

Praise for *Lie or Die: Blood Moon*

‘Clack raises the stakes in *Lie or Die: Blood Moon* with plenty of plot twists racing towards a gripping ending – a thrilling sequel.’ Ravena Guron, author of *This Book Kills*

‘A high-octane thriller packed full of twists, trials and betrayals – I couldn’t turn the pages fast enough! A fantastic sequel to *Lie or Die*, this will leave readers absolutely shell-shocked.’ Kat Ellis, author of *The Devouring Light*

‘Twists, turns and tension from the first page, the story flies at breakneck speed towards the adrenaline-fuelled climax. *Blood Moon* is fun, terrifying, emotional and a fantastic read!’ Tess James-Mackey, author of *You Wouldn’t Catch Me Dead*

‘I flew through this fantastic thriller in one sitting. *Blood Moon* is an impeccable follow-up to the brilliant *Lie or Die*, with even more twists, turns and edge-of-your-seat moments. *Traitors* meets *Squid Game* meets Werewolf, with an atmospheric castle setting and an intriguing cast of characters – YA readers are in for a treat!’ Jan Dunning, award-winning author of *The Last Thing You’ll Hear*

‘*The Traitors* meets *Squid Game* this is reality TV at its deadliest. An adrenaline-fuelled, dark and twisty race for survival where everyone is out for themselves and even those you trust will throw you under the bus. I couldn’t put it down.’ C.L. Miller, author of *The Antique Hunters Guide To Murder*

‘A cleverly plotted heart-racing ride, packed with unpredictable twists and turns and culminating in a shocking climax which will leave you reeling and desperate for more...’ Sue Cunningham, author of *Totally Deceased*

‘This book kept me on my toes from start to finish... But when they say trust no one, TRUST NO ONE!’ Zeena Gosrani, author of *This Dark Heart*

‘Another heart-pounding thriller from A.J. Clack, this sequel takes the gore and twists to a whole new level, and I loved every minute of it!’ Amy McCaw, author of *They Own the Night* and the *Mina and the Undead* series

‘A thrilling follow up to Kass’ story in *Lie or Die: Blood Moon* is like if *The Hunger Games* met *The Traitors*: bloody, brutal and brilliant. The tension and pacing are impeccable and like in all good games of Werewolf, you’re never sure who to trust. I’ll be thinking about this series for a long time to come.’ Elle Machray, author of *Remember, Remember*

‘I thoroughly enjoyed *Lie or Die: Blood Moon*. It’s exactly the kind of propulsive puzzle I’ve come to expect from Clack, and it’s equally delightful and terrifying to be back with familiar faces and brand new players in an even more unpredictable game. An adrenaline-fuelled new round of thrills and heart-pounding twists!’ Jess Popplewell, author of *The Dark Within Us*

LIE OR DIE

BLOOD

MOON

A.J. CLACK



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More things I've learned about reality TV

Big viewing figures mean there's always a sequel.

Drones. Outside broadcast trucks.

Bigger budget, better location.

*At no point did anyone mention that when you're
on top there's nowhere to go but down.*

Or that murder was just the beginning...

LIE OR DIE: *BLOOD MOON*

Rules of play

Castle Dwellers: All contestants (Peasant or Werewolf) are referred to as Castle Dwellers.

Werewolves: Werewolves must masquerade as Peasants and remain undetected. Each night phase during the blood moon they must murder a Peasant by placing the name of their intended victim in the campfire.

The Alpha: A Werewolf with special powers. He/she has the ability to turn Peasants into Werewolves. How many the Alpha may turn is determined during the gameplay by the audience. When and who they turn is up to the Alpha.

Peasants: Peasants must uncover the identities of the Werewolves at the Castle Council and avoid being murdered.

Castle Council: Held each day. The Castle Council will nominate a suspected Werewolf. Each nomination must be seconded. Two nominations must be made in each council.

The Gauntlet: If found guilty by the Council, the Castle Dweller must run the Gauntlet. If completed, they may leave the game. Players leaving by the Gauntlet will not win the prize money.

Character Cards: Various character cards are hidden within the game. These cards allow the holder special powers. These powers can only be used once.

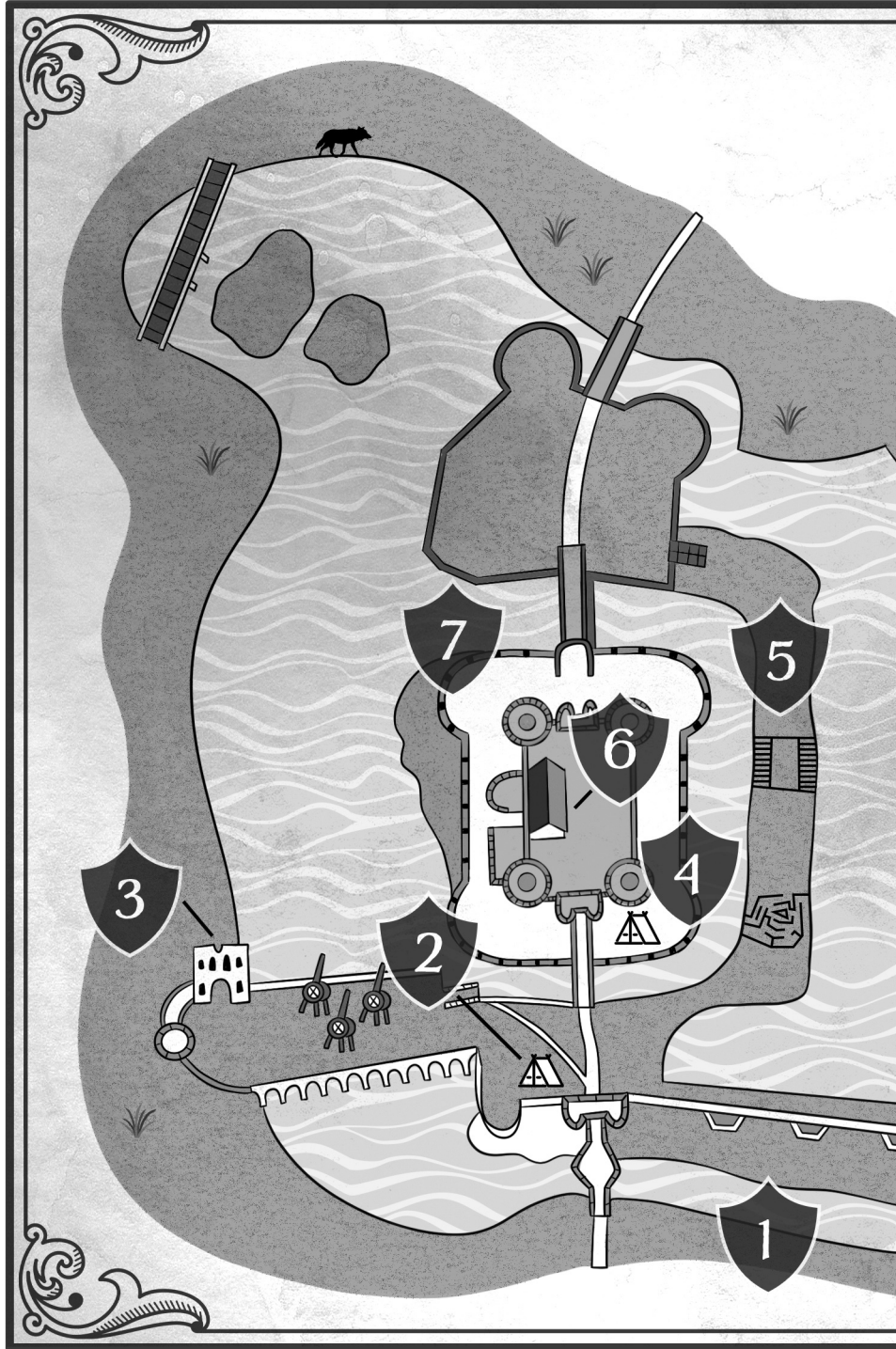
Action Cards: Hidden within the game, these cards give the bearer a specific action or ability. This action can only be used once.

Shields: Hidden throughout the game are a series of immunity shields. These grant the bearer immunity from Castle Council nomination. They may only be used once.

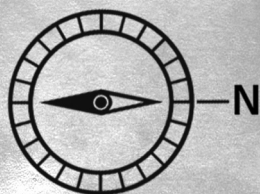
The faction with the majority remaining at the final Castle Council will win the prize money and the title of Ultimate Champions. Production reserves the right to add or take away character cards and action cards and to change any status without warning or explanation.

Status of players will be revealed after an eviction via the Gauntlet and not from murder or death by gameplay.

LIEORDIE:BLOODMOON©Skyegreenproductions



CAERPHILLY CASTLE



1. Start
2. Camp 1
3. Portakabin Gatehouse
4. Camp 2
5. The Gauntlet
6. Great Hall
7. Final Castle Council

Lewis

My knees grind into solid ground, the weight of the world sitting heavily on my shoulders. My fingers claw at the icy soil, splitting nails as the nature beneath my palms fights back. I want to bury myself in the earth but its frozen surface refuses to let me in, as cold and heartless as the castle that spat me out but devoured my friends in one gigantic gulp.

My eyes squeeze shut. *You don't get to feel bad. You just get to breathe... One ... two ... three.* My heart's pounding so fast it's gonna break my chest... *Four ... five.*

Footsteps hurry towards me. A thick blanket covers my shaking shoulders. Hands under elbows pull me vertical in one easy move that makes me cry out in anguish and tremble with fright.

'Can you tell us your name?' Police surround me, as hungry as the *Blood Moon* wolves.

My words stick in my throat as I struggle to speak. I need to tell them. They need to know what I did.

I chose life. And my choice will forever kill me.

Dragging my eyes away from the castle, I focus on the first face I see.

'My name is...' I force myself on, stumbling quickly through my confession. 'My name is Lewis Ellis, and I killed Kass Kennedy.'

1

Five days earlier

Kass

‘What the actual?’ Lewis is staring into my bedroom mirror, hands flapping in the air like helicopter propellers, the hair-dye box squashed beneath his feet. ‘It said copper not bloody tangerine!’

I count to five, forcing my lips straight, and wait.

He pirouettes like a pro, his eyes never leaving his reflection. ‘Actually, it’s pretty cool. I look like Helios, the sun Titan.’

‘More like a titanic pumpkin.’ I giggle as the light reflects off the colour making a haloed ring around his head, sun-like and just as godly. ‘We won’t lose you in a crowd, that’s for sure.’

‘Kass Kennedy, you are *so* funny,’ he says smacking his lips together. ‘I am goo-ood. You should try it; it’s liberating. Makes you feel alive...’ His eyes flood with pain.

My stomach plummets to its now normal low and I scramble to lift the mood back up.

‘Maybe,’ I say gently. ‘It’s better than a *Lavender Haze*.’

He smiles, but his eyes tell a different story as unwelcome memories gatecrash my bedroom. He doesn’t do Swiftisms anymore, not since... And I miss it. I miss before-TV-show Lewis.

He shrugs it off, his shoulders a little more slumped than before, and runs his hands through his bright new hair.

I check my phone, a common enough move I know, but ever since *her* message it's become an obsession. Despite a huge police investigation and our own dedicated DC Brown, Skye Greenhill's still out there. We may be free of Central Studios and the *Lie or Die* reality-TV show, but she still has us trapped within an imaginary house, forever looking over our shoulders, trusting no one.

And I hate her.

At first we were just happy to be alive, left to grieve the friends we left behind. But then came the attention and the relentless harassment by the media, the followers and the conspiracy theorists who reimagined our story and rewrote our lives.

No one cares about the truth. No one wants to face the facts. Everyone believes the lie. It's like the world's gone mad.

And I'm trying to make sense of it all.

And I'm beyond sad.

And I'm angry.

And guilty. I survived while they died. Why? For what? A reality-TV show ambushed by a fame-hungry wannabee and a psychopath.

My phone pings. I grab it, my heart dancing.

'And what does the tattooed sexy stud want?' Lewis says. 'Come on spill, you only get that look when he texts.'

‘What look?’ I push my phone into my pocket. It’s not Rhodri anyway, some number I don’t recognise, prob spam.

‘You *lurve* him.’

‘Do not,’ I protest as my cheeks flush warm. Arrogant, stubborn and the token bad boy, I so didn’t like him in the game. But Rhodri proved himself to be the strongest and bravest of us all, going into the game to provide his mum and his little sister, Carys, with a better life. He was the one good that came from all the bad. Six months later and I still can’t believe that he’s into me.

‘Oh please, you so do. He’s the only one that can make you smile these days. You’re proper blushing.’ Lewis flops onto my bed. ‘So? How is love in Tonypandy?’

‘Porthcawl.’ I correct him.

‘And what’s Welsh for I’m totally lusting over your bones?’

‘*Cau dy geg*,’ I say.

‘Sorry, what?’ Lewis chokes.

‘Shut up. It means shut up.’ I giggle. ‘Not sure that’s how you pronounce it, but it’s how I remember it.’

Lewis lies back on the pillows. ‘Ahh, how very sexy.’

I pull a face.

Lewis’ eye-lined eyes sparkle with laughter. ‘You’ve got it bad.’

I throw a cushion at him. ‘Stop.’ Lewis and I have been friends since forever. With Thea we form a tight friendship that’s lasted since Reception. Since the game we’re unshakeable.

There's a knock at the door.

'This just came for you,' Mum says handing me a parcel. 'Hi Lewis, nice colour.'

'Thanks, Mrs K, felt like a change.' Lewis pushes his hair back from his eyes. 'It's the Helios look.'

Mum's smile is wonky, betraying her confusion but she goes with it. 'Wasn't he the one who got too close to the sun?'

'That was Icarus,' I say. My fingers drum on the cardboard, waiting for her to go.

'Helios *is* the sun,' says Lewis.

'Of course he is.' Mum closes the door behind her.

The box is light in my hands. Lewis passes me the scissors.

'What you been buying?' he asks.

'Nothing.' I run the scissors down the centre and peel back the flaps. My hands hover over the delicate white paper covering the contents. A weird bubbling sound escapes my throat as I read the small shiny sticker holding it together.

My phone pings again... I ignore it.

'Kass?' Lewis scooches towards me, reading over my shoulder. 'Skygreen Productions.' He whistles. 'Shiiiiit.'

Every part of me is screaming not to open it but my hands move robotically, independent of my brain. The tissue paper crinkles as I fold it back. Beneath is a handwritten note.

You are cordially invited to:

LIE OR DIE: *BLOOD MOON*

Following the success of series one, we're looking for more confident & competitive contestants to take part in this **ULTIMATE** reality-TV survival show.

And we want **YOU!**

Further instructions to follow.

I can't breathe. I'm back on the *Lie or Die* set, the theme tune thumping in my head. It's been months since Skye sent us all the text inviting us to play the game Werewolf. One short text just weeks after the show, then nothing but a claustrophobic silence. We thought she was messing with us, letting us know that she got away, outsmarting and outmanoeuvring us in the game and beyond. As the weeks turned into months we allowed ourselves to hope it was over. All that was left was for the police to do their job and catch her.

Lewis takes the box from me. Ripping it open, he unfolds a white piece of cloth. He recoils with a high-pitched yelp, throwing it onto the bed, eyes wide and terrified.

I force myself to look. It's a T-shirt, loose with age

and grubby with wear. On the front is a worn Storm Trooper. Smeared across the picture is a bloody handprint.

My heart is pounding in my ears. I know this T. It belongs to one of the survivors of the game, a geeky Mafia super fan, the most 'real' contestant. And if I know the wearer, then the blood soaked across the front like a calling card must also be his.

It's Max's.

And he's in trouble.

2

I want to scream. I want to shout to my mum downstairs, to Dad, to DC Brown, to anyone who'll listen. I want to yell until my lungs burn, but the words on the back of the invitation compel me silent.

This invite is confidential and intended for the addressee only.

Any attempts to inform a third party will be met with the most extreme consequences.

Lewis fumbles with his phone, filling the silence with an expectant ring. No answer. No crazy voicemail message with some weird music that I always say is *Star Wars* instead of *The Mandalorian*, which makes Max really, really mad.

‘He’s not picking up,’ Lewis squeaks.

‘She has him,’ I whisper over the monotonous ring. ‘I know it.’

The ringing stops.

Lewis stares at his phone. ‘Doesn’t mean anything. He’s probably gaming. He got a new game. If he’s wearing headphones he won’t hear his phone.’ His palm hits his forehead. ‘What was it called?’

‘Lewis.’ I try to tell him what he already knows but he’s not listening.

‘He’ll be playing. It’s all a setup. Skye’s screwing with us.’ He slumps onto my bed.

I wish I could hide in Lewis’ denial but the words on the invitation burn my eyes. I perch next to him, Max’s beloved *Star Wars* T in a poisonous heap on the floor.

I know Skye.

I know how she plays.

My phone buzzes. Max is video calling.

‘What the hell, Max? So not funny.’ Nothing but silence. ‘Max?’

Max presses his face right up to the camera, tears streaming down his cheeks. He looks awful, his lovely dark eyes puffy and bloodshot. His left eye’s bruised and swollen and dried blood cakes the corners of his mouth. The camera pans out to reveal him sat on a chair, hands tied behind his back. There’s a sign hanging around his neck – a snarling wolf’s head, the words *Blood Moon* in bold black. His head keeps dropping to his chest, like it’s too heavy to hold up, his dishevelled jet-black curls flopping over his face.

He lifts his eyes back to the camera, wild and terrified. ‘Help me.’

The phone goes blank.

We don’t move, frozen to the spot, my horror mirrored on Lewis’ face.

Lewis’ phone pings. Reluctantly he holds it out:

52.08393°N, 1.43325°E

BLOOD MOON

23/01-22.00

Don't be late. I'm dying to play.

'What does it mean?' Lewis whispers.

My eyes scan the numbers, they look familiar in a haven't-got-a-clue sort of way.

Lewis is pacing, shaking his hands out in front of him. 'She wants to play Werewolf. Okay, we can do that. Or not. We can go, but we don't need to play, just grab Max and get out before she can do anything.' He stops. 'We beat her once; we can do it again.'

I nod, unconvinced by his kamikaze plan, my brain transporting me back to the last game. Skye's ability to manipulate us at every turn had us all running in circles. It won't be easy to beat her at her own game; she's way too clever for that. Maybe there is something in getting in quickly and getting out. I reread Lewis' message over and over. There's something recognisable about the numbers: *52.08393°N, 1.43325°E*.

Lewis is still pacing. 'If she hurts Max—'

'Coordinates,' I say in a welcome eureka moment. 'They're coordinates.'

'So, it's like a code?' He watches me punch the numbers into Google Maps.

'Yeah, like what3words without the words,' I say. 'Look. It's a location. Rendlesham Forest. It's not far.'

‘Perfect.’ Lewis strikes a pose, his face one big sneer. ‘Let’s run off to a forest with a serial killer because she asked so nicely.’

‘Not you,’ I say. ‘The invitation is just for me.’

‘Uhhh, I got the text.’ Lewis’ sneer morphs into an indignant frown. ‘Like I’m gonna let you walk back into the mouth of hell alone.’

‘But you hated Mafia, even before...’ I stop. Lewis wasn’t in the game; he got trapped in the studio but locked out of the set, forced to witness the murder of contestants while being helpless to stop it. Would he survive a game of Skye’s Werewolf? Can I risk it? ‘You hate Werewolf even more; you don’t even know how to play.’

‘Hel-lo?’ Lewis counts on his fingers. ‘One, I’ve watched you and Thea play Mafia enough to be a mastermind in the subject. Two, I was there with you all the way in *Lie or Die*; I saw everything. And Three, how hard can Werewolf be? It’s Mafia but with Werewolves and Villagers instead and some other weird characters designed to make the game even easier. I can do this.’

He’s right. But ever since she sent that first text I’ve been obsessing about the game Werewolf. It’s just a different version of Mafia, the principle’s the same. Find the Werewolves hidden in the group before they kill you. Lewis was there; he understands what’s at stake. Sceptical and petrified must be plastered all over my face because he changes tack, cocooning me inside a safe Lewis hug.

‘We knew this was coming.’ His voice is surprisingly

wobble-free. 'We do this together. We find Max before the game even starts and get out smelling of heroes.' His words fill the room with strength, but the shake of his arms betrays him.

I love him for trying.

'I don't want to be a hero,' I mumble into his shoulder. When I think of a hero, Tayo Asagu leaps into my head, the rugby-playing model and super brain from *Lie or Die* who had the strength and courage to stand up to our attackers in a move that got him murdered.

'Well tough shit, girl, you already are.' Lewis interrupts my thoughts.

I wrinkle my nose. 'What does a hero smell of anyway?'

Lewis squeezes me tighter. 'Hugo ICED, freshly ground coffee and swimming pool changing rooms.' He pauses. 'No judgement. Now call your sexy boyfriend; we need a shit-hot plan.'

'No.' It comes out as a yelp, reaction rather than thought. 'If we tell him he'll come.'

'That was a big part of the shit-hot plan.'

'We don't even know if he got an invitation.'

'Why wouldn't he? He got the first text, we all did. Skye's after everyone who survived, right? She'll need us all. And some. I wonder who else she'll get to play, maybe some D-list celebrities trying to revive their careers?'

'The only thing we know is that we don't know anything,' I say trying to stay on track. 'And if we can keep Rhodri safe, then that's good right?'

‘Uh hello? Welsh boy won’t want to miss an opportunity to show us all what a hero he is.’ Lewis presses his lips into a hard line. ‘Wow, that was channelling major catty.’ His mouth relaxes. ‘Soz.’

I let it go. Lewis and Rhodri’s relationship is beyond complicated, and I don’t have time to play a round of *who do I like more?* There’s only one cohesive thought in my head right now and that’s to keep Rhodri out of it. Angry Rhodri is dangerous Rhodri. There’s no telling what he might do if Skye starts pushing his buttons.

‘What about Thea?’ As soon as he says our best friend’s name his head starts to shake in time with mine. ‘No way.’

‘Agreed,’ I say. Although Thea’s injuries healed on the outside, she’s struggling big time on the inside. When the real footage came out and the lies and conspiracy theories filled the socials it was too much for her. She got so much hate for just being her. Those people who cast judgement from snippets they saw in a manufactured reality became her judge and jury and sentenced her to a lifetime of misery. They don’t know her; they’ve no idea how much their words tore her apart. Then came Skye’s sick message about playing Werewolf and she was totally triggered. Her dad’s taken her somewhere quiet, somewhere social-media free. ‘We need to keep her out of this, she’s been through enough already.’

‘But what if she gets an invite?’ Lewis says.

‘She won’t see it; she has no phone.’

The true extent of Thea's mental health revealed in one small sentence. Thea without a phone is like Tom without Jerry, Rick without Morty; you'd never have believed it – until the game. *Lie or Die* was supposed to change her life, not ruin it. It should have been her big break. Instead, it broke her big time.

'We need to tell the police.' My mind's whirring so fast I can't keep up. 'DC Brown said to tell him if we heard anything.' I have his personal number on speed dial. 'We should call him. It's the—'

'No!' Lewis shouts and I stop, my finger hovering over the number. He waves the invitation in my face. 'If we tell ANYONE, Max will die.'

'You don't know that,' I say.

'Really?' Lewis points to the T-shirt, his finger making frenzied circles over the blood. 'You don't think this is a seismic warning for us to keep our mouth shut? You saw Max, you don't think she'll kill him the instant we tell our friendly and little-bit-sexy detective or any-bloody-one else?' He collapses on the bed. 'We have no choice. We are proper screwed.'

I slump to the floor, gripping the soft carpet between my fingers. A part of me wants to bail, to bury under the duvet and refuse to come out.

'We could ignore it?' I mumble. 'Don't look at me like that.'

'Like what?'

'All judgy.'

‘Am not.’

‘You totally are.’ I don’t look up. ‘I’m just saying what if we didn’t go. What’s the worst thing that could happen?’

‘Max would die.’ Lewis says.

‘She could be bluffing?’

‘Sorry hun, that bitch don’t bluff.’

‘So much for being the hero,’ I say. ‘Now you hate me.’

‘I don’t hate you,’ he says. ‘And I’m not judging; I thought the exact same thing. But I don’t think I could live with myself if he...’

His words hang in the air. Max gatecrashes my thoughts. He went into the first game not for fame or fortune but just to prove that he was the best – the best reality fan and the best Mafia gamer. He wasn’t prepared for what came next and survived by keeping his head down and staying under the radar. He’s not strong like Rhodri or savvy like Lewis. To be held prisoner by Skye will be killing him, even if she doesn’t intend to carry out her threat. And if we did nothing? How do you go on living knowing that someone died because of you?

My thoughts return to Lewis. ‘Let me do this by myself. It’s me she wants.’

‘Not happening, no way are you leaving me behind to tell Welsh that I let you go alone.’ He waves his hands to stop me interrupting. ‘We’re in this together, Kennedy. Thank god I did my hair this colour.’ He flips his fringe. ‘Nothing says screw you Skye Green more than tangerine.’

‘Skye Greenhill.’ I correct him.

‘Whatever,’ he says, his eyes wandering back to his phone. ‘I think under the circumstances I can afford a little artistic licence with my rhyming.’

I watch my best friend, his new orange fringe tumbling over his face as he scrutinises the message, and I’ve never loved him more.

‘Uhh.’ His hand flies into the air. ‘If those first two numbers are coordinates then I’m thinking the last numbers are a date? Twenty-three, zero one.’ He looks at me, eyes like saucers. ‘That’s today. And 2200 a time?’ His voice rises. ‘We’ve less than four hours to get sorted and get to Rendlesham piggin’ Forest.’

He rummages through my messy desk, his movements jerky and uncoordinated.

‘She said we couldn’t tell anyone but she didn’t say we couldn’t leave our phones behind with all the information on, did she?’ Lewis drops a pencil, bending quickly to pick it up while gesturing impatiently for my phone. ‘What’s your password?’

‘password1#,’ I mumble, handing it over. ‘All lower case.’

Lewis chuckles nervously. ‘Wouldn’t take a detective to figure that out.’ He takes a picture of the invitation.

I frown. ‘But they won’t see it, they won’t come in here until it’s time to wake up tomorrow.’

‘That’s what I’m counting on.’ He sticks my password on a Post-it and attaches it to the screen.

‘We’re sticking to the rule; we’re not telling anyone,

but if they accidentally find your phone when your alarm goes off in the morning, then that's not on us.'

'But they—'

Lewis holds up his finger in a shush. 'Alexa set an alarm for 7.30 a.m. tomorrow.'

Alexa responds.

'Technically we're not *telling* them anything,' Lewis says. 'And by the time Skye finds out it will be too late; we'll either be gone or in the game.'

I pull a *not-convinced* face but unable to come up with a better idea I stay quiet.

'It's lame but what can you do? The parents are going to kill us when they find out we've done this. We just have to hold on until help comes.'

My flight reaction ramps into overdrive.

'Kass?' Lewis is shaking me. 'Kass?'

All I can see are the faces of the dead, the ones who didn't make it out of the last game.

'Kass?' Lewis holds my shoulders with both hands, his face right up in mine. 'Plan now. Panic later. And we have one. It's dangerous and very stupid and probably not going to work but at least it's a plan.'

He's right, there's no time for panic. She's timed this perfectly. We've no time to think, to do anything but exactly what she wants. Anger replaces fear as I pull myself back into the room. I'm so sick of feeling scared. I want this to be over and if that means facing her again then so be it. I force my mouth into what I hope is a convincing smile. 'I'll drive.'

Taking a step back he splutters. 'I don't think so. I don't want to die before we get there.'

I play along, pulling a *haha* face while feeling empty inside. We've got the convincing faux bravery down to a T. I try not to shudder every time he says the D-word. I'd never really given it much thought before the show, but now death's my new normal.

Skye's victims live inside my head. How can I move on when Tayo Asaju's last words replay nightly in my ears, as he names his murderer over and over and begs me to understand? Death and I are close friends now and, thanks to Skye Greenhill, I barely think of anything else.