

## Bad Love 91

### Chapter 91

I spend the hour before the start of the ceremony walking the main pack's grounds.

There are so many buildings in need of updating and repair. There are resources that we need to invest in order to

structure Pack Roberts for future generations.

A plan begins to take shape.

I might not live long enough to fulfill it but...

My brother meets me at the schoolhouse. It's a single room building. Seeing it now with the eyes of an adult, I wonder at how small the structure is and how antiquated.

"You'd think we were Amish," I mumble.

He laughs.

The door is locked but he whips out a set of keys and lets us in. The room is all white and there are computers along one wall. Maps on the other, chalkboards and a desk at the front.

"Is Mrs. McHenry still teaching?" I ask.

"She is."

"How old is she?"

"200?"

I chuckle. "No seriously."

My brother spins a globe on her desk. "I don't know. At least 80."

I walk to the desk I used to sit in. Front row. Second seat from the right. I touch the desktop. Time presses on relentlessly. I feel a gush of nostalgia for the little girl I was and all the things I learned in this quaint one-room facility.

"Maybe she wants to retire," I say to Liam.

"Or maybe she likes being of service to her pack and her community." Liam shrugs. "She'll be present tonight. Ask her yourself." He grins, then his playful mood changes. "Just don't make too many changes all at once, 'kay."

It's a warning.

"I should get ready," I tell my brother.

Without waiting for him, I walk away.

The low sound of music spills out of the mansion. It's tasteful. The strings of a four-piece quartet drift to me. I always liked the sound of a cello and violin. I never learned to play.

I'll never get that opportunity.

The orchestra is no doubt Aaron's doing. He has a set of wolves that perform at most every event he hosts.

Tables of food are laid out in the main hall, and would you look at that, someone removed the stripper pole. I glance quickly at Aaron.

He winks at me.

A servant for this event, also from Aaron's pack, offers a glass of Champagne. I accept the flute and then set it back down on his tray. "Is something wrong, Leah?"

"No Luca. Just not in the mood for drinking quite yet."

Alcohol isn't good for the baby.

I touch my stomach and whisper a wish and prayer.

My life doesn't really matter in the scheme of things. But it would be so nice to give this child a chance.

I'm wearing a black pantsuit paired with expensive heels. I

have on earrings and a watch. In the trunk of belongings that Aaron sent over, the giant diamond ring was also packed, but I didn't put it on.

He may be helping me tonight, and I won't resent his presence since it reinforces the 'peace' but our marriage is null.

And given my recent prognosis, I can't go back to Aaron.

In doing so, I'd be giving him my entire pack.

I avoid my brother. And Aaron.

Adam stays close. He's probably worried I'll faint or something, and I make sure to pause intermittently to eat and

to drink water.

Then I continue to make the rounds. Reuniting with wolves and packmates. Shaking hands and hugging. Bowing to elders and kissing the heads of little children.

I feel like a goddamn politician!

Gradually the room settles in and as I've made my way at least once to each small group or person present, I move toward the front of the room.

This is it. The moment to formally accept my position and to welcome my pack.

I can't run with them.

I can't commune with them mind-to-mind.

I don't think I can compel them.

There are snide comments and arched brows. Plenty of naysayers looking at me with disgust.

I take the stairs to the front dais and try to gather my thoughts.

This is my chance to win them over.

Only when I look out at the hundreds of wolves gathered. Me, the only sick human among them, all the words I have to say die on my lips.

Chapter 92

AARON

Damn it... say something, Leah!

She's staring like a deer in the headlights, and the cliché is appropriate. But you don't want to be frozen prey, not in this

company.

"Let's give Leah a round of applause," I shout.

The whole room turns to face me.

Scowls and dirty looks outnumber the shocked expressions.

I grin. "Come on, she kept my ass in line for a decade. Just imagine what miracles she'll work back here among her

family."

Laughter echoes through the room and gradually people cheer and clap wholeheartedly.

I'm not trying to steal her spotlight. That's not my intent. She needs to stand on her own feet. I never wanted to actually

break this woman. Bend her, sure. Over most any piece of furniture in the vicinity.

Because it's her will that's always been sexiest to me.

I arch a brow at Leah now. Let's go, honey. Get on with it.

"My friends," she begins. Her voice is strong and it silences the room instantly. Did she put force behind the words, I wonder? I feel...something.

"I've missed you in the many years I was pledged for peace. And though I wish my father was still alive and here to shepherd Pack Roberts into the next century, I accept the responsibility he bestowed upon me. And I do not take it lightly."

All right, she's off to a good start.

"I've learned a lot about what it means to be an Alpha. First and foremost, it's a sacrifice. It's setting the needs of the pack above all else. And I pledge to you that I will continue to do that until my last breath."

Is that what her marriage to me was, a sacrifice?

I hate to think of our years together as that.

I rub my chest. My wolf is agitated.

"Now," Leah smiles crookedly. "Let's get the elephant out of the room, shall we? I'm human."

There are some mock gasps from the crowd.

"I know!" she says. "Shocking. And..." she leans forward conspiratorially. "Female."

More gasps. This time with some laughter.

"But here's the thing," Leah says. "Pack Roberts doesn't need a leader based on gender. Pack Roberts doesn't need a vicious warrior like my father before me. We've made our peace with our sworn enemy. Isn't that right, Alpha Aaron?"

Da mn. Leah. Way to put me on the spot.

Every head swivels in my direction.

"Yes. Our marriage solidified peace."

Her eyes narrow.

Well, she had to know I wasn't going to let her get away that easily. And she might be spouting off about annulling our marriage or divorcing me... But I'm not agreeing to that.

"Our pack needs someone who can rebuild our infrastructure. Our pack needs someone with strong political ties to gain us more authority on the Council. Our pack needs someone with the financial acumen to make us one of the wealthiest packs

in the country."

With each pronouncement, the cheers increase.

She's winning them over.

Not with empty promises or brute strength or even her beauty. And she is beautiful. I've never been more proud.

She's won them over with hope... same as she did with me.

## Chapter 93

LEAH

Adam steps up onto the stage. "Friends. Family. Let's celebrate our new Alpha!" Adam grabs my hand.

He kisses my cheek.

I feel my face heat.

This is a very public display and I have to think that Adam is doing this very intentionally.

Aaron growls and pushes off the wall from the back of the room. I shake my head sharply.

Please don't make a scene.

I just touted about peace, and Adam's about to start a war.

I glance at Adam. "What are you doing?" I whisper.

Everyone is talking and cheering and I'm mostly confident they aren't all trying to listen.

"Letting the room know you're not Aaron's anymore." His eyes are kind. "You have to know I've always cared about you, Leah."

If he cared so much, then why did he wait until I was dying to look me up?

What's more... what he did just now in front of our pack was more about solidifying his position and aligning himself with me as "the Alpha."

bring Adam in for a hug and pat his back. "Don't ever make such a presumptuous move again," I growl. "Do you understand me?"

He leans back and his mouth turns down.

"Get away from me," I say bluntly.

He does.

I wave and step down to shake hands again with some of the elders and to smile confidently-or try to-despite that I'm terrified that every person in this room is going to see straight through me.

It's another hour before the party starts to wind down-or start up, I suppose, depending on where you're standing. Outside,

on the back lawn, there's a DJ and the younger wolves are having more of a party. In here in the main packhouse, families and elders hit the buffet and sit at tables eating and conversing.

The string quartet continues to play.

A hand grabs mine and spins me around.

I tense until I see who it is.

Aaron.

“Just one, for ol’ times’ sake,” he tells me.

Then he moves me through the steps of a formal waltz and I let him, because outside of this night and this moment, I don’t think I’ll ever be in this man’s arms again.

“Come home, Leah.”

“I am home.”

“Be with me then. Here. Somewhere else. He ll, we can set up some neutral zone between both our packs.”

I cannot believe what he is offering me.

“W-why?”

I draw back and search his dark eyes. I wait for an answer that never comes. He doesn’t give me the words. Maybe he can’t. Or maybe, like Adam, he’s just posturing and jockeying for position and hiding his ulterior motives.

His steps are sure and he spins me out and twirls me back in close. I can’t breathe without drawing in his masculine strength. I miss this man. How he’d hold me at night. He ll, I even miss his wolf.

“Maybe in the next life, Aaron.”

He looks at me oddly. “What the he ll is that supposed to mean?”

## Chapter 94

I manage to extricate myself from Aaron. It’s no small feat.

The man is an Alpha in every sense of the word, and his personality is its own force of nature that calls to me.

He’d brought my left hand to his lips at one point, all under the polite guise of thanking me for the dance. But then he rubbed his thumb over my ring finger. It was a pointed reminder that I didn’t have either of my rings on.

But really.

We weren't together anymore.

The way he acted like we still were or like it was some foregone conclusion that we would be again... his absolute confidence, it has me doubting things.

I hate that I'm so fickle.

I have a knife in the pocket of my pantsuit. Another strapped to my ankle.

Despite that this is a welcome ceremony. That I am the Alpha of this pack. I look at each packmate in attendance here and evaluate each of them as a viable threat to me.

I'm a lamb amongst wolves in every sense of the comparison. When I coughed a few times, it had some of the wolves looking at me askance. There will come a time when they will

know. When I won't be able to hide my sickness any longer.

And what then?

I'd be wise to have a succession plan in place.

"You holding up alright, shorty?" It's the dark-haired woman from my father's bedroom.

"You're like an inch taller than me," I say.

She's dressed in a floor-length gown that somehow manages to look stunning and effortless. Not overdressed, but still really

classy.

"I didn't catch your name," I tell her.

The other night, she'd been, uh, busy. One of the girls from that menage was older than me in school by a few years,

Deanna.

"Selene."

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I nod.

"It's a lovely ceremony," I say.

"Oh, please let's not resort to small talk."

"Fine with me."

She smirks. "It wasn't all just for the sake of peace," she says, gesturing with her glass of Champagne to Aaron. "I've never seen a man look so hungry. And your father had quite the appetite."

Ew. Gross.

She laughs. Then she sobers abruptly. "There is power in you. More than you realize."

frown. I'm nobody.

I'm not the prettiest female in this room. Not by a longshot. I'm a bulldog compared to this elegant wolf beside me. And I'm

human.

She taps my chest. "It's in here. Beauty fades. Wolves age. Who we are at our core... that's what has the power to unify a pack." She casts another glance at Aaron. "Or to bring a male

like that to his knees."

Chapter 95

Selene leads me outside. She makes introductions to other females. There are familiar names and faces, but in the long years I've been living with Aaron, everyone has moved on. I'm

an outsider to them.

Even as their Alpha, there is a 'divide' only it's born of power

and influence.

I'll need to earn their trust.

That's okay.

It should be that way.

But I will carve my legacy and ensure that they're protected for generations to come. I wasn't lying about that or up on

that stage spewing empty promises.

There's a lot of work to be done here.

"You did good, Leah."

It's my brother and he's tipsy, I think. He holds a glass in his hand that has a few inches of amber liquid in it.

"I'm hoping you'll be able to bring me up to speed. I get the sense there are some financial issues."

Liam looks away.

"Brother," I whisper. "Don't close me out. I'm not good at many things, but this is a place where I can make a difference. And I'm going to."

He nods curtly.

Marla comes over and lays a kiss on him. A bunch of kids surround them making noise and acting raucous. They have ice cream cones and plates of cake. One of them slams into me and smears white icing all over my pantsuit.

"Oh nooo!" the young ones scream.

One of the little girls starts crying.

“Hey now, it’s alright. It’ll wash.”

“I have just the thing,” Marla tells me.

She takes my hand. “This way, Alpha. We’ll have that cleaned up in a jiffy.”

Liam smiles at us fondly and I’m feeling pretty happy too.

If I just stay in the moment, I can enjoy this party. I can feel what it means to truly be part of a pack. The laughter and dancing, kids running around, music blaring.

It’s fun.

It’s one of those moments like a wedding or birthday or holiday where it can feel like a chore or some event to endure, but really, it’s a snapshot of life, a perfect bite-sized memory.

“Thanks Marla.”

“Of course! At least it’s the kid’s fault. I’m so clumsy. I’m constantly spilling stuff on my clothes and I only have me to

blame.”

I giggle and follow her back toward the main house.

The party has mostly moved outside and though Aaron remains in the living room, he doesn’t interfere when he sees me running up the staircase. He just smiles fondly.

Marla runs a few steps ahead of me. She’s like a gazelle. In stilettos.

It’s a bit of a miracle to behold.

I’m not quite as fast, but I’m giggling as we race up to my room.

We both are breathless and laughing as we round the corner and though I’m human and shorter, I beat her to the door by a second.

“You win!” she proclaims.

I snort. “You let me.”

And running in heels isn’t really behavior befitting an Alpha.

But it is ‘me.’ And that’s who I’m determined to be.

head to the trunk of clothes that Aaron had sent over. "I'm sure there's something in here. I won't be but a minute."

Marla closes the door behind me.

"You're right," she says. All traces of humor gone. "This won't take long, you weak bitch."

Then she lunges at me.

Chapter 96

I spin and manage to catch her face.

She's shifting and her canines are long and sharp. She snaps at my face, but I force her jaws away.

Her claws go for my eyes and face but I sweep out her legs. and when she goes down, I dive for the gun sitting on my bedside table. I grab it and slam into the ground, but I bring up the weapon and aim as I spin.

I never get the chance to fire off a shot.

Liam has Marla by the throat. And Aaron is already in the room. He's lifting me up and physically blocking me from them with his body.

It happens so fast.

I'm shoved behind him.

Liam doesn't ask questions or try to get a sense of the situation. He snaps Marla's neck and then tosses her body

toward our feet.

"How the hell did you know to come running, huh, mutt?"

Aaron asks.

"Aaron! This is my brother. Leave him out of it." I shove him aside so I can take in the scene. "I'm just wondering how the two of you made it up the stairs and into the room so fast. Not sure how you fit."

Aaron snorts.

Liam squats and grabs Marla's lifeless face. "We were watching you, Aaron. And it's not like I've been avoiding my sister. I've kept her in my line of sight all night. When I saw her head upstairs. And you followed, I came immediately."

"Shove her in the trunk," I say.

Both males stare at me like I've lost my mind. Then Aaron

smiles appreciatively. "That's my girl."

"Oh shut it. This is my ceremony party. I'm not marring it with a murder attempt and I sure as hell I am not advertising that my brother's girlfriend tried to kill me."

"Brian's girlfriend," Aaron says.

"What?" I scratch my head.

He nods toward Marla's body. "She was dating Brian. The wolf that abducted you." He looks at Liam.

"When did you two take

up together?

"A couple of months ago."

"Interesting. Could be they were eyeing up your pack for a while then."

I think about it for a minute. If what Aaron says is true, then Pack Roberts is more vulnerable than anyone realized.

"Have your men bring the trunk out at the end of the party. We'll take out the trash," Aaron says.

I shake my head. "Who talks like that? It's like casting out of a Hollywood action flick."

He smirks. "Keeps you amused."

Liam is glancing between us.

"What?" I ask him.

"The two of you... your relationship is interesting."

Aaron crosses his arms. "Just what were you anticipating?"

Liam shrugs. "I don't know. You both hate each other and yet you banter. He kept you prisoner and resented the marriage, yet he's here and sending gifts like it's your birthday." He turns

to me. "And you keep acting like you hate him, but you light up when he comes into the room."

I clear my throat. "Why don't you head down to the party, brother? If anyone asks, we'll just say Marla went home early."

Liam nods.

"You should go too, Aaron," I tell him.

He purses his lips.

Liam heads out the door and quietly closes it behind him.

I point to the shredded shoulder of my outfit and the icing that's still smeared on my outfit. "I need to change clothes."

Now, he smiles fully.

Chapter 97

Aaron leans back against the door. A living, breathing wall of rage and protection.

Not for the first time, I wonder at the combination.

"Thank you for attending tonight," I tell him. "If I'm being honest, I was nervous about you being here. I thought it might prompt more questions and contention, but I think it helped to smooth things over. I appreciate you doing that."

He nods. "While you rule, I see no reason for us to break the peace."

While you rule...

"And if I wasn't Alpha?"

He shrugs. "That might change things." He tilts his head. "That should please you. I've let your brother and other packmates know that too tonight. You're the one holding the peace in place, Leah. I could give a shit about your brother or packmates."

It's a courtesy, he's extending.

But when I'm gone...

"Why do you look sad?" he asks.

I blink back the tears I feel forming. "I'm not."

But this wolf knows me too well.

"She's not worth your tears, Leah."

But I'm not sad about that female Marla. I'm in shock because

I trusted her, but all in all, it was a good lesson for me.

"She would've slit your throat, eaten your flesh and not thought twice about it, honey. Then your brother would have

either mated her or killed her." He looks at me and his eyes are softened with pity. "Maybe that was always their plan."

"I refuse to believe that my brother would do such a thing."

It was Liam first through the door. Liam to snap her neck. Liam

to protect me.

“It’s the people closest to us that can inflict the most damage, princess.”

I think about it. “On that...we agree.”

He starts to stalk me across the room, his eyes blazing gold. “I

can think of a few more things we agree on.

I feel my temperature rise.

It’s so good with this male. Already my breasts feel heavy and

that space between my thighs gets wet.

His nostrils flare like he knows that too.

“No.” I shake my head. “Aaron, we can’t.”

“From one Alpha to another... we can. And really well. Unless you’ve forgotten.”

It feels like forever but it’s only been a few days.

I inch back but there’s nowhere to really go. Boxes are still stacked up and this old bedroom of mine was never

particularly spacious.

When he’s close, his hands snake out. One grabs my hip and pulls me in. The other tangles in my hair, dislodging all the

pins and clips.

“Da mn it, Aaron.”

He smirks against my lips. “You should’ve left it down. You know my preferences.”

Ever ar rogant.

His lips brush mine and I know this is wrong.

Wrong to give myself over to this man.

Wrong to take what his body can give to me.

But he was here tonight. In support of me.

“Aaron, I can’t forgive you.”

His lips scorch a path across my neck. “Never said I needed your forgiveness, honey.”

No. He just needs my body.

The pantsuit is shredded. He takes both sleeves and rends the fabric down the middle. “Step out of it,” he tells me.

I do.

I'm standing in panties and heels and a demi-cup bra that does some pretty amazing things.

Aaron steps back to look.

His low growl is music to me. Then his hands are back in my hair, his mouth slanting over mine. He kisses me deep and

slow and when he draws back he looks kind of puzzled.

Maybe he's as lost to this madness as I am. Maybe he can taste that I'm sick.

Or sense that I'm pregnant.

With his baby.

"What is it, Leah?" he asks.

I don't want to talk. I don't want to fight. "Shut up and kiss me."

Chapter 98

AARON

Something's different.

I can't put my finger on it.

It's Leah's scent. Her taste, maybe?

Then I stop thinking and let my body lead. Or, more accurately, hers. She goes up on her toes so that hot junction of her thighs vees right over me. She rocks there, working the tip of my dick until my eyes cross. Then I grab her ass and pick her up. She latches her ankles around my waist, her high heels digging into my ass.

I like that.

And the scratch of her nails down my back. And the soft moans of pleasure that escape her full lips. She rocks up and down over me and that tiny scrap of satin between her legs needs to go. I don't want anything between us.

Hell, if I had my way, she'd be naked three quarters of every day, and all day on Sunday.

Her arms are around my neck, her tongue in my mouth.

I switch my grip to tear off her panties and her throaty little hum of approval has my balls tightening like I'm ready to explode.

I brace my legs and on the next upward glide, and I slide her onto my cock. I let her control the speed and depth. The weight of her sinking down on me is its own special kind of

hell.

"Again," I rasp.

Like she needs to be told.

She's lost in the moment, grinding her tight body against me, seeking out her own pleasure and it turns-me-the-f\*\*k-on because I can feel that she's close. I angle my hips to rub her clit on each stroke and her legs start to shake.

One pump then another and she's clenching down, her body exploding around mine and me kissing her hard to muffle the screams she can't hold back.

Normally, I'd want to hear every sound, but she's mindless at this moment and with so many wolves present, I don't think she'd want her first impression with them to be of loud s\*x with their enemy in her childhood bedroom.

See? I'm a gentleman.

When her hips start to slow and she's too sated to keep moving, it's my turn. I press her up against the wall and piston. my hips. I leave one leg around my waist and anchor her knee over my other arm, spreading her wider. I lower my head to graze her nipples and she starts coming again.

Each pulse of her body drags me closer to the edge and when she lets go for a third time, I follow her into the abyss.

The aftermath isn't our norm.

Music filters from the grounds below.

There's a dead body ten feet away from us.

All in all, maybe not so different. She's seen plenty of violence in the years she's been with me. Most wolves work hard and play hard, so this environment is relatively tame.

Not that I want Leah exposed to such things.

If I had my way, I'd keep her locked up with me.

But as her body cools I see those cursed walls coming back up, brick by brick.

"This was a mistake, she tells

I grab her hair and force her head back. "I'll put up with a lot of sh it. But don't lie to yourself. And don't ever lie to me."

Chapter 99

LEAH

It's my party and I'm pretty sure people are noticing that I've been missing for close to an hour. If I'm lucky, maybe they'll think I'm engaged in some other part of the house with other packmates. But something tells me, Aaron's missing presence will be harder to overlook. Enemy and all that.

When they can't find either one of us...

One plus one plus one is three.

I should really take a shower because the scent of him is on my skin. I lean into his neck for a moment where that incredible smell is concentrated and I lick his skin.

He starts hardening again and I realize what I'm doing.

I spring away from him. I'm about to start spouting about that being a mistake too. But Aaron arches an eyebrow all but daring me to disobey him.

Fine.

Whatever.

S\*x was never our problem.

It was everything else.

Come to think of it..."Aaron, I need a million dollars."

If my father's pack is in as bad of shape as I think it is, I'm going to need money to start investing and probably ten times that to make enough sizable plays to set them up. If I had more time...I could generate that revenue organically.

"Actually," I tell him. "I need twenty million."

He shrugs back into his shirt. "Okay."

Just like that? No questions asked.

"Uh, thanks."

I try to figure out his motives. It's not a lot of money to him, he has billions. But still. He has to know that I'm going to use it to rebuild Pack Roberts. Does he not consider us a threat at all?

Is he humoring me because he plans to take us over anyway?

Aaron smirks. "I don't mind doing you a favor, Leah."

Oh lord, I've made a deal with the devil.

"Don't overthink it." He tucks me on the chin. Then he bends and claims my torn panties and tucks them in his pocket.

"Don't take too long, honey." With a wink, he slips out of the room before me.

I stand here. Na ked in heels. My heart racing.

Chapter 100

My phone dings with a text. It's Adam.

You need to start treatments.

Actually, I don't. And I'm not entirely sure I can. Aaron has a right to know. He is the father of our child and even though it is my body, I still feel obligated to tell him.

When I'm ready.

I think about Aaron's last threat about 'lying to him' – because

I definitely am. About my prognosis, about my pregnancy.

About my feelings for him.

Leah. You need to listen to me.

It's Adam. Again. And I'm not real keen on the timing of Adam's text. This is still my Coronation ceremony. Pretty poor timing on his behalf, if you ask me. And I'm definitely not okay with his tone. I don't 'have' to do anything or listen to anyone.

I change into a different black outfit. Sleek fitted pants with a black silk top. There had been a jewelry box in Aaron's initial 'gift' delivery. And while he'd never bothered with birthday or

holiday presents, he may have been saving up, because that jewelry box is stacked with diamond earrings, tennis bracelets, emeralds, rubies and platinum necklaces.

I keep it simple with diamond earrings and avoid anything around my neck.

In the event of another attack, why give someone something to grab?

Heels aren't the most practical choice either, if I'm trying to be able to defend myself. But I can kick out of those quickly enough.

I descend the stairs and continue to work the party.

Wolves are dancing. In the main pack hall, older couples twirl around the floor and it's a sight to see.

Their faces are weathered and even Mrs. McHenry, who is in her upper 80s, is gliding around the room with a young man, one of her grandkids maybe. Fathers hold their daughters' hands and a group of moms are playing with toddlers on a new rug in the corner of the room.

It should always be like this.

Carving the time and space to welcome friends and family.

It's what a pack is all about.

On its most basic level, it's food, shelter, protection. But really it's loyalty and support and absolute acceptance.

Family. Love.

I don't see Aaron and I assume he's outside with his own men, drinking and maybe hanging out with the younger people and partying. Although I can't say that was ever really his scene.

Everyone seems occupied.

So after making one more round, both inside and out, smiling until my face hurts and memorizing names and faces, I take the opportunity to go back upstairs. Only this time toward the other wing of the house.

If Selene or the other women are in my father's room, this time. I'm going to politely ask them to leave. This is their house too, but there are a dozen other suites.

The door to my father's bedroom is locked.

I wait for an upswell in the music and kick the handle. It takes several well-placed kicks to snap the lock-and legit, heels are not the best choice for a break-in-and once the latch breaks from the frame, I let the door swing open.

I go inside and think where would my dad hide something, if it was information he wanted only me to see.

I look to the corner of his bedroom to the sitting area across from the fireplace. There on the mantel are books. Stacks and stacks of books. They're covered with dust.

And just waiting for me...