

BLUE DELTA BOOKS



UNWELCOME

PJ GRAY

CHAPTER 1

PARTY TIME

It was Friday afternoon. With a sigh, Tia Brock slung her backpack onto her bed. She wasn't looking forward to the weekend. Her big plans involved babysitting.

Tia's phone played a familiar tune. It was her friend Harper's ringtone. Harper started talking before Tia could say hello.

"I have an idea," Harper said. "I know how you can come to my party tonight."

"Harper, I'm grounded. I can't come." Tia loved that her friend never gave up.

“Just listen!” Harper smacked her gum. “My sister can babysit. Her plans got canceled. Now she’s free.”

Tia chewed on her lip. “I don’t know, Harper. You and I have tickets for next week’s concert. Remember? I can’t do anything wrong tonight if I want to go. It’ll be worth it.”

“But your mom loves my sister. Kevin actually behaves for her.”

Harper had a point.

“Okay,” Tia said. “I’ll mention that to my mom. Maybe she’ll go for it.”

“Kevin! Tia! Dinner!” Tia’s mom called out from the kitchen.

Tia jumped up. “Got to go. I’ll try.”

CHAPTER 2

A GOOD PLAN

When Tia entered the dining room, her brother was already there.

Kevin sat at the table. He smiled at her. “You can’t go out tonight.” Then he stuck out his tongue.

“Zip it, Bug.” Tia wondered if she was that annoying as an eight-year-old.

“Don’t call me that!” Kevin shouted.

Mrs. Brock entered from the kitchen. “Stop it, you two.” She held a big bowl of pasta. “Tia, can you grab the salad?”

“Sure.”

Kevin snatched a dinner roll. He looked at his mother. “I think Tia is in a mood because she’s grounded.”

Tia gritted her teeth and told herself to remain calm.

Rain pounded against the dining room window as they finished dinner.

“Wow,” Mrs. Brock said. “It’s really coming down out there.”

Kevin wiped his mouth. “May I be excused?”

Mrs. Brock looked at his empty plate. She nodded.

Kevin ran to the den to watch TV.

This family dinner was faster than usual. Mrs. Brock had plans.

Tia helped clear the table. “Mom? Harper said her sister can babysit tonight. Maybe it

would be best for her to watch Kevin. He listens to her more than me.”

Mrs. Brock raised a brow. “Really? Is this so you can go to Harper’s party?”

Tia didn’t answer the question. “You like her sister. She’s watched Kevin before. And I’ll pay her! It’s a win-win.”

Her mom placed dishes in the sink. “Tia, you’re missing the point. It’s not about paying for a babysitter. This is about you being responsible. You came home very late last Friday. That means no party. Am I being unfair?”

She was right. Tia did the crime. Now she had to do the time. “No. It’s fair.” Still, Tia was disappointed.

Her mom grinned. “That was a nice try though. Just remember our deal. Watch your brother tonight. Then you can go to the concert next week. This is about give and take.”

Tia began to load the dishwasher. “I know.”

Her mom continued. “And remember. I don’t want any mistakes this time. Try not to burn the house down.”

Tia’s face heated as she thought about the last time she watched Kevin. “That wasn’t my fault.”

Her mom dried her hands. “You put a pizza box in a hot oven.”

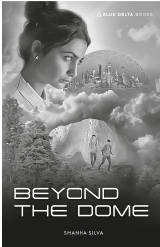
Tia shook her head. “No. Kevin put the pizza box in the hot oven.”

Mrs. Brock tossed her dish towel on the counter. “Kevin is eight. That’s exactly why he needs someone watching him closely. Maybe you two can do something fun together.” She snapped her fingers. “I know. How about a jigsaw puzzle? There’s a new one in the hall closet.”

“A puzzle?” Tia rolled her eyes. “Mom, seriously?”

Mrs. Brock patted her daughter's arm. "It could be fun." Her mom looked at her watch. "Now, I have to get ready. This client meeting is important. I don't want to be late."

FICTION



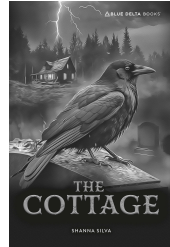
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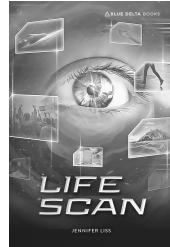
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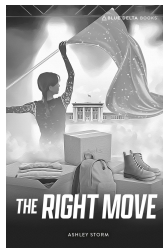
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SUSPENSE

UNWELCOME

Tia is stuck at home babysitting when all she really wants is to go to a party. She settles in for a boring night at home, but tensions rise when a storm picks up and the lights go out. When strange events start to occur, Tia realizes her evening may turn out to be anything but dull.



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