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My name is Callum Ormond.

I was a hunted fugitive.

My story continues.

CONSPIRACY 
365

REVENGE

GABRIELLE LORD

SCHOLASTIC

SYDNEY AUCKLAND NEW YORK TORONTO LONDON MEXICO CITY
NEW DELHI HONG KONG BUENOS AIRES PUERTO RICO

Prologue

I knew something was wrong as soon as I saw the envelope.

It was waiting for me on my pillow. A red wax seal marked it like a thick, wet drop of blood.

I ran to the window and looked out, but the front yard was dark and quiet. Cautiously, I pulled the curtains back across and picked up the creamy-coloured envelope.

The front was blank, but the seal on the back was carefully pressed with something feathered. I held it under my lamp.

A chill shuddered through my body.



I tore open the envelope and stared at the cryptic message stamped on the note inside.

For a split second I thought it was a hoax—something one of those relentless journalists, like Ben Willoughby, had snuck into my room in a desperate attempt to force another story out of me.

Some people thought that ‘Callum Ormond, the Teen Fugitive’, was more interesting as a monster. They were always trying to poke and prod me, trying to tempt the ‘Psycho Kid’ out of his slumber. All for another photo and another headline.

And when they finally accepted that I wasn’t a crazed maniac, it was almost like they were disappointed.

But this didn’t look like a journalist’s prank. The tattered wings on the seal . . . and the way the ink was stamped so firmly on the note inside . . . this was different.

Something Winter had warned me about since we left Ireland kept replaying in my head. The thought sent a shock wave through my body, and awoke a feeling that I’d only so recently put to rest.

Fear.

I shoved the note into my pocket, telling myself over and over again that it was nothing.

REVENGE

Just a hoax. Some idiot's idea of a joke.

I took one last look out the window, into the empty darkness, then headed downstairs.

We were having a movie night to kick off the school holidays. Mum and Gab were already in bed, and Boges, Winter and Ryan were coming over to watch a midnight horror movie in our home theatre.

I had popcorn and ice-cream ready, and a shiny new copy of *Nosferatu*—'the original vampire movie', so Ryan had said. Turns out he's a huge horror fan. I tore the plastic off the DVD case as I sat back in one of the eight brand-new recliners.

I stared into the hollow eyes of the ghoulish figure on the cover. He wore a long black coat, claws poised for trouble.

Was trouble coming to find me again?

Since being back home with Mum and Gab, I'd wanted everything to be perfect for us. Claiming the Ormond Singularity meant that we had more money than we knew what to do with, but after living alone in stormwater drains, the bush, derelict houses, under bridges . . . I just wanted us to be together.

I'd spent a bit of money on spoiling Gab. I'd taken her out shopping, thrown her a huge surprise slumber party (with Mum's help), and

given her a silver bracelet with a tiny crown charm—since she now liked to think of herself as royalty.

I also had our old rumpus room converted into the home theatre, like the one in that Dolphin Point mansion I'd hidden in for a while (only in this one I didn't need to sneak around like my life depended on it).

Free stuff was always turning up on our doorstep, too. Companies would send me sneakers, backpacks, hoodies, mobile phones, skateboards, even helicopter lessons—they all wanted the famous Cal Ormond to endorse their products. They'd sent Mum and Gab a few things too: jewellery, books, kitchen stuff . . . they'd even been invited on the first voyage of the *Sapphire Star*—the largest luxury cruise ship in the world. Mum and Gab couldn't wait to visit the exotic islands on the itinerary.

My friends were running late. I leaned back in my chair and held my hand up in the projector light. I was scraping the shadow of a claw across the wall when I heard a car pull up out front.

I jumped up, jogged to the door and opened it, expecting to find Ryan's car in the driveway.

But it wasn't him.

REVENGE

Instead, I spotted the humming silhouette of a dark car without its headlights on, idling by the kerb. I ducked back inside, out of sight, waiting for the blinding flash of a long-lens camera.

But it didn't come.

Slowly, I peered out again. The car was still sitting there.

In only a few months, stacks of books had been written about me. There were thousands of blog posts and YouTube clips about my life on the run, and my Facebook page had been invaded by fans and freaks. Complete strangers followed me and called out my name wherever I went. I'd spent 365 days on the run from cops and criminals, disguising my looks, hiding in the shadows, trying to survive . . . and yet after claiming the Ormond Singularity, proving my innocence and returning home, I was ducking for cover at every corner with almost as much vigilance. When was it going to end?

Still rattled from the note left on my pillow, my fear quickly morphed into anger. I stared at the car, rage surging through me.

'What do you want?' I shouted, storming out of the house. 'Haven't you seen enough of me already? How could you want *more* photos of me? You want to see me angry? Here, I am!'

The car didn't move.

I stepped forward.

'Is that you, Willoughby?' I shouted. 'Did you break in and plant that stupid note?' I pulled it out of my pocket and waved it. 'Leave me and my family alone! And get away from my property!'

The car accelerated, screeching away.

'That's right, get out of here!' I added, before stumbling, as a sharp pain pierced my right thigh.

Damn, I thought to myself. I must have brushed against Mum's new rose bush.

The vehicle disappeared and I stood back up and scanned the street, waiting for nearby verandah lights to come on, followed by my weary-eyed neighbours, frustrated that Cal Ormond had brought unwanted attention to Flood Street once more.

But no lights came on. Nothing stirred.

The smell of burnt rubber drifted across the lawn as I stumbled again, falling to my hands and knees. The pain in my thigh throbbed. This was no rose thorn.

Something, someone had . . .

My chest tightened. I struggled for breath.

Gotta get help.

Under the streetlight, my vision blurring, I tried to focus on the note . . .

REVENGE

30 DAYS