

UNITED
We 
 **SPY**

a l l y c a r t e r





Chapter 1

The water was still as we walked beside it. A single rower sliced through the channel like an arrow shooting out to sea, and I couldn't help but stare after him, more than a little jealous.

"It's beautiful. Isn't it, Cammie?" I heard my mother ask. She slipped her arm around my waist. It felt sure. Safe.

But all I could do was muster a nod and add a not-very-enthusiastic "Yeah".

"Do you have an interest in rowing?" asked the man in the tweed cap and brown trench coat who was accompanying us. He looked like an ad for London Fog. Either that or a Sherlock Holmes impersonator. Or a bigwig British academic. And, of course, I knew that last one was right on.

"Cam, Dr Holt asked you something." Mum nudged me.

"Oh. Yes. Sure. Rowing looks...fun."

"Do you row at your school now?"

He sounded interested. He *looked* interested. But I've been trained to hear what people don't say – to see the things that are better kept hidden – so I knew that Dr Holt was simply trying his best to be nice.

“No. We do...other things,” I told him, and reminded myself that it wasn't a lie. I didn't, however, feel the need to add that by *other things* I meant learning how to kill a man with uncooked spaghetti and disarm nuclear bombs with Tootsie Rolls. (Not that I'd done either of those things *yet*. But I still had one semester left at the Gallagher Academy.)

“Well –” he pushed his horn-rimmed glasses up on his nose – “Cambridge is a very well-rounded university. Whatever activities you enjoy, I'm sure we have them here.”

Oh, I highly doubt it, I thought, just as my mum said, “Oh, I'm sure you do.”

Dr Holt turned up a path, and my mother and I followed. The long lawns were green, even in winter. But the sky overhead was grey, threatening rain. I shivered inside my down jacket. I wasn't as thin as I had been at the start of my senior year, but I was still a little underweight. Despite the fact that Grandma Morgan had spent the better part of Christmas break force-feeding me various things covered with gravy, my coat felt too big. My shoulders felt too small. And I remembered with a pang what had happened to me the previous summer – that even Gallagher Girls aren't always as strong as they need to be.

“Cammie?” Dr Holt asked, pulling me back to the

moment. “I said, what other colleges are you—”

“Oxford, Yale, Cornell and Stanford,” I said, rattling off the universities that Liz had put on my hypothetical short list, answering the question I’d only half-heard.

“Those are all excellent schools. I’m sure that if your test scores are any indication, you will have your pick.”

He patted my back, and I tried to see what he was seeing. An average-looking, average-sounding American teenage girl. My hair was in a ponytail, and my shoes were scuffed. I had a zit coming in like gangbusters on my chin and a couple of scars at my hairline, which had forced a recent experiment with a fringe that hadn’t turned out so well.

There was absolutely no way for Dr Holt to know what I’d done over my summer vacation; but there are some scars that even a fringe can’t cover, and they were still there. I could feel them. And I couldn’t tell Dr Holt the truth – that I was a perfectly normal senior at the world’s foremost school for spies.

“And this, Cammie, is Crawley Hall. What do you think of it?”

I turned to study the big stone building. It was beautiful. Old. Regal. But I’d been living in an old regal building since I was twelve, so I couldn’t muster the enthusiasm Dr Holt was probably hoping for.

“Our economics department is world-renowned. Do I understand correctly that you are interested in economics?”

I shrugged. “Sure.”

“Can we go in?” Mum asked. “Take a look around?”

“Oh, I’m sorry.” Dr Holt pushed his glasses up again. “The university is closed for our winter break. I’m afraid we’re already making something of an exception.”

My mother reached out and touched him gently on the arm. “And I am so grateful to you for working us in like this. As you know, we’re only in the UK for a couple of days, and Cammie has so been looking forward to it.”

Dr Holt looked at me. I tried and failed to mimic my mother’s smile.

“And here we have the library. Some might say it’s the jewel in our campus crown,” Holt added. “We have the finest collection of rare books in the world. First editions by Austen and Dickens – we even have a Gutenberg Bible.”

He puffed out his chest, but all I could say was “That’s nice”.

“Now, up this path you will find–”

“Excuse me, Dr Holt?” My mum cut him off. “Do you think it would be OK if Cammie looked around on her own? I know classes aren’t in session, but maybe that would help her to get a feel for the place.”

“Well, I...”

“Please?” my mother asked.

“Oh, of course. Of course.” Dr Holt looked at me. “What do you say, Cammie? Meet us back at the quad in an hour or so?”

Something seemed so strange about that moment. For months, there had always been someone by my side. My mother. My roommates. My (and I don’t use this word

lightly) boyfriend. Someone was always there, watching out for me. Or just *watching* me. It felt more than a little strange for my mother to nod her head and say, “It’s OK, kiddo. Go on. I’ll be here when you get back.”

So I stepped away, reminding myself that when you’re a spy, sometimes all you can do is go on. One foot in front of the other, wherever the narrow path might lead.

Before I turned the corner, I heard Dr Holt say, “What a...charming girl.”

My mother sighed. “She’s had a hard year.”

But Mum didn’t try to explain. I mean, how do you tell someone, *Oh yes, my daughter has always been a real sweetheart, but that was before all the torture?* So she didn’t say a thing, which was just as well. Dr Holt didn’t have the clearance to hear it anyway.

I walked by myself around the corner of the grand old building. There was an arbour covered with ivy. A statue of someone whose name I didn’t know. The air was moist and cool around me. I felt alone as I walked between two buildings and found myself staring down at the river again. Another single rower slid across the water, looking backwards, moving forward. It seemed to go against all logic, but the man kept pushing on against the current, and I wondered how he made it appear so easy.

“Fancy seeing you here.”

The voice cut me off, but I didn’t startle; I turned.

“So did you get it?” my best friend, Bex, asked. Her British accent was even thicker in her native land, and her smile was especially mischievous when she crossed her

long arms. The wind blew her black hair away from her face. She looked alive and eager, so I held up the key card I had slipped out of Dr Holt's pocket.

“Are you ready?” I asked.

She looped her arm through mine. “Cammie, my dear, I was born ready,” she said, and then she walked up to Crawley Hall and swiped.

When the light flashed green she said, “Come on.”



Chapter 2

Crawley Hall seemed empty as Bex and I closed its doors behind us. Our footsteps echoed in the corridor. We passed heavy wooden arches and stained-glass windows. It felt more like a museum than a school, and not for the first time in my life I walked down the hallowed halls of education, totally breaking the rules.

“So, what do you think, Cam? Are you a Cambridge girl? Or do you fancy yourself as more Oxfordian?”

“Oxfordian?” I repeated.

“It’s a word. Or...it could be a word. Now, answer the question.” Bex shrugged and leaned against a door that was unlike the others we had passed – not heavy wood, but steel. Security cameras were trained on it, and it took Bex a second to finagle her way inside.

“Cambridge is nice. It could use better locks, though,” I said.

“So, no Cambridge.” Bex nodded. “How about Yale?”

Or you could always join me at MI6. The two of us together, out in the real world.”

“Bex,” I said, rolling my eyes. “We don’t have time for this.”

“What?” Bex asked. She put her hands on her hips and squinted at me. “It’s winter break.”

“I know.”

“And we’re seniors.”

“I know,” I said again.

“So aren’t you...curious?”

“About what?”

“About life. Out there. *Life!*” she said again. “Tell me, Cameron Ann Morgan, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

We’d reached another door, and I stopped and looked up at the camera that monitored the entrance, just as I whispered, “Alive.”

Thirty seconds later we were standing in the entrance hall of the largest library I had ever seen. Old oak tables filled the centre of the room. Bookshelves thirty feet high stretched along every wall. First editions of Thackeray and Forster sat behind protective glass, and Bex and I walked alone through the empty room like a pair of extremely literate thieves.

We climbed the stairs and started through a maze of shelves and small alcoves, perfect for studying.

“We should have brought Liz,” I said, thinking about how our smallest, smartest, and...well...nerdiest roommate

would have loved it there; but when Bex came to an abrupt stop, I remembered why Liz wasn't allowed on that type of field trip.

I peered around Bex's shoulder in time to see a shadow move across the floor. The lights were off and the corridor was still, and yet a figure cut through the light that streamed through the stained-glass windows, like a puppet in a show that only we were supposed to see.

I heard a door open and close, and slowly Bex and I eased out onto the landing and padded softly down a narrow hallway to where a door stood slightly ajar.

We paused for a moment, and Bex mouthed the words *You sure?*

But I didn't answer. I'd come too far – I wanted this too much. So I didn't hesitate. I just pushed open the door and walked into the room, my pulse quick and my hands steady, ready for whatever I might find.

“Stop!” the man cried. “Who are you? What are you doing here? I'm calling security.” He spoke rapid-fire, barely breathing in between demands, certainly not giving us enough time to answer.

“Put your hands up. Up! Put them up,” he shouted, even though he didn't hold a weapon. His hair was overgrown and grey. He wore a dirty, wrinkled suit and looked like he hadn't showered in days.

“Mr Knight?” Bex asked. She inched closer. “Sir Walter Knight?”

“This area is restricted,” he shouted again. “The

campus is closed. You aren't supposed to be here."

"I'm not supposed to be a lot of things," I said. "My name is Cammie Morgan." As soon as I said the words, a shadow crossed his face. It was like he was staring at a ghost.

Me.

He was staring at me.

I wasn't supposed to be alive. But I was.

"You don't have any bodyguards, I see," Bex said, looking around the room. It was an office, not very big – just large enough for an old desk, a chair and a short leather sofa that rested beneath the only window. There was a rumpled pillow and blanket, and the wastepaper basket overflowed with take-out containers and week-old newspapers.

"I guess that makes sense," Bex added. "You're not sure who you can trust, are you?"

"I know the feeling," I said. When I noticed that he was shaking, I added, "Don't worry. You don't have to be afraid of us."

"Oh, I don't know about that." Bex laughed. "He could be a *little* afraid."

Bex sidled closer, and Walter Knight backed away until he was pressed into his desk and couldn't move any more.

When Bex spoke again, her voice was so low it was almost a whisper. "Elias Crane the sixth is dead, Sir Walter. You probably heard about his car *accident*." Bex made little quote marks above her head, emphasising the word. "Oh,

I bet that drove you crazy, wondering if it really was an accident. I mean, it's possible he'd just had too much to drink when he drove his BMW off that cliff. But when Charlene Dubois went missing while driving her kids to school..." Bex let the words draw out. She made a *tsk tsk tsk* sound. "*That* you couldn't chalk up to coincidence. So you went on the run." She threw her arms out wide in the small space. "And you came here."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Sir Walter shouted, but Bex just shook her head.

"Yes, you do. Why else would you be sleeping on the sofa in an office that's supposed to be abandoned, instead of at your London flat? Or your French villa? Or even your Swiss chalet? I have to say, this was a pretty smart decision. Squatting in a library. Clever. I bet a lot of people don't even know that Cambridge sees it as a feather in their cap for a former British Prime Minister to have an honorary office here. It's nice. It took us a while to track you down. But we *did* track you down, of course. And we won't be the only ones."

"The first rule of running, Sir Walter," I told him. "Never go any place familiar."

He was shaking his head and saying, "No. No. You have the wrong man."

"No, we don't," I told him. "You are Walter Knight, son of Avery Knight, great-great-great grandson of Thomas Avery *McKnight*. Tell me, did your great-grandfather change the family name because it made it easier for an Irish boy to rise to power in the British government at the

turn of the century? Or was it because of the Circle?”

“What is your point?”

“I saw your great-great-great grandfather’s name on a list once.” I put my hand in my pocket and felt the piece of paper that I kept there, while the image flashed through my mind. That list had been buried in my subconscious for years, but once I’d remembered it, I hadn’t been able to forget it. The names written there were going to haunt me until every last one of their descendants was collected and accounted for. “It was a list of very angry – very powerful – men. Now their descendants are very powerful people. And, as you know, Sir Walter, somebody wants you dead.”

“Get out!” he snapped, and pointed towards the door. “Get out now. Before I–”

“Before you what?” Bex grabbed him by the collar.

“You won’t be safe here,” I said, and watched the words land, the realisation sweeping him off his feet. He walked to the window and sank onto the sofa, pushing aside the pillow and blankets.

“Does the CIA know you’re here?” Sir Walter asked. “Don’t tell me they’re sending little girls to do their dirty work these days.”

Sure, I should have felt insulted. After all, this man and the goons who worked for him had been trying to kill me for months. And failing. If anyone knew not to underestimate a Gallagher Girl, it should have been this guy. But in my professional opinion, guys almost always underestimate girls. And honestly, we Gallagher Girls

wouldn't have it any other way.

His gaze shifted quickly from Bex to me. He looked between us as if expecting one of us to teleport out of there and come back with reinforcements.

"Your former...*associate*...Catherine Goode. She killed Crane. You know that, right?" I asked, but he said nothing. "And Charlene Dubois didn't just go for a drive and forget to come home."

"Charlene...is she dead?"

"Maybe. Probably. But you know Catherine better than we do, so tell me – why do you think she is picking off the leaders of the Circle of Cavan?"

"She's crazy," the man said with a scowl, and I knew from experience he was right. "She hates us. She wants to control things, and what she can't control she destroys."

I thought about Catherine Goode's son. She hadn't been able to control him. Did that mean she was bound to someday destroy him too?

"They're coming for you, Sir Walter." I shook my head. "And they won't be as nice as we are."

"I'm not in the Circle of Cavan," the man spat.

Bex shook her head slowly. "Wrong answer."

"I'm not!" This time, he shouted. "I'm not a part of that any more."

"It's not the Boy Scouts," I told him. "They don't let you walk away."

"I'm finished." He pointed towards the door. "And... and...this is your fault." He pointed in my direction. "You should have had the decency to die when we needed you to."

“Sorry,” I admitted. “I’ve been going through a bit of a rebellious streak. I swear it’s almost over.”

“So you’re here to kidnap me?” he asked.

“You say *kidnap*. We say *hold in a secure facility until it’s safe to turn you over to the proper authorities*,” Bex replied with a grin. “But to each his own.”

“If we found you, Sir Walter, then it’s just a matter of time before Catherine does too,” I told him. “Now, come on. Let us keep you safe.”

I reached for his arm, but he jerked away.

“No place is safe. You don’t understand. Look at you. How could you understand? You’re children. If you knew what the others want to do...what the Inner Circle is planning...I never wanted this.”

“Why?” Bex asked. “What are they planning?”

Knight shook his head. His lips actually quivered when he told us, “You don’t want to know.”

He’d seemed afraid when he first saw us, when he spoke about Catherine and the people she had killed. But in that moment, his fear turned to terror. He rocked back and forth, saying, “You can’t stop it. No one can stop it. It’s—”

“What are you talking about?” Bex shouted, gripping him by the shoulders, holding him still. “Tell us what you’re talking about, and we’ll stop it – whatever it is.”

“You fools.” He laughed. “*It’s already begun.*”

Bex looked at me. We’d come there with one simple mission: to find Thomas McKnight’s descendant and take him into custody. We hadn’t been counting on this. If the

leaders of the Circle – the Inner Circle, as Knight had called them – were planning something, then that could very well change everything.

There was a new urgency in her voice when Bex said, “Look, we’re asking nicely. When Catherine comes – she won’t ask at all. So come with us now. Please.”

The man snarled. “Or what?”

Irony is a funny thing. Maybe the room was bugged and someone heard the cocky, condescending tone of his voice. Or maybe it was just fate that made the sniper pick that moment to fire. But I guess we’ll never know.

Suddenly, glass shattered, showering the room in glistening, falling shards. Bex and I dived behind the desk just as the rifle fired again. I heard the hiss of the bullet, saw the dark spot that grew on Sir Walter’s chest, and watched him fall hard onto his knees.

He was still upright, though, as I scrambled towards him.

“Sir Walter!” I yelled. He was one of the people who had sent a hit man on my trail, who had wished me and the list inside my head out of existence. But I didn’t feel any peace. Whatever ghosts had followed me to that room, they wouldn’t be satisfied just to watch him die.

“Sir Walter!” I yelled again. A drop of blood ran from his lips. As the life drained out of him, he toppled over to the ground, never to defy us – or anyone – again.

“Cam!” I heard Bex call my name. She had a death grip on my arm and was dragging me to my feet. But I couldn’t move. I was frozen, staring through the shattered

window at the woman who stood atop the building across the lawn, picking up a grenade launcher and pointing it in our direction.

“Catherine,” I said.

And then my boyfriend’s mother took aim at our window again. And fired.

Glass crunched beneath my feet.

Blood ran into my eyes.

The grenade must have struck a gas line, because smoke swirled all around me and I could feel the heat of the explosion at my back. But Bex’s hand was still in mine, and the two of us stayed low, crouching beneath the black air, running down the hall, away from the body and the flames.

When we reached the end of the hall, I looked out of the window and saw Zach’s mother running across the lawn. She must have sensed me there, because she stopped and turned, raised her hand and waved, almost like she’d been expecting me, hoping to see me.

And then she was running again, and I knew I had to find her, make her pay – that as long as she was out there, a part of me would never, ever heal.

“Cam!” Bex yelled as sirens started to sound.

Classes might not have been in session, but Crawley Hall was still one of the most prestigious places in all of England. There were smoke detectors and glass-break detectors, and someone was going to come looking for whoever had done this thing, and we needed to be far away when they did.

“Cam, come on!”

“She’s here!” I yelled, trying to break free.

Bex held tightly to my hand – didn’t let me go.

“She’s gone.”