

# The Glittering Edge

Alyssa Villaire



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Penguin  
Random House  
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First published in the USA by Little, Brown and Company,  
a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.  
and in Great Britain by Penguin Books, 2025

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Lines from “Mad Girl’s Love Song” poem on p. 29 (“*I think I made you up  
inside my head.*”) and p. 301 (“*I should have loved a thunderbird instead. /  
At least when spring comes they roar back again.*”) from

*Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath, published and reprinted with permission by Faber and Faber Ltd.

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Set in 11.86/16.38pt Dante MT Std  
Typeset by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes  
Printed and bound in Italy

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,  
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-73958-7

All correspondence to:

Penguin Books

Penguin Random House Children’s

One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW



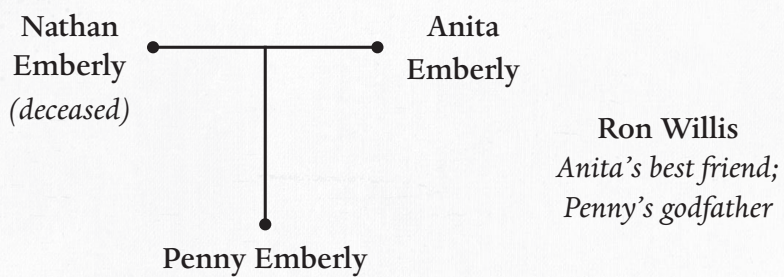
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*For Dad.*

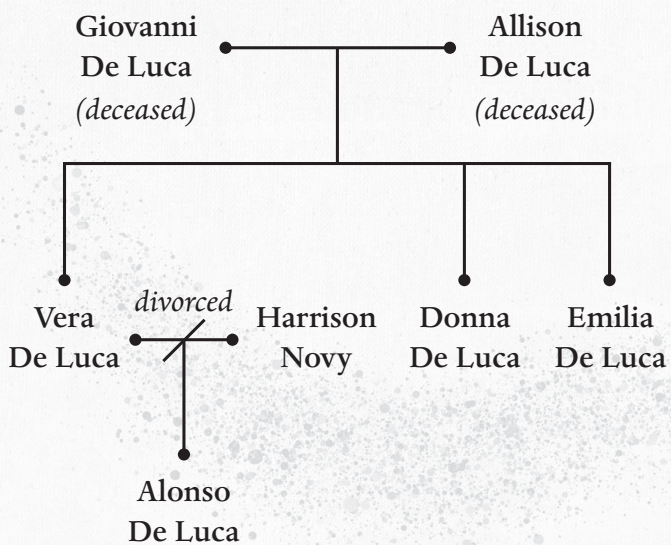
*I would've broken a million curses to save you.*



## The Emberlyys

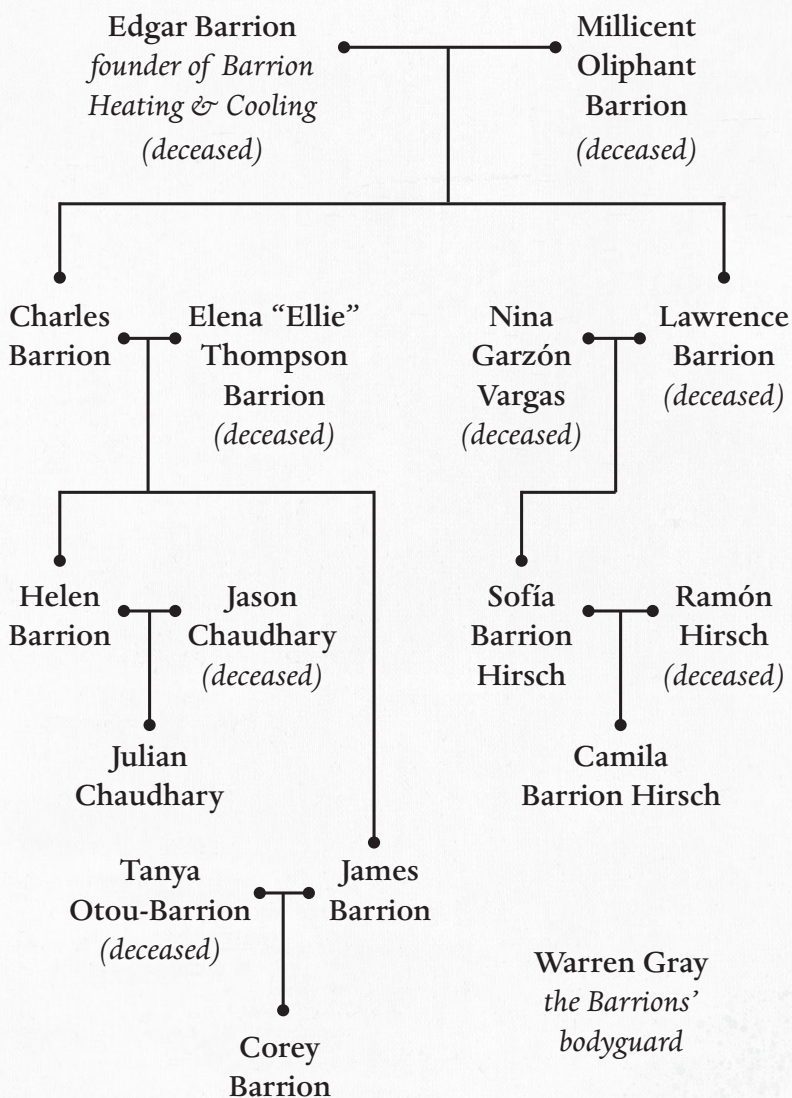


## The De Luca Coven





# The Barrions



# 1

## Penny

**THE FOURTH OF JULY PARTY IS SURPRISINGLY FUN UNTIL ALONSO DE Luca shows up.**

Penny is the first person to notice him. She's at her usual post at the perimeter of the crowd, which offers great people-watching. Plus, she doesn't know how to socialize by dropping herself into a tornado of drunk people. This is one of Corey Barrion's parties, which means it's straight out of a 2000s high school comedy: big and loud and peppered with people vomiting into houseplants. Or, since they're currently in the woods, vomiting into Elkie Lake.

Penny catches sight of Alonso's blue hair just as she's taking her first sip of beer, and she gasps mid-swallow. A few people laugh as she coughs violently. *You are beauty, you are grace*, she tells herself as her eyes water, but she still can't look away.

Because if Alonso is here, this party is about to take a turn for the worse.

A wave of silence follows Alonso as he cuts through the crowd. Even the music and the crickets go quiet, or maybe that's because of the blood rushing in Penny's ears.

"Naomi!" Penny whisper-shouts at her best friend.

Naomi is absorbed in a conversation with Kyla McGuinness, her on-again off-again girlfriend. Normally, Penny wouldn't interrupt them. She takes pride in being a great wingwoman, like most best friends with no love life. But this is an emergency.

It takes Penny waving her arms like an air traffic controller for

Naomi to finally clock her, and the flirtatious smile disappears from her face. Naomi turns around right as Alonso is stalking by, heading for the keg. Two of his cronies follow close behind, looking bored.

Kyla leaves Naomi stranded as she runs back to her own friends, so Penny glues herself to Naomi's side. "Sorry! I panicked."

Naomi flicks her sleek ponytail over her shoulder. "So did Kyla, apparently. Alonso is on my shit list for ruining an *almost* romantic moment." She grins as she takes in the party's rising frenzy. "I bet twenty bucks Alonso throws the first punch."

"What if he just wants free beer?"

Naomi raises a perfectly shaped eyebrow. "You really think he showed up at Corey's party on accident?"

Naomi is right. Idlewood's center of gravity is the animosity between the families that produced Alonso and Corey. Without it, their small Indiana town would probably collapse in on itself like a dead star.

Penny's eyes find Corey in the crowd. He's absorbed in a conversation, and he hasn't noticed the entire party looking between him and Alonso like they're facing off in a tennis match. Corey starts to turn around, and Penny reflexively hides behind her hands. Because in a matter of seconds Corey will realize Alonso has crashed his party.

But to everyone's surprise, Dylan Mayberry accidentally saves the day. She saunters over to Corey and interlaces her fingers with his, distracting him.

Crisis averted. For now.

"If you keep staring, you'll accidentally look into Dylan's eyes," Naomi says. "I don't feel like dragging a stone version of you home in my mom's Civic."

Penny snorts. "Be nice."

"I refuse. Dylan Mayberry is evil incarnate." Naomi gasps. "Oh my god, did I tell you that Carly Pilowski said *Dylan* leaked Lisa Yung's nudes last spring? Apparently Lisa got drunk and flirted with Corey at a party, and the photos were all over the internet three days later. Coincidence?"



“Probably not,” Penny admits. *Possessive* doesn’t begin to describe Dylan Mayberry. If she’s around, it’s best to pretend Corey isn’t one of the most attractive human beings alive, as difficult as that may be. Letting your eyes linger too long on his high cheekbones or full lips will be seen as a declaration of war.

Corey is now talking with some theater kids while Dylan scrolls through her phone, sending a clear message that whatever they’re saying isn’t worth her time. Penny looks between them, wondering what she’s missing. They’ve never really made sense as a couple. Corey is way too nice for Dylan, but then again, Penny doesn’t know him personally. She feels some kinship with him, since they both lost parents when they were little, but that’s the only thing they have in common. What’s undeniable is that anyone attracted to boys will have a crush on Corey at some point. That includes Penny, who liked him for a year in middle school. But as time went on and Corey failed to acknowledge her existence, Penny’s crush faded. She and Corey would only happen in some parallel universe, and Penny is perfectly happy in this universe, thank you very much. She’s got everything she needs—her best friend, her mom, her job at Horizon Café. It’s the summer before senior year, and it might be the most perfect summer of Penny’s life.

She can’t think about next summer, though. High school will be over, and everything will change.

“You might be right about Alonso,” Naomi says, distracting Penny from an impending thought spiral. “He actually seems . . . calm?”

The subject of everyone’s attention has settled with his friends on the opposite side of the clearing. Alonso is busy glowering, which is as calm as he gets. His friends are holding red plastic cups, but Alonso drinks from a brown bottle he must’ve brought himself.

“Did he bring his own beer to a keg party?” Penny asks.

Naomi leans in, smirking. “Maybe he’s here to cast a spell on everyone. As soon as midnight strikes, bugs will start crawling out of our ears.”

Penny’s throat goes tight. There are lots of rumors about the De Lucas, who have a long, complicated history in Idlewood—a history that



involves Corey's family. The rivalry between the De Lucas and the Bar-  
rions has lasted for decades, and everyone knows exactly when it started:  
Like many mythic wars, it was thanks to a very dramatic love triangle.  
Corey's grandmother Ellie was originally engaged to Alonso's grand-  
father Giovanni. Then it was discovered that Ellie was cheating on  
Giovanni with Corey's grandfather Charles, and she married him instead.

If you were being diplomatic, you could say that Giovanni never  
got over it. In truth, the term *murder-suicide* doesn't begin to cover  
the wreckage Alonso's grandfather left behind. Over the years, the  
stories about these two families—and about Giovanni De Luca in  
particular—have taken on a supernatural bent. And those stories have  
followed the De Lucas all the way to the present.

Which is to say, most of the people at this party believe Alonso De  
Luca is a witch.

Naomi elbows Penny. "Hey, I'm kidding."

But to Penny, it's not a joke. Not even a little.

Since she can't say that out loud, she shrugs, trying to look casual.  
"Some people think the stories are real."

"Just because they dress like those girls from *The Craft* doesn't  
mean they're hypnotizing people and forcing them to jump off of  
balconies."

Penny's eyes are drawn to Alonso. It's the worst timing, because  
for some reason Alonso is looking at Penny, too. His gray eyes are  
focused and bright.

Suddenly, the grass at Penny's feet is fascinating.

When Alonso is around, it's best to pretend you're a single-celled  
organism, invisible to the human eye. Attracting his attention is  
always a bad idea, and not only because of the witchcraft rumors. It's  
because Alonso is a buffet of anger and toxic masculinity. Last year, he  
broke Eric Lim's arm in PE after his team lost a game of baseball. The  
year before that, when Mrs. Hollis failed him in an exam, Alonso set a  
bunch of frogs loose in her biology lab.

Penny doesn't like to imagine what Alonso would do if he found  
out what she saw ten years ago, in these same woods.

“Do you want to get out of here before shit goes down?” Naomi asks.

There’s a shock of electricity in the air that was fading before Alonso’s arrival; it’s like the night has started over again. “I feel like everyone almost wants them to fight.”

“This is Idlewood, Penz. What else is there to do except watch overgrown babies get angry?” Naomi sighs. “I can’t wait to get out of this stupid town.”

That stings. Naomi must see the hurt in Penny’s face, because she quickly adds, “I didn’t mean it that way. You know Idlewood isn’t my place, and honestly, I don’t think it’s yours, either. I know you’re afraid of leaving your mom alone, but she’ll be fine.”

“I want to stay, Naomi,” Penny says. “It’s not just because of my mom. This is home.”

“You only think that because you’ve never left. You can’t tell me you really want to live in flyover country for the rest of your life.”

Penny gapes at her. “Right. I’m just a country girl, so far beneath you.”

“You’re *not*. I’m sorry, okay?”

“It’s fine,” Penny says, hoping Naomi can’t hear the tremor in her voice. “I’m going to get another drink.”

Penny tries not to run to the keg. She’s always known that Naomi will leave Idlewood, but why does she have to bring it up *now*? They have a whole year left. Can’t they put off that conversation for as long as possible?

Penny takes her time refilling her cup, waiting for her anxiety to loosen its grip on her muscles. When she finally turns around, there’s someone standing in her path.

Alonso De Luca.

Alarms go off in Penny’s head. Nobody escapes Alonso’s general aura of rage, and that includes Penny. Sometimes he’ll walk by her lunch table just to glare at her. Or if they have a class together, he’ll raise his hand right after Penny speaks to argue with her. It’s like he’s aiming for maximum humiliation.

Which is why Penny immediately steps around him, avoiding his eyes. Maybe if she pretends she didn’t see him—

“Hey,” Alonso says. “I need to talk to you.”

Penny stops, her heart beating fast against her ribs. “Me?”

Alonso laughs under his breath. It’s a low, gravelly sound, and it sends a weird shiver over her skin. “Yeah, *you*.”

Penny’s fingers tighten around her cup, but she stands her ground. She can do this. It’s just a conversation. She’ll pretend she’s talking to anyone but him.

Alonso grabs the beer bottle out of the pocket of his silk robe-slash-jacket. His white skin is almost translucent, and his dangly earring glints in the string lights hanging from the low branches above them. Penny wants to see if Naomi has noticed so she can swoop in and save her, but Alonso is staring Penny in the eyes, and looking away feels like admitting she’s afraid of him.

Alonso opens his mouth, and Penny braces herself.

“How’s your summer going?”

Penny flinches. “What?”

“Your summer,” Alonso says slowly, as if he’s talking to a toddler who doesn’t understand the concept of seasons. “Is it good?”

Is this . . . small talk? Does Alonso *do* small talk?

“Uh,” she says, but incoherent sounds don’t count as answers, so she adds, “Good. Yours?”

“It’s fine. Listen, sorry about what I wrote in your yearbook. I was drunk.”

Penny suddenly feels like the single-celled organism she was pretending to be. Alonso wrote something in her yearbook? How had she missed that? And what would embarrass him enough to bring it up like this? Maybe it was a nasty drawing, or a government secret. Or maybe he wrote something awful about Penny’s mom. He wouldn’t be the first person to do that.

All Penny manages to say is, “You were drunk at school?”

Alonso narrows his eyes. “Just forget about it, okay?”

“Okay! Already forgotten!”

The corners of Alonso’s mouth twitch downward. “You didn’t even read it, did you?”

Penny tries to smile. "I must've missed it?"

"Then you should've *said* that."

Maybe it's the beer giving her confidence, or the fact that she already messed up this conversation, but Penny gives up all pretense. "It's fine, Alonso. I don't even want to know what you wrote."

Alonso's glare is so intense, he doesn't even blink. "Why not?"

Penny grits her teeth and forces the words out. "I know you don't like me, okay? And I don't need you to like me. So let's forget you ever wrote anything in my yearbook. I'll never bring it up again, I swear. Just leave me alone."

Penny expects Alonso to laugh at her, or maybe turn into the Hulk. But he doesn't move. Instead, he stares at her, a vein bulging in his neck, his eyes wide and impossible to read.

Then another voice cuts through the silence.

"What are you doing here, Alonso?"

The words come from behind Penny. Alonso starts, as if he forgot for a second where he was. Then a slow smile spreads over his face.

"Hey, Corey," he says. "Great party. Guess you forgot to invite me."

Even though the night is hot, Penny's blood turns to ice. Because she's somehow found herself right in the middle of a battlefield.