
A Fairy Godmother Novel
WISH OF THE WICKED
Revenge is pure magic.
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
DANIELLE PAIGE
BLOOMSBURY

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Stealing Snow
Before the Snow
Queen Rising

Wish of the Wicked

WISH OF THE WICKED

DANIELLE PAIGE

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For my beautiful mother, Shirley Paige,
you are my fairy godmother, I know you watch over all our
family still . . . Chris, Andrea, Daddy, Josh, Sienna & Fi.

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WANTED—DEAD OR ALIVE!

REWARD FOR THE CAPTURE OF FUGITIVES

By edict of Her Royal Highness Queen Magrit, members of the Entente and all users of magic are now and hereafter considered outlaws of Hinter and the Thirteen Queendoms. All enemies of the Crown will be burned at the stake. Protecting any such outlaws is considered high treason, punishable by death.

PART I
THE PAST

The Entente will rise again. We have a plan, and you are just in time.
—Galatea, La Soeur of the Past

PROLOGUE

The End. And Also the Beginning.

The Queen created the word "witch" and cursed my people in one breath. And in the next she condemned Hecate, my Hecate, to die.

We had been walking through the square when the Queen's guards grabbed her. Hecate went with them, even though she was stronger. Even though she could have stopped them with a breath, a whisper, or a turn of her wrist. She let them lead her to the square and tie her up. She let them start a fire beneath the pyre. She kept her lips sealed. She did not move a muscle in protest. She let them take her from me. From all of us.

From me especially.

Hecate was the most powerful of us. She was the Future of Les Soeurs, my mentor, and sister to us all. But I didn't know she was my mother until the moment before her last breath.

When I could move again, I touched my face. It was wet. I realized that I was crying. I had never seen another member of the Entente cry—not Hecate on the pyre, not Galatea as she was watching her. But I was crying now.

I should have known she was my mother, but Hecate had always been so powerful that her wishes were opaque to me—like she never wanted or felt anything other than what she was doing at the

time. But as she burned, her eyes met mine. The flames curled around her. She should have been screaming—instead, she spoke to me in a voice I could only hear in my head.

I wish I'd told you, Farrow. But it is not our way.

I tried to scream, to get to her, but I was paralyzed where I stood. As a man dressed in the livery of the Queen's guard read off a list of offenses, saying things like "malevolent sorcery against the Queen" and "treasonous inciter," my mouth would not open; my legs would not move. I didn't know if Hecate was using what power she had left to stop me from fighting when she should have been fighting to stay alive.

Don't fight.

Suddenly Galatea, my older sister and the Past of Les Soeurs, appeared in the center of the square. If Hecate expired, there would be only two of them left. The three Les Soeurs led the rest of the Entente, each with a different gift. Iolanta, the Present, was in isolation. But she would feel Hecate die the moment it happened. Galatea, as the Sister of the Past, would remember every second of Hecate's death without the kindness of time to help it fade. Even though it was thought that my gift would be the Present someday, it felt like I would be remembering every detail of it forever too. I prayed for them to be able to stop it, but that was all for naught.

The other sisters began to appear. The army raised their swords against them. I still could not move.

Iolanta was there suddenly—Iolanta, who never left the confines of her isolation. Iolanta, who knew the Present and clearly could feel Hecate on the pyre.

South and Amantha and Bari were there too, making their own desperate attempts at saving her while I stood frozen.

I had no choice. I did not blink once as I watched the flames

engulf her body, her face, and her hair. As her skin charred black and her eye sockets filled with fire, and as my eyes stung and teared from the smoke, I could not unsee. But I didn't know why Hecate would have wanted me to have this be the last image that I would have of her, my mother.

Iolanta raised her wand, and Black Fire coursed out of it. Unfortunately for all of us, that fire met with the store of cannon fire nearby. Everything was chaos; everything was burning and ash in an instant.

When it was over, when the Entente were all ash and the Queen's guard had left on horseback, I tried to turn and leave, to get away. But something stalled me. I wanted, I needed, to take her home. I waited until dark; I waited until every last onlooker had dispersed.

I gathered the ashes from the pyre and put them in the pouch I wore around my neck, making sure I left no part of her behind. When I was done, I held her in my hands. I could not feel her—not her power, not her essence, not her electricity.

My mother.

In the Entente, we were all sisters. There were no mothers. But now I knew mine, and I didn't know how to feel about it. I slipped my wand out of my pocket and tried to use it to make a path to the Hiding Place. But it was no use. The wand did not work.

I had to go on foot. I ran the whole way to the Hiding Place. It was where we had been born, where we were raised until we were ready for placement, and where we were to go if anything catastrophic ever was to happen. Losing Hecate was worse.

The interior of the Place mirrored that of the palaces we were sent to—marble floors, high ceilings, opulent silks—but everything here was made of magic.

It wasn't until after the ashes were in the glass coffin in the center of the room that I realized something I could not reconcile. How had any of this happened without Les Soeurs stopping it? How was it that we could correct the fates of others and not do the same for ourselves? My mother saw this coming.

"You could have stopped this," I said as I closed the lid with a spell. "We could have avoided the square today altogether."

She was gone, and the Queendom wants us all dead, not just her. How is that Fate's plan?

We were Entente. For centuries we had been at the side of every queen and king in every Queendom, as advisors, confidants, leaders. We were the whispers. We were the details, tiny arrows that you couldn't ignore. We were strings of moments, coincidences, and happenstances that led you to yesterday and today and tomorrow. We were the Fates.

Nothing was the way it was supposed to be. There had always been the three of them directing us: Past, Present, and Future. Though no one ever saw Iolanta except for Hecate and Galatea, we always felt her influence in the directives we were given. It had always been the three Les Soeurs, but now . . .

"Hecate," I whispered to the glass casket. "I know there isn't a happily ever after for us, but I never expected this." As I looked through the glass before me, something seemed to . . . stir.

I closed my eyes tight, doubting them.

But when I opened them again, the ashes were indeed moving, forming the shape that I knew so well to be Hecate's.

"Hecate?" I said, feeling slightly foolish. Despite a lifetime of magic up close, I had never seen anything like this. Dead was dead. There was no "after," we all knew that. But as I watched Hecate's ashes swirling around in the glass coffin, what I knew slipped away.

The ashes began to swirl around the case in a frenzy. They formed a kind of funnel that increased in velocity.

I leaned in just as the glass shattered and the funnel tornadoed out of the case and smashed about the room. I landed on the floor, pushed by the force of air that the ashes had created.

"Hecate!" I screamed, wondering if the ashes were conscious, wondering if the ashes were dangerous, wondering if the ashes were still Hecate.

I got back to my feet, my eyes still on the swirling gray. Glass clattered around me, and yet somehow I had not felt a single cut. I half expected the ashes to try and escape. Perhaps the coffin disagreed with her. Perhaps, they/she was seeking peace. But as they spun down from the ceiling they began to form the Hecate shape all over again. And when the ashes had settled completely into her form, they finally stood still, and I took a step toward them.

I had not known that she was my mother, but I had always felt closer to her than the other Older Sisters. It was her favor I sought, her approval I wanted. For a moment, the ashes began to make up her face, and then her neck, her shoulders, and so on, until my Hecate was before me, completely formed.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I blurted.

My mother made of ash did not answer. Or maybe she could not. Then the ashes broke apart and came back together in the shape of a heart.

Was this her way of telling me that she loved me? Or was this her way of saying goodbye?

The ashes broke apart again and came back together as her silhouette.

"I don't want to say goodbye to you," I said finally.

I didn't know magic could do this. That it could continue beyond

the grave. There were rules and limits. Things that we did and did not do. But here was Hecate, my mother, standing in front of me made of ash.

Suddenly, behind me I heard footsteps against the marble. I turned back. Someone was coming. Lots of someones.

Hecate beckoned me closer with a wave of her arm. I stepped forward, and she lowered down beside me. Her ashes brushed my ear.

Leave everything behind, the ashes whispered in Hecate's voice . . .

Run!

This time the voice was louder, and the ashes burst apart.

RUN!

I ran.

CHAPTER 1

The night before

"Whose power would you rather have?" Bari asked, cross-legged on the bed in the room we shared.

"Hecate's, no question," I said automatically.

"Knowing the Future is better than the Past. Everyone knows that," Bari responded.

"But I would take either Hecate's or Galatea's over Iolanta's power," I said.

"Iolanta's is the worst," Bari agreed.

I felt something lift inside me.

At seven and a half, Bari was only six months older than I was but somehow miles ahead of me in magic. It was a small victory to have even an ounce of her approval. I imagined everyone in the Entente would agree with me, including Iolanta herself; the gift of the Present wasn't a gift at all. It seemed much closer to a curse.

I pictured Iolanta in her isolation room, sitting in the dark quiet and letting the world go by, her homemade things around her. Because outside the Reverie, Iolanta felt every single human from the Hinter to the Thirteenth Queendom and beyond all at once. For even the strongest Entente, the weight of all those Presents was too hard to bear.

"But the Future is more interesting than the Past. You can't do anything about the Past," Bari argued.

I thought about Hecate, who was stoic and watchful and stern. You wouldn't know that, when she looked at you, she could see your entire life stretched before you in a single touch—all the possible futures, all the possible twists and turns.

And I thought about Galatea, who was different from her sisters. She bore her gift like a shield. She could look at a human and know every bad and good thing they had ever done. The Past was set. And she had little reverence for humans because of it.

And I thought of the mantle that Galatea, Iolanta, and Hecate were charged with—the heavy responsibility of advising the queens of every Queendom.

Before I could respond to Bari, a large beetle with glowing blue wings landed on the tip of my nose. We were taught not to kill insects, but I instinctually raised my hand to swat it.

"Don't move, Farrow," Bari said. "If you crush them, you crush me."

"What did you do?" I asked as my concern rose for Bari. I tapped my wand against my leg nervously.

Bari lifted her skirt, revealing that her legs were now completely composed of the same kind of beetles as the one perched on me. The beetles' wings were the same blue. If the insects hadn't been moving, I would have thought that Bari was wearing a glamorous pair of pantaloons.

She had been experimenting with transformation for months, but she had started turning her wand on herself. In contrast, I had only managed to give a beetle a single butterfly wing. Every Entente practiced with insects before they moved on to animals. But we were not supposed to turn our wands on ourselves until we

had mastered smaller magic. Bari was always trying bigger and bigger spells.

I had turned my wand on myself countless times, but I never strayed past the small spells, like cosmetics, and I dabbled in minor weather changes. I could make my light-brown skin and dark hair any color or texture—from my impossible curls to an updo. I could touch the hem of my dress and make it any style I wanted, from its default gray to a gown worthy of a princess. My biggest feat to date was filling the courtyard with fog.

Bari could do more with her wand than I could with mine. All the young Entente could—except South, who was human and could do nothing. He was adopted by the Entente and he had no magic. But he still had a wand. He carved new ones constantly, holding out hope that one day a wand would work.

What Bari had done I had never seen another Entente attempt to do. I was pretty sure we weren't meant to do it at all.

"Have you told Les Soeurs yet?" I asked in a whisper as I looked for the beetle, which had flown away. It circled over our heads just out of reach. Amazingly, Bari seemed unbothered that a part of her was buzzing above us in beetle form.

"Not yet. I can only do the extremities," she said. "I want to try with something larger . . . maybe birds or butterflies."

Bari had a penchant for winged things, be it a butterfly or a sparrow. If it flew, it garnered her attention. But what would make her concoct a spell like this? There had to be a rule against beetles for legs . . . What would Hecate say when she saw what Bari had done?

Bari waved her wand again. The errant beetle returned dutifully to its place among the others on the bed. Another wave. This time the blue beetles transformed into her flesh again.

"Bari, it's dangerous. You've made yourself too vulnerable. What if you complete the spell? How would the insect version of you be able to hold a wand? What if you got stuck like that?" An image of her with a beetle head and an Entente body flashed in my imagination.

"Then you would change me back. You worry too much, Farrow," she said confidently. "You could do it too if you tried. How do you think the Fates became the Fates? We don't just wake up one day ready for big magic. We have to prepare."

"I don't want to turn into beetles. Besides, I could have crushed part of you."

If my words affected Bari in the slightest, her face didn't betray it. Before she could mount another defense, she suddenly put a finger in front of her lips and threw the dress back down over her legs. She raised her wand and the door swung open, and South tumbled in after it. He had been listening.

"You're both wrong," he cried. "Iolanta's is the best. If you know the Present, you'd know if someone is lying or telling the truth." South, seemingly immune from embarrassment, plopped down on the floor near the foot of my bed.

He was always doing this. He didn't understand that we wanted him to stay as far away from us as possible.

"No one asked you, South. Besides, you'd be lucky to have any magic at all," I snapped.

South's hair was a mess of brown curls that always seemed too long and were rarely combed. His eyes were big and brown and too often looking at me. He was the only boy—the only human—ever allowed past the Veil, the magic that hid the Reverie from the rest of the world. I didn't remember when Les Soeurs brought him home. But with a single touch, Galatea had known his Past, Iolanta

his Present, and Hecate his Future, and together they had known there was no one else in all the Queendoms with whom he belonged.

"Farrow! That's not fair," Bari said suddenly. "We may never be lucky enough to be chosen as Fates, but South will never be touched by magic at all."

"I'm glad I'm nothing like you." South looked right at me as he said it. "I would rather be anything than an Entente."

South had never said anything like that before. He was lucky to be here.

I felt my cheeks go red and my heart pick up its pace. South had always liked me the best. What if South liked me so much because he thought I was the closest one to him, the closest to being human? What if Bari thought the same thing? My magic was late, not absent altogether. There was a difference. If only I could show them that I was like my sisters and not like him . . .

Bari's eyes flashed with anger, and they caught mine with what felt like a challenge. I knew what she was thinking too: *We can't let him talk about the Entente that way.*

"What's going on?" a voice asked from the far corner of the room.

We glanced over to see nothing but an empty chair. A second ticked by and the air blurred in front of it, and then Amantha stepped out of the center of the blur.

Traveling was a prized gift that sometimes took years to master. I could make it from one room to another in the Entente but never any farther than a few feet. Amantha had been as far as the next Queendom.

"South doesn't want to be part of the Entente. He wants to be anything else," Bari explained.

"Anything else, huh?" Amantha asked.

South glanced at me wistfully, as if he was expecting me to come to his aid.

Bari caught his glance and seized upon it.

"I think South thinks maybe our Farrow would want the same," Bari said with an edge of mischief in her voice.

Amantha chimed in. "What do you say, Farrow?"

South looked at me again, expectant.

"Just take it back, South," I said, breaking his eye contact and finding the wall. But out of the corner of my eye, I could see him slump with disappointment.

"I would rather be anything else than Entente," he said firmly.

"Be careful what you wish for, South," I said with a flourish. I spotted a moth poised on the edge of the windowsill and got an idea.

South laughed and then got still, his eyes widening.

"What are you doing?" he asked, his voice pitching a hair higher with concern.

"*Quiet your smile, stop your laugh, and don't be so daft . . .* "

I raised my wand and began to chant some words under my breath. It wasn't a real spell, but South didn't know that. South was always there, a constant reminder of what it would be like to be completely ordinary. He wasn't one of us. He was a boy. He had no magic. He was a stray who Iolanta had taken in even though she couldn't take care of herself.

I thought that the second I raised my wand he would run, but South's eyes were defiant. He stood firm. The only indication that he was at all upset was the more-pronounced-than-usual rise and fall of his chest through his shirt.

I began again.

Quiet your smile, stop your laugh, and don't be so daft.
If not the Entente, what do you want?
If not here, then where?
I know—why not the sky?
When I open my eyes, you can fly.
Like the pesky moth that you are,
You will have wings so you can fly far . . .

He began to back away, then suddenly screamed in pain.

I heard a crunch of bone. He fell to the floor and began writhing around.

What was happening?

"It wasn't a real spell, South," I said as panic seized me. "I just wanted to teach you a lesson.

"South?" I called his name. But if he could hear me, I couldn't tell. He tried to stand up, but his legs buckled under him.

I reached down to try to help him, but he recoiled from my touch.

"Leave me alone," he said, his voice hoarse and full of reproach. He got to his feet again and turned toward the door.

Beneath his gray shirt something rippled. The rustling stopped and the cracking began. It sounded like bones breaking and re-forming.

A second later a pair of black-and-flesh-colored wings tore open the shirt, unfurling toward the ceiling. South stared at the shadow the wings made on the floor of the room. He stretched an arm around to touch the wings, but they were just out of reach.

South glanced back at me, his eyes meeting mine again. I felt the crush of guilt.

Hecate appeared in the doorway, watching me with disappointment so deep, it hurt almost as much as my guilt.

What had I done?

"Wings . . . You gave him wings," Bari said, her eyes wide in wonder. Amantha pointed and did not say a word. Her pale skin had gone paler.

"It was an accident," I blurted out. "I'm sorry, South."

But South was already running past Hecate as fast as his little red shoes could carry him.

"How did she do this?" Amantha asked Hecate.

"With enough will and enough magic, anything is possible," she replied.

"I didn't mean to, Hecate," I tried to explain.

Hecate looked directly at me. "Like I said, be careful what you wish for, Farrow."