

"With Ivy's propensity for trouble and the chaos of her insane family, you'll be laughing too hard to figure out the villain before the end." - Natalie J. Damschroder, author of *Brianna's Navy SEAL*

Something Old Something Dead



Misty
Simon



an Ivy Morris
Mystery

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Misty Simon

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Dedication

As always, to Rida, for her unwavering support.

And to Daniel and Noelle for making it so easy to live my
dream.

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You girls ROCK!

Chapter One



Laughter burst from the living room, a swell of noise that nearly drowned out the doorbell's ring. I hustled to put the last of the cookies on a tray and get to the front door before whoever was leaning on my bell got really persistent. Yeesh!

"Hang on!" I yelled, then immediately cringed. Please don't let it be one of the local women arriving late. That certainly wouldn't win me any points as the newbie to town. I'd been in Martha's Point, Virginia, for over six months now, but apparently, I'd be a newbie, an interloper, if you will, (and wasn't that a great word?) until I'd reached the ripe old age of eighty-four, which was approximately fifty-nine years down the road. Argh. It used to be sixty years, but yesterday was my twenty-fifth birthday.

Thank you for singing, but you can stop now.

I took a second to straighten myself out before opening the door with some semblance of normalcy. My first inclination was to yank the thing off its fricking hinges just to get the ringing to stop, but that would be another no-no. Plus, it was freezing outside and snow blowing inside through a wide open door was not my idea of a good time.

So I gently pulled the door toward my body. And thank God I did. Framed by the doorway, a big blue beehive stood proud and tall eight inches above the little lady on the stoop. The top of her hair was right at my eye level. I briefly thought about talking to the hair instead of looking into the eyes of Ms. Thelma Boden from the post office. She and I had a love/hate relationship. She loved to go through my mail to see what kind of new catalog I received to stock the back room of my costume shop. I hated her for making me feel like a cheap floozy for giving the locals what they demanded in the form of lacy lingerie and the occasional set of handcuffs.

“Well, if it isn’t Ivy Morris,” she drawled in her smoker’s rasp.

Who the hell else did she expect when she showed up at my house? But I kept my cool. I was still trying to fit in around here. If that meant getting the shit end of every stick when it came to conversation, then so be it.

My dad was marrying one of the town’s dearest residents. I’d have to have an in at that point, then I’d open the can of whoop-ass I so dearly wanted to let loose on an almost daily basis.

“Ms. Boden, thanks so much for coming.” I had plastered this smile on my face nearly thirty minutes ago when my dad’s fiancée’s bridal shower had started and I was not letting it go. If I could have used Mega Hold Aqua Net to keep it there, I would have.

“The party has started,” I said, stepping out of the way.

“I know that,” she snapped, like I’d insulted her. “Why you had to have it on a Wednesday afternoon is beyond me. A body can’t get out of work and come straight over here. I had to go home and redo my hair.”

I almost said what fine hair it was, but held back. She wouldn’t take it as a compliment, and I wouldn’t mean it as one, either. Instead, I said, “Would you like to go in? I can take your coat if you’d like. Or I can show you where the coats go and give you a tour of the house.” I cringed at that last part. Please, don’t ask for the tour, I thought. I’d offered it to nearly everyone, but only one person had taken me up on my offer. And all she wanted to know was if Ben Fallon, my boyfriend of about four months (squee!)

and I committed our sins of iniquity in my big mahogany bed. She'd even tried to pry open one of my nightstand tables to see if I kept any toys, or "potions" as she called them, to keep Ben coming around. Jeez.

Thelma brought me back with her crackling voice. "I have no need to see the house, since I can't believe you would have been able to improve upon it after Gertie's passing." She sniffed and turned her back on me, beelining for the living room. Obviously, she already knew the way; no help needed from me.

It was a test of my fortitude that I barely restrained myself from pulling her back by the big hair. Fortitude and worry that I wouldn't be able to extract my fingers from the over-shellacked 'do when I had her on the floor under my foot. Whether I liked her or not, she was a friend of Martha's. And Martha, the blushing bride, was the Queen for the Day. Even if I did have to play the overworked and under appreciated Cinderella.

I took extra special care to throw Thelma's coat on top of a leather jacket and watched with appreciation as it slid onto the floor. Ha! Of course, I ran right over and picked it up, placing it on top of the pile gracing the guest bedroom couch. I did not want to start missing checks in the mail because I chose to be petty.

I made my way back to the kitchen and grabbed my tray of cookies. Thank God they weren't penis shaped this time, as they had been the last time I made cookies. Funny now, but not when I had to ice them at a disastrous panty party in November. Better not to think about it.

I bumped into my best friend, Bella, on the way back to the living room. She nearly dragged me to the floor with her manicured nails.

"Do I have to be here? How long is this thing going to take? Why don't you have any Tastykakes?" Her normally flawless hair—comes from running a beauty salon, I think—was a little mussed, but for Bella that was like a hurricane coming through and ripping up her house.

"I'm hoping it will be over in an hour," I said, straightening my shirt. "I didn't plan any games or anything so I could move all these women out of the house ASAP. I could happily live the rest of my life without seeing all those old derrieres in the air while

they try to scoop cotton balls from a tray to see how many kids Martha and my dad will have.” Ew! The answer was none since my dad was in his sixties and so was Martha. It was completely not permitted in my world. But I wouldn’t say that out loud. Every time I do something like that, it always ends up coming true. Fate likes to spite me, so I’ve been careful lately.

“Can I do anything to help you, hon?” Bella said. “Anything to keep me out of the living room?” She clasped her hands in front of her chest. “Please!”

Her normally sparkling amber eyes had little light in them, and I understood. “Sure, do you mind getting the cake out of the fridge and making sure it’s okay? Then I need plates and forks and napkins set out. You’ll find it all on the counters.”

“I owe you big.”

“Damn right you do.”

She laughed for the first time today, and I breathed a sigh of relief. I had the theory Bella was psychic and I was so afraid she was going to spout off something about my house burning down, or the roof shooting off from all the hot air building in the living room.

Don’t get me wrong, I love Martha and would do just about anything for her, but the other biddies...well, I was completely torn between wanting them to embrace me like I’d always lived here, and wanting them to stay as far away as possible from me. But wanting their approval, to be a part of the town, won out every time.

So I made my way into the living room, cookies proudly displayed, and watched Martha open presents that made even me blush. I would not think about her using the feather boa with my dad. I wouldn’t.

There had been some talk about having strippers at the party, but I vetoed the idea. I knew I wouldn’t have been able to bear that. If I couldn’t even think about Martha having sex, I certainly wouldn’t have been able to see it simulated by some G-stringed guy with a fireman’s hose over his shoulder.

Another big burst of laughter sounded. I needed to get a new doorbell because I almost didn’t hear it again. Who else was due? Nearly every female in town was in my house at this point. I was

running out of places to seat the old birds.

The ringing turned to banging on the wood door. “I’m coming! Hold on!” No, I hadn’t learned my lesson from the last time I answered the door. I even yanked the door open this time. I nearly got bowled over for my trouble.

Luggage, adults, children, and a dog came barreling through the door, nearly knocking my big body down, and that was no easy feat.

“Ivy!” one of my sisters cried. At this point I wasn’t even sure which body parts still belonged to me, so I just grabbed the person in front of me and held on.

Turns out it was my oldest sister Maggie doing the yelling. Rose and Daisy weren’t far behind. I had a kid hanging off my leg and another trying to dislocate my shoulder, while a third firmly lodged its head into my crotch.

Hello family.

