heard the sounds of the party that reality came back, realizing he had not only tucked himself away, but moved across the room, and *opened the door* without me being fully aware.

My arm swung back, swiping my skirt down even as my head whipped to the side.

But the door was already closing.

And I was alone.

Completely and utterly fucked.

Literally.

I had been fucked.

Savagely.

And maybe I had enjoyed it while it happened, but as I finally pushed myself up, and reached down to drag my panties back into place - feeling a dull ache, a reminder of him and this encounter that would haunt me for a full day after - I realized the weight of what had just happened.

I walked into a party, and within half an hour, had my panties around my ankles, and some guy inside of me.

Some guy whose name I didn't even know!

Me.

The girl who had never known anything even close to a one-night-stand before.

Ugh.

As much as I wanted to believe I was modern, woke, mature about these matters, there was no stopping the rush of shame that moved through me as I reached up to pull the bow out of my hair, my braid a mess from his tugging.

It was in the heat to my cheeks, the swirling in my belly, the unusual urge to curl up and cry. In the shower. Like I could wash it away. There was no washing it away.

I just fucked a man whose first name I didn't know.

My phone chirped in my pocket, making me reach for it like a lifeline.

*M - Where are you?!?*

*- You wouldn't believe me if I told you.*

*M - You're in the library, aren't you? It was off-limits! Stay there. I'm coming to find you.*

I tucked my phone away, going behind the desk to grab my books, hugging them to my chest like they could maybe take a bit of the swirling awfulness inside away.

From his position on the side of the desk, the raven's beady eyes seemed to bore into me.

Poe's words seemed to swim back to be, familiar, but somehow new at the same time.

*And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming. And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; and my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor shall be lifted--nevermore!*

The door opened a second later, bringing Margerie in. I wouldn't have recognized her even up this close, if I didn't know it was her, dressed in a full-on Marie Antoinette get-up, complete with flowing skirt, wig, and white makeup. If I didn't see her distinctive violet eyes on me, I wouldn't have known it was her.

"Why does it smell like sex in... oh," she broke off, eyes going huge, seeming to take in the sex smell and my look of shock, putting the pieces right together. "No way!" she half-shrieked, excited, surprised, curious. "Who was it?" she asked, coming close, voice a whisper, like the books were listening.

I took a deep breath that shook in my chest. "Gatsby."

"What?" she asked, shaking her head.

"The guy who owns this house," I clarified, shamed yet again that I didn't know the man's name whose cock had just been inside me.

Margerie was uncharacteristically quiet for a long moment, her lips parted. "Carter Alon?" she asked in what seemed like complete disbelief.

"I guess," I admitted, closing my eyes for a second. "I didn't catch his name. But he told me this was his party."

"You *had sex* with *Carter Alon*?"

I rolled my eyes at her. "So what if he's some rich dude, Margerie. That doesn't matter."

"No, it's not that he's rich. Well, there is part of it that is that. But that's not the whole thing."

Why was her tone so serious? Gravely so. Like maybe this was an even bigger fuck up than it already felt like.

"What is it then?"

"Hallow," she said, shaking her head. "Carter Alon just bought Spines. He's your new boss."

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