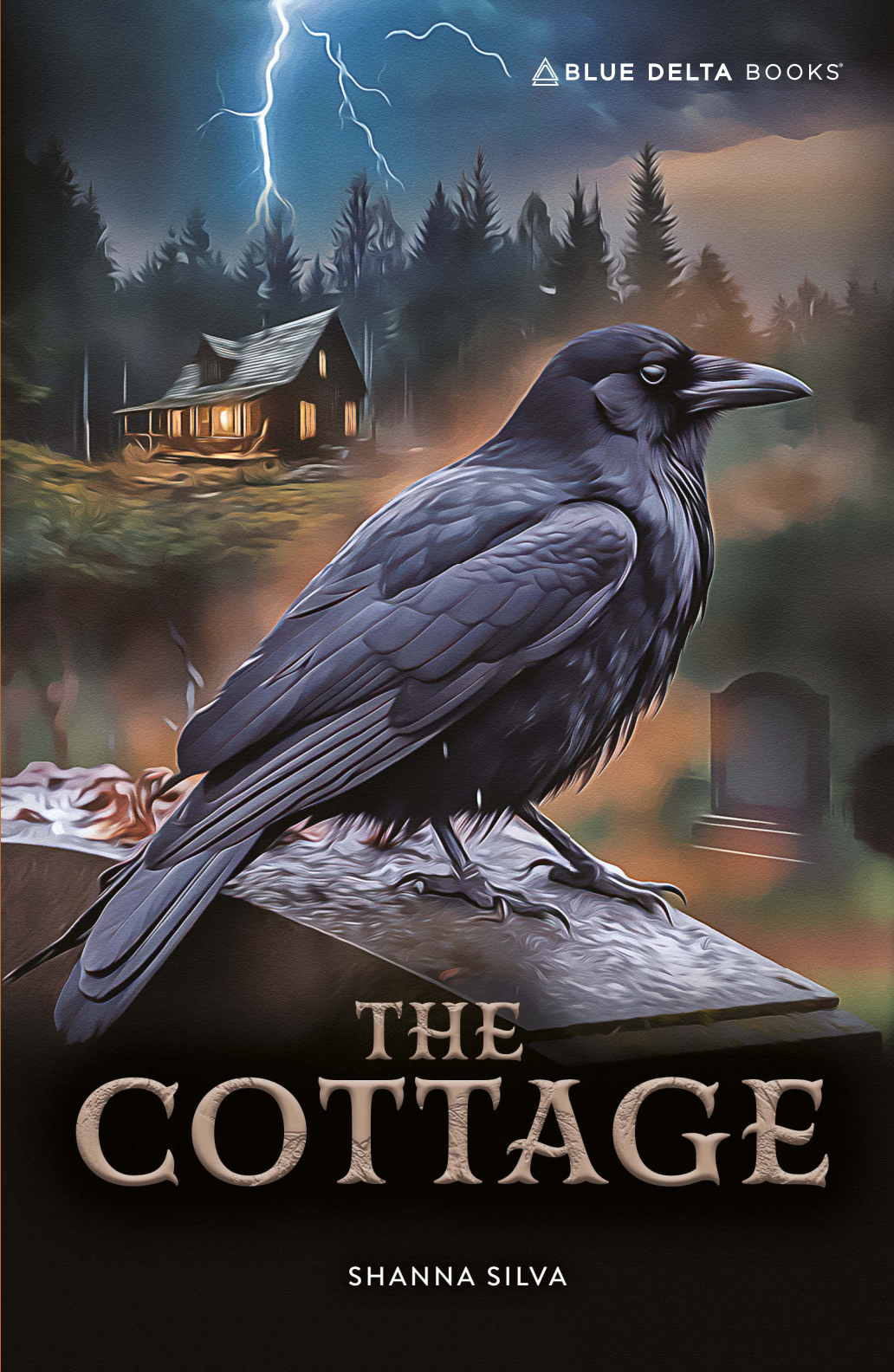


 BLUE DELTA BOOKS™



THE COTTAGE

SHANNA SILVA

CHAPTER 1

GONE

It all started at the cemetery. The day we buried my dad was when I first heard the music. A stringed instrument was playing. Its tune was eerie and sad. I felt like crying. But I couldn't. Maybe I was all cried out.

A small group had gathered around the grave. Everyone except me was focused on the pastor. The music had stolen my attention. At first, it was muffled. Then it got louder as the coffin was lowered into the ground.

“Do you hear that?” I asked my younger brother, Aram.

He gave me a confused look. Tears dotted his face.

“What’s that music?” I whispered.

He fidgeted. “I don’t hear anything.” Aram wore my old suit. It was way too small for him.

The music stopped after the coffin was covered with dirt.

I still couldn’t believe my father was gone. Everything had happened so fast. My dad’s stroke had left him paralyzed. He’d never made it home from the hospital. That was just days ago, but it felt like forever.

My brother, mom, and I were on autopilot. There’d been too many services: wake, church, and graveside. We honored all the traditions in an effort to console my mother.

Soon I heard the music again. I also sensed something. It was a presence circling me as a gentle wind rustled my hair. No one else seemed to notice. Gradually, the music faded. The breeze slowly disappeared too.

After the burial, we went home. Our grief weighed us down like an anchor. I soon realized that my dad's death would be the dividing line of my life. Everything would always be either before he passed or after.

None of it seemed real. Just days ago, he and I were arguing.

“You have opportunities, Davit,” my dad had said. “That’s why we came to this country. For you and Aram to be educated. So you could become doctors or lawyers. Build secure futures.”

“How many times do I have to tell you?” I asked. “That’s not what I want to be.”

My mom shot me a warning look.

“Sorry,” I said. “Dad, I didn’t mean any disrespect. But I have other ideas about my life. I like building with my hands. I’m happy working on cars and machines. Taking things apart and putting them back together.”

“Yeah,” Aram chimed in. “Like you did with the toaster.”

I glared at him. We’d agreed not to bring that up ever again.

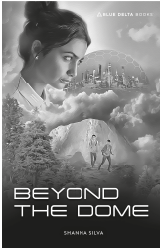
“Computers are great too,” I continued. “It would be cool to design video games.”

My mom sighed. “That’s a hobby, not a career.”

Don’t I get any say in my own life? I had wanted to scream.

Now it didn’t matter. My father was gone. That meant I was the man of the house. There was no more room for dreams.

FICTION



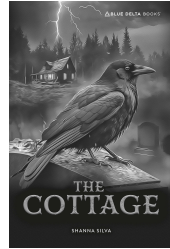
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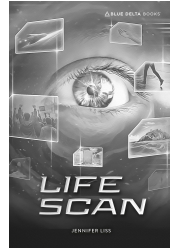
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SUPERNATURAL

THE COTTAGE

Davit and Aram are having a rough time. They're both struggling with their dad's death, and then car trouble strands them near the woods. When a mysterious woman offers to help, the boys find themselves in a situation neither of them could have ever imagined.



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