

Cross My

**H**e**a**r**t**

and

Hope to

**S**P**y**

a l l y c a r t e r

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*For Faith & Lily,  
the next generation of Gallagher Girls*

**Gallagher Girls preview chapter extract**

# Chapter **One**

“**J**ust be yourself,” my mother said, as if that were easy. Which it isn’t. Ever. Especially not when you’re fifteen and don’t know what language you’re going to have to speak at lunch, or what name you’ll have to use the next time you do a “project” for extra credit. Not when your nickname is “the Chameleon.”

Not when you go to a school for spies.

Of course, if you’re reading this, you probably have at least a Level Four clearance and know all about the Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women—that it isn’t *really* a boarding school for privileged girls, and that, despite our gorgeous mansion and manicured grounds, we’re not snobs. We’re spies. But on that January day, even my mother . . . even my *headmistress* . . . seemed to have forgotten that when you’ve spent your whole life learning fourteen different languages and how to completely alter your appearance using nothing but nail clippers and shoe polish, then

being yourself gets a little harder—that we Gallagher Girls are really far better at being someone else.

(And we've got the fake IDs to prove it.)

My mother slipped her arm around me and whispered, "It's going to be okay, kiddo," as she guided me through the crowds of shoppers that filled Pentagon City Mall. Security cameras tracked our every move, but still my mother said, "It's fine. It's protocol. It's normal."

But ever since I was four years old and inadvertently cracked a Sapphire Series NSA code my dad had brought home after a mission to Singapore, it had been pretty obvious that the term *normal* would probably never apply to me.

After all, normal girls probably love going to the mall with their pockets full of Christmas money. Normal girls don't get summoned to D.C. on the last day of winter break. And normal girls very rarely feel like hyperventilating when their mothers pull a pair of jeans off a rack and tell a saleslady, "Excuse me, my daughter would like to try these on."

I felt anything but normal as the saleslady searched my eyes for some hidden clue. "Have you tried the ones from Milan?" she asked. "I hear the European styles are very flattering."

Beside me, my mother fingered the soft denim. "Yes, I used to have a pair like this, but they got ruined at the cleaners."

And then the saleslady pointed down a narrow hallway. A hint of a smile was on her face. "I believe dressing room number *seven* is available." She started to walk away, then turned back to me and whispered, "Good luck."

And I totally knew I was going to need it.

We walked together down the narrow hall, and once we were inside the dressing room my mother closed the door. Our eyes met in the mirror, and she said, "Are you ready?"

And then I did the thing we Gallagher Girls are best at—I lied. "Sure."

We pressed our palms against the cool, smooth mirror and felt the glass grow warm beneath our skin.

"You're going to do great," Mom said, as if being myself wouldn't be so hard or so terrible. As if I hadn't spent my entire life wanting to be *her*.

And then the ground beneath us started to shake.

The walls rose as the floor sank. Bright lights flashed white, burning my eyes. I reached dizzily for my mother's arm.

"Just a body scan," she said reassuringly, and the elevator continued its descent farther and farther beneath the city. A wave of hot air blasted my face like the world's biggest hair dryer. "Biohazard detectors," Mom explained as we continued our smooth, quick ride.

Time seemed to stand still, but I knew to count the seconds. One minute. Two minutes . . .

"Almost there," Mom said. We descended through a thin laser beam that read our retinal images. Moments later, a bright orange light pulsed, and I felt the elevator stop. The doors slid open.

And then my mouth went slack.

Tiles made of black granite and white marble stretched

across the floor of the cavernous space like a life-size chessboard. Twin staircases twisted from opposite corners of the massive room, spiraling forty feet to the second story, framing a granite wall that bore the silver seal of the CIA and the motto I know by heart:

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.*

As I stepped forward I saw elevators—dozens of them—lining the wall that curved behind us. Stainless steel letters above the elevator from which we'd just emerged spelled out WOMEN'S WEAR, MALL. To the right, another was labeled MEN'S ROOM, ROSLYN METRO STATION.

A screen on top of the elevator flashed our names. RACHEL MORGAN, DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT. I glanced at Mom as the screen changed. CAMERON MORGAN, TEMPORARY GUEST.

There was a loud ding, and soon DAVID DUNCAN, IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS REMOVAL DIVISION was emerging from the elevator labeled SAINT SEBASTIAN CONFESSIONAL, at which point I totally started freaking out—but not in the Oh-my-gosh-I'm-in-a-top-secret-facility-that's-three-times-more-secure-than-the-White-House sense. No, my freak-outedness was purely of the This-is-the-coolest-thing-that's-ever-happened-to-me sense, because, despite three and a half years of training, I'd temporarily forgotten why we were here.

“Come on, sweetie,” Mom said, taking my hand and pulling me through the atrium, where people climbed purposefully up the spiraling stairs. They carried newspapers and chatted over cups of coffee. It was almost . . . normal. But

then Mom approached a guard who was missing half his nose and one ear, and I thought about how when you're a Gallagher Girl, normal is a completely relative thing.

"Welcome, ladies," the guard said. "Place your palms here." He indicated the smooth counter in front of him, and as soon as we touched the surface I felt the heat of the scanner that was memorizing my prints. A mechanical printer sprang to life somewhere, and the guard leaned down to retrieve two badges.

"Well, Rachel Morgan," he said, looking at my mother as if she hadn't been standing right in front of him for a full minute, "welcome back! And this must be little . . ." The man squinted, trying to read the badge in his hand.

"This is my daughter, Cameron."

"Of course she is! She looks just like you." Which just proved that whatever terrible nose incident he'd experienced had no doubt affected his eyes, too, because while Rachel Morgan has frequently been described as beautiful, *I* am usually described as nondescript. "Strap this on, young lady," the guard said, handing me the ID badge. "And don't lose it—it's loaded with a tracking chip and a half milligram of C-4. If you try to remove it or enter an unauthorized area, it'll detonate." He stared at me. "And then you'll die."

I swallowed hard, then suddenly understood why take-your-daughter-to-work day was never really an option in the Morgan family.

"Okay," I muttered, taking the badge gingerly. Then the man slapped the counter, and—spy training or not—I jumped.

“Ha!” The guard let out a sharp laugh and leaned closer to my mother. “The Gallagher Academy is growing them more gullible than it did in my day, Rachel,” he teased, then winked at me. “Spy humor.”

Well, personally, I didn’t think his “humor” was all that funny, but my mother smiled and took my arm again. “Come on, kiddo, you don’t want to be late.”

She led me down a sunny corridor that made it almost impossible to believe we were underground. Bright, cool light splashed the gray walls and reminded me of Sublevel One at school . . . which reminded me of my Covert Operations class . . . which reminded me of finals week . . . which reminded me of . . .

Josh.

We passed the Office of Guerrilla Warfare but didn’t slow down. Two women waved to my mother outside the Department of Cover and Concealment, but we didn’t stop to chat.

We walked faster, going deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of secrets, until the corridor branched and we could either go left, toward the Department of Sabotage and Seemingly Accidental Explosions, or right, to the Office of Operative Development and Human Intelligence. And despite the FLAME-RESISTANT BODYSUITS MANDATORY BEYOND THIS POINT sign marking the hallway to my left, I’d much rather have gone in that direction. Or just back to the mall. Anywhere but where I knew I had to go.

Because even though the truth can set you free, that doesn’t mean it won’t be painful.

“My name is Cammie.”

“No, what’s your *full* name?” asked the man in front of the polygraph machine, as if I weren’t wearing the aforementioned (and supposedly nonexplosive) name badge.

I thought about my mother’s words of wisdom and took a deep breath. “Cameron Ann Morgan.”

The room around me was completely bare, except for a stainless steel table, two chairs, and a mirror made of one-way glass. I probably wasn’t the first Gallagher Girl to sit in that sterile room—after all, debriefs *are* a part of the covert operations package. Still, I couldn’t help squirming in the hard metal chair—maybe because it was cold in there, maybe because I was nervous, maybe because I was experiencing a slight underwear *situation*. (Note to self: develop a wedgie theory of interrogation—there could totally be something to it!) But the efficient-looking man in the wire-rim glasses was too busy twisting knobs and punching keys, trying to figure out what the truth sounded like coming from me, to care about my fidgeting.

“The Gallagher Academy doesn’t teach interrogation procedures until we’re juniors, you know?” I said, but the man just muttered, “Uh-huh.”

“And I’m just a sophomore, so you shouldn’t worry about the results coming out all screwy or anything. I’m not immune to your powers of interrogation.” *Yet*.

“Good to know,” he mumbled, but his eyes never left the screens.

“I know it’s just standard protocol, so just . . . ask away.” I was babbling, but couldn’t seem to stop. “Really,” I said. “Whatever you need to know, just—”

“Do you attend the Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women?” the man blurted, and for reasons I will never understand I said, “Uh . . . yes?” as if it might be a trick question.

“Have you ever studied the subject of Covert Operations?”

“Yes,” I said again, feeling my confidence, or maybe just my training, coming back to me.

“Did your Covert Operations coursework ever take you to the town of Roseville, Virginia?”

Even in that sterile room beneath Washington, D.C., I could almost feel the hot, humid night last September. I could almost hear the band and smell the corn dogs.

My stomach growled as I said, “Yes.”

Polygraph Guy made notes and studied the bank of monitors that surrounded him. “Is that when you first noticed The Subject?”

Here’s the thing about being a spy in love: your boyfriend never has a name. People like Polygraph Guy were never just going to call him Josh. He would always be The Subject, a *person of interest*. Taking away his name was their way of taking him away, or what was left of him. So I said, “Yes,” and tried not to let my voice crack.

“And you utilized your training to develop a relationship with The Subject?”

“Gee, when you say it like that—”

“Yes or no, Ms.—”

“Yes!”

Which, I would like to point out, is not nearly as bad as it sounds since, for example, you don’t need a search warrant to go through someone’s trash. Seriously. Once it hits the curb it is totally fair game—you can look it up.

But somehow I knew that the Office of Operative Development and Human Intelligence was probably far less concerned about the trash thing than it was about what came *after* the trash thing. So I was fully prepared when Polygraph Guy said, “Did The Subject follow you during your Covert Operations final examination?”

I thought about Josh appearing in the abandoned warehouse during finals week, bursting through walls and commandeering a forklift to “save” me, so I swallowed hard as I said, “Yes.”

“And was The Subject given memory-modification tea to erase the events of that night?”

It sounded so easy coming from him, so black-and-white. Sure, my mom gave Josh some tea that’s supposed to wipe a person’s memory blank, erase a few hours of their life, and give everyone a clean slate. But clean slates are a rare thing in any life—especially a spy’s life—so I didn’t let myself wonder for the millionth time what Josh remembered about that night, about me. I didn’t torture myself with any of the questions that might never have answers as I sat there, knowing that there is no such thing as black-and-white—remembering

that my whole life is, by definition, a little bit gray.

I nodded, then muttered, “Yes.” Like it or not, I knew I had to say the word out loud.

He made some more notes, punched some keys. “Are you currently involved with The Subject in any way?”

“No,” I blurted, because I knew that much was true. I hadn’t seen Josh, hadn’t spoken to him, hadn’t even hacked into his e-mail account over winter break, which, given present circumstances, turned out to be a pretty good thing. (Plus, I had spent the last two weeks in Nebraska with Grandpa and Grandma Morgan, and they have dial-up, which takes forever!)

Then the man in the wire-rim glasses looked away from the screen and straight into my eyes. “And do you intend to reinitiate contact with The Subject despite strict rules prohibiting such a relationship?”

There it was: the question I’d pondered for weeks.

There I was: Cammie the Chameleon—the Gallagher Girl who had risked the most sacred sisterhood in the history of espionage. For a boy.

“Ms. Morgan,” Polygraph Guy said, growing impatient, “are you going to reinitiate contact with The Subject?”

“No,” I said softly.

Then I glanced back at the screen to see if I was lying.

## Chapter **t**wO

**I**f you've ever been debriefed by the CIA, then you probably know exactly how I felt two hours later as I sat in the backseat of a limousine, watching city give way to suburbs and suburbs to countryside. Dirty piles of blackened ice became thick blankets of lush white snow, and the world seemed clean and new—ready for a fresh start.

I was through with lying (except for official cover stories, of course). And sneaking around (well . . . except when involved in covert operations). I was going to be normal! (Or as normal as a student at spy school ever gets a chance to be.)

I was going to be . . . myself.

I looked at my mother and reiterated the promise that I would never let a boy come between me and my family or my friends or matters of national security ever again. Then I realized that she'd hardly said a word since we'd left D.C. "I did okay, didn't I?" I asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.