LIBRIS | We know books

BY LEIGH RIVERS

Edge of Darkness trilogy
Insatiable
Voracious
Restitution

Psychotic Obsession

Web of Silence duet
Little Stranger
Little Liar



THE EDGE OF DARKNESS TRILOGY

INSATIABLE

BOOK 1

LEIGH RIVERS

PIATKUS

LIBRIS | We know books

PROLOGUE

KADE

SIX YEARS AGO

I fucking hate people.

Especially parties.

It might be my fifteenth, but that doesn't mean I'm going to participate in the celebration like my twin sister keeps insisting. I don't like the attention or being around groups in general.

Mum told me we could have a joint party; we've been doing it this way for years. But fuck that – I hate it. And if I hear the song "Single Ladies" one more time, I will lose my shit. Most of the people here are fourteen still and have a crush on anime characters, for fuck's sake.

I had to escape to my room like I always do.

Locking my room door is mandatory, because sack having any

LIBRIS We know books

of them tell my mum I'm smoking out on my balcony. Ewan, my stepfather, caught me last week while having a draw in the pool house and said if I did it again, he'd tell her.

No one wants that woman yelling at them, scary bastard that she is.

I like my privacy, my own space where I'm unbothered. I have my key jammed in the hole, the latch on and a chair against the door. No chances of anyone ruining my peace.

I'd rather fill my lungs with smoke.

It makes me feel weird, to be honest. People might think it's great to be the centre of attention when they walk into a room, but I can't stand it. I'd rather be invisible. I'd rather no one knew who I was, or my family history, or do everything they can to talk to me.

They don't want to know who I am, not really.

You'd think living in one of the largest manors in the west of Scotland, they'd struggle to find my room, my wing, but unfortunately, they have, and if one more person knocks my door, I'll put a cig out in their eye.

I should go to the party before Mum or Ewan can bang on the door and give me shit, but I can't seem to move from the balcony.

Because I'm preoccupied.

She has no idea I'm watching her.

Away from the rest, away from the party, a girl with long dark hair, wearing a little black dress, sits on the edge of the pool with her feet in the water.

Something about her intrigues me, so I keep my eyes on her.

I like to watch people from afar. I'll study the way they act, their facial expressions and body language in certain situations, the tones of their voices. I intentionally make people uncomfortable just to see their reactions. My teachers are forever complaining to my parents.

Mum tells me to stop it, but it's a great way to pass time and try to understand things that don't come naturally to me.

I tilt my head to the side and stare at the girl with intense fascination.

Why is she not at the party? And who the fuck is she? I've never seen her before.

I can't stop looking at her – I don't want to stop – unable to tear my gaze away as she stares at the starry sky. She must be cold, surely. September is nothing short of fucking Baltic.

Maybe I should take her down my hoodie and...

What? Shut the fuck up, Kade.

I stub out my smoke then toss it into the ashtray hidden under my balcony ledge, keeping my eyes on the mystery girl while I shove on my trainers.

Mum will come for me at any moment for the birthday cake. I waft the smell of cigarettes from my room and cover it up with air freshener.

My phone dings in my pocket, and I quickly pull it out while I brush my teeth. The group chat I have with my two best friends pops up. Dez is pissed he isn't here. And Base asks if I want to go to a real party followed by Russian words I don't understand.

Before I can reply with a *yes*, I hear footsteps.

My shoulders slump. *Here we go.*

"Kade!" Mum bellows from the other side of my door.

I roll my eyes, place my toothbrush back in the holder and switch my phone screen off.

"Are you in there?"

I kick aside the chair and pull the latch. "Yep."

When I swing it open, I'm met with her scowling at me, arms crossed, tapping her foot on the ground. She's smaller than me, with blonde hair that's nothing like my dark. Similar eyes, blue and sleepy, but hers are glaring at me while I look at her, giving her a bored expression.

"Were you smoking again? I can smell it from the stairs."

"No," I lie, dodging her and making my way down the spiral staircase my stepdad Ewan designed for me.

"Your sister was looking for you. You missed the cake."

I pull up my hood and tighten the strings, burying my hands into the front pocket as I grunt. Luciella has always been the golden child, the favourite, the one who doesn't give my mum and Ewan any problems. They both worship the ground she walks on. I get it. I'm not like them. I'm not like my twin sister.

Luciella would never be caught smoking or drinking at the age

LIBRIS We know books

of thirteen, and definitely wouldn't be brought home by the police after punching an officer.

He deserved it.

I'm sure everyone sees me as the bad kid. The one the family dreads when they get together. I used to give a fuck and attempt to fit in, but now I prefer my own company – the loner. They keep their distance, and so do I.

Mum does try though, probably too much.

She thinks I didn't hear her crying to my dad over the phone about my "mood swings", begging him to help her deal with their "unfeeling" teenage son. But I'm not a completely emotionless robot. I care about Dez and Base, and, when she isn't a pain in my ass, Luciella. I just don't see the point in following stupid rules or talking about feelings I don't really get.

There's nothing wrong with who I am. Even Dad tells me I'm special and never to take offence at how others view me.

He's probably the only person on earth who truly understands me, yet he lives thousands of miles away in a mental institution – he's committed numerous crimes and is deemed too dangerous to live amongst the public.

It's pretty fucking promising for me that he remembers feeling the same way I do.

The famous Tobias Mitchell, American psychopath. The insane killer who took over every news channel in the world. He's labelled as ruthless and unpredictable. Dangerous. A threat to life. Yet, when we visit the institution, he's a caring dad who wants to know everything that's going on in our lives. He tries to be involved as much as he can and looks at my mum like she's the only woman in the world, full of complete adoration.

Even though he tried to kill her.

Yep. He can keep his crazy; I have my own.

My stepdad has been in my life since birth and does what he can. He takes me for boxing lessons in an attempt at some father–son bonding, like he did with my stepbrother Jason. But he's grown up now and has his own life, so it seems Ewan has moved on to me.

I finish pouring a drink of juice and walk around the table.

Some of my sister's friends are giggling, whispering between

them while openly watching me, and it makes me uncomfortable. The mystery girl by the pool isn't here though.

Not that I'm looking.

I make a quick escape by pushing through the crowd and going out onto the grounds. The glow from the spotlights leads the way to the pool house.

When I reach the end of the path, I glance over my shoulder to make sure no one has followed me before continuing. The ripples from the water reflect on the glass door of the pool house, and I lean against it, pulling out a cigarette.

I look out to the loch, the moon resting just above the Munros in the distance. The manor is surrounded by water and green forests, and it's kind of relaxing.

I close my eyes as the nicotine burns my lungs, releasing it in a cloud of smoke.

The sound of splashing has me frowning, nearly dropping the cigarette from my mouth when I see the mystery girl is still here. She's perched on her elbows, casually chilling at the edge of the pool, still admiring the stars in the sky.

I shouldn't feel a rush of excitement, but I do.

What do I do? Talk to her? Walk away? Hide?

"Who are you?" I ask, taking another drag as I walk towards her.

She doesn't acknowledge my existence, and I really want her to look at me. I try again. "Hello? Who are you?"

I don't like being ignored, especially by a random person who resembles a ghost with freckles all over her body. I wouldn't usually try to socialise but colour me fucking intrigued.

From her side profile, I can openly admit she's pretty. The thought smacks me upside the head because I've never thought of someone as pretty before.

I assumed I was defective in that department, but since I like the way she looks, perhaps I'm not. It's hard to study her the way I do others, but I'm more than happy to just... look at her.

Getting annoyed with the silence, I huff. "You should go back inside. It's too cold out here, Freckles."

Grimacing, I mentally punch myself in the dick. *Freckles? Really, Kade?*

LIBRIS We know books

Still silent.

If she ignores me one more time, I'm shoving her in the fucking water.

I shake my head.

Sitting on the bench next to the diving board, I inhale, unsure why I keep talking. I never talk. "You don't go to my school."

I freeze when she looks up at me, and fucking hell, her eyes are insane. Coughing out the rest of my smoke, I lean my elbows on my knees as she stands, shaking off the water from her legs and slipping on her shoes.

I don't get it. Or her. Or why she's walking around the pool towards me.

Wait.

She's walking towards me.

Oh shit. What the fuck is she doing? *Go away.*

My breath is slowly being ripped from my lungs as she draws closer. In fact, I don't think I'm breathing at all.

Her hair flows down her back in curls, freckles dusting over her skin, and those eyes are fucking killing me. They aren't blue, maybe a light green mixed with silver, like a forest in winter.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

She sits beside me and takes the cigarette from my lips, then places it between her own. The touch of her fingers against my lips doesn't make me uncomfortable.

I try not to show how much she's affecting me by looking away, but my insides are somersaulting.

I clear my throat while she smokes my cigarette like it's hers. There's a breeze and fuck do I inhale the sweet vanilla – she smells good.

I turn my head and watch as she rests back, the end of the cigarette bright orange. Then she blows a cloud above us, eyes closed as the smoke dissipates in the air.

Her eyes open, and now she's looking at me. I'm stuck gazing right back at her beauty.

Fuck.

Once she's done, she places what's left of the cigarette back in my mouth. Her fingertips graze my lips and send a spark to my

chest, and I'm not sure what that means. I toss the finished bud aside.

"My name is Stacey." Her voice is soft, quiet and calming. Colour me even more fucking intrigued. "I joined Luciella's dance class a few months ago."

I wouldn't mind watching her body move, to see her in her element. I bet she moves beautifully too.

Stop.

I light another smoke since she finished mine, eyeing her every few seconds as we sit in silence.

Stacey.

A name for the mystery girl.

"What age are you?" I ask.

She smiles at me, and shit, I've never liked someone's smile before. I find myself faintly smiling back at her.

"I just turned fifteen. Same as you."

Same as you.

The three words have me wanting to know more about her.

Her grin grows when I hum, a dimple denting deep in her cheek, and she looks away and tucks a strand of hair behind her ear.

Butterflies, I think.

I wonder if she feels them too?

I must be ill. I'll need to ask Mum what the fuck is wrong with me.

"You sound American *and* Scottish," she says. "So does Luciella."

We spend a lot of time in America visiting our father. It was only natural we picked up the accent over the years. Mine is a lot stronger and deeper.

Hearing people yelling for Stacey, I sigh, knowing our meeting is about to be cut short.

As much as I'd love to sit here and stare at her like a creep, I need to leave before she thinks I'm a weirdo trying to chase some girl I don't even know.

"Giving you a heads-up," I begin, flicking the cigarette into the grass as soon as I see my sister's blonde head. I narrow my eyes. Even though I don't want to say the next words that leave my mouth, my impulsiveness wins. "Just because you're my sister's friend doesn't

LIBRIS | We know books

mean you can speak to me. Stay the fuck out of my way."

As I turn to leave, she lets out a mocking laugh.

"Funny," she snaps back, and I halt in my tracks, brows knitting together as I glance over my shoulder at her.

She pops out her hip and crosses her arms. "And cute. I was just about to say the same thing to you. So why don't you stay the fuck out of my way, *Kade*?"

I like the way my name sounds on her tongue.

I smirk, loving this side of her. "Or else what?"

Ah, fuck. Freckles is even prettier when she's mad.

The butterflies are going fucking wild, and I have no idea how to repress the feeling.

She barges into me with her shoulder, and I can't stop the grin pulling at my lips as she marches away with my sister.

Her scent lingers, her dark hair bouncing down her back, but she keeps facing forward, refusing to give me that one last look at her I'm desperate for – until she's about to vanish down the pathway among the trees, when she turns and gives me the middle finger.

Fucking hell. Why am I smiling?

1

STACEY

SIX YEARS LATER

I pull the duvet away, slowly and quietly, and slide my legs out of the bed first. He stirs and reaches across the mattress, but I'm out and on my feet before he can touch me.

My dress and underwear are scattered across the floor, my heels probably on his stairs or in the living room. A Tinder date that began in the pub, something to keep me busy. After a few drinks and endless flirting, he invited me back here.

Is it bad that I can't quite remember his name? He's either Bryan or Byron. They do sound the same. I'll need to check his profile before I delete the app.

I notice a few missed calls on my phone from my best friend Lu, one from my other best friend Tylar and several messages from my

LIBRIS We know books

stepbrother, demanding to know my whereabouts.

I groan, rubbing my temples to try to ease my headache, then open Luciella's contact and type out a message.

> ***Me**: Can you pick me up? I'm at Branchton. There's a row of houses across from a church. Do you know the place?*

I tiptoe down the steps with my heels and jacket to hand until I reach the bottom, sitting on the bottom step.

My phone vibrates.

> ***Lu**: On my way. Be there in five.*

Thank God.

I know my friends are going to want the details. I can already hear the high-pitched squeals they'll make when they hear I finally had sex after months of not being the slightest bit interested.

The last person I slept with told me that as much as I'm a lovely girl, he couldn't meet up again. Weirdly enough, he went missing a few days later, and still is.

Being called a *lovely girl* at the age of twenty-one annoyed the hell out of me.

There's a car horn sounding outside, and I sigh in relief.

Luciella's stepfather bought her the car for getting into university. Ty is planning on taking over her family's dance studio.

I'm still trying to find myself, and I'm okay with that. I'm in no rush to sort my shit out. I'm a dancer and an aerialist, an instructor three nights a week for kids' and adults' classes, and we train for shows and competitions.

My mum died when I was thirteen, and when my dad fell in love with Nora Fields, he moved us to this town to live with her and her two boys, Kyle and Chris.

My dad died two years ago, but Nora and her sons insist on me staying there until I save up enough money to move out; she kept all the inheritance that was supposed to be for me.

I don't need to pay dig money, which is good, despite the utter nightmare of living in that house. It means I can focus on my goals.

It's nearly the break of dawn as I step outside. The black Audi R8 waiting has me freezing. The tinted windows hide the driver, but I know exactly who it is, and the fine hairs on the back of my neck rise, my heartbeat accelerating.

The alloys are shiny, as if they've been freshly polished, and the headlights nearly blind me. I grimace, wondering if I can turn around and walk away.

Lu is going to catch a slap when I see her later.

The horn sounds again, making my shoulders tense.

"Unbelievable," I mutter under my breath, seeing no other way to get home since an Uber will take forever to get to this side of town.

With my heels dangling from my fingers, messy hair, and make-up far from fresh, I feel nervous. Out of everyone who could pick me up after a one-night stand, he's the last person I want.

Unhurriedly, I make my way to the car, opening the passenger door and throwing myself into the seat. I don't look at him – I keep my eyes forward, tossing my heels on the floor in front of me as I attempt to put my belt on. It retracts twice, and I blow out a breath when I finally manage to click it in.

I try to ignore the addictive scent of mint, cigarettes and Tom Ford's Noir. The same aftershave he's used for years. I try to ignore *him*, but his presence is everywhere, even after two years of silence between us.

I cross my arms in front of me, glancing at him sideways. "Lu said she was picking me up."

He doesn't respond, looking bored as he types on his phone, his elbow perched on the leather divider between us. He has a fresh tattoo on his hand, which somehow makes it look even more veiny.

I gulp, quickly looking away before he notices me letting my gaze travel up the new tattoos littering his body.

His knees parted, gym shorts showing off his legs, he leans back against the driver's seat, still texting. My scowl deepens as I watch him reply to messages instead of driving me home.

He must have been working out in the home gym at the manor. His top is tight against his chest, the taut muscles still swollen from his session. There's a cigarette tucked behind his ear, and wavy

LIBRIS We know books

black hair nearly as dark as his soul falls over his forehead.

He has a sun-kissed tan that makes me look like a ghost.

As much as I'd like to say I've forgotten everything about Kade Mitchell, I'm a terrible liar.

I roll the window down, ignoring the chill taking over me while I try to stop his scent from clouding my judgement. Yes, Kade might be handsome, a person that ticked every box for me at one point, but he's my best friend's twin brother and completely off limits.

I know that now.

The last conversation we had was two years ago, and he hasn't as much as looked me in the eye since. I know Lu must have given him shit to get him to come pick me up.

He'd never do this off his own back.

Fucking Luciella. She's aware of how much we can't stand each other. She knows I try to dodge him every chance I get. I mean, she doesn't know *exactly* why, but still.

After nearly three minutes of rock music playing low and him typing away on his phone, the sun starts to rise. My jaw rolls in annoyance, my gaze flitting between the steering wheel and the front gate of the house I left.

"Are you going to drive or just sit here?"

As usual, I'm met with silence. He clicks away on his screen, the corner of his mouth curling up into a smile.

I try not to stare at how handsome he is, despite being a reincarnation of the devil; how soft his skin appears under the harsh black ink. He doesn't smile often, so who is he talking to? Annoyingly, my traitorous heart beats faster. Who's making him grin like that?

No. Stop, Stacey. Who cares who makes him smile?

I can't stay in this car. I need to get the hell out of here.

"I'm getting an Uber," I say, unbuckling my belt, but Kade catches it before it can retract, yanking it to click back in without a word, eyes still on the screen. He types with one hand, the other holding my seat belt in place until he eventually shuts his screen off and turns the car back on.

The engine rumbles beneath us, and I'm rocketed back into the

chair as he accelerates at a ridiculous speed.

He turns the music up, and I stare at him, at his beautifully harsh features, while his silvery-blue eyes blaze into the road. I eventually put the window up to stop my hair from blowing wild.

I open my messages and see one I must've missed.

***Lu**: Kade's coming instead.*

***Me**: I hate you.*

She replies instantly.

Lu: Sorry! He was driving his friend home. Please don't kill each other.

***Me**: I really hate you.*

I click my screen off and stay silent, staring out the window at the trees whizzing by. My phone vibrates uncontrollably in my hand – a chain of messages from my stepbrother.

***DoNotAnswer**: Where the fuck are you?*

***DoNotAnswer**: I'm on my way home and you better be there.*

***DoNotAnswer**: I mean it, Stacey.*

I roll my eyes and sigh as I ignore him. It'll come back to bite me, but I can't deal with him right now. Not while I'm in a car with Kade fucking Mitchell, trying not to breathe the same goddamn air as him.

"You should've told Luciella no," I eventually say, loud enough so he can hear me over the music.

Kade's jaw tenses as he speeds up.

I huff, resting my elbow on the window, palm to the side of my head. "I would've waited for an Uber or walked."