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THE DAISY CHAIN FLOWER SHOP

Dream Harbor Series

Book 6

LAURIE GILMORE



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Chapter One

Daisy Scott, current owner of The Daisy Chain Flower Shop, was just one Daisy in a long line of Daisies. Her mother was Daisy. Her grandmother was Daisy. The literal chain of Daisies went back for at least a hundred years. The women in her family passed down the name and the flower shop as diligently as they tended to their blooms. It was all very quaint, and she had quit fighting it years ago. But as far as Daisy knew, she was the first one to be cursed.

Not that she actually believed in curses, at least not at first. Mostly because it wasn't 1850 and she had a working brain. She had rejected the notion completely. Sure, three weddings she had done flowers for had ended in divorce within a year, but as far as she knew Jeanie and Logan were still going strong. Didn't that count for something?! And yes, she did have an ex-husband *and* an ex-fiancé, but there was no way her own unlucky love life was somehow rubbing off on to other people, right? That would be crazy.

The whole notion was crazy, and she wasn't even sure

the town would have cared if Mayor Kelly hadn't mentioned some foggy notion of a dream he'd had at a packed town meeting six months ago. He'd apparently seen a dark cloud hovering over the flower shop, and that was enough for the townsfolk to run with. Tales of her own sordid history and of the trail of broken relationships she left in her wake had been greatly exaggerated, and naturally, had spread like wildfire. Daisy had booked nothing but funerals ever since—with the exception of Jeanie and Logan's wedding—but that had been all Annie's doing. That woman could make anything happen. The mayor had felt terrible about her loss of business, and he'd been buying mixed bouquets every Saturday to make up for it. But a bouquet once a week did not make up for lost wedding revenue.

That man was a menace.

Still, she refused to believe she was actually *cursed*. She blamed small-town gossip and her own inability to pick a good partner for her current situation. Not a curse. But much like how she had tried to reject her name in the fourth grade, trying desperately to convince everyone to call her Jade, her denial of the curse didn't stick. In her head, or in reality.

And as she stood behind the counter of the shop with the early April sun streaming in through the stained-glass window above the door, leaving a kaleidoscope of colors on the worn wood floor, her ex-fiancé waltzed in with his new fiancée and confirmed once and for all the existence of curses.

A dark cloud, indeed.

Son of a bitch...

'David, hi!' Well, that sounded far too perky. Tone it down, Daisy. You shouldn't be nearly that eager to see your ex. 'What brings you in?' she asked, casually brushing petals and leaf bits off the counter from the giant funeral wreath she'd been working on.

This was fine. Totally fine that her ex, who she hadn't seen since the break-up and didn't even live in this town, was showing up in her shop on a random Tuesday afternoon. And that he was looking as handsome as ever; blond hair artfully sculpted away from his defined cheekbones and incredible jawline. *Totally fine*.

'Hey, Daisy.' Her ex, the man she had planned on spending the rest of her life with, tipped his head to the side as he looked at her. It was a pitying look. A look that said he felt sorry for her, like some horrible tragedy had befallen her. But the only tragedy was him dumping her a month before they were supposed to get married. Via text. And she really wished she could say she hated him. That she was over the whole fiasco. That it didn't cut her to her very core that he was already engaged again after only a year of them being broken up when she hadn't even managed to go on a single date. But she couldn't say any of those things.

Daisy wished she could be a 'Jade'. She wished her entirely black wardrobe transferred to her insides as well. But Daisy was actually still the little girl her mother used to dress in yellow dresses until the age of nine. Daisy was soft. Daisy was still in love with David. And she hated herself for it.

'Hi, Daisy! It's so nice to finally meet you! You have such an adorable shop,' the woman on David's arm cooed as she looked around at the stuffed-to-the-brim store.

Hailey.

Daisy only knew her name from the copious amount of internet stalking she'd done after she and David had ended things. Hailey, who worked in marketing for a firm in the city, was a Leo, loved brunch—and from what Daisy could tell—spent all her spare time at the gym or drinking matcha lattes and posting about it. Hailey, who had a much cooler name than *Daisy*.

Daisy would really like to hate her, too, but Hailey was smiling so genuinely as her eyes flicked from the refrigerated roses to the dried bouquets to the potted plants in the window, that Daisy was having a hard time with that one. She seemed nice. She was cute. Honestly, Daisy could see the appeal.

'It's nice to meet you, too. Uh ... what brings you guys in?'

Translation: what the hell are you doing in my town and have you come into my store just to remind me of how shitty my life currently is?

Daisy's face hurt from the fake smile she'd contorted her mouth into. She absolutely would not let David's pitying look get to her.

Hailey looked up at David, beaming with perfectly straight teeth, and David, *Daisy's David*, smiled down at Hailey with hearts in his eyes. Daisy thought she might be sick. 'We are scouting wedding venues, and I remembered how quaint Dream Harbor was,' he said, as though this was all perfectly reasonable, as though he wasn't infiltrating *her* town, *her* life. 'We're checking out the inn this afternoon and The Christmas Tree Farm tomorrow.'

'They both look so lovely!' Hailey continued to beam, and Daisy's breakfast burrito rose higher in her throat.

'Of course, even if we get married in town, we'd find someone else to do the flowers. That would be a bit too awkward,' David said with a laugh.

'Right, of course, totally.' Daisy forced herself to laugh, too, but it came out as more of a bark. Hailey's eyes widened in concern at the sound.

This was surely a new level of hell. She didn't know what she was more upset about: her ex possibly getting married to his shiny new girlfriend in her hometown, or that she wasn't even going to get any business out of it. It was almost enough to make her choke out another insane laugh. Which, apparently, she did, because Hailey was looking like she was preparing to call the emergency room to have her checked out.

'Unless this all makes you uncomfortable...'

David tipped his head again like he was looking at an injured puppy. 'I just figured it's been a year and we've both moved on...'

'Totally! Totally moved on!' Dear God, was she yelling? She seemed to have lost control of her voice. She did another hyena-esque laugh, and Hailey took a few steps back from the counter.

'I'm just going to browse over here...' she said, wandering away, but not before shooting David a look that clearly said she wanted him to take care of his mess of an ex.

'Look, Daisyboo.' David leaned closer, his toned arms on the counter, the smell of his expensive cologne overtaking the earthy smell of flowers.

'Don't call me that,' Daisy whispered, even as her heart leapt at the old nickname. She really was cursed. Cursed to pick men who didn't love her.

'Sorry, old habit.' He smiled that damn charming smile, the one that had fooled her into thinking he loved her. 'I just wanted to say, if this is too much, we'll leave right now... It's just that Hailey really likes this place ... and I thought we could all be adults about this.'

'Of course she does. Everyone likes it here,' Daisy bit out, trying desperately not to let David see how miserable she was, how alone.

It was true. Everyone loved Dream Harbor. She'd somehow managed to forget that fact in the year she'd been away. The year she spent with David, moving into *his* condo, living closer to the city so he could be near *his* job, hanging out with *his* friends.

She'd forgotten how much she secretly loved this little shop, how much she missed her friends and seeing her parents and grandparents all the time.

Not that she'd admit it.

Not that it didn't still feel like she'd failed at something.

At love, mostly.

At being in a functional relationship.

She may have loved this shop, but it didn't change the fact that being back here just reminded her every day of what she'd lost.

The bell over the door jangled as a new customer walked in, giving Daisy a brief moment of reprieve. She recognized him from somewhere. The café, maybe? Or Jeanie's wedding! Elliot. That was it. The guy with the glasses who kept looking at her. Kinda like he was now.

Like a deer in headlights when Daisy caught his eye. But a cute deer, with a slight blush on his cheeks and ruffled hair like maybe he'd just woken up.

And Daisy didn't know if it was David's stupid handsome face, or Hailey's perfect gym-toned ass, or if it was the memory of the way Elliot had looked at her that night at the wedding, like maybe he wanted her, that made her do what she did next. It certainly wasn't any rational thought.

But when fighting a curse, maybe it was best to abandon rationality completely.

'Really David, it's fine with me. Like you said, we've both moved on.' Daisy smiled and waved at Elliot in the doorway. 'In fact, here's my new boyfriend now. Elliot, come say hi!'

Chapter Two

Elliot had been avoiding the flower shop for two reasons. Both having to do with the nearly frantic woman currently waving him over and calling him her boyfriend.

Daisy.

Lovely, soft Daisy.

Daisy, whom he'd spent far too much time thinking about ever since she'd arrived in town. He'd only been living here for a few months at that point, still wondering why he'd chosen this little town to hide out in. And then there she was, storming into a town meeting like she owned the place.

And he'd very nearly fallen in love with her.

A terrible habit of his.

Which was reason number one for avoiding the pretty little flower shop on Main Street and its pretty little owner. Elliot had moved to Dream Harbor to forget about love.

To avoid it entirely, if possible. After two years, he still hadn't been able to shake off the failure and heartache his divorce had caused, and he wasn't eager to try again.

He hardly knew Daisy. But he knew himself and he knew he had already developed an absurd crush on the woman based almost completely on the way she argued with everyone at town meetings and the way she looked in a tight black T-shirt. Like the one she wore now. Even with the faded, daisy-print apron she wore over it, he could see how it hugged all her curves.

Elliot swallowed hard.

He should not be looking at Daisy's curves. Daisy's curves were sure to lead nowhere good. At least, in the long term. In the short term, he was sure Daisy's curves would lead him to all sorts of amazing places.

But that wasn't the point, because the second reason he'd stayed away was a bit more insane but tied in with the first. Daisy was cursed. Not that Elliot believed in curses, but if town gossip was to be trusted, Daisy left a trail of broken hearts in her wake, and Elliot's was broken enough. He was fairly certain it didn't even work anymore, and so the issue of Daisy's black T-shirt was moot, really.

'Elliot.' Daisy's voice snapped his attention from her shirt to her face. Her eyes were wide, nearly pleading with him. She obviously wanted him to go along with whatever weird situation this was, but Elliot's thoughts were stuck on one thing. *She knows my name.*

Elliot had a tendency to blend in. To hide, his brother would say. He was just shy, his mother would insist. But Elliot wasn't sure it was either of those things. He was an

observer. He liked to watch people, and he didn't feel a huge need to thrust himself into the action. Which most people seemed to find either creepy or boring.

But somewhere along the line, Daisy had learned his name.

And apparently now she needed him. 'Come over and say hi to David,' she said again, her volume increasing with each word. 'You remember David, *my ex*. I told you about him.' She raised her eyebrows dramatically like she was waiting for him to remember his line.

It was time to thrust himself into the action.

'David, right, of course,' he said, stepping up to shake the man's hand. 'So nice to meet you.' If there was one thing Elliot understood, it was the pain and embarrassment of running into your ex and their new person. He'd experienced it one too many times before moving here.

Daisy mouthed *thank you* over David's shoulder and scurried around the counter to stand next to Elliot. She grabbed his hand in hers, twining their fingers together, and Elliot had to swallow the startled sigh that wanted to escape his lips. It had been a long time since someone had held his hand. And Daisy's was so warm and small and perfect.

'I didn't realize you were seeing anyone,' David said, clearly still trying to piece together what was going on while Elliot tried to keep his shit together about a girl holding his hand like he was twelve.

'Yes, I'm seeing someone.' Daisy still sounded a bit unhinged, so Elliot gave her hand a gentle squeeze. She looked up at him with a surprised smile. 'I'm seeing someone,' she said again, rolling her shoulders back.