



HAUNTING
ADELINE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

H.D. CARLTON

Haunting Adeline
By H. D. Carlton

Prologue

The windows of my house tremble from the power of thunder rolling across the skies. Lightning strikes in the distance, illuminating the night. In that small moment, the few seconds of blinding light showcases the man standing outside my window. Watching me. Always watching me.

I go through the motions, just like I always do. My heart skips a beat and then palpitates, my breathing turns shallow, and my hands grow clammy. It doesn't matter how many times I see him, he always pulls the same reaction out of me.

Fear.

And excitement.

I don't know why it excites me. Something must be wrong with me. It's not normal for liquid heat to course through my veins, leaving tingles burning in its wake. It's not common for my mind to start wondering about things I shouldn't.

Can he see me now? Wearing nothing but a thin tank top, my nipples poking through the material? Or the shorts I'm wearing that barely cover my ass? Does he like the view?

Of course he does.

That's why he watches me, isn't it? That's why he comes back every night, growing bolder with his leering while I silently challenge him. Hoping he'll come closer, so I have a reason to put a knife to his throat.

The truth is, I'm scared of him. Terrified, actually.

But the man standing outside my window makes me feel like I'm sitting in a dark room, a single light shining from the television where a horror flick plays on the screen. It's petrifying, and all I want to do is hide, but there's a distinct part of me that keeps me still, baring myself to the horror. That finds a small thrill out of it.

It's dark again, and the lightning strikes in areas further away.

My breathing continues to escalate. I can't see him, but he can see me.

Ripping my eyes away from the window, I turn to look behind me in the darkened house, paranoid that he's somehow found a way inside. No matter how deep the shadows go in Parsons Manor, the black and white checkered floor always seems visible.

I inherited this house from my grandparents. My great-grandparents had built the three-story Victorian home back in the early 1940s through blood, sweat, tears, and the lives of five construction workers.

Legend says—or rather Nana says—that the house caught fire and killed the construction workers during the building structure phase. I haven't been able to find any news articles on the unfortunate event, but the souls that haunt the Manor reek of despair.

Nana always told grandiose stories that wrung eye rolls from my parents. Mom never believed anything Nana said, but I think she just didn't *want* to.

Sometimes I hear footsteps at night. They could be from the ghosts of the workers who died in the tragic fire eighty years ago, or they could be from the shadow that stands outside my house.

Watching me.

Always watching me.

Chapter 1

The Manipulator

ometimes I have very dark thoughts about my mother—thoughts no sane daughter should ever have.

S

Sometimes, I'm not always sane.

“Addie, you’re being ridiculous,” Mom says through the speaker on my phone. I glare at it in response, refusing to argue with her. When I have nothing to say, she sighs loudly. I wrinkle my nose. It blows my mind that this woman always called Nana dramatic yet can’t see her own flair for the dramatics.

“Just because your grandparents gave you the house doesn’t mean you have to actually *live in it*. It’s old and would be doing everyone in that city a favor if it were torn down.”

I thump my head against the headrest, rolling my eyes upward and trying to find patience weaved into the stained roof of my car.

How did I manage to get ketchup up there?

“And just because *you* don’t like it, doesn’t mean I can’t live in it,” I retort dryly.

My mother is a bitch. Plain and simple. She’s always had a chip on her shoulder, and for the life of me, I can’t figure out why.

“You’ll be living an hour from us! That will be incredibly inconvenient for you to come visit us, won’t it?”

Oh, how will I ever survive?

Pretty sure my gynecologist is an hour away, too, but I still make an effort to see her once a year. And those visits are far more painful.

“Nope,” I reply, popping the P. I’m over this conversation. My patience only lasts an entire sixty seconds talking to my mother. After that, I’m running on fumes and have no desire to put in any more effort to keep the conversation moving along.

If it's not one thing, it's the other. She always manages to find something to complain about. This time, it's my choice to live in the house my grandparents gave to me. I grew up in Parsons Manor, running alongside the ghosts in the halls and baking cookies with Nana. I have fond memories here—memories I refuse to let go of just because Mom didn't get along with Nana.

I never understood the tension between them, but as I got older and started to comprehend Mom's snarkiness and underhanded insults for what they were, it made sense.

Nana always had a positive, sunny outlook on life, viewing the world through rose-colored glasses. She was always smiling and humming, while Mom is cursed with a perpetual scowl on her face and looking at life like her glasses got smashed when she was plunged out of Nana's vagina. I don't know why her personality never developed past that of a porcupine—she was never raised to be a prickly bitch.

Growing up, my mom and dad had a house only a mile away from Parsons Manor. She could barely tolerate me, so I spent most of my childhood in this house. It wasn't until I left for college that Mom moved out of town an hour away. When I quit college, I moved in with her until I got back on my feet and my writing career took off.

And when it did, I decided to travel around the country, never really settling in one place.

Nana died about a year ago, gifting me the house in her will, but my grief hindered me from moving into Parsons Manor. Until now.

Mom sighs again through the phone. "I just wish you had more ambition in life, instead of staying in the town you grew up in, sweetie. Do something more with your life than waste away in that house like your grandmother did. I don't want you to become worthless like her."

A snarl overtakes my face, fury tearing throughout my chest. "Hey, Mom?"

“Yes?”

“Fuck off.”

I hang up the phone, angrily smashing my finger into the screen until I hear the telltale chime that the call has ended.

How dare she speak of her own mother that way when she was nothing but loved and cherished? Nana certainly didn't treat her the way she treats me, that's for damn sure.

I rip a page from Mom's book and let loose a melodramatic sigh, turning to look out my side window. Said house stands tall, the tip of the black roof spearing through the gloomy clouds and looming over the vastly wooded area as if to say *you shall fear me*. Peering over my shoulder, the dense thicket of trees are no more inviting—their shadows crawling from the overgrowth with outstretched claws.

I shiver, delighting in the ominous feeling radiating from this small portion of the cliff. It looks exactly as it did from my childhood, and it gives me no less of a thrill to peer into the infinite blackness.

Parsons Manor is stationed on a cliffside overlooking the Bay with a mile long driveway stretching through a heavily wooded area. The congregation of trees separates this house from the rest of the world, making you feel like you're well and truly alone.

Sometimes, it feels like you're on an entirely different planet, ostracized from civilization. The whole area has a menacing, sorrowful aura.

And I fucking love it.

The house has begun to decay, but it can be fixed up to look like new again with a bit of TLC. Hundreds of vines crawl up all sides of the structure, climbing towards the gargoyles stationed on the roof on either side of the manor. The black siding is fading to a gray and starting to peel away, and the black paint around the windows is chipping like cheap nail polish. I'll have to hire someone to give the large front porch a facelift since it's starting to sag on one side.

The lawn is long overdue for a haircut, the blades of grass nearly as tall as me, and the three acres of clearing bursting with weeds. I bet plenty of snakes have settled in nicely since it's last been mowed.

Nana used to offset the manor's dark shade with blooms of colorful flowers during the spring season. Hyacinths, primroses, violas, and rhododendron.

And in autumn, sunflowers would be crawling up the sides of the house, the bright yellows and oranges in the petals a beautiful

contrast against the black siding.

[Read the book online here](#)