

INTRODUCING ALEXANDRA LIND

Date of Birth: August 24, 1976

Astrological sign: Virgo (“Virgo? How boring is that,” she says with a laugh)

Education: Degrees in Computer Engineering and Programming. Most useful in her new environment she says sarcastically. A karate practitioner since childhood, she holds a black belt 4th dan and has also dabbled in jujitsu. Never got beyond “Smoke on the water” on guitar, but knows the lyrics to all her favourite rock songs – although she’s not quite sure this qualifies as education. Is a proficient user of the staple gun – has used it for everything from upholstery to fixing Halloween disguises. Sadly, staple guns do not exist in the seventeenth century. Good at drawing, crap at sewing and knitting. Used to consider herself a good chess player – until she met Matthew.

Favourite dish: Chocolate cake. Or maybe chocolate mousse, or chocolate ice cream or ... Chocolate, she summarises with a little sigh.

Favourite pastime: Hot baths and Matthew.

Alex sits down on the bench and looks at me. She’s flushed and looks damp – due to the weather she says, casting a look through the small window to the sunny yard beyond. I know for a fact Alex doesn’t like heat – just as she prefers to stay indoors whenever thunder rolls too close. Now she frowns at the edge of dark grey that lines the horizon and is slowly creeping up over the blue summer skies.

“It might just be rain,” I say.

“Yeah,” she nods, sounding unconvinced. “Stupid,” she adds, “to be scared of thunder.”

“Given the circumstances ...” I say.

“Yeah,” she repeats, and her hands interlace, fingers whitening as she presses her hands tight together.

If it weren’t for the short hair, unruly curls sprouting in all directions from under the rim of her cap, Alex Lind doesn’t look all that different from the other women in the house. Long skirts, a bodice that is a bit too tight over a rounded bosom, a neat white collar and an apron that is in serious need of a wash. The colours suit her, the muted russet of the bodice bringing out the bronze and copper strands in her dark hair. Two blue eyes meet mine, brows pulled together in a frown.

“Still look the same, do I?” she says.

“More or less,” I say. After all, the first time I saw her she was in jeans.

Alex scrapes at a stain of something that looks suspiciously like dried blood on her apron and sighs.

“Sometimes I no longer even notice,” she says, gesturing at the apron. “First few days here I’d change aprons every morning, but now ...” She shrugs. “Same thing with all my clothes; now I wear them well beyond modern hygiene standards.”

I can smell that. At least she bathes regularly, a major difference to most of the people here and now.

“Do you think it was meant somehow?” I ask her. “You know, your plunge through time.”

“Like some sort of predestined fate? Don’t be ridiculous! It was more a matter of wrong time, wrong place.”

“Yes,” I say. “I dare say you regret taking the shortcut over the moors.”

“I was late.” Alex gnaws her lip. She laughs, takes off her cap and scratches vigorously at her hair. “It was either the moor or being flayed by Diane. The moor seemed a better option.” She gives me an interested look.

“Was Diane upset when I didn’t show up at the meeting?”

“Of course she was,” I say.

“Probably pissed off, right?”

“More worried, I think.”

“Hmm.” She looks away. “And Magnus?” Her voice softens when she says her father’s name.

I cover her hand with mine. “What do you think?”

She nods, pulls her hand free and spends a couple of minutes fiddling with the lacings on her bodice.

“I miss him so much.” She gives me a very blue look. “Will I ever see him again?”

I hitch my shoulders. I’m just the writer here.

She slumps a bit. Her finger draws a large capital I on the table.

“And Isaac?” she says. “He’s alright, isn’t he?”

“He’s fine,” I say.

“He doesn’t miss me,” she states.

I shake my head, Of course not; the boy is too young for that.

“That’s good.” She looks relieved somehow. Her features relax, she smiles and sits back against the wall.

“So,” I say, “do you regret it?”

“Regret what?”

I roll my eyes at her. “Taking the shortcut – ending up here.”

“Well, I didn’t exactly plan on time travelling, did I?” she says. She laughs, shaking her head. “I guess nobody does. Kind of incredible, all in all.” She grows serious. “Had someone told me that by taking the road over the moor I might end up yanked out of my time, I would never have done it – assuming I believed anyone who told me something so utterly ridiculous.”

We share a chuckle. Alex has no patience with people professing an interest for the occult – no matter in what shape. And yet here she is, living proof that sometimes weird things happen.

“I’m pretty glad no one did,” she says a few minutes later. “Otherwise, I’d never have met Matthew.” She gazes out of the small window, her mouth softening into a faint smile.

“So he’s worth it, huh?” I say.

“He’s worth some of it,” she fires back. “Some of the experiences I’ve had here I’d rather have been without, thank you very much.”

“Umm,” I say. I like putting her through precarious episodes.

“Yeah, I kind of notice that,” she says. Her blue eyes bore into me. “It’s because you’re jealous.”

“Who? Me?” I feel caught out. Of course I’m jealous! She’s young, he’s gorgeous, life is crammed with adventure – okay, okay, perhaps excessively so at times, but still. She laughs and shakes her head at me, and I feel my cheeks flaring into a bright, tomato red.

“We’re not here to talk about me,” I say in an effort to retake control over the situation. “It’s you people want to know about.”

“Five foot eight, dark hair, blue eyes, good tits ... well that’s it, no?” she says.

I roll my eyes at her. “Your inner qualities, Alex!”

“Opinionated and stubborn to a fault,” Matthew says as he enters the kitchen. He grins at Alex. “Quite the hellcat at times, and she kicks like an unbroken horse.” His mouth softens, he extends his hand and Alex sort of floats upright and levitates towards him. Okay, okay; of course she doesn’t – but is sure looks that way.

“I’m right glad you chose that shortcut,” he says.

“So am I,” she says, “most of the time.”

“Not always?” he asks, something dark colouring his voice.

“Almost always,” she says.

“Hmm.” He grips her chin and raises her face to the light. He kisses her, a mere brushing of lips no more, and I pretend a major interest in my pencil.

“Not always?” he asks again.

“Always,” she says in a voice so breathless it makes me smile. Seeing as they’re entirely oblivious to my presence I leave them to it, gliding as soundlessly as possible from the table to the door.