

Specially Selected Bonus Content

Bonus Book 1: The Ghost's Deadly Secrets

Description

What dark secrets is he hiding underneath the suit I want to rip off him?

Realtor Melody Zabat has a secret: she sees ghosts. Unfortunately, most of the ghosts she comes across are murder victims, and she inevitably ends up entangled in the investigation.

She's just happy that she can escape all of those ghostly complications in her little hometown of Blackcliff. It's her sanctuary, where she can pretend to be a normal person.

At least, it is until murder comes to town...

Suddenly Melody finds herself haunted yet again—this time by a rich city girl with secrets she doesn't want to share. Add into the mix the handsome billionaire with secrets of his own, and Melody finds herself faced with mystery on every side.

Oskar Freyson, Alpha of the wealthiest Shifter community in the country, doesn't need to work as an FBI agent, but he has his reasons for joining the agency. But he isn't in Blackcliff for company business; he's there for revenge. Unfortunately, this gives him motive for murder, and he soon finds himself being investigated by his own team.

With a ghost connected to the billionaire who is connected to a murder, can Melody discover the true killer... and maybe find love along the way?

Chapter One

There was a crisp mountain smell in the air that made Melody Zabat hate the sight of Blackcliff. Though the little town was clean and she generally loved the mix of Old West and modern aesthetic that the buildings exuded, it was one of those days where she wished she could just blow off her responsibilities and run naked through the woods with a spear in hand and a wolf at her side. Or just go fishing.

Unfortunately, Melody had to be satisfied with a shot of coffee and a hot breakfast from her favorite café in town, Old Gossip. Houses weren't going to sell themselves, and ever since that handsome billionaire, Oskar Freyson, had taken an interest in their town, she felt like she was being run off her feet.

Freyson was the Alpha of the wealthiest community of Shifters in the country, and he had billions of dollars of his own personal wealth at his disposal. Some people in town were concerned that he was going to try to turn Blackcliff into a Shifter Sanctuary, but Melody wasn't worried about that. If anything, an influx of Shifters, especially wealthy Shifters, would do the town some good. The economy wasn't doing very well. If the town continued on the path it was on, it would be a ghost town in a few decades.

Ghosttown. Melody couldn't help but chuckle at her own joke. Of course, it didn't hurt that Oskar Freyson was perhaps the most handsome person she had ever seen. All Shifters were hot, but he was exceptional. What was it about Shifters and their naturally good genes?

Jane Gardens, the owner of Old Gossip, beamed at her when she entered the café. The silver-haired woman was still as spry as she was when she was sixty, which was how old she had been claiming to be for the past decade. Melody took her usual spot on a barstool at the counter, beside Elisabeth Burgess, a young woman with curly hair.

"And then I saw Milly Braden and Russel Rickey standing on the corner, kissing." Jane leaned on the counter, her wide eyes fixed on Elisabeth.

"Oh, really?"

Elisabeth glanced at Melody from the corner of her eye, a slightly pained expression on her face, but she was far too shy and eager to please people to interrupt Jane. Her compassionate personality served her well at the daycare she ran, but when it came to busybodies like Jane Gardens, she was the unwilling recipient of hours' worth of gossip.

Melody debated whether she should come to Elisabeth's rescue, but she didn't want to end up hearing the whole story that led up to Milly Braden and Russel Rickey kissing, and she kept quiet.

"I don't know what's happening with young people these days. Imagine, kissing like that out in the middle of the day." Jane shook her head. "Back in my day, kissing was done sitting in parked cars out in the woods." Jane giggled suddenly, sounding like a woman much younger than she was. "And when I say kissing—"

"Too much information," Melody interrupted, miming covering her ears. "You're like a grandmother to us here, we don't need to hear that sort of thing."

Jane shrugged. "You want your usual, dear?"

Melody nodded. "Please."

"Salmon steak with fried eggs coming up," Jane trilled.

As the older woman moved away, Elisabeth let out a pent-up sigh of relief. "Thank you,"

"My pleasure. How are you and Bobby liking the new house?"

Elisabeth had moved to Blackcliff with her then-infant son ten years previously, but it was only now that her business was picking up that she had been able to afford to buy a house. Melody had worked closely with her to find the perfect fit for the two of them, and she was eager to know how they were settling in. It was the best part of selling houses, hearing how happy people were in their new homes. Almost as good as a whole day's fishing.

"It's wonderful, thank you." Elisabeth beamed. "The backyard is so big, we might even be able to get a dog. I think Bobby is old enough to start taking on a little more responsibility."

Melody nodded. "He's a bright boy. I'm sure you'd do well with a dog."

Jane bustled back towards them, refilling Elisabeth's coffee cup and giving some to Melody as well. "So, are either of you young ladies dating anybody yet?"

Elisabeth's face went beet red, but Melody laughed to draw Jane's attention to her.

"No dating for me. I like where I am right now. Selling houses, building up my real estate company. Besides, I know everybody who lives here too well to find them interesting. I need somebody with a little more mystery." She took a sip of her coffee.

It was mostly true. Melody wasn't interested in any of the locals. If Oskar Freyson showed any interest in her, however, it would be another story.

A tall, leggy blonde suddenly appeared behind Jane. Melody's eyes widened. The blonde's form was wavering, translucent, like an image projected onto the surface of a lake. Her hair was turned up with flowers in it, and she wore a tight-fitting white dress that looked halfway between something a bride would wear and something to go clubbing in.

"You," the blonde said, pointing at her. "They told me to find you."

Melody ducked her head. *Not now! Not here!*

Jane tapped her hand. "Hello? Dear, you really need to stop spacing out on me."

"Sorry." Melody shook her head and forced herself to look at the older woman.

The blonde stood right behind Jane, her form growing more solid, blue eyes flashing. "Don't you dare ignore me!"

"I asked you how you plan on having a lasting relationship with a mystery man," Jane said. "The mystery will wear off, and then what?"

The blonde vanished, only to reappear right beside Melody. "Hello? I know you can see me. I do not take kindly to being ignored!"

She actually stomped her foot.

Melody tried to repress a groan, but she didn't quite make it. Jane's brows furrowed. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I might be a little queasy," Melody said, grabbing her stomach for emphasis. "I've been going pretty hard since Freyson came to town. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad for the work, but it's been almost two weeks since I've had a day off and I think it's catching up with me."

Jane's eyes flashed and her mouth turned down. "I have nothing against Shifters, but that man can't just waltz in here and take over everything. We ought to have a say in what goes on in our own town!"

The blonde appeared right in front of Melody, putting her hands on her hips. "Are you deaf or blind? I need your help and I'm not going anywhere until you help me."

"Can I get that salmon to go?" Melody blurted. "I just remembered I have things to do at the office."

Jane looked surprised but soon handed Melody a container with her breakfast in it. Melody threw down some money and raced from the café, trying her best not to glare at the blonde, who was following after her. Stupid, pushy ghost.

Melody hurried to her car, tossing her breakfast onto the passenger seat. It slipped through the blonde already sitting there, who made a face and folded her arms. Melody whipped out her phone and held it to her ear. She learned long ago the tricks of preventing people from looking at her strangely as she talked to ghosts.

"Let's make this quick," Melody said, fixing her hair as she looked at the blonde in the rearview mirror. "I don't have time to deal with pushy ghosts today. I have a meeting with a very important client."

"Oskar Freyson," the blonde said. "That's who you are meeting?"

The way she said it had Melody frowning. "You know him?"

The blonde sighed. "I suppose you can't tell, but I'm a Shifter. And these shoes? They cost five thousand dollars."

"You're a member of his pack," Melody realized, her eyes widening.

"Yes. Although I never liked the word 'pack'. It's not like we're wolves. We're all different animals. I happen to be able to Shift into a dolphin. Not that I had much chance to do it, seeing as we're so far from the ocean. Well, Oskar had a pool for us marine Shifters, but it's just not the same. What are you wearing, anyway? Are you going to a costume party for homeless people?"

Great. A rich, preppy, pushy ghost. Melody ground her teeth together.

Hopefully, this one hadn't been murdered like the last one. That had been a mess. It was only because of her father's best friend, Uncle Todd, that she had avoided too much public attention. Knowing somebody in the FBI really had its perks, even if Melody would like one year to go by when she wasn't involved in somebody's murder.

"So you sought me out for a reason. What do you want?"

"You'll see when I show you."

Melody groaned. "I don't have time for games."

The blonde folded her arms. "I'm not playing games. It's too complicated to just explain."

Ghosts!

They were all the same. Melody was willing to bet dollars to donuts that, in the end, a simple conversation would solve the whole issue. Hopefully, this one wouldn't take two months to resolve like the last one—they had wanted Melody to make sure their dog's ashes were buried with them. Why they couldn't just tell her that, she didn't know.

But then, ghosts were often are too self-conscious to say what they actually wanted, and so made her run around in circles trying to solve the mystery. She hated mysteries more than she hated losing her favorite fishing lure.

"Where are we going?" Melody asked.

"There's a bridge just outside of town."

Melody nodded. She knew where it was, a popular fishing hole. She'd caught a ten-pound trout there two years ago, a real beauty.

"I better not find your body there," she warned her passenger, reaching through the ghost for her breakfast.

The ghost made a disgusted noise as Melody broke off a piece of salmon and popped it into her mouth. "Must you put your hand *through* me?"

"Honey, you're not there," Melody replied. "And I'm hungry."

"Okay, let's get one thing straight. Anybody who calls me honey gets their face slapped. I don't care if I'm dead, it's condescending, and I will find some way to make you pay if you ever call me that again. My name is Cindy."

"Melody. So? Are you taking me to see your body? Cause I really don't want to find another body. The last time a ghost made me find their body, I ended up being a suspect in a murder investigation. I do *not* want to go through that again."

Cindy slumped in her seat and folded her arms. "You're not going to find my body. It was cremated two years ago."

"Well, that's a relief." Melody's shoulders relaxed.

She made it to the bridge quickly. To her relief, there was nobody around, and so she didn't bother with the phone when she got out of the car. Cindy sat on the hood of her car, arms folded, staring at Melody as she walked out onto the bridge.

"Okay. So what am I supposed to see?"

Cindy pointed downwards. "It's under the bridge."

Melody rolled her eyes. "Seriously, why can't you just tell me? Do you have any idea how difficult it is to be the person who always sees ghosts and finds bodies and tries to convince the police to believe what actually happened?"

It's a nightmare! Blackcliff is literally my only free spot. I can't have ghosts start showing up around my home. I'd go crazy."

"Are you finished?"

Melody glared at the ghost and stomped down the trail that led under the bridge. As soon as the river came into view she stopped. And groaned.

Lying half in the water was a body.

Chapter Two

Oskar Freyson sipped his coffee as he looked over the properties he was looking at buying. He had been in the town for three weeks now, and although his plans to build a ski hill were just a cover at first, he had to admit that there was a lot of potential here.

Blackcliff was the perfect place for a year-round retreat. It could be a very successful town if they took advantage of their surroundings. Beautiful mountain trails for summer, not to mention the nearby lake that was the best unknown place to fish this side of the Rockies. The slopes were perfect for a ski hill in winter. They even had a good amount of snow. All it would take was to clean the place up a little, throw some new paint on a few of the old buildings, and the town would become very prosperous indeed.

The problem was that all the locals seemed to be opposed to any sort of progress. Or maybe it was that he was a Shifter. There was still a lot of racism in the country, especially in little towns like this.

He'd get his PR team working on the problem of how to win over the locals as soon as his other business was done.

Oskar stretched his arms, feeling his wings just below the surface of his skin, wanting to break free. He'd only shifted twice since arriving in Blackcliff, and his beast, a great bald eagle, was getting anxious. If he could, he would have shed his clothes and soared over the valley where Blackcliff was located, taking in a bird's eye view of the surroundings. Unfortunately, if he did that, chances were some stupid hunter would shoot him. It was too risky to Shift outside just yet.

A knock came on his hotel door and Oskar groaned. If this place was going to end up a successful tourist town, these small-town busybodies really needed to learn how to leave their guests alone. This was the third time this morning that somebody had come looking to see if he 'needed anything'. More likely, they had come to gape at him, the billionaire Shifter alpha.

But when he answered the door, he saw that it wasn't housekeeping. A man wearing an FBI jacket stood outside, looking vaguely annoyed. It was Todd Barton, the leader of the team Oskar was assigned to. His jaw clenched. So the company had realized what he was up to, had it?

Well, he wasn't going to back down. What was the worst they could do?

"Freyson. Going to let me come in?"

Oskar held the door open for him. "I'm taking a leave of absence. What are you doing here?"

Barton stepped into the room. "Got called into town and thought I'd stop by to see you. Nice room. I heard you've been here for three months now. Hard to afford on a government salary."

"Yeah, well, good thing I don't rely on my FBI paycheck, then."

Oskar hadn't *needed* to work a day in his life. His father had built a massive electronics company that gave him more than he needed to live off of. He wasn't an idle person, though, and kept his time occupied. His low-end job at the FBI had seemed like a good idea when he had taken it.

Juggling the responsibilities of the Shifters he was Alpha too, his various companies and investments and his work with the FBI was beginning to wear on him, though. Mostly working with the FBI. He didn't mind Barton so much, but having to take orders from their superiors rankled him. A bunch of idiots, the lot of them.

Barton turned to him. "David Fezioni was found dead just outside of town yesterday morning."

At first, Oskar didn't believe it. Fezioni was the reason he had taken time off work, the reason he had come to Blackcliff in the first place. For him to be dead... Anger closed over his heart. Now he would never get his answers.

"Dead. Of course, he'd go and die before I got the truth."

"As I recall, you were ordered not to pursue your investigation of him." Barton folded his arms, shaking his head at Oskar. "Just the fact that you are in the same town as him has the deputy director spitting mad. If I found out that you had any contact—"

"He kidnapped and killed my cousin's fiancé." Oskar narrowed his eyes. "A member of the Shifters I am responsible for. And those *idiots* who give us orders have basically closed the case."

Taking orders had always rankled him, ever since he was a child, but the new deputy director was the most idiotic man he had ever met. Oskar was used to having a measure of freedom. With the Shifters he was their leader. In his companies, he was the top boss. Even with his FBI team, Barton understood that he worked best when given space to be his own man. The deputy director, however, thought that he was an entitled rich boy, and did everything in his power to make

the agent's life miserable. At least he knew it wasn't because he was a Shifter. The deputy director was married to a Deer Shifter himself.

The tension between the two men had nearly come to blows over Fezioni. The man was responsible for Cindy's death, but the deputy director never gave Oskar the room he needed to prove that.

Barton's gaze was steady on Oskar. "Look, we all know that you had your suspicions where Fezioni was concerned. Which makes this situation all the worse for you."

Oskar scowled. "Are you seriously considering me a suspect in his death?"

Barton merely stared back at him. Clearly, he was.

The implications of what this meant had Oskar straightening. If they were looking for suspects... A smile crossed his face. "So he was murdered. It wasn't an accidental death. It could be his partners, they double crossed him for some reason and—"

"And you had a grudge against the victim."

"I didn't kill him." Oskar rubbed his hands together while his Eagle chattered in excitement. "How did he die? Shot execution style?"

"Hit in the head with something like a baseball bat and thrown into the river."

Oskar frowned. "I'd have made him suffer."

Barton rolled his eyes. "We don't have an official report from the ME yet, but until we get news otherwise, we're treating it as a homicide. With any luck," here Barton narrowed his eyes at Oskar, "it will turn out that Fezioni's death *was* accidental. It would make all of our lives much easier."

"Not mine. If it was accidental, then my leads into Cindy's death are gone."

"You have to let it go, Freyson. I know you took her death hard, but it's been two years. You're ruining your position with the agency and—"

"I don't need the agency. I'm a billionaire, remember? My first duty is to the Shifters that rely on me. Cindy was one of them, and I will bring the people who murdered her to justice."

Barton sighed and shook his head. The older man had streaks of gray in his dark hair, and as he gazed at Oskar, his gaze softened. "You need something to ground you. I've known you for a while now. You were nothing more than a rich drifter when you first joined the agency, even with being the Alpha of your shifters. They don't really need you, they'll all be wealthy, and all of the *real* problems they run into are easily handled by your lawyers."

"So you're saying I'm useless?" Oskar ground his teeth.

"I'm saying that joining the FBI gave you purpose. Without it, you'll just end up drifting again. Is that what you want?"

"I want to bring Cindy's killers to justice. If the agency won't let me do that—"

"Where were you between seven and eight last night?"

Oskar stopped. His shoulders hitched. Barton was seriously treating him like a suspect. Grinding his teeth together, he shook his head. "I was hiking by myself. Looking for a place to fly where I wouldn't get shot."

Barton pinched the bridge of his nose.

"Hey, I didn't know that Fezioni was going to get himself killed, otherwise, I would have had a proper alibi. You know me. If I had killed him would I be so stupid as to not have come up with something better than *hiking alone*?"

"At this point, I just hope the preliminary exam is wrong and Fezioni wasn't murdered," Barton said shortly. "Given his ties to organized crime, the FBI is handling the case, but I don't want you to get yourself involved. Understood?"

The order had Oskar grimacing. Don't get involved? Unlikely. He knew that Fezioni was involved in Cindy getting kidnapped and killed, and he was darn well going to find out what had happened so he could bring the others to justice. With any luck, it would bring some closure to the Shifter community he was Alpha of. And to him. Cindy was too important to just lock away in the unsolved files folder.

Another knock came at the door.

"Room service," Oskar explained when Barton looked questioningly at him. "They're really pushy here."

"Concerned for their customers?"

"Nosy is more like it. I don't think any of these people have met either Shifters or billionaires before."

He opened the door and was surprised to find the realtor, Melody Zabat, on the other side.

She smiled at him, a pretty smile that always made him smile back. Even now when he didn't feel like smiling. Melody was the best part of Blackcliff. Red hair, green eyes, a dusting of freckles over her face. She was also very invested in her work, and never wasted his time.

"Hi," she said. "This might sound odd, but is Todd Barton here?"

Oskar pulled back, glancing over her shoulder. "Barton?"

"Mel, what are you doing here?" Barton shook his head as Melody stepped into the room.

"They said I'd find you here. We need to talk, Uncle Todd."

"Uncle?" Oskar's brows rose. "You didn't tell me you had a family."

Melody's brows rose. "You two know each other?"

"Yes," Barton said. "Freyson is on my team with the FBI. Freyson, this is Melody, my best friend's daughter."

"We've been working together," Melody said. "Looking at the property. If he's a member of your team, how come we haven't met before?"

"Because there was no need to." Barton shook his head. "Melody's the one who found the body."

Oskar winced. "I'm sorry."

Melody shrugged, far too casual about it. Usually, people who found bodies were at least a little traumatized.

Barton gripped Melody's elbow. "Come on. Let's go talk. And Freyson? Don't leave town, okay? I'll be in touch."

Oskar scowled but nodded. Melody's big, emerald-green eyes tracked him as Barton led her out of the hotel room. There was unbridled curiosity in them and Oskar mentally cursed Barton for telling him to stay in town. No doubt the whole

town was going to think he was a murderer by the end of the hour. Or maybe not. Melody didn't seem like the kind of woman to go around gossiping. No, he was probably going to be fine.

Fezoni dead. Oskar returned to the map that was spread over his desk. He would need to find a way to get in on the investigation. His gut told him that it was murder. His Eagle screeched, sounding satisfied.

It was no more than Fezoni deserved.