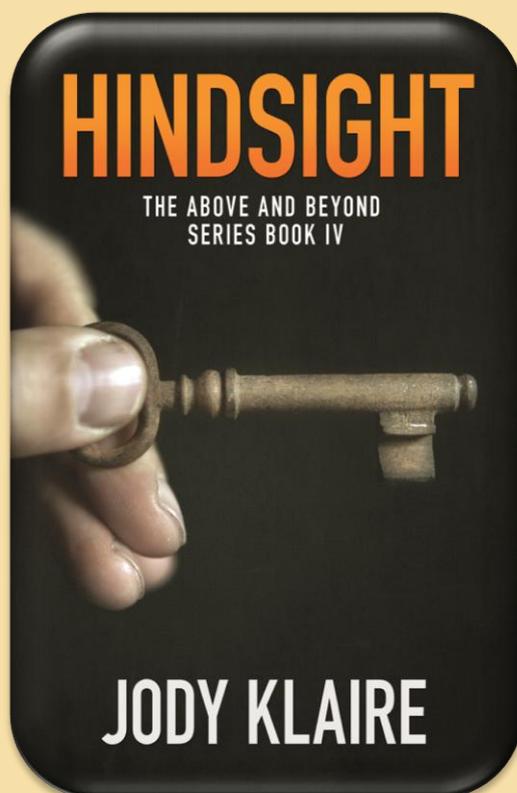


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TEASER



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"Miss Locks... please." Jessie shook her. Wild panic in her eyes.

Frei gasped for air. She gripped hold of her throat. Her heart hammered. "Jessie, run."

Jessie shook her head and glanced at the door. Voices outside. "I can't leave you."

"Jessie, run. You can hide. If you do that, Aeron, Renee, they'll be able to find you." She tried unclasping Jessie's hands from her arm but was too weak. The room dimmed around her. "Please... if you run, that gives me a chance, right?"

Anything to get her to run. Anything so she didn't get caught.

The voices grew louder. She wasn't sure how many of them there were. To her, it sounded like they had surrounded the place. She scoured the rickety excuse for a boathouse praying there was an escape route. She didn't want Jessie trying to swim away, the water was deep, dark, swirling. She'd be easy to hit.

"The tracker says they're in here."

She knew that voice.

No.

Frei fought the urge to shudder, fought the panic, the need to cry.

She gripped hold of Jessie, fought the tears, the terror, the need to curl up. "Please... run... you have to tell them. Find Aeron, Renee, tell them." Her words slurred, her vision distorted.

The door groaned as whatever Jessie had piled against it buckled. The owner of the voice wouldn't let a little thing like that slow them down.

She shook Jessie, desperation flooding through every pore. "Run."

Something flickered across Jessie's eyes. She looked at the door and back to Frei then set her jaw. "Yes, that way, they won't find you."

Frei shook her head. "No. Jessie... No—"

She tried to grab for Jessie, tried to beg but her throat closed. Jessie ducked away and ripped open the side door, slamming it behind her.

Another familiar voice called out and she blinked back the tears. Jessie had their attention now and Frei couldn't help.

She slumped onto the dirty wooden planks, willed her body to move but it only twitched. Her breathing shallow, sharp, rattling.

She could only lie there and pray Jessie could run faster than her pursuers.