

The Girl in the
Shadows

Chapter One

Ivy

I lay down and gaze forlornly at my crumpled bedsheets and will for the uneventful long day to be over. My room smells musty and stale, just like always, and I give a long deep sigh. Further down the corridor, I hear my younger sister, Catherine, snoring loudly as she turns over in her bed, clearly undisturbed. I wish I could be as carefree as that. But I can't. My mind, as if on cue, starts racing as I try desperately to shut it down.

Suddenly, I hear the key being rammed into the lock. It's dad and he has just got home from the pub. He's drunk again. I can tell. The unnecessary clattering and banging noises downstairs, the drunk laughter as he slowly climbs the stairs gives me a little inkling. I curl into a ball to preserve body heat and wish and wish more than anything, I could escape this awful dreary lifestyle and live in a world full of colour. A world full of brightness and vibrance. A world with mum in it. But no. As I slowly drift off to sleep, I drift back into reality and realise that I will never escape this world of darkness.

Chapter Two

Daisy

"Daisy! Hurry! You're going to be late for school! It's 8:05!" yells mum as she races into my room, panting like she had just ran a marathon.

"What?" I reply groggily, screwing up my eyes at the sudden bright light. "What do you mean it's 8:05, wait... IT'S 8:05!" I yell, as the pure realisation dawns on me. I toss my covers aside hastily. I can't believe it! I only have 20 minutes before the bus leaves! I sprint to the bathroom and shove my toothbrush into my mouth while running a brush through my straggly, knotty, mundane brown hair. Once completed, I throw on my uniform and grab a breakfast bar from the table. I look at myself in the mirror. I look terrible, but who cares?

"Bye Mum!" I shout, cramming the bar into my mouth. I almost choke and nearly trip over my own feet but it is worth it when I turn the corner and see the bus. I let out a big breath and hurry to meet my best friend there, who is greeting me with a little wave. Her name is Ivy and she is amazing. She has long blonde glossy hair (nothing like mine) and has such a sweet personality that it is impossible not to like her.

"Hey! There you are! Where were you?" she asks, greeting me with a little hug.

"Oh, I slept in. I've been exhausted recently." I reply.

"Yeah. I did that the other day. It is this time of year. The weather is –" but, almost as if on cue, when Ivy says weather, she is cut off by an almighty rumbling sound from the clouds, followed by a flash of lightning and then a downpour of treacherous rain. People shriek and everyone runs for the doors of the bus.

Ivy and I follow everyone and collapse into some seats at the back. I lay my head against my seat and inhale slightly. I have made it.

Five minutes later, the rain is still going strong and everyone is watching in fascination. None of us have ever seen anything like it. Ivy and I gaze out of the window in awe and gawp at the lightning that is repeatedly flashing.

Then, it stops. It just does. No explanation. Nothing. The thunder and lightning stop and are replaced with sunshine beaming down brightly onto everyone's faces, making us all squint and wonder what is going on. Everyone is perplexed. What IS going on?

Chapter Three

Ivy

We pull up at school and Daisy and I compare our schedules. We both have P.E. to start off so we change and head to the hall. When we get there, we are greeted by a replacement teacher whose name is Mr Calle. He's dressed in a grey tracksuit and has a grumpy expression on his face. After giving us all a lecture on his expectations, he tells Daisy and I to go to the back of the hall and grab the rugby balls. We head there and look around for a while and do a bit of digging around the cupboard.

"Oh my gosh! Where are they?" I pant.

"I don't know!" speaks Daisy's muffled voice from underneath a pile of bibs. She emerges and gasps for breath. Then, Daisy speaks.

"Ivy... come and look at this a sec." Daisy mutters, her tone suddenly sounding apprehensive.

"What, what is it?" I ask coming over to have a look. But what I see is something entirely different to what I expected to see. Right, there, in front of me, is a shimmering hole. It glistens in the dark room and radiates a glow that makes me feel warm and reminds me of all my favourite things, of hot days and ice cream, and my mum's gorgeous smelling perfume, the one that smells like flowers, and, dad's aftershave when I was little, and, and....

"Ivy!!" yells Daisy, jolting me back to my senses.

"What happened?" I respond, confused.

"I, I don't know. One minute you were talking to me and the next you were.... I don't know.... in a trance almost!" babbles Daisy in one long sentence.

Suddenly, before any of us have any time to contemplate what has just happened, we find ourselves levitating in the air as if a force is carrying us. Together, we are hurled into the

portal are sent spinning round wildly as we descend into the mysterious depths of the portal....

Chapter Four

Daisy

Ivy and I are sucked into the portal and we tumble and turn until our feet hit solid ground. Well, not exactly solid. Our feet are touching crisp white snow and as we look around, I can practically feel the excitement buzzing off of Ivy. As I take in the scene, I see some crisp white trees with the most magnificent branches and I also see some houses. But not just any houses. These are houses made of leaves. They have been woven together neatly and precisely and have been formed into a strong sturdy building. They are truly the most amazing and spectacular things I have ever seen in my life.

"Oh, what is this place?!" gasps Ivy as she prances around, the snow making a satisfying crunch with every step she takes. I remain rooted to the ground, almost paralysed in utter shock and amazement.

"Woah." I agree.

"Let's go explore! Come on!" says Ivy, tugging at my arm, and snapping me out of my mini trance.

"But...." I hesitate.

"But what?" prompts Ivy impatiently. "What could you possibly be worried about?! We have a whole new world to explore!" she exclaims.

"How are we ever meant to get back home?" I respond, my eyes glued to the floor.

But deep down, I know what Ivy is thinking. She knows that I have a loving, caring family to go home to, whereas her situation is entirely different. She once was a family, her mum, dad and Catherine. But her family is not a family anymore. They are incomplete and missing someone. I shudder.

"Oh, come on. You know we'll find a way. We always do." She responds, clearly with no idea about the mini tornado going on in my head at that precise moment.

She hoops her arm through mine and we walk off. I don't know where we are headed, nor when or if we will get back, but I do know one thing. As long as I have my best friend with me, I can accomplish anything.

Chapter Five

Ivy

I can feel the hesitation from Daisy as we amble along, taking in the sight of the wondrous scenery around us. She is holding back, I can tell. I just don't know what it is. We walk along until it darkens and we are both shivering with fear. I spot a local church and suggest to Daisy that we should head in and see if we can find some shelter for the night.

"After all, we don't really have anywhere else to go, do we?" I speak.

"No, I guess not." Daisy replies, shivering with cold. Or fear. I can't tell.

As we enter, we see rows and rows of pews but, at the front, we don't see the typical paintings and illustrations you usually see in a church. At the front, there is a picture of four people. But not just any people. If you can call them people. No, these people are the seasons.

There is Spring, the dainty little fairy with green shimmery wings and small glittery shoes. Then, we see Summer, a strong looking boy with yellow shorts and a T-shirt. Autumn is a quiet soul, curled up with a book and with long auburn hair. Finally, we see Winter. This is the photo that scares Daisy and I the most though. Winter is a pale boy with a scowl on his face and looks sly. Like a snake. Waiting to pounce on his next victim.

Suddenly, we both sense there is something wrong. The room temperature changes and both of us shiver. We tense.

"Ivy, can we please go? Now." mutters Daisy, clutching my arm.

"Yes, you've definitely done enough here. For now." says a voice that fills me with dread and makes me feel cold all the way from the top of my head to the bottom of my toes. As we slowly turn around, we see Winter, surrounded by his cronies, sneering at us. He is dressed in pale tracksuit bottoms and a T-shirt with his hair so messy that it could've been a bird's nest. He speaks one word, while looking at us intently.

"Humans," he murmurs.

Then, his wand is pointed at us. I feel a tingling sensation, almost electric, in my body and the world goes black....

THE END