Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Lost Soul

Written by Gabriella Pierce

Published by Canvas

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.



Gabriella Pierce

Canvas

Constable & Robinson Ltd
55-56 Russell Square
London WC1B 4HP
www.constablerobinson.com

First published in the US by William Morrow,
an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers US, New York, 2013

First published in the UK by Canvas,
an imprint of Constable & Robinson Ltd., 2013

Copyright © Alloy Entertainment 2013

The right of Alloy Entertainment to be identified as the
author of this work has been asserted by them in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are
either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any
resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events or
locales is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved. This book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold,
hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover
other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A copy of the British Library Cataloguing in Publication
Data is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-78033-947-4 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-78033-948-1 (ebook)

Printed and bound in the UK

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Chapter One

Her first thought was that the flame was beautiful. Brighter than bright against the dark, dusty air, it seemed like a living thing. Jane wanted to touch it, hold it in her hand, feel its intentions against her skin. But as she leaned forward, a dark, heavy shape beside her shifted, then jerked, then seemed to grow impossibly large. She didn't see the sharp, flashing hooves until one of them glanced across her side, knocking the wind out of her.

Billy? The gentle old horse, her only real friend in this cold, unwelcoming place, had become completely transformed by rage and fear. Air returned to her lungs

in a painful rush, and she let out a choked sob. Billy's eyes rolled toward her in panic and he shied again, twisting on his tether and lashing out angrily with his hooves at the wall behind him.

She opened her mouth to calm him down – animals had always listened to her better even than to their own masters – but then she realized what he saw. In the few seconds she had been dazed from his kick, her tongue of flame had blossomed into a small tree, and it was still growing. *Too fast. Far too fast.* It reached out to her with hungry hands, spitting a furious heat into the air of the barn. Somewhere behind its shower of sparks, Billy let out a frightened, high-pitched scream, and Jane felt a matching one tear its way out of her own throat. The far walls were catching fire, and she felt the skin on her legs redden and blister as the tendrils of flame crept across the rough planks of the floor.

There had been a door, she remembered dimly. She had come inside, out of the bald daylight and into the dark privacy of the barn to think about her secret. If she had walked in, couldn't she walk back out again? Jane shrank back from the pressing flames, her fingers scraping against the unfinished wood of the wall. She felt her way along it, ignoring the prickling in her fingers and palms as splinters detached and stuck to them. She could pull those out later, but she knew from her last home that fire gave no second chances. She heard a scream, low pitched, a man's, from deep inside the barn. Mr. Waller. Had he been milking

the cows on the other side? She couldn't remember now. Faces danced before her in the shifting gold-and-red glow. Her new parents, her new sisters, her new start – as unreal now as if she had only ever dreamed it all.

Then her fingers found a beam of wood that stood out from the rest. She held her breath, her singed lungs straining in surprise. Beyond the beam was empty space. Closing her eyes, she thought the only prayer she knew and rolled her body forward. Cool, fresh air caressed her skin, though she could still feel the menacing oven of the barn breathing onto her neck.

Calloused hands grabbed her by the shoulder, and she blinked her eyes open, bleary from the soot stuck to their lashes. Mrs. Waller was staring down at her, her face contorted in rage. 'Where's John?' she shouted, gripping Jane's shirt collar and yanking her off the ground. 'Annette, you stupid thing, tell me – is he still inside?' Jane could sense more than see other people approaching from the house. 'Tom, check the other side; forget the horse and look for your father. Lucy, run next door and get help.' She turned back to Jane, her deep-set blue eyes boring into hers. She raised her hand, and it moved down in slow motion, knocking Jane onto the ground as it connected with her face. Hot fire shot through her cheek and seemed to settle inside her skull. 'Devil girl,' Mrs. Waller cried. 'We should have never taken you in. You may have just killed my husband.'

★ ★ ★

Jane's eyes flew open with a start. She blinked in confusion at the rectangle of orange light above her, struggling for a moment to remember who and where she was. Jane Boyle, her brain volunteered eventually. Lying in bed, staring up at the skylight, in the apartment off Washington Square Park.

Staring at the orange city haze, she felt a brief longing for the open sky in her dream, for a place where streetlights didn't crowd out the billions of stars. *But those places don't have Saks or Magnolia Bakery cupcakes, so . . .* They had painful histories and haunting secrets instead: hers, and Annette Doran's as well, if her recent nightmares were to be believed. Jane had been having these strange dreams ever since her showdown with Annette a week ago . . . dreams that seemed suspiciously like Annette's memories. But the dreams couldn't be real, could they?

Jane blinked the sleep out of her eyes and sat up in bed. Annette Doran had spent most of her life in the British foster-care system as Anne Locksley, an amnesiac who was plagued by mysterious fires. It wasn't until Jane had intervened that Annette learned she was actually the long-lost daughter of one of the richest families in New York . . . and the last in a long line of incredibly powerful witches. Jane had set out to reunite Annette with her mother, Lynne Doran, who also happened to be Jane's former mother-in-law – and her mortal enemy. Jane thought that by doing Lynne this service, she'd be safe from her magical wrath.

But Jane was horribly mistaken. By the time she learned

that Lynne's plans for her daughter were far more sinister than she could ever have imagined, Lynne had convinced the girl that Jane was the enemy. Annette had attacked before Jane could clear things up, her uncontrolled magic burning down the top three floors of the Dorans' Park Avenue mansion as she had burned down many buildings before.

Jane glanced up at the skylight; it was too early for signs of daylight, but she felt certain she wouldn't be able to fall asleep again before it really was morning. She swung her legs over the side of her bed, testing her balance on the edge of the white rug. Her right leg had been pinned under a billiard table during the struggle with Annette and still felt deeply sore. She poked at its bandage, trying to remember the last time she had applied a new poultice.

She eased herself out of bed and padded toward the kitchen, wishing Dee were here to whip up one of her signature breakfast spreads. The two friends had shared this apartment for a brief time, but Jane knew it wasn't safe for Dee to be around her right now. She'd insisted that Dee stay with the Montague witches, the closest thing Jane had to magical allies. Now she was completely alone in the apartment – and she was sick of hiding.

Coffee. A shower and a massive mug of coffee, she decided. It was a start. Next on the agenda was cornering Annette Doran, and making sure she knew just what type of witch her mother really was.

Chapter Two

Seven hours and an unwise amount of caffeine later, Jane squinted resentfully at the pale spring sun. As far as she could tell it had gone from inching torturously toward its highest point to refusing to move at all, and her watch seemed equally reluctant to move. She lowered her eyes and pressed her oversized sunglasses more securely onto the bridge of her nose. The banded wooden doors of Park Avenue Presbyterian seemed to be smirking at her.

'Open,' she whispered fiercely, twisting her right foot uncomfortably in its sensible-but-still-painful kitten heel. The heavy double doors began to swing forward, and Jane

flinched, hoping she hadn't sent out her magic without realizing it. But then a stocky, impeccably dressed man stepped out, turning back to help an elderly woman in Chanel across the threshold. 'Finally,' Jane muttered, watching the trickle of congregants intently.

Since the spectacularly destructive end of Annette Doran's welcome-home party the weekend before, her mother had been doing nonstop damage control. For Lynne Doran, socialite extraordinaire, that meant appearing in public – flawlessly turned out – as often as possible, in a wide variety of PR-friendly activities. Jane had even found a photo of her and Annette at an ASPCA adoption event, holding an undeniably photogenic puppy up to their smiling faces. Jane suspected that the pair would be conspicuously attending church as well, and so she had staked out a position in the shadows of an alley across the street, hoping to catch a glimpse of them.

A tall woman with dirty-blond hair stepped through the double doors and Jane inhaled sharply, but upon closer inspection the stranger was at least ten years older than Annette. *Not that Lynne would have let her out of the house in espadrilles, anyway.* A breeze curled around the side of the building she was leaning against, but to Jane it felt hot and angry, like the air in her dream from the night before.

Jane knew it was dangerous to get near Annette, and especially to try to reason with her, but this seemed like her only hope. If she could just make Annette hear the truth – the whole truth – she stood a chance at rescuing her

from Lynne's clutches. Right now, Annette believed that Jane's family had been plotting against her for her whole life. And while it was true that Jane's own grandmother had helped abduct four-year-old Annette and erase her memory of her childhood, she only did so to keep her safe from Lynne. Jane's grandmother had known all along what Jane had only recently discovered: that the person known as Lynne Doran was actually Hasina, one of the world's original witches. She had survived over the millennia by taking over the bodies of her female relatives, leapfrogging from one generation to the next each time her current shell grew old. 'Lynne Doran' had been so anxious to reunite with her long-lost daughter not because she missed her, but because she needed a new body to inhabit. Now Jane had to somehow convey all this to Annette and convince her that she needed to get to safety. Malcolm, Annette's older brother and Jane's ex-husband, was already in hiding from his psychotic mother; Jane knew he would be eager for Annette to join him.

When Annette finally appeared in the doorway of the church, Lynne was stuck to her side as firmly as ever. The women made a striking pair. Their colouring was different and Annette's frame was a bit more solid than her willowy mother's, but the way they carried themselves in their demure Sunday suits marked them unmistakably as family. *Financially and genetically blessed family,* Jane thought ruefully, pressing herself back a little into the narrow alley. Fellow churchgoers flocked about the two women

like butterflies around rare, impressive flowers, and Lynne greeted all of them with gracious nods and calibrated smiles. Annette carefully mimicked her mother's gestures and expressions, though she seemed a little uncomfortable to Jane's skeptical eye.

Finally, Lynne reached discreetly into her purse, no doubt sending a text message to summon their driver. *I thought they'd leave on foot.* They were only a few blocks from the mansion, and it hadn't occurred to Jane that they might be going somewhere else after the service. Park Avenue was wide, with a tree-lined divider down the centre that would shield her somewhat from view, but she hesitated. Was it worth the risk to step out into the open and hail a cab?

As she wavered, a strong arm grabbed her from behind and pulled her backward into the shadows. When the grip on her arm released suddenly, she stumbled for a few steps, her injured leg buckling underneath her, and fell to the ground. Jane threw her hands up instinctively to protect her face and felt the magic in her blood spring up, whipping the debris around her into a brief, frenzied tornado.

But instead of falling back to the concrete, the debris paused in midair, then parted abruptly to slam against the brick walls on either side. An older woman stood there in the silence, looking at Jane. She was all grey hair, cold pewter eyes, and sharp angles, and Jane felt a certain fleeting satisfaction at the sight of the thick white bandage

peeking out beneath the sleeve of her cardigan. Annette's fire had at least gotten a piece of one of her aunts, Jane thought grimly. It was Cora McCarroll, she was almost sure, and not Cora's grumpier, more taciturn twin. Jane pulled her magic into a steady, more orderly shape around her body.

'You shouldn't be here,' Cora snarled, and Jane felt the static charge of her magic pressing angrily against Jane's own.

'You're blocking the way out,' Jane said between clenched teeth, rubbing at her aching leg and sending a tendril of magic to explore the shadows of the alley behind her. In a moment it found something solid but not too heavy. She held her breath and launched it forward.

Cora waved, almost contemptuously, as the garbage can that Jane had lobbed at her glanced off one of the brick walls with an empty, useless clang. 'There's more than one way for you to leave here,' she snarled, and the static charge pressed closer, taking on a sharper, more hostile feel.

Jane pushed back against it blindly. Malcolm and her gran had both told her that she was an extremely powerful witch, but the fact remained that she hadn't learned about her magic until very recently. Against a witch like Cora, who had been spell-casting for decades, raw power only mattered so much. 'You told Lynne that you wanted to be left alone,' Cora continued, almost conversationally. 'You didn't mention that you intended to keep sticking your

nose where it didn't belong. I can't imagine what you're still doing in this hemisphere, but if you knew what was best for you, you'd stay away.'

'You didn't mind me being around when you thought you could use me,' Jane pointed out.

Cora laughed sharply. 'You had something we needed. But not anymore. We have Annette now, and *she* doesn't need some stalker following her around and filling her head with paranoid nonsense. She is heir to something more important than you could possibly understand, and your interference is entirely unwelcome.'

What they had needed was magic, and Lynne's blood. Jane had one of the two, and Lynne had manoeuvred her into marrying her son in the hope that the couple would produce a daughter who had both. Jane had run away on her wedding day, after learning the awful truth about her in-laws. It wasn't until she discovered Annette – who, of course, fit the bill perfectly – that she realized returning Lynne's long-lost daughter could gain her her own freedom. 'You guys really are just the picture of a close, loving family,' she spat back. 'I suppose Annette should consider herself lucky.'

Cora's thin lips twisted upward in a ghostly approximation of a smile. 'You have no idea,' the witch purred, her pewter eyes half closing in what Jane could only call rapture. Her mouth fell open in shock. Cora McCarroll *knew* what Annette's body was intended for, and she thought it was an *honour.*

The edge of the older woman's magic grew softer for a moment, and Jane instinctively pushed outward against it, clearing a little more breathing space around herself. Cora took a step back and frowned. 'This is a family matter,' she snapped, pulling the edges of her magic and her cardigan closer to her body. 'You're out, so stay out.' She spun dramatically and stormed out of the alley, leaving little eddies of trash and newspaper spinning around in her wake.

Jane made no move to follow; she was sure that Lynne had already whisked Annette away to their next photo op. Instead she found a clear space on the concrete ground and leaned her back against the cold brick wall, closing her eyes and trying to trace the currents of her magic as it returned to her body. Jane had put a lot of work into learning to harness and control her power during the previous few months, and knowing that she had held off Cora so steadily and still had some reserves left brought a grim, tired smile to her lips.

'*Family,*' she murmured thoughtfully, turning the word over in her mouth. Technically, witches were all one big family: they could all trace their ancestry back to one of the legendary Ambika's seven daughters. In the more modern sense, Jane was out of the family . . . but that didn't mean Annette was entirely without loving, concerned relatives.

Jane snapped her faux-lizard wristlet open and slid her cell phone out. The screen flared to life, displaying what she had self-consciously been looking at over and over

throughout the previous week: the last of the fake 'junk' emails that Malcolm had sent her, so that she would know how to contact him. She scrolled to the bottom and tapped the number tacked on to the end of the email.

The line beeped in a measured, foreign-sounding way, and Jane waited patiently. Finally she heard what sounded like a voicemail tone, followed by an expectant, staticky silence.

'It's me,' she said shortly. 'I wanted to wait until I could tell you that everything was safe again. It mostly is – for you, I mean. But Annette's alive, and she's in danger, and I don't really know where to go from here. Malcolm, I think it's time for you to come home.'

She cut off the call and slid the phone back into her purse as she stood up, brushing dust off her clothes and stepping out of the alley.