

THE LAST  
SAFE  
PLACE

BY  
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# CHAPTER 1

When Gabriella Carmichael's eyes suddenly popped open, pain and blood were still several minutes away, tucked securely into the glove box of the future, snug as a map of Idaho.

She shook her head fiercely to dislodge the tattered, gauzy remnants of sleep so she could focus. That's when she sensed his presence, maybe even smelled him—a sickly sweet aroma like decay.

*Yesheb is here! In the house!*

A clap of thunder rumbled brutally loud and she jumped, uttered a little peep of a scream. She scooted to the edge of the bed and stared out her bedroom window where writhing lightning torched the night sky behind the silver worms of rain squiggling down the glass.

*No! It's not supposed to storm tonight!*

Gabriella had checked and rechecked the forecast—cloudy, just *cloudy*—but had propped herself up on pillows to stare into the darkness until dawn anyway. She'd done the same thing when she couldn't sleep the night before. And the night before that.

How could she possibly have drifted off *now*? Dropped her guard like that *tonight!*?

With her heart banging against the walls of her chest like a sperm whale in a fish tank, Gabriella struggled to look at every square inch of the room at the same time. Was he actually here ... maybe even in the bedroom? She began to tremble so violently she was afraid the bedsprings would squeak from the movement, and she had to be quiet!

As her eyes darted from the empty doorway to the shadowed dressing table to the hulking armoire in a herky-jerky motion that made seeing anything all but impossible, a voice from that maddeningly reasonable part of her mind began to plead its case before the High Court of Common Sense.

How could Yesheb possibly be in the house? There was an armed guard patrolling the property—*with a pit bull!* And a brand new security system. Besides that, P.D. was right across the hall. He might be a golden retriever, but he'd at least bark to *welcome* an intruder.

She let out the breath she'd been holding and almost giggled in the flood of sweet relief that washed over her. She'd trust Puppy Dog's nose over technology any day. He would—*P.D. wasn't here!* He'd gone to the guest house with Ty to spend the night with Theo.

Rationality still refused to budge.

Yesheb had obeyed the restraining order, had remained obediently one hundred feet away from her at all times, and the man had never done anything as drastic as this, as breaking into her house!

*And that's a valid argument? He isn't here now because he's never been here before?*

Come on, Gabriella. You're just overreact—

*It's after Good Friday. It's a full moon. It's storming outside. He's here!*

She gasped, the intake of air so abrupt and urgent she almost started coughing. Instead, she stopped breathing altogether. Between the lightning flashes and accompanying rumbles ... underneath the silence that thundered in heartbeat bursts in her ears ... was a noise. A small sound, really, but a noise even one of those mindless idiots in horror movies would consider sinister. Gabriella certainly did since she'd made a Note to Self only a few hours earlier that she needed to get the handyman to put a new brass kick plate on the bottom of the door that led from the side entrance of the house into the kitchen. Something—or somebody, probably Ty—had bent the edge of the plate and now it dragged across the Moroccan tiles with a scraping sound that she could hear *right now*.

Only that was absurd. She couldn't possibly hear that door scrape way up here on the second floor. She held her breath, strained to hear with every ounce of concentration—

There it was again! The scraping sound. But the sound wasn't coming from downstairs. It was coming from across the hall, from her son's bedroom. That made no sense at all because the floor in Ty's room was carpeted.

Air exploded out of her lungs and she bit down so hard to stifle the accompanying scream that she tasted blood in her mouth.

The old baby monitor!

Ty had found it in the back of his closet and she had been pretending for days she didn't know the boy was using it to eavesdrop on conversations all over the house. She'd spotted the sending unit hidden behind the sugar canister on the kitchen counter before supper tonight.

He must have left the receiving unit turned on in his bedroom!

She grabbed the telephone on the nightstand beside the bed, wrestled the receiver off the cradle with shaking hands and put it to her ear. No dial tone. She stifled a small sob and felt around for her iPhone in the slot in her Bose SoundDock speakers where she'd set it last night to blast out rap music—she *hated* rap music—to keep her awake. She located it—whimpering now—picked it up and then fumbled it in her shaking hands. It fell into her rumpled sheets and she dug around frantically trying to find it in the dark. Wanting to scream. Knowing she couldn't.

Run!

No, hide!  
*Which?*

The scraping sound stops Yesheb in his tracks. He waits, his breathing even and steady. But he is committed now, halfway through the door. It will scrape again no matter which way he moves it, so he pushes it forward and steps silently into the kitchen. Then he pauses to listen.

Yesheb hears the scuttling cockroaches in the wall behind the kitchen sink—evolutionary perfection, creatures of his realm. He hears the squeak of the air conditioner fan in the basement HVAC unit and the movement of the air through the ductwork. He hears the flutter of an owl's wings in the tree by the porch, the whisper of spiders spinning webs behind the couch and ... that sound, beating at the edge of his hearing. Could that be the mad, terrified, thumping of Zara's heart? Does she know he's here?

He hopes so!

Yesheb throws back his head and laughs uproariously without making a sound.

Then he follows the scent of her fear, moving as silently as a daddy longlegs across the kitchen, through the dining room to the living room. His shoes cleave the lush pile of the carpet and the sound purrs softly in his ears.

He has never been inside her house, and the essence of her all around him is almost overwhelming. He can sense her everywhere, the way a bloodhound can still smell a person long after they have left the room. He pauses to breathe her in and his heart responds to her nearness, begins to beat faster. He continues across the darkened room, bumps a table in his haste and reaches out with feline grace to catch a blown glass vase before it hits the floor. The vase shimmers in the sudden white glow of lightning from the window, either black or blood red, impossible to tell without turning on the lights. Yesheb could do that, of course; he does not fear detection. But darkness is always preferable to light. Its sensuous warmth caresses his skin, oils it as he glides in and out of puddles of shadow.

Yesheb draws power from fear, the spawn of darkness, and he feels his strength building. Zara is afraid of him. Her terror pulses off her, disturbs the air around her. Of course, she *wants* him! Every woman wants him. But she's afraid he'll hurt her—and she has every right to be. The thought of her delicious screams shoots through his body like a low-power electric shock. Oh, he will not cause her so much pain that enduring it makes her strong. No, just enough, a sweet agony tart as lemon juice, an ever-present debilitating, demoralizing torment. Just enough so she cowers in his presence and cringes when he draws near her.

He does not want her love; he wants her fear. That will bind his bride to him forever.

Gabriella knew she only seconds to decide what to do, no margin for error, no mulligans. Her bed was unmade, her sheets still warm. He'd know she'd just left—hiding was futile. She had to run.

She flew to the door of her room in bare feet with her long, white nightgown whipping around her legs. Lightning shattered like bright mirrors into sharp silver fragments outside her window; thunder rattled the glass. She couldn't think with her heart hammering in her ears louder than the thunder.

*Calm down.*

Yesheb didn't know which bedroom was hers; he'd have to look in them all and hers was the last one, at the end of the hall across from the back staircase. If she could get to the back stairs before he appeared in the hallway from the front stairs ...

She peeked around the door jamb.

The night light at the base of the stairs cast a pale yellow glow up the steps—backlighting a grotesquely pointed shadow moving slowly up the wall, its edges as jagged as a shard of glass. She watched, spellbound, like a mouse staring into the eyes of a cobra, as the shadow reached the top step and spread out thick as tar on the hallway floor. She knew the man who owned it was only a step or two behind.

The fine down of blond hair on her arms instantly stood on end, popped upright by goose bumps. She flattened herself against the wall by the door, panting, her face wet. Was she crying? No, it was sweat, fear sweat! She heard a faint squeak, the familiar, carpet-muffled cry of the top stair tread. She pressed herself tighter against the wall and held her breath, afraid Yesheb could hear her ragged, shuddery breathing.

He'd search each room as he came to it, wouldn't he? He'd stop first at the room at the top of the stairs. It was the only one of the six upstairs bedrooms where the furniture was arranged so the bed was not visible from the doorway. He'd have to take two or three steps into the room to see the bed was empty. That was all the time she'd have to dash across the hall and disappear down the back stairs.

She visualized where he must be. Top of the stairs now. Crossing the hall. She counted the seconds—one Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi. He should be inside the room ... *now*.

Gabriella leapt out the door.

And slammed into Yesheb's chest.

She screamed, the sound of fabric ripping into two shredded pieces. Then she fell back from him and banged her head painfully on the wall behind her.

“Again,” he cried, his eyes wild. “Scream again!”

She shrieked louder, a cry of horror more than fear. Yesheb standing in the shadowy hallway, huge, dressed in black, his face twisted in that smirking smile was the single most monstrous sight she had ever seen—her recurring nightmare come to life.

“One more, Zara?”

*I'm not Zara!*

But she had no air to give voice to the words even if she'd dared. Yesheb's presence had sucked all the oxygen out of the hallway.

“Go ahead, make all the noise you want, get it out of your system. Or are you finished? You might need that voice to cry out for some other reason later on so I'd hate for you to lose it now in a ...” He reached into his jacket and withdrew a vicious-looking dagger from an ornate leather scabbard. Its shiny blade was dulled by some dark liquid. Yesheb wiped some of it onto his finger and licked it off slowly as he continued, “... futile effort to rouse your guard. Or his useless mutt.”

She stared at the knife and it dawned on her ponderously, like picking up something huge, that there was no one to rescue her.

“You knew I'd come for you.” His voice had the rounded, modulated tones of a television news anchor. Somehow oily, though—greasy. She could imagine his words slathered with slime.

It wasn't a question, so she didn't answer it. But she *had* known. Had been dreading his arrival since April 2. Good Friday. That's when the hourglass of providence had been turned and the sand began to slide silently into the empty sphere below. That's when the four-full-moons countdown clock had started ticking. She'd known then he would come. She'd done everything she could to guard against him but somehow she'd known all along it wouldn't be enough.

“It is time!” A bolt of lightning slashed across the sky, trailing a rumble of thunder as an exclamation point on the end of his sentence. “You can see, my lovely Zara, that the heavens eagerly await our union and our reign. Now, which room is the boy's?”

“Ty? What do you want with—?”

He slapped her. Hard, but casually, like flicking a piece of lint off his shoulder. Her head snapped to the side; she grunted and staggered but didn't fall. With her cheek aflame, she felt a trickle of blood begin to slide down her upper lip.

“Get the boy. I need him.”

She looked up into his face to plead for him not to drag her little boy into this nightmare. But the words died on her lips. Though the light was poor, she could see his eyes were the eyes of a shark cruising dark waters in a night sea. Empty, but not lifeless, they were aglow with a sentient brutality barely held in check. She knew him better than he knew himself because she had shaped and formed him, and the message in his ice-blue eyes was unmistakable: There was absolutely *nothing* this man wouldn't do, no evil of which he was incapable.

"Ty's not home," she stammered and watched his face darken, his eyebrows draw together like the clouds gathered in the storm outside the window. "That's his room, see for yourself. He's spending the night with ... a friend. Joey Thompson, from his school."

Yesheb grabbed her by her upper arm, yanked her across the hallway and through the open door into Ty's room where a fire truck wallpaper border was the last remnant of the "little-kid" decor she was scrambling to obliterate because it had become "just-shoot-me" embarrassing to him. The fire truck bed was already gone, replaced by a double bed with a Pittsburgh Steelers bedspread. Giant posters of Troy Polamalu and Ben Roethlisberger now hung where paintings of fire hydrants, ladder trucks and firemen had marched along the wall above his bed. The room was in its usual state of chaos. Wrinkled clothes were casually strewn everywhere; it smelled of dirty gym socks. But the bed was made; it was clear it hadn't been slept in tonight.

Yesheb was still suspicious. "This is a school night. You wouldn't let him stay overnight at a friend's on a school night."

He was right. She wouldn't. Ty wasn't at a friend's house; he was sound asleep on the far side of the back yard. At least he better be asleep. She'd agreed to allow Ty to stay in the guest house with his grandfather—if he was in bed by nine o'clock.

"Ty and Joey are working on a science project together. It's due tomorrow and they needed to work late to finish it." She could feel Yesheb's mounting rage in the fingers that dug into her upper arm. He pointed to the pile of books and the open backpack on the desk.

"Why didn't he take his books with him?"

"He doesn't need the books for the project," she said, fabricating a story as the words fell out of her mouth. "The boys are ... building a geodesic dome out of sugar cubes. Mrs. Thompson's bringing Ty home later tonight." He squeezed her arm tighter, glared at her. "When he and Joey are finished, she'll drop him off." Yesheb's pinching grip on her arm had cut off all circulation to her hand.

"What time will he be back?"

"I said he had to be home by eleven o'clock."

Yesheb said nothing. Either he'd believe her or he wouldn't. She had no idea what she would do either way.

"Eleven o'clock. That will leave us enough time."

He let go of her arm and as she rubbed it to get the circulation back, sheet lightning danced across the night sky and he studied her in the splashes of light that spilled in through Ty's curtainless window. She felt horribly exposed in the white cotton nightgown. Her long hair—natural blond but colored jet black—hung around her shoulders in a tangle of curls. The curls were natural, too; she had to use all manner of appliances and goo to achieve a straight-as-a-broom-handle, parted-in-the-middle look.

He moved a step closer.

*Here it comes.*

Some calm voice inside her informed Gabriella that she was about to be raped. Apparently, she was already disassociating because the voice wasn't even her own. But she recognized it. It was the laboriously cheery voice at the airport that warned: "Do not leave baggage unattended at any time while in the terminal as it may be removed in accordance with TSA regulations."

When he reached out his hand, she shrank back from him. That actually seemed to please him.

"My seed in your womb will produce ... perfection." He was breathing hard now. She could smell garlic and mint mouthwash. His voice was thick. "Our union will be a mating like none other the world has ever known." She could feel heat pulse off his body. Every other time she'd been near him he'd felt as cold as death. "I will take you as no man—"

He stopped abruptly, as if he had literally grabbed hold of his own arm. Then she watched him drag himself back from the edge. "But not yet." His voice was breathy. "Not until we have performed all the rituals."

Then he touched her cheek, tenderly caressed the thick expanse of twisted scar tissue that covered the right side of her face that puckered the skin from below the corner of her eye to the bottom of her jaw.

"Beautiful, my dear," he crooned, as if he was talking about the scar and not her face. And maybe he was. He leaned toward her, as if to kiss the scar. She felt his cheek next to hers, his breath on her neck. She cringed away. He began to nibble on her ear—

A lightning bolt of pain stabbed into the side of Gabriella's head and she shrieked. She lurched back and saw blood on Yesheb's mouth and he was chewing ...

She reached up, confused, and grabbed her ear, on fire with agony. It was wet—she was bleeding—and there was a ragged ...

He had bitten off her ear lobe! *That's what he'd been chew ...*

The room began to whirl around and around. The pain dimmed. The light grayed out. The world went black.

When Gabriella came to, she was lying on her bed. The pain in her ear fired her instantly alert. Blood had soaked the top right side of her nightgown and was smeared on the sheets around her. But when she reached up she found a bandage on her ear—crude, made with gauze and some surgical tape Yesheb must have found in the cabinet in the bathroom. She sat up and saw that her gown was hiked up above her knees, twisted around her. She grabbed it, yanked it down, scooted back against the headboard and pulled the covers up around her the best she could.

Yesheb stood rigid in the doorway staring at her. The fire of hunger in his eyes was so fierce she could feel the heat all the way across the room.

“Your skin is soft,” he purred. “Smooth beneath my hand.” He stopped, took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “But ... I did not, I *would not* dishonor you, my precious Zara.”

She stared at him, unblinking, didn’t move. Maybe she was going into shock. No, she was already in shock. Reality was wrapped in cotton; everything felt muted, muffled.

“We will be joined together,” he rasped through clenched teeth, “only when it is time.”

Apparently unaccustomed to reigning in his passions, he turned abruptly, stepped out into the hallway and began to close her door behind him. “I will wait for that time here.”

It was obvious he could barely hold his need in check. Maybe he couldn’t manage it in the same room with her.

Gabriella burst into tears and didn’t know why. Perhaps the menace of his passion was unbearable. But that didn’t make her feel like *crying*. Running, yes, but not crying. Sobs wracked her whole body anyway, without the advice and consent of her mind. If this intensity kept up, she’d soon be hysterical. But maybe this was hysteria.

Yesheb seemed to approve of the tears.

Her sobbing ramped up a notch, and still she felt like a spectator to it.

Then he said something that would have been tender from a normal man. “I will be right outside your door, my precious Zara. When you have cried yourself to sleep, I will come in and sit with you in the darkness and watch over you.” His next words were spoken in a voice deep and booming, the sound bouncing off the insides of an oil drum. “When the boy comes, we will perform the sacrifice and then *we shall be one!*”

She stopped crying in mid-sob, sucked in a ragged gasp as understanding dawned.

The *sacrifice*? Ty!

Yesheb closed the door behind him as Gabriella fell over in the bed sobbing. But this time her horrified mind had joined her body in hysteria.

He stands in the hallway outside her room and listens to her cry. It is a haunting sound, lost and lonely and lovely, one he yearns to hear often. It rises and falls in something like a melody, a song of fear and horror that goes on and on.

Yesheb hears it while his mind processes dozens of other sensations at the same time. He read once that autistic children are unable to differentiate among all the stimuli assailing their senses, unable to tune anything out, so for them, life is a cacophonous cauldron of unintelligible sounds and smells, sights and feelings.

Yesheb's mind is more like an autistic mind than a normal one. But rather than being unable to differentiate among the stimuli around him, he is able to attend to all of it at once. He stands in the maelstrom of it now, tastes the salty flavor of blood and tissue, hears the sobbing as part of a symphony of his own breathing whishing in and out and his heart's rhythmic thump-whoosh, thump-whoosh. He smells fear sweat—hers—and arousal sweat—his—and feels the compression of his feet into shoes, his body into clothing and sees ...

*All the color is gone.*

He balls his hands into fists so tight his fingernails dig into his palms. No blue sky, green grass, red lips. No color in anything. Black, white and shades of gray.

He can't think about that now! Will *not* think about it! He maintains absolute control over his mind and body and can remove thoughts from—

Why is the color gone? Where did it go? Is it a punishment?

*What have I done to anger The Voice?*

The thump-whoosh, thump-whoosh of his heart kicks into a gallop. Horrid little doubts roar around in his head. Ugly bikers on custom Harleys, they race faster and faster as something like panic rises up with a taste of vomit in his throat.

And for a long time he stands as if in a trance while huge battles are waged in his soul. Emotions attack in swarms but he fights them off, grapples to regain control. All the upheaval is painted on the background of sobbing. His bride, crying behind the closed door. The princess he has found against all odds, among all the women in the world.

After a while, the image of her begins to steady him. Once she is his, the planets will align properly. Yes. And he will see color again then. Yes!

But if something goes wrong and he cannot have her, will his other senses go away too, stop functioning? Leave him deaf or totally blind, unable to smell or feel?

An ice pick of dread stabs into his belly so powerfully he actually grunts from the pain of it.

*"No!"* he whispers aloud. "My bride and I will be one!"

When his essence is again totally present in the hallway—bloody and battered from contests unseen on the human plane, but triumphant—he listens to the music of Gabriella's tears. How he loves that sound. He could listen to it for—

She has been crying a long time. It's amazing she hasn't exhausted herself by now, sobbing that hard. Yet she continues to cry with the same abandon as when he left her.

A cold fist grabs his guts and squeezes. It is *not* fear! Yesheb has mastered fear!

Even so, he turns with the speed of a striking black mamba, flings the door open and switches on the light. The bed is empty. The window is open; rain has soaked the curtains and drips off the sill into a puddle on the shiny wood floor. On the nightstand, Gabriella's iPhone rests in a slot on a black speaker box. The microphone icon of the Voice Memo app shines on the screen and the sound of her sobbing issues through the speakers.

Gabriella is gone.

Yesheb lets out a cry, a wailing howl of rage and frustration, then turns and bolts down the stairs after her.

*"Ty, wake up!"*

Gabriella shook her son roughly. He was usually hard to awaken but his hazel eyes popped open instantly and he looked up confused.

*"Mom, wha—?"*

*"Get up, we're leaving."*

She threw back the covers and yanked the boy to a sitting position. She'd carry him if she could, but he was too big for that now. The golden retriever at the foot of Ty's bed had gotten to his feet as soon as she lurched into the room, panting and dripping, and stood beside her now, wagging his tail.

*"Where are we go—?"*

*"Just come on!"*

The boy picked up his glasses from the bedside table and fumbled them onto his face, then looked at the floor in a daze, searching for his slippers. She grabbed his arm and pulled him to his feet. *"No time for shoes. Let's go!"*

She heard movement behind her and the overhead light flicked on, momentarily blinding her. She turned in slow motion to face the man standing in the doorway, then grunted in relief, took two steps and slapped the light switch back off.

“What in the world—?” Theo began.

In the brief splash of light Gabriella had seen the shock on the old black man’s face. She must look a fright. Her hair plastered to her skull, her nightgown soaked and ripped—she’d caught it on something as she climbed off the sun porch roof—with blood dripping from her ear. The bandage had slipped off during her nightmare flight across the yard, her white gown glowing like the tail of a comet in the flashes of lightning, so bright she feared the light would shine in the upstairs windows and Yesheb would see.

“Ty and I have to get out of here.” She moved to drag the still sleepy child around him, but the old man stood firm, blocking the door.

“You not gone run outta here in the middle of the night ’less you tell me what—”

“There’s a man in the house,” she said. “A ... stalker.”

“A what?”

*A stalker!*”

“How’d he get past that guard, that rent-a-cop Ridley?”

Gabriella had hired Thomas Ridley after the police refused to listen to any more of her complaints that she was being watched. She didn’t have time now to tell Theo about the bloody dagger.

“Just *believe* me,” she said. “A dangerous man is after ...” She cut her eyes meaningfully to the boy, “... *us*.”

The old man’s protest broke off as clean as a dry stick. “Then let’s git!” He pulled his robe around him and started his peculiar hobble down the hallway leading to the door between the guest house and the garage.

*You’re* not going—” Gabriella began.

“So you gone leave me behind to make nice with Mr. Personality when he find out you not here?” he said over his shoulder without turning around.

Theo was right, of course. He wouldn’t be safe here either.

They all hurried barefoot down the hall with P.D. close on their heels. They had just stepped into the garage when Gabriella heard it. The wind bore it into the guest house through the back door she had left open. It was a cry—savage, guttural, more feral than human. The cry of a beast.

Gabriella was weak with relief when she leapt in behind the steering wheel of her Lincoln Town Car and found the keys dangling in the ignition. The keys to the other two cars in the garage—the Mercedes and the Porsche—were in her purse on the dressing table in her bedroom. She’d been *almost* certain she’d left the keys in the Lincoln, but what if ...?

As Theo slammed the back door behind P.D. and Ty and jumped into the passenger seat, she cranked the engine, flipped on the headlights and hit the button for the automatic garage door opener. Yesheb would be able to see the garage door opening from the house. The driveway curved around so the doors faced the back yard. He'd know where she was.

The door seemed to take a hundred years to crank up. Gabriella didn't wait until it was fully raised. As soon as it was high enough so the top of the car would clear it, Gabriella slammed the transmission into reverse and the big car charged backwards into the driveway. Thunder clattered like heavy boots on wooden stairs; sudden raindrops rattled like volleys of buckshot against the windshield. They were out in the open now, completely exposed. And she could feel his eyes on them, feel his rage. The most dangerous point was now, when she had to stop and put the car in drive, turn around in the oval and head for the street. If he came now ...

Yesheb appeared in the rain-freckled glow of headlights. An apparition, a black ghost. She hadn't seen him coming, he was just there, his face frozen in a mighty contortion of rage, his handsome features so distorted he was hardly recognizable.

She screamed. The hood ornament was centered on his chest like the crosshairs of a rifle and she shoved the gearshift into drive and hit the accelerator, mashed it all the way to the floorboard. The car leaped at Yesheb.

Gabriella tensed for the impact, the horrible thumping sound he would make as the front grill hit him and threw him backward or under the wheels, or up over the hood and the top of the car.

But the car flew forward into empty air. Yesheb was gone. Had she only imagined he was there? Nobody could move *that* fast! She felt only a little bump, as if the back wheel had run over something small.

As the speeding car careened onto the street, Gabriella glanced in the rearview mirror. For only a moment, she saw him. A hulking shape of deeper darkness in the shadow cast by the garage as lightning torched the night sky. He was hunkered down low, like a lion preparing to spring forward, and she had the irrational fear that he could jump that far, that he could leap off the ground and land on the top of the car or crash through the back window.

And then the driveway with its shadowy figure vanished as they sped down the street. Gabriella thought it odd that all the street lights had double halos around them until she realized she was looking at them through both the water on the windshield and the pools of unshed tears in her eyes. She heard a strange, whining cry, but until Theo patted her leg comfortingly she didn't realize she was the one making the sound. She ground her teeth together and swallowed the cry and pressed her foot down harder on the accelerator.

Yesheb hadn't *walked* to her house. He had a vehicle hidden somewhere. Within minutes, he would cleave the night with his rage in mad pursuit.

The hunt was on.