



# Generations

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Madaline sighed as she followed Caroline into the dark, musty store. She was one second away from being dragged, really, because they were supposed to be going into the pizza place two doors further down the block. The porcelain doll sitting on the antique chair in the large bay window, one hand in her lap and the head cocked to the side had drawn Caroline's attention and she'd instantly had to ask about it.

It wasn't like Madaline was going to wait outside on the sidewalk while her friend discussed buying the creepy-looking doll to bring home. Or more correctly, to bring to their lunch before bringing it home. If she was lucky, Caroline would leave it in the bag, not set it out at their table like it would be joining them for tea.

She'd done it once before, which is why Madaline hoped it wouldn't happen today. Something about the way the doll's vacant eyes followed her past the window had sent a shiver down her spine. Though, as she ghosted her fingers over the tops of some desks and across the back of a couple of chairs as she moved around the store a little, maybe it wasn't too much of a stretch to think maybe something in here might be haunted. Caroline had a couple that they were both sure were haunted, brought home from estate sales in surrounding towns that had seemed to move after they'd been placed in the house.

"Are you sure you can't come down a little in the price? She's missing a hand, after all. So I'm going to have to try and see if I can get her fixed." Caroline's voice rang through the store and had Madaline turn her head to watch the brunette as she talked to the man at the counter. He looked a little frustrated at the request.

A soft whisper drew her attention away from them and pulled Madaline toward the back of the store. A small case rested in a corner with some old pocket watches and keychains on the top shelf. There weren't any people though, and a frown etched its way onto her features as she glanced around. The thought that maybe someone was behind a dresser or bookcase crossed her mind but a quick peek around told her that she, Caroline, and the Store Clerk were the only three in the store.

As she looked over at the case again, her attention slid to a small round locket keychain. It looked old and was stuffed toward the back, almost forgotten or like they hadn't quite finished putting it out.

“Something interest you, dear?”

Jumping back a step, Madaline let out a shout and her hand came to rest over her heart. “Geeze! Make some noise when you approach someone please!” Her tone held the shock and slight fear she’d felt at not realizing someone had walked up to her.

Caroline couldn’t stop the laughter that escaped her as she watched her friend, bag already in hand. Just how long had she been staring at the keychain, Madaline couldn’t help but wonder.

She shot her friend a glare before straightening and pointing to the keychain. “Can I see that one?”

The Clerk nodded and unlocked the case before pulling it out. “Strange, I don’t remember this coming in.” Not that they stopped themselves from handing it over for Madaline to look over.

Metal cool to the touch when it was set in her hands, Madaline’s thumb teased along the vine design on the front of it. She saw that along one side of it, a small hinge said it should open but when she shifted it in her grip to try and pry it open nothing happened. Stuck, probably with age, she mused to herself. “How much for it?”

“Mads, do you really want something you can’t open? I’m sure you can get a better one somewhere else.” Caroline wrinkled her nose at the keychain.

The Clerk frowned at Caroline, clearly not liking how her friend was trying to talk her out of purchasing the keychain. Something about the keychain pulled at her though, so she hummed softly in thought.

“I’ll sell it for five dollars. It’s a steal really, considering how old it looks.” The Clerk offered Madaline a warm smile.

Caroline shook her head, “You don’t really need it though, do you, Mads?”

A glance between the two left Madaline wondering which she trusted the least. Why was Caroline trying so hard to talk her out of purchasing the keychain, especially at a small price point? She wasn't entirely sure, and weirder still the Clerk's eyes seemed a little strained at the corners. Like they wanted it gone, not in the store anymore. Without a word, her free hand dipped into her purse and she teased a few of the free-floating bills out.

"I'll take it." Before either could say another word she counted out the five singles and handed them over to the Clerk. She knew as she handed the bills over, though she couldn't say how, that he wouldn't bother to even worry about a receipt or proof of the transaction.

Slipping the keychain into her pocket, she glanced over at her friend. "Ready? I'm starved."

The brunette's eyes lingered on the pocket for a moment. Almost long enough that Madaline had opened her mouth to ask her question again, but before a word slipped from Madaline, Caroline offered a smile and a nod. "Yea, and then I need to get Miss Penny home and with her friends."

"Soon enough your room is going to be all doll and nowhere for you to sleep," Madaline joked as she lead them out of the store and into the sunlight once again. Her hand raised up to shield her eyes from the sun as she blinked to allow them to adjust. A glance behind her showed the inside of the store almost shadowed and barely visible now that she was outside.

They'd been in the antique store a number of times, but she couldn't remember if any other time had managed to get under her skin as much as today had. Almost like something about today made it different. As she watched the store, a ripple seemed to shimmer across her vision, making the inside of the store look a little wavy to her gaze. Though Caroline grabbed her arm and dragged her away without a second thought or giving her time to question what she'd just seen.

"They need good homes! It's not my fault that so many people abandon the poor dears!"

Caroline's words drew Madaline's attention, the ripple forgotten as potentially just the sun playing tricks on her eyes. She let herself get dragged to the pizza shop easily, drawn into the same teasing argument they always seemed to have when Caroline brought home a new friend.



It's late evening when Madaline finally remembers the keychain in her pocket, and even still not until she's getting ready for bed. Her nightly ritual of emptying out the pockets of her jeans before she takes them off, lest a twenty-dollar bill gets washed and ruined beyond usage again.

Her fingers wrap around the metal of it, still cool to her touch despite having rested against her upper thigh through the day, and she looks down at it again. The moment her eyes settle on it, a soft rush of whispers crowd her ears and she has to glance around to make sure she's actually alone in her bedroom. It's almost enough to make her drop the keychain onto her dresser, or better yet in it with her socks so she wouldn't have to look at it again.

As her thumb teased down one of the vine designs she winced and watched as a drop of her blood teased down the metal. When it hit the seam where it should open but hadn't at the store, the blood seemed to get sucked through and into it.

When a small spark popped loudly, she gasped and finally dropped the locket as she took a step back. Hand raising to her mouth, she pressed her tongue to her thumb like it would stop the bleeding, not make it potentially worse. She wasn't sure what surprised her next in those next moments.

There was no copper flavor across her tongue and when she spared a quick glance down the cut was gone. But when her eyes lifted to the keychain locket again, it rested open on the floor with a small lock of bloody hair falling out. She didn't have to get close to know the little bundle of hair was bloody, it was almost a platinum blond so the stain on it stood stark and almost proud.

In the next moment, a wisp of smoke lifted itself up and formed into a tall, dark-haired man as he stretched his arms up to the ceiling. Fingertips almost brushed the plaster above him as he gave out a groan, shirt riding up a little to show off very pale skin. “Zeus almighty, I feel like I’ve been in there for centuries!”

The scream caught in Madaline’s throat and she stumbled back enough to tumble into the overstuffed armchair completely across the room from the man. He stood between her and the door, trapping her in with him. Not that he had looked at her yet, more interested in stretching out almost every muscle in his body first.

“You know, you’re going to catch flies if you leave your mouth open like that.” His words were slow and almost lazy.

Madaline’s mouth snapped shut, her nose taking in more air as she tried to figure out what was happening. Where he’d come from. It couldn’t have been her keychain could it? “W...who are you? Where did you come from?”

She watched his almost midnight gaze flicker over to her before dismissing her for curiosity over some of the things in the room. The ceiling light, her nightstand lamp, her laptop which was sitting on a lap desk on her bed.

“Like you don’t know. You freed me. How long have I been asleep?” When she watched him silently without an answer he finally raised his eyes to her, brow arching just a little. “Come now, little witch, it’s not the first time you’ve seen a god, right?”

Her brows knit together a little and she shook her head. Though it wasn’t exactly in answer to what he was asking. “I’m not a witch. Gods are just myths...stories told in history class...”

This only seemed to draw his full attention to her and he crossed the room and dropped to one knee in front of her. “You don’t know what you are?” His hands caught one of hers gently, trapping it between them.

A thrum of something pulsed against her skin and her eyes started to grow heavy, everything in her calming down despite the earlier spike of adrenaline. "What are you doing to me?" The question felt heavy on her lips and the words slurred together.

*Sleep.*

That single word pushed against her almost completely and before she could answer or fight it, everything went dark.

## About the Author

Meri Benson is a Chicago native that has always been in love with the written word. When not living in other people's worlds, she's creating her own. From urban fantasy worlds that mirror our own to fantasy worlds that transport you to fantastical places, she loves crafting them all. Her favorite distractions from creative endeavors and writing is her cat that enjoy 'helping' by settling himself on her, or whatever project has stolen her attention away from her number one "fan".

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