

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**PENELOPE DOUGLAS**



**HIDEAWAY**

— A DEVIL'S NIGHT NOVEL —

INCLUDES *Bonus* MATERIAL

**HIDEAWAY**

# CHAPTER I

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## KAI

**R**ain was like night. You could be different in the dark and under the clouds.

I'm not sure what it was. Maybe the lack of sunlight and how our other senses heightened or the subtle shroud hiding things from our sight, but only certain times were acceptable to do certain things. Shrug off your jacket and roll up your sleeves. Pour a drink and lean back. Laugh with your friends and scream at the basketball game on TV.

Follow a girl you've been eye-fucking for an hour into the pub bathroom and have your friends nod in approval when you come back out.

Try doing that during the day with the intern at the office.

Not that I'd want the freedom to indulge in anything at any time anyway. Things were more special when they were rare.

But every morning, when the sun rose, the coils in my stomach wound tighter in anticipation.

Nightfall was coming again.

Letting my mask dangle from my hand at my side, I stood at the top of the second-floor landing and watched Rika sitting in her car. She kept her head down, her face visible by the glow of her cell

phone, despite the downpour of rain hitting her windshield as she typed.

I shook my head, my jaw flexing. *She doesn't listen.*

I watched as my best friend's fiancée finished up, the light from her phone disappearing, and then she opened the car door, stepped out, and broke into a jog, dashing through the pounding rain. I darted my eyes, taking inventory of her. *Head and eyes cast downward. Keys wrapped in her closed fist. Arms shielding her head from the rain and hindering her line of sight.*

Completely unaware of her surroundings. The perfect victim.

Grabbing the harness at the back of my mask, I stretched it out and slid the silver skull down over my head, the inside hugging every curve of my face for a tight fit. The world around me shrank to a tunnel, and all I could see was what was right in front of me.

Heat spread down my neck, seeping deep into my chest, and I drew in a long, cool breath, feeling my heart pounding, getting hungry.

All of a sudden, the rain, like a waterfall in the alley outside, filled the dojo, and the heavy metal door downstairs slammed shut.

"Hello?" she called out.

My heart dipped into my stomach, and I closed my eyes, savoring the feel. The sound of her voice echoed through the empty building, but I stayed planted on the dark landing, waiting for her to find me.

"Kai?" I heard her shout through the large space.

I reached back and pulled the hood of my black sweatshirt up, covering my head, and turned to look down over the railing.

"Hello?" she asked again, more urgent. "Kai, are you here?"

I saw her blond hair first. It's what you always noticed about Rika first. In her black penthouse, in this black dojo, in the black alley outside, in dark rooms and on black streets . . . she always stood out.



I rested my hands on the rusted steel railing, keeping my feet planted on the grates, and watched her step slowly into the main room below, flipping up the switches on the wall. But nothing happened. The lights didn't go on.

She jerked her head left and right, looking suddenly alert, and then darted out her hand, flipping them off and then on again.

Nothing.

Her chest moved up and down quicker, her awareness peaking as she clutched the strap of her bag tighter.

I fought not to smile and cocked my head, watching her. I should show myself. I should play fair, let her know I was here and that she was safe.

But the longer I waited, and the longer I stayed quiet and hidden, the more nervous she appeared. And as she walked farther into the room below, I couldn't help but want to feel this moment. She was confused. Scared. Timid. She didn't know I was here. Right above her. She didn't know that my eyes were on her right now. She didn't know that I could run at her, get her in a hold, and have her on the floor before she even knew what had happened.

I didn't want to scare her, but I did. Power and control were addictive. And I didn't want to like it, because it made me sick.

It made me Damon.

I started breathing harder and tightened my fists around the railing, growing scared myself. This wasn't normal.

"I know you're here," she said, looking around with her eyebrows pinched together.

But the stubborn set to her eyes was forced, and I lifted the corner of my mouth in a smile behind my mask.

Her long gray T-shirt fell off her shoulder, and rain glistened across her chest and neck. The downpour pummeled Meridian City outside, and at this time of night—and in this neighborhood—the streets were empty. No one would hear her. Probably no one even saw her enter the building.