

# I

IN HER APARTMENT *high above the streets of Paris, Gabrielle Roux stood in front of the bathroom mirror, still wearing her daringly short purple dress and sky-high platform heels. The light glanced off her golden hair as she brushed it and thought back to the glittering party from which she had just come.*

*There had been at least twenty girls there, and Gabrielle was sure that she had been the most beautiful and most admired. Six boys — at least one of whom had a girlfriend — begged for her phone number.*

*Of course, she wouldn't text back any of the boys. They just weren't good enough for someone like herself. After all, at only nineteen years old, she was already an almost-famous model. She didn't need to resort to stealing an ugly girl's not-cute-enough-and-not-rich-enough boyfriend. Once her Italian Vogue cover came out, she would naturally start hanging out with people who were more worth her time and attention.*

*Gabrielle wet a washcloth and gently removed her makeup, patting her high cheekbones. As she reached into the cabinet for her eye cream (it was*

never too early to protect her porcelain complexion), she scowled, catching sight of her arm. There was a dark smudge just above her wrist. She scrubbed her forearm with soap until the skin around the splotch was pink. When that didn't work, she used rubbing alcohol. But still the dark stain remained.

With an angry grunt, Gabrielle walked out of the bathroom — and froze.

All the lights were on.

But she hadn't turned on any of them — certainly not the light in the kitchen.

“Maman? Papa?” she called, irritation in her voice. Her parents were supposed to be out of town. It would be just like them to come home early and ruin her weekend.

But would they really return at two thirty in the morning?

There was no reply.

Well. She squared her shoulders, tossed her shiny hair, and walked toward the living room. Gabrielle wasn't scared of anything.

But as she reached the arched entryway to the luxurious sitting room, the skin on the back of her neck began to tingle . . .

And she knew she wasn't alone.

Ever so slowly, she turned around, expecting to see a stalker (preferably a smitten, handsome young man who'd broken in so he could proclaim his undying love).

But it wasn't a crazed fan.

A woman stood in front of her, wearing a long pale-pink dress with a wide-open lace-trimmed collar. Her hair was white and piled in frothy curls that extended nearly a foot into the air above her head.

*Gabrielle stared. Clearly, her apartment had been invaded by some sort of crazy person — or was this one of her annoying friends in a costume, playing a joke on her?*

*The woman's cold eyes seemed to glow from within.*

*And Gabrielle realized that something was very wrong.*

*“Qu'est-ce que vous voulez!?” Gabrielle whispered. What do you want?*

*The woman's silence sucked the warmth out of Gabrielle's blood. Finally, she spoke in a low hiss. “La fille de la famille Roux.”*

*Gabrielle opened her mouth to promise the intruder anything — all the money she had, her mother's jewelry, the keys to her father's car —*

*Before she could speak, a sharp CRACK filled the apartment. The mirror on the wall behind the woman shattered into jagged shards.*

*Gabrielle's eyes went wide as the largest piece flew across the room toward her.*

*And then her head fell off her body.*