

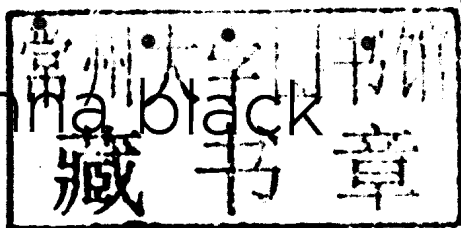


A Faeriewalker Novel

glimmerglass
jenna black

glimmerglass

jenma black



St. Martin's Griffin



New York

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

GLIMMERGLASS. Copyright © 2010 by Jenna Black. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. For information, address St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

www.stmartins.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Black, Jenna.

Glimmerglass / Jenna Black.—1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-312-57593-9

1. Teenage girls—Fiction. 2. Magic—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3602.L288G57 2010

813'.6—dc22

2009046746

acknowledgments

A novel is rarely written in a vacuum, and this one is no exception. Many thanks to my critique partner, Kelly Gay, for all the valuable input she gave me along the way, and for reading multiple drafts without a word of complaint. Thanks also to Dame Kaz for helping me make sure my Avalon Fae didn't speak too much like transplanted Americans, and to Lauren Abercrombie for helping me make sure my teens came out sounding like teens. Thanks to my editor, Jennifer Weis, and her assistant, Anne Bensson, for making this book possible in the first place. And last, thanks to my fabulous agent, Miriam Kriss, for believing in me, and for helping me believe in myself when my confidence wavers.

prologue

The absolute last straw was when my mom showed up at my recital drunk. I don't mean tipsy—I mean staggering, slurring, everyone-knows drunk. And as if that wasn't bad enough, she was late, too, so that when she pushed through the doors and practically fell into a metal folding chair at the back, everyone turned to glare at her for interrupting the performance.

Standing in the wings, I wanted to sink through the floor in embarrassment. Ms. Morris, my voice teacher, was the only one in the room who realized the person causing the disruption was my mother. I'd very carefully avoided any contact between my mom and the students of this school—my newest one, and the one I hoped to graduate from if we could manage two full years in the same location just this once.

When it was my turn to perform, Ms. Morris gave me a sympathetic look before she put her hands on the piano. My face felt hot with embarrassment, and my throat was so tight I worried my voice would crack the moment I opened my mouth.

My voice is naturally pretty—a result of my ultra-secret, hush-hush Fae heritage. Truthfully, I didn't need the voice

lessons, but summer vacation was going to start in a few weeks, and I'd wanted an excuse that would get me out of the house now and then but wouldn't require a huge time commitment. Voice lessons had fit the bill. And I enjoyed them.

My heart beat hard against my chest, and my palms sweated as Ms. Morris played the introduction. I tried to concentrate on the music. If I could just get through the song and act normal, no one in the audience had to know that the drunken idiot in the back was related to me.

Finally, the intro was over, and it was time for me to start. Despite my less-than-optimal state of mind, the music took over for a while, and I let the beauty of "Voi che sapete," one of my favorite Mozart arias, wash over me. Traditionally sung by a woman pretending to be a young boy, it was perfect for my clear soprano, with the hint of vibrato that added a human touch to my otherwise Fae voice.

I hit every note spot on, and didn't forget any of my lyrics. Ms. Morris nodded in approval a couple times when I got the phrasing just the way she wanted it. But I knew I could have done better, put more feeling into it, if I hadn't been so morbidly aware of my mom's presence.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I was done. Until the applause started, that is. Most of the parents and other students gave a polite, if heartfelt, round of applause. My mom, on the other hand, gave me a standing ovation, once more drawing all eyes to her. And, of course, revealing that she was with me.

If lightning had shot from the heavens and struck me dead at that moment, I might have welcomed it.

I shouldn't have told her about the recital, but despite the fact that I knew better, there'd been some part of me that wished

she would show up to hear me sing, wished she'd applaud me and be proud like a normal mother. I'm such a moron!

I wondered how long it would take the story to make the rounds of *this* school. At my previous school, when one of the bitchy cheerleader types had run into me and my mom when we were shopping—a task she was barely sober enough to manage—it had taken all of one day for the entire school to know my mom was a drunk. I hadn't exactly been part of the popular crowd even before, but after that . . . Well, let's just say that for once I was glad we were moving yet again.

I was sixteen years old, and we'd lived in ten different cities that I could remember. We moved around so much because my mom didn't want my dad to find me. She was afraid he'd try to take me away from her, and considering she isn't exactly a study in parental perfection, he just might be able to do it.

I'd never met my dad, but my mom had told me all about him. The story varied depending on how drunk and/or depressed she was feeling at the time. What I'm pretty sure is true is that my mom was born in Avalon and lived there most of her life, and that my dad is some kind of big-deal Fae there. Only my mom hadn't realized who he was when she started messing around with him. She found out right about the time she got pregnant with me, and she left home before anyone knew.

Sometimes, my mom said she'd run away from Avalon because my dad was such a terrible, evil man that he'd be sure to abuse me in horrible ways if I lived with him. That was the story she told when she was sober, the story she built to make sure I was never interested in meeting him. "He's a monster, Dana," she'd say, explaining why we had to move yet again. "I can't let him find you."

But when she was drunk out of her gourd and babbling at me about whatever entered her mind at the moment, she'd say she'd left Avalon because if I'd stayed there, I'd have been caught up in some kind of nasty political intrigue, me being the daughter of a high muckety-muck Fae and all. When she was in one of these moods, she'd go on and on about how great a guy my dad was, how she'd loved him more than life itself, but how her duty as a mother had to come first. Gag!

I wanted to slink away from the recital before it was even over, but I didn't dare. It was possible my mom was dumb enough to have actually driven here, and there was no way I could let her drive back home in the state she was in. I had the guilty thought—not for the first time—that my life might improve if she got herself killed in a car wreck. I was ashamed of myself for letting the thought enter my head. *Of course* I didn't want my mother to die. I just wanted her not to be an alcoholic.

Ms. Morris took me aside as soon as everyone was done, and the sympathy in her eyes was almost too much to bear. "Do you need any help, Dana?" she asked me quietly.

I shook my head and refused to meet her gaze. "No. Thank you. I'll . . . take care of her." My face was hot again, so I made my escape as quickly as possible, avoiding the other students who wanted to either congratulate me on my brilliant performance (yeah, right!) or try to get the full scoop on my mom so they could tell all their friends.

Mom was trying to mingle with the other parents when I walked up to her. She was too out of it to pick up on the subtle you're-a-drunk-leave-me-alone vibes they were giving her. Still feeling like everyone was staring at me, I took hold of her arm.

"Come on, let's get you home," I said through gritted teeth.

"Dana!" she practically shouted. "You were *wonderful*!" She

threw her arms around me like she hadn't seen me in three years and gave me a smothering hug.

"Glad you enjoyed it," I forced myself to say as I wriggled out of her hug and began heading for the door with her in tow. She didn't seem to mind being dragged across the room, so at least that was a plus. *This could have been worse*, I tried to tell myself.

I didn't have to ask Mom whether she'd driven, because the minute we stepped outside, I could see our car, parked so crookedly it had taken up about three spaces. I said a silent prayer of thanks that she hadn't managed to kill anyone.

I held out my hand to her. "Keys."

She sniffed and tried to look dignified. Hard to do when she had to clutch the railing to keep from falling headfirst down the steps that led to the parking lot. "I am perfectly capable of driving," she informed me.

Anger burned in my chest, but I knew exactly how much good it would do me to explode, no matter how much I wanted to. If I could just keep pretending to be calm and reasonable, I could get her into the passenger seat and out of the public eye much faster. The last thing I wanted was to have a big shouting fight scene right here in front of everybody. Mom had given them enough to talk about already.

"Let me drive anyway," I said. "I need the practice." If she'd been even marginally sober, she'd have heard the banked fury in my voice, but as it was, she was oblivious. But she handed over the keys, which was a relief.

I drove home, my hands clutching the wheel with a white-knuckled grip as I fought to hold myself together. My mom was in the middle of gushing over my performance when the booze finally got the best of her and she conked out. I was grateful for

the silence, though I knew from experience it would be quite a production to get her out of the car and into the house in her condition.

When I pulled into our driveway and contemplated the task ahead, I realized that I couldn't live like this any longer. Nothing could possibly be worse than living with my mother, constantly lying for her, trying to cover up that she was passed out drunk when she was supposed to be meeting with my teachers or driving me to some off-campus event. Ever since I could remember, I'd lived in mortal fear that my friends at school—what friends I managed to have when we moved around so much, that is—would find out about her and decide I was some kind of freak by association. A fear that, unfortunately, I'd found out the hard way was not unfounded.

I'd been the adult in this family since I was about five, and now it was time for me to take my life into my own hands. I was going to contact my father and, unless I got some kind of vibe that said he really *was* an abusive pervert, I was going to go live with him. In Avalon. In the Wild City that was the crossroads between our world and Faerie, the city where magic and technology coexisted in something resembling peace. Even in Avalon, I figured, I'd have a better, more normal life than I had now with my mom.

I've never been so wrong about anything in my life.

chapter one

My palms were sweaty and my heart was in my throat as my plane made its descent into London. I could hardly believe I was really doing this, hardly believe I had found the courage to run away from home. I wiped my palms on my jeans and wondered if Mom had figured out I was gone yet. She'd been sleeping off one hell of a binge when I'd left the house, and sometimes she could sleep for twenty-four hours straight at times like that. I wished I could be a fly on the wall when she found the note I'd left her. Maybe losing me would finally turn on the lightbulb over her head and she'd stop drinking. But I wasn't holding my breath.

I'd had no trouble finding and contacting my father. Mom would never have dreamed of telling me his name when she was sober, and he wasn't listed on my birth certificate, but all it had taken were a couple of probing questions when she was in one of her drunk, chatty moods to find out his name was Seamus Stuart. The Fae, she confided, didn't use last names in Faerie, but those who lived in Avalon had adopted the practice for the convenience of the human population.

In the grand scheme of things, Avalon is tiny, its population less than 10,000, so when I'd gone online and brought up the Avalon phone book, I'd had no trouble finding my father—he was the only Seamus Stuart listed. And when I called and asked him if he knew anyone by my mother's name, he readily admitted he'd had a girlfriend of that name once, so I knew that I'd found the right guy.

Before that first conversation was over, he had already asked me to come to Avalon for a visit. He'd even sprung for a first-class plane ticket into London. And never once had he asked to talk to my mom, nor had he asked if I had her permission to come visit him. I'd been surprised by that at first, but then I figured she'd been right that if he could have found me, he'd have spirited me away to Avalon without a second thought. *Don't look the gift horse in the mouth*, I reminded myself.

The plane hit the tarmac with a jarring thud. I took a deep breath to calm myself. It would be hours still before I would actually meet my father. Being a native of Faerie, he couldn't set foot in the mortal world. (If he'd decided to kidnap me, he'd have had to use human accomplices to do it.) The unique magic of Avalon is that the city exists both in Faerie and in the mortal world—the only place where the two planes of existence overlap. When my father stood at the border of the city and looked out, all he could see was Faerie, and if he crossed the border, those of us in the mortal world wouldn't be able to see him anymore.

He'd arranged to have a human friend of his meet me at the London airport and take me to Avalon. Only when I got through Avalon immigration would I be able to meet him.

I went through the immigration and customs process in London in something of a daze. I'd been too excited and nervous to sleep on the plane, and it was definitely catching up

with me now. I followed the herd to the ground transportation area and started searching the sea of placards for my own name.

I didn't see it.

I looked again, examining each sign carefully, in case my name was misspelled and that's why I'd missed it. But the crowd of drivers steadily thinned, and nowhere did I see anyone holding up my name. I bit my lip and examined my watch, which I'd adjusted to London time. It was 8:23 A.M., and when I'd last talked to my dad, he'd estimated that if the plane was on time, I'd get through customs somewhere around 8:15. His friend should be here by now.

I took another one of those deep breaths, reminding myself to calm down. Dad's friend was only eight minutes late. Hardly worth panicking about. I found a comfortable chair near the doors, my gaze darting this way and that as I looked for someone hurrying into the terminal like they were late. I saw plenty of those, but none of them carried a sign with my name on it.

When 8:45 rolled around and still there was no sign of my ride, I decided it was okay to get a little bit panicky. I turned on my cell phone, meaning to give Dad a call, only to discover I couldn't get a signal. Belatedly, I wondered if American cell phones worked in London. I swallowed another wave of nerves. Dad had sent me a lovely getting-to-know-you gift, a white rose cameo, and I found myself fingering it anxiously.

I'd been in and out of a lot of airports in my life, and if the flight was long enough, my mom was invariably sloshed by the time we landed. Even when I was like eight years old, I'd been capable of steering my mom through the airport, finding our baggage, and arranging a taxi to take us to wherever we needed to be. Granted, the most exotic place I'd ever had to do it was Canada, but heck, this was England, not India.

Telling myself not to sweat it, I found a bank of pay phones. Because my mom couldn't be trusted to keep track of bills or anything, we'd arranged for me to have my own credit card, which I promptly used to make the long-distance call to Avalon.

I let the phone at my dad's house ring about ten times, but no one answered. I hung up and bit my lip.

I'd been nervous enough about this whole adventure. Now I was stranded at Heathrow Airport and my dad wasn't answering his phone. Add to that a crushing case of jet lag, and all I wanted to do at the moment was curl up in a snug, comfy bed and go to sleep. I swallowed a yawn—if I let myself get started, I'd never stop.

At 9:15, I had to admit that the chances of my dad's friend showing up were slim to none. My dad probably wasn't answering his phone because he was waiting for me at the Avalon border, as he'd promised. So okay, all I had to do was get a cab to take me to the border. It was only about twenty-five miles out of London. No big deal, right?

I exchanged some money, then got in one of those enormous black cabs they have in England. It felt really weird to see the driver on the wrong side of the car, and even weirder to be driving on the wrong side of the road.

My driver drove like a maniac and talked nonstop the entire way to Avalon's Southern Gate. I don't know what his accent was, maybe Cockney, but I only understood about a third of what he said. Luckily, he never seemed to require a response aside from the occasional smile and nod. I hoped he didn't see me flinching and wincing every time it seemed like he was about to squash someone into roadkill.

Like everyone else in the universe, I'd seen lots of pictures of Avalon. You could find about a thousand guide books dedicated

to the city—I had two in my luggage—and just about every fantasy movie ever made has at least one or two scenes that were filmed on location in Avalon, it being the only place in the mortal world where magic actually works. But seeing Avalon in person kind of reminded me of seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time: no photograph on earth could do it justice.

Avalon is situated on a mountain. Yes, a real, honest-to-goodness mountain. The thing juts up into the sky out of the flat, green, sheep-dotted countryside, and it looks like someone grabbed one of the Alps and haphazardly dropped it where it most definitely did not belong.

Houses and shops and office buildings had been built into every square inch of the mountain's slopes, and a single paved road spiraled from the base to the castle-like structure that dominated the summit. There were lots of lesser cobblestone roads that led off that main one, but the main road was the only one big enough for cars.

The base of the mountain is completely surrounded by a thick, murky moat, the moat surrounded by a high, electrified fence. There are only four entrances to the city itself, one at each point of the compass. My dad was supposed to meet me at the Southern Gate. The taxi driver dropped me off at the gatehouse—a three-story building about a half a block long—and I felt another pang of apprehension as I watched him drive away. It was possible for cars to pass through the gates into Avalon, but the driver would have to have an Avalon visa to be allowed through. Backpack over one shoulder, I dragged my suitcase through a series of rat mazes, following the signs for visitors. Naturally, the lines for residents were all much shorter.

By the time I got to the head of the line, I was practically asleep on my feet, despite the anxiety. There was a small parking

lot just past the checkpoint, and like at the airport, I could see people standing around there with placards. But as I waited for the customs official to stamp my passport, I still didn't see my name on any of them.

"One moment, miss," the customs official said, after having examined my passport for what seemed like about ten years. I blinked in confusion as he then walked away from his post, carrying my passport.

My throat went dry as I saw him talk to a tall, imposing woman who wore a navy-blue uniform—and a gun and handcuffs on her belt. It went even drier when the official gestured at me and the woman looked in my direction. Sure enough, she started heading my way. I saw that the official had handed her my passport. This didn't seem like a good sign.

"Please come with me, Miss . . ." She opened the passport to check. "Hathaway." She had a weird accent, sort of British, but not quite. Meanwhile, the customs official gestured for the next person in line.

I had to step closer to the woman to avoid getting trampled by the family of five that came up to the desk behind me.

"Is there a problem?" I asked, and though I tried to sound nonchalant, I think my voice shook.

She smiled, though the expression didn't reach her eyes. She also reached out and put her hand on my arm, leading me toward a key-carded door in the side of the building.

I tried to reach for the handle of my suitcase, but some guy in a coverall got there before me. He slapped a neon orange tag on it, then hauled it off behind the official's desk.

I wondered if I should be making a scene. But I decided that would just dig whatever hole I was in deeper.

"Don't be afraid," the woman said, still towing me toward

the door. Well, I suppose she wasn't really *towing* me. Her touch on my arm was light, and it was more like she was guiding me. But I had the feeling that if I slowed down, it wouldn't feel like guiding anymore. "It's standard procedure here to conduct interviews with a certain percentage of our visitors." Her smile broadened as she swiped her key card. "It's just your lucky day."

I was now hitting stress and sleep-deprivation overload, and my eyes stung with tears. I bit the inside of my cheek to try to keep them contained. If this was just some kind of random selection, then why had the official looked at my passport for so long? And why hadn't my dad told me it was a possibility? I certainly hadn't read anything about it in the guide books.

I was led into a sterile gray office with furniture that looked like rejects from a college dorm and a funky smell like wet wool. The imposing woman gestured me into a metal folding chair, then pulled a much more comfortable-looking rolling chair out from behind the desk. She smiled at me again.

"My name's Grace," she said. I wasn't sure if that was a first or a last name. "I'm captain of the border patrol, and I just need to ask you a few questions about your visit to Avalon; then you can be on your way."

I swallowed hard. "Okay," I said. Like I had a choice.

Grace leaned over and pulled a little spiral-bound notebook from one of the desk drawers, then readied an intricately carved silver pen over the paper. I guess the Fae aren't big on using Bics.

"What is the purpose of your visit to Avalon?" she asked.

Well, duh. I'm sixteen years old—I'm not here on a business trip. "I'm here to visit with family."

She jotted that down, then looked at me over the top of the