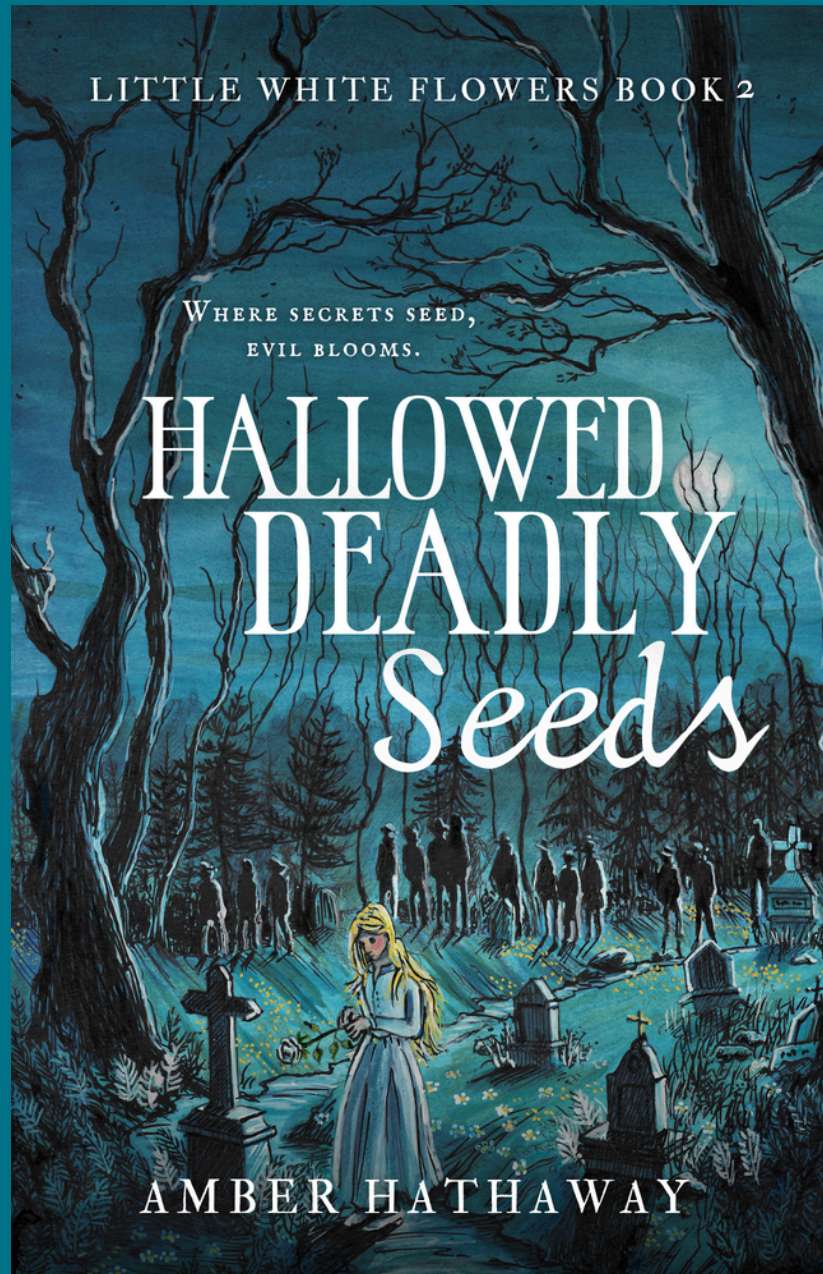


# HALLOWED DEADLY SEEDS

## BOOK CLUB KIT



Discussion questions, author Q&A, and more

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## Praise for *Little White Flowers*

“I don’t often call books flawless, but when it comes to *Little White Flowers*, there is no better word to describe it. It is atmospheric, relatable, painful, and made for this forever fan of Stephen King’s *Children of the Corn* and Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery.” I am excited to see how the story unfolds in the rest of the series.”

—Sage Moon, HWA Notable Works Review



“... Hathaway has a unique voice that runs from the mundane to suddenly morbid, from scary and uncomfortable, but her writing always conveys a warmth within the lead characters that make them human and likeable. That humanity, contrasted with the growing horror of the situation, makes this a great read...”

—Jonathan Chapman, Staff Reviewer for *The Horror Zine*

# Welcome!

Thank you for taking interest in *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, the second book in my Little White Flowers series. While I call this a Book Club Kit, it can also be great for buddy reads or for solo readers who want to dive a little deeper into the story. Feel free to use the items in the kit in any order or to omit items if they don't fit your needs. I'm also happy to meet with book clubs virtually, schedules permitting, so if you would like to have me there for part of the meeting so you can pick my brain, feel free to reach out. You can contact me at [amber.hathaway.author@gmail.com](mailto:amber.hathaway.author@gmail.com)

I started the kit with an "About the Author" section so you can get to know me a little bit better. I also have included two Q&As, one with me and one with my cover illustrator, Eva Mout. In my Q&A, I delve a little deeper into certain aspects of the story and also talk a little bit about how my writing process has evolved. In Eva's, she walks you through her process for designing book covers and talks about her inspiration for the *Little White Flowers* and *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* covers.

After the Q&As, I have the discussion questions. I tried to pick a mixture of general questions and questions more specific to the story. However, these are just some ideas. Feel free to change up the questions as you see fit.

I also have a "Read, Watch, Listen" list in which I share writing, movies, and music that relate to *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* in one way or another. It consists of a mixture of media pieces referenced in the book as well as pieces that reminded me or others of the book. I had a lot of fun putting this together, and I'm always eager to hear what other books, movies, and music my work reminds people of, so if you have comps, feel free to send them my way.

The current epilogue to *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* is not the original epilogue I wrote, so I thought it would be fun to include the first epilogue I drafted to give you a peek at how the book originally ended. We also have another letter from Riley. I drafted it while I was writing *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* so I would know the content of the letter I reference in the book, and I figured you might like to see it too. To conclude this kit, I included a little information about the final book in the Little White Flowers series as well as how you can stay up-to-date on my writing projects.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber Hathaway". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# About the Author

I'm Amber Hathaway, a horror and dark fiction writer and author of the Little White Flowers series. I've been writing horror stories with quirky characters since I was eight. My first published work of fiction appeared in an anthology in 2023, and I've had a number of other short stories published since then.

I hold a PhD in Physics from the University of Maine, among other degrees. When not writing or reading, I enjoy crafting, cosplaying, galavanting around my neighborhood in search of Pokémon, and cataloging whichever butterflies come my way. I live in central Maine with my equally eccentric partner, Brian Toner. I'm also an autistic ace with all the anxiety.



## Five Facts about Me

1. I love walks and hikes in nature, whether it's through the woods, along the riverbank, or on the beach.
2. I'm a huge fan of corn mazes, but haunted houses intimidate me.
3. When I was little, I used to watch *The X-Files* with my dad on Saturday nights. It inspired me to want to be a ufologist when I grew up.
4. In high school, I wrote a ton of poetry. One of my poems was published in *Teen Ink Magazine*.
5. I love bright colors, rainbows, and glitter



# Q&A with Amber Hathaway

What's your favorite scene in *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*?

That's a tough question. I don't think I have one single favorite scene, but there are two that really stick out to me. One is Andy's final POV chapter. I love most of my characters, but Andy has a special place in my heart. He has really had a rough go of it in certain respects, and to see that glimmer of realization that he is valuable and has something to contribute to the world makes me so happy. The other is the conversation between Betty and her mother at the end of the book. That one makes me a little teary-eyed when I read it. I know many people have difficult relationships with religion, myself included, but I hope that for survivors who do find comfort in religion, they can take that passage to heart.

The idea of witchcraft plays a significant role in *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*. What inspired this?

Two books: *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England* edited by David D. Hall and *A Season with the Witch* by J. W. Ocker. Both provided a fascinating glimpse into the mindset of the colonists behind New England's witchcraft accusations. From a modern scientific lens, it can be hard to understand how people could believe in witches as agents of the devil with all these otherworldly powers. But really, in many ways, we're not so far removed from those lines of thought. Take an insular rural town that distrusts science and modernity, and those beliefs could easily proliferate. There were enough parallels between the mindsets of the New England colonists and Evanston's residents that the witchcraft plot thread seamlessly wove its way into the story.

When people think about witch hunting, they usually think of burning witches at the stake. Why did you go for hanging instead?

Because convicted witches were executed by hanging in New England. Burning was one of the methods used to execute supposed witches in parts of Europe for a time, but by the seventeenth century, hangings were the norm in England. Since the colonies were under British rule, the colonists carried out capital punishments in accordance with British law, which meant hangings, not burnings. Even though executions for witchcraft in the US ended with Salem, hanging remained the predominant means of capital punishment through the 19th century. Due to the town's isolated nature, residents of Evanston wouldn't be knowledgeable of or have access to more modern forms of capital punishment.

# Q&A with Amber Hathaway

Were there any chapters that were difficult to write?

The one where they're getting Alice ready for the whipping. The physical violence is in some ways less horrifying than the psychological trauma the situation dredges up for Alice. Getting into Alice's mental state for that chapter required digging into some of my own trauma. It was mentally and emotionally taxing to write, but I also feel like it's one of the most powerful chapters in the book.

Has your writing process changed at all since Book 1?

When I drafted Book 1, I did it without editing at all until I finished the draft. However, editing an entire novel-length manuscript is intimidating. I got in this pattern where I would edit the first few chapters, hit a difficult point where I felt overwhelmed, and put the book up for a while. Then I'd pick it up again and rinse and repeat. I did manage to edit the whole document multiple times over, but it was a struggle.

When I started writing *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, I took a different approach. I'd write a chapter, hand it off to my critique partner for feedback, and then edit the heck out of it before I moved on to drafting the next chapter. This was a much less intimidating process, and by the time I finished the draft, I had a fairly cohesive story. I still had to edit the manuscript as a whole once I received my editor's feedback, but I've found the polishing as I go process makes drafting much smoother.

What do you hope readers will take away from this book?

I think there are a number of messages that readers can take away, and some may resonate more with a given person than others. A few of my favorites are that you can do incredible things even when you're terrified. That we are stronger together than on our own. That sometimes redemption is possible. That you are not responsible for your abuse.

What's next for you?

My main focus is finishing the final book in my Little White Flowers series. It's drafted but needs some editing before I can put it up for pre-order. I also have a 90s YA series loosely inspired by Fear Street in the works. The first book is drafted, and I've just started the second book.

# Q&A with Eva Mout

Eva created the cover illustrations for *Little White Flowers* and *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*. We thought it would be fun to give you a little peek into how the book covers came to be.

1. What's your process for creating art for a book cover?

Well, when both the author and I are happy with the content of the contract and when we have signed, I start reading the book. Usually, after having read about 75% of the book, I will have already formed the right images in my mind, and I will already have decided what the best idea is to be depicted on the cover. But I always finish reading the book, for fun, but also to make sure that I haven't missed any unexpected plot changes or important details. I then start making the first sketch.

(What I do not do is depict the author's cover idea. Sometimes authors tell me what they want on the cover of their book. I then politely tell them that I don't work that way. This has two reasons: There is a difference between being an artist and a craftsman. Depicting other people's ideas would take away from me all my creativity and love for my work. Therefore, it would make my artwork suffer in quality. The second reason is that being an author is a completely different profession from being a cover artist. Authors can use many details to describe the plot, the surroundings, the main characters, etc. But as a cover artist, my job is to entice the audience by telling only a very small part of that story, without giving away too much. Knowing what and what not to depict is up to the artist, but of course there is always room for discussion.)

After I have sent the sketch to the author, usually using a little video in which I can explain my ideas, I then have to wait for the author's response, which is always a bit scary. Even though I can't remember my first sketch ever having been rejected, I still get nervous.

Sometimes the author likes the sketch to be a bit more worked out, which is easy to do. When it is approved, I start working in ink, which is permanent.

During this whole process I make sure I send lots of updates on the progress, so the author is not being kept in the dark on how things are faring and if he/she will get his money's worth.

When the final artwork is approved, I have a professional scan made, which I send to the author through email. After having been paid, I also send the original artwork and the sketches to the author's home address. And of course, after the book has been published, I get a copy sent home. This concludes the end of the commission, but months of helping each other getting views on the book and book cover follows. I absolutely love the whole process, which usually makes me end up with a new friend.

# Q&A with Eva Mout

2. With *Little White Flowers*, you illustrated a specific scene from the story. With *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, you went for more symbolic cover. Could you speak about the symbolism in the HDS cover?

The image of Andy and Alice standing in the water in their white gowns, was an unshakeable image that immediately got stuck in my mind when I read ‘Little White Flowers’. Even though I enjoyed the rest of the story, I knew that was the image that needed to become the cover. Two innocent teenagers, knowing very well that they were in danger of being sacrificed, standing barefoot in the water, depicted exactly what I wanted: The viewer feels that something is very off, but at the same time the illustration doesn’t give away the plot. You can only feel danger lurking without knowing exactly what it is. So this illustration was indeed very specific to a certain scene.

‘Hallowed Deadly Seeds’ was a book with a lot of dialogue. That meant that there was less for me to ‘hold on to’ when it came to choosing a specific scene to depict. So it was extra important to catch the atmosphere of the book, which to me is a compelling combination of a charming innocence, which we find in the children but also in the first impression of the town and its environment, and on the other hand the feeling of impending doom, dread, death, loss and cruelty. I chose Alice visiting the grave of one of her aunts who had mysteriously died, because it tells the viewer exactly this combination. It was an image that held a lot of promise.

The figures in the background are the townspeople, who always seem to be secretly lurking, gossiping, judging and betraying... You can almost hear them whispering. They didn’t need a face, we all know people like that in our own lives. They usually stay hidden in the shadows anyway.

3. Where can people learn more about you and your work?

My website is a perfect collection of everything I have made, so I suggest to visit that, if you’re curious: [www.UrsusArt.Studio](http://www.UrsusArt.Studio)

And if you want to get in touch with me for whatever reason, please write me an email at ‘[ursusart.studio@gmail.com](mailto:ursusart.studio@gmail.com)’.

4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Absolutely! Grab a copy of both Amber’s books. You won’t be able to put them down until you have finished them. Delicious dread guaranteed!

# HDS Discussion Questions

1. What emotions did *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* evoke for you? Were there any scenes that were difficult to read? Were there any that were particularly impactful to you? What about them made you feel that way?
2. How did the setting and atmosphere of the book affect the mood and tone of the story? Did it create a sense of danger, mystery, dread, or unease?
3. How did you feel about the witchcraft angle? Did it make sense why the townsfolk were so quick to blame witches for their misfortunes?
4. If you had to pick a message or takeaway from the book, what would it be? Why?
5. If you were to make a playlist for this book, what song or songs would you include?
6. What were your thoughts on the epilogue? Were you happy with Isabella's perspective, or would you have rather seen an epilogue from the point of view of another character?
7. How did you feel about the romantic thread between Alice and Riley? Would you have liked to see more romance? Did you feel like it helped or hindered the story?
8. Over the course of the first two books, several characters undergo significant personal transformations. How did you feel about these arcs? Were there any you were excited to see? Were there any you were disappointed by?
9. Did the book keep you on your toes? Did you see the plot twists coming? Did any surprise you?
10. The title of Book 1, *Little White Flowers*, refers to the children offered as Sacrifices. Who or what do you think are the Hallowed Deadly Seeds referred to in the title of Book 2?
11. How do you feel about the fact that the book was left open for a sequel? Would you have preferred it to have a tidier ending? Are you excited for the third and final book?



# Read, Watch, Listen

The following books, movies, and songs are a mixture of media directly referenced in *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* (denoted with an \*) and comp titles or other media with a similar vibe to *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*. (See the Little White Flowers Book Club Kit for even more suggestions.) Pick a few that interest you. What connections do you see between your chosen media and *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, if any?



- *Lullaby* by Diane Guest\*
- *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson\*
- *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson\*
- “Rapunzel” by the Brothers Grimm\*
- *A Season with the Witch* by J. W. Ocker\*
- *Witch Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England* edited by David D. Hall\*
- *Something in the Walls* by Daisy Pearce

- *Cujo* (1983)\*
- Barbara Steele films e.g., *The Ghost* (1963), *Nightmare Castle* (1965)\*
- *Scooby-Doo, Where are You!*\*
- *The Witch* (2015)
- *The Village* (2004)
- *The Mist* (2007)

- “Meant to Live” by Switchfoot\*
- “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition” by Serj Tankian
- “Season of the Witch” by Lana Del Rey
- “Witches Burn” by The Pretty Reckless
- “Broken Pieces Shine” by Evanescence
- “Somewhere I Belong” by Linkin Park

# Deleted Epilogue

The epilogue you'll find in *Hallowed Deadly Seeds* is not the original epilogue I wrote. The first epilogue centered around Alice, Andy, and Riley, but my editor pointed out that it might be nice to hear from one of the townsfolk at the end of the book. I realized that circling back to the townsfolk would help lay the groundwork for Book 3, but an additional epilogue would have been overkill, so I nixed my original epilogue and wrote the new one. However, I thought it might be fun for you to see how Book 2 originally ended. Note that because this chapter was cut from the book, it has not gone through the same editing that the rest of the book has. Thus, the writing may be a bit rougher in places.

## Epilogue

Ten years later

Alice circled the final score with her red pen. She closed the manila folder and plucked it from her lap, lowering it toward the floor. The stack of graded homework papers hit the faux marble surface with a satisfying thud.

The burgundy chenille couch she had settled upon, a hand-me-down from Mom and Dad, nearly spanned the width of the cramped, two-bedroom apartment's living room. She folded her legs pretzel style and leaned her head back against the soft cushioning. Finally. Now that she had finished her grading for the week and sent a draft of her dissertation's introductory chapter to her advisor, maybe she could spend a few minutes tinkering with her latest short story idea. If she budgeted her time well, she might even finish it before the end of the weekend.

"All done?" Andy said from the cushion bordering hers. He sat with his laptop upon his thighs, staring at the screen. A week's worth of dark stubble covered the lower portion of his face.

"For now. Remind me again why I wanted to get a PhD."

"So you can make everyone call you Dr. Drayton."

"Titles are overrated."

He squeezed her knee. "Mhmm, but you're doing great, kiddo. I'm so proud of you."

She scooted closer to him. A section of her hip-length hair caught beneath her palm, and she winced. She glanced at his screen, which depicted pavement with a white chalk outline and blood spatters. Yellow crime-scene tape crisscrossed the scene. A white rectangle with black text was overlaid atop the image.

# Deleted Epilogue

“How’s the game coming?” she said.

Andy took off his thick-framed glasses and rubbed his eyes. “It’s coming, I guess. I’m just trying to figure out where to place the text.”

The front door opened, and Riley bounded through. He wore a pale blue button-down and brown slacks. An ear-to-ear grin lit up his face.

“We got the grant!” he said.

“Woo! Way to go, bud!” Andy said.

Alice smiled as she crossed the floor to Riley, but unease perturbed her gut. He and his doctoral advisor had spent countless hours filling out grant applications to make this research trip happen. He deserved this success. Still, the thought of him returning to Evanston exacerbated her heart.

“Congratulations,” she said as he pulled her into a hug. “I know how hard you’ve worked for this.”

He gave her a peck on the lips. “Thank you. I’m pretty excited, albeit a bit nervous at the thought of going back.”

“I still don’t understand why you needed to go through all these applications when you can drive up there,” Andy said.

“It’s because of the laws around abandoned property.” Riley said.

“I know, you’ve explained that before, but it’s bullshit that you could get in trouble for doing research when the town is literally just rotting away.”

“At least that’s no longer a concern,” Alice said.

Riley bounced on the balls of his feet. “I think I’m going to go on a walk, burn off some of this energy. Would either of you like to come with me?”

“It’s too hot outside,” Andy said.

“I’ll come with,” Alice said.

# Deleted Epilogue

She and Riley made their way down the sidewalk, striding side-by-side. Riley stole a glance at her from the corner of his eye. “How are you feeling about all of this?” he said.

She twisted the emerald ring Grammie had given her. When Riley had first expressed interest in studying Evanston for his doctoral dissertation, she had been resistant to the idea. The days she had spent in that hellhole had been the worst of her life, and while it sometimes felt nice to vent about Evanston with Andy or Riley, the thought of immersing herself in those awful memories again and again made her skin crawl.

Riley had been understanding. He had offered not to talk about his work around her, but it was hard having something so big between them. Evanston had worked its way into their conversations more and more, and soon she was almost as invested in the project as he was. Except for the expedition piece.

“I take it you’re not happy,” he said.

“I’m worried.” It was one thing to think about Evanston from the safety of their home. It was another thing entirely to go there. “I know it’s irrational. I know the town is empty, and none of the people who hurt us will be there. But still, I can’t shake the anxiety that creeps up anytime I think of you being hours away in a place where so many bad things happened.”

He took her hand, twining his fingers with hers. “That’s understandable. We went through a lot there. But like you said, none of the people who hurt us are there anymore. We don’t even know if any of them are still alive.”

That was the piece that bothered her more than anything else. A decade later, and there were still no traces of Evanston’s former residents. How could two hundred people vanish like that? Sure, the Maine wilderness was vast and remote, but if they all starved to death or something, shouldn’t someone have stumbled across the bodies by now? And if they were still alive, where were they? This wasn’t the 1600s. A Roanoke repeat shouldn’t be possible. And yet...

A hermit thrush trilled as she and he turned onto a paved trail cutting through the woods. Riley shook his head. “It’s hard to believe it’s already been a decade since I left Evanston. If only my teenage self could see where I am now.” He looked down, his gaze settling upon their joined hands. “Well, he’d be horrified by how far I’ve strayed from the path of righteousness, but I think he’d also be in awe. Before I met you, I never in my wildest dreams would have envisioned myself going to college at all, let alone entering a doctoral program.”

“Teenage Alice would be disappointed that I haven’t published a novel yet. Although she also thought all she had to do was commit the words to the page, when really, that’s only half the battle.”

# Deleted Epilogue

He squeezed her hand. “I’m sure she would be so proud of all that you’ve accomplished. And you will publish a book someday. I have faith in that.”

She smiled. A decade out of Evanston also meant a decade with Riley. Which felt like an impossible amount of time, too short and too long all at once. It was as though she had known him her whole life, but each year they shared together seemed to pass at the speed of light. Blink, and it was gone.

Sunlight glinted against the diamond nestled on her left ring finger, the same ring he had given her in Evanston. Ten years ago, the ring’s presence on her hand had signified her loss of agency, but after his real proposal, it had gained new meaning. Every night when she laid her head beside Riley’s, every time she put on the ring, she chose him again and again.

The evergreens lining either side of the path gave way to an expanse of tall grasses and wildflowers. A monarch butterfly settled upon a Queen Anne’s lace blossom.

Little white flowers. The dreaded phrase filled her mind, but with it came her resolve. She would go with Riley. He had mentioned before that he could secure her a spot on the trip if she wanted, since she had first-hand experience with Evanston. She had turned him down at the time because it seemed like a lot of suffering for no reason. Even the trauma therapist she had seen after Evanston had said returning there would probably not benefit Alice. The town was so far removed from her everyday life, and going back without a trained therapist by her side to help her work through the negative emotions as they arose might worsen her trauma responses.

But the trip would be hard for Riley as well, and she had developed more coping mechanisms for handling panic and anxiety in the years since. If her presence would make things easier for him, then wouldn’t joining him be the right thing to do? Maybe not for the whole week, but at least for that first day, so he would have someone who knew what it was like by his side. And maybe while he was busy conducting his research, she and Andy could poke around for clues as to what had happened to Evanston’s missing residents.

Sure, the police investigation had proven fruitless on that front, but every time she had spoken with the police, she had gotten the impression they were merely humoring her. If that was how they approached the entire investigation, there was a chance they overlooked something vital. Riley deserved closure regarding his mother’s and Margaret’s fates. Whether or not Alice could give him that, she ought to at least try.

“Maybe I could come with you to Evanston for a day,” she said.

# Deleted Epilogue

He paused, studying her face. “Only if you want to.”

“I think I might.”

He squeezed her hand and started down the path once more. Her steps synchronized with his. The journey through life was not always an easy one, but at least neither she nor he had to walk it alone.

Dearest Alice,

Words cannot begin to express how sorry I am for what has transpired. I do not write this to ask for your forgiveness. I don't know if I warrant it; that is something only you can decide. I merely aim to provide you with a complete account so that you may decide how to proceed with all the relevant information.

After you announced that you were with child, the Council deliberated about what to do with me. Despite my insistence that I was the father, the Council was in agreement that I could not be. However, Mr. Miller offered me a proposition: serve him, and I would be spared my execution to help raise your child. I made the choice to serve him.

My first and, thus far, only assignment had nothing to do with you as far as I could tell. Mr. Miller requested that I convince my sister to apologize for her behavior last Sunday. I spoke with her and she gave her apology, but it appears that was insufficient for Mr. Miller.

As I said, when Mr. Miller spoke with me about your punishment, he claimed it was for your immodest dress. However, with more consideration and in light of Andy's remarks, I am now inclined to believe that Mr. Miller sentenced you to get back at me for my perceived slight. If that was his motive, I am truly and utterly sorry for the role I played in your torment. If I could go back and choose otherwise, I would. Alas, what's done is done.

While I should like to be by your side, I understand if you no longer feel inclined to associate with me. I hope, whatever you choose, that you are able to find happiness and contentment.

Ever yours,

Riley.

# Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to read and discuss *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*! If you feel inclined, please consider leaving a review on Goodreads, Amazon, Google, or your favorite book retailer or social media site. It helps this little book find its way into the hands of more eager readers.

Want a sneak peek at the final book in the Little White Flowers series? Sign up for my newsletter to receive a link to preview the first four chapters. Join my newsletter at: <https://www.amberhathaway.com/contact>

You can also follow me on Instagram, Threads, or YouTube @amber\_hathaway\_writes and on Bluesky @amber-hathaway.bsky.social. I'm most active on Instagram, but I post all major announcements to all of my socials.

