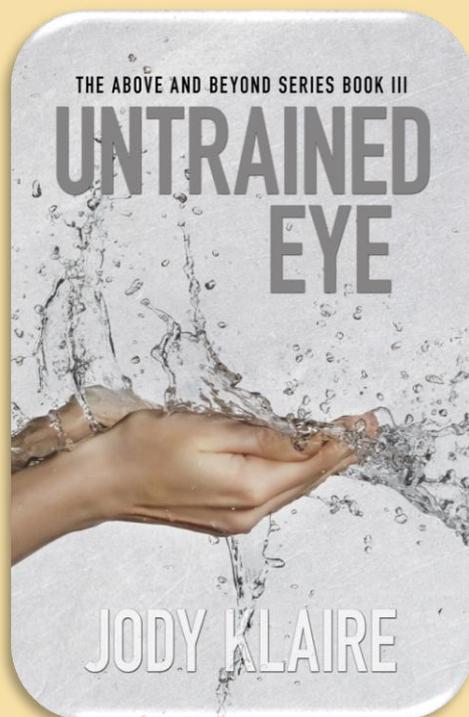


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## TEASER



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**TEASER**

I turned to Kevin. He eyed me in a way that my reputation deserved. Fear, wariness, suspicion. Guess my cover was working.

The buzzer sounded.

"Kevin, you need to take my hand. It's not safe." I reached out hoping he would listen. The wind buffeted me about as I tried to keep my balance.

Kevin, a weedy kid with red hair, shook his head. "You said you'd *deal* with me." His beady eyes tracked over my arms as he swayed in the wind.

"Well, it's either me or the deputy principal. You want to explain to him why you attacked someone?" I edged closer.

He edged back.

The wind whipped around us. He was too near the edge. His foot slid but he rescued it in time. We were five floors up on a baking roof trying to keep upright in vicious blasts of wind.

I glanced down, there was only a small row of stonework around the roof edge.

"I need the notes!" Kevin's eyes were wild, panicked. "They won't accept me if I don't have them."

Kids poured out of the buildings below. I heard someone

call out. Kevin must have too as he turned and wobbled. His foot slid again. He scrambled to keep his balance.

"Look at the drop. Kevin, we need to get you down. We can talk about this. There's another way." I didn't know about him but the sun was so hot that I had sweat dribbling off the tip of my nose.

My hands weren't much better.

"You'll tell them if I come with you." Desperation pulsed from his every movement.

I edged closer. My sneaker squeaked as it slid under my weight. Kevin backed up again. A blast of wind hit us. His eyes widened. His foot went from under him.

I threw myself forward. Clattered across the tiles. One hand reached to catch hold of Kevin's flailing arm. My other hand trailed behind with the hope I could catch the stone to stop myself.

I caught his wrist.

I dropped over the side.

My clammy hand gripped the stone edging.

We smashed into the wall. My breath pounded out of me. I felt the stone shift under the weight. We hung there, five floors up and I prayed I could hold on.

What was it with me and dangling from ledges anyhow?