



DEADLY SECRETS LURK WITHIN  
NOBLE ISLAND'S OLDEST MANSION

RAQUEL BYRNES

A NOBLE ISLAND MYSTERY

# WHISPERS ON SHADOW BAY

A TRULY SUSPENSEFUL  
PIECE OF FICTION THAT  
WILL HAVE READERS  
WISHING FOR THE NEXT  
BOOK AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE.

- RT Book Reviews  
on Purple Knot

# Whispers on Shadow Bay

Raquel Byrnes

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

## **WHISPERS ON SHADOW BAY**

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## Dedication

To my Father in heaven, the winner of lost hearts and  
healer of broken dreams.



## Praise for

### *Purple Knot*

Get ready for a book jam packed with emotion, intense conflict, and plenty of plot to keep the reader absolutely fixated with this book. *Purple Knot* blew me away. Right from the start the action pulled me in, and I couldn't stop until the last page. Some may say that's an exaggeration, but it's the truth. There was just so much to take in that I didn't want to miss a single thing.

Reyna is a strong heroine who faces a very tough decision, and the chain reaction of events that follow that decision keep on building up until the very intense climax of the story. The hero of the story is Jimmy, Reyna's ex-fiancé. Working side by side after a tragic event brings them close once again, but along with the after math of losing her best friend and his sister, the pair has their own past issues to resolve before they can truly be together again.

Raquel Byrnes blends contemporary, suspense, drama, and intrigue into one powerful novel. Don't miss *Purple Knot* if you love dramatic romantic fiction.  
~ Siren Book Reviews







# 1

*Noble Island — Washington State  
Shadow Bay Estate*

I stared out the windshield at the gnarled branches scratching through thick fog. The black iron gate before me rose in jagged spires against a dusky sky, forbidding and stark in the sea of lush green foliage. I sank deeper into the seat of the leased sedan and chewed on a fingernail. This was my last chance to change my mind. I could still turn around, leave this dark and soggy forest, and fly back to the beaches of California. I told myself this even though I knew it wasn't possible. My thumb went to my finger, to twirl the engagement ring that was no longer there. I stopped myself with a ragged breath.

*Don't let me fall apart again, Lord. Help me have faith that despite all that's happened, no matter how it looks right now, You haven't left me.*

"Keep it together, Rose," I whispered. My hand went to the polished mahogany box on the passenger seat, the smooth wood comforting under my palm. "This can be a good thing if you let it."

I'd flown the length of the Pacific shore to this little known island off the coast of Washington as if distance from my home would lessen the heaviness in my heart. Taking a steadying breath, the car rolled forward, gravel crunching underneath the tires. I drove

up to the metal intercom box standing off the path. I rolled down my window, and a cold mist blew in my face. I gasped.

Numbered buttons, yellowed and cracked with age, butted against a round speaker. A tingle of worry raced through me. Was I supposed to know some sort of code? Reaching into my purse, I pulled out the folded acceptance letter. I scanned it, re-read the conditions of my employment, and sighed. Nothing. I glanced back at the keypad and bit my lip, thinking. Gray mist swirled around the metal pole of the speaker, and a slow eddy of fog sent me shivering in my lightweight coat.

"Don't work," a voice crackled behind me, and I yelped.

A man, white-haired and crouched with age, leaned on a shovel near the rear fender. His long brown coat, tweed hat, and black galoshes made him look as though he belonged on the English moors.

"W-What?" I put my hand over my racing heart.

"Been broke for years," he said in a thick Irish brogue and raised a shaking finger to the speaker.

Forcing a smile, I unbuckled and got out of the warm car to face him.

"My name's Rosetta Ryan. I'm here for the caregiver's position. Mrs. Tuttle hired me." I held out a hand. The stranger glanced at it and then back at my face without moving. Clearing my throat, I looked down at the acceptance letter in my other hand wondering if he really was scowling or just wrinkly.

"Name's O'Shay," the old man said. Raising a bushy white brow, he shook his head. "And you don't look like a Carl to me."

"I'm sorry?"

"Mrs. Tuttle hired a fellow named Carl for the position." He straightened up, grabbed the shovel, and walked past me to the gate.

"I don't understand," I followed him to the iron entrance, my stomach quivering. "I came here to work."

"You from California?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Yes, how did you—"

"Blonde hair, blue eyes, and a tan not likely to occur out here in the woods."

I smoothed a hand down the gold tresses that draped over my shoulders and attempted to undo the ravages of Washington's constant moisture. "Oh."

O'Shay fussed with the gate's lock, not answering. It pushed open with a plaintive moan, and he turned to me, waving his hand. "Well, you better go and talk to Mrs. Tuttle, then."

"Right." I hurried back into the car and drove through. "Where do I go?"

"Just follow the road on through," O'Shay muttered. "Go on. It's at the end."

"Thank you," I said out the window as I passed him. He pulled his coat tighter around his frail frame and nodded.

I drove slowly, the mist allowing for only a few feet of visible road. The sun now gone, a cloying blanket of vapor floated through the headlight beams. I'd never seen fog like this. Not even when it rolled off the sea near my home on the beach. Gripping the steering wheel, I kept my eyes on the rectangles of light punching through the haze up ahead. Windows.

The gravel gave way, and smooth asphalt curved around to the front of the house. I pulled up to the

stone fence and stopped the car, heart racing.

*Lord, please give me courage to do this.*

And I did need courage. These past few weeks had proven that. The sobs, so familiar lately, threatened to rise from my throat, and I pushed them down.

Grabbing the letter, I climbed out of the car and looked up at Shadow Bay Hall. Even shrouded by darkness and fog, the house emerged large. The picture from the Internet did not do it justice. Though I couldn't make out the stone façade and sharp gables, the impression of size loomed in the shadows beyond.

A wan orange light illuminated the double wood doors, and when I rapped my knuckles against them, the knock was barely audible. I tried again, harder this time, and searched the wall on either side for a bell. Finding it behind a scraggly potted fern, I pressed it, but didn't hear an answering chime or ring.

Probably broken, too.

Shifting from one foot to the other, I hadn't decided whether to try another door, or go find O'Shay, when footsteps sounded from inside. It eased open with a crackling complaint, and half a face peered out. A shock of silver hair over a matching brow and a clouded brown eye regarded me.

"Yes?" The voice, a woman's, sounded like old paper scraping in the wind. "What do you want?"

"Mrs. Tuttle?" I said with forced cheer. "I'm here for the caretaking position." I held the paper up for her to see.

Mrs. Tuttle pulled the door back the rest of the way and took the paper. She squinted at it, sighed, and pulled a pair of bifocals from her sweater. She looked at me over the sheet, her rheumy eyes narrowed.

"You're not Carl."

My heart fell. I'd worried about this and talked myself into leaving for Washington despite doubts.

"I know the letter is addressed to Carl Berman." Tuttle's gaze lowered to my jeans and flip-flops. Smoothing the blouse down with sweating hands, I continued. "But since the letter was sent to my home, has my address at the top, and mentions *my* references I thought..."

"And you are?" Mrs. Tuttle shook her head.

"Rosetta Ryan."

"Ms. Ryan, is it?" She took off her glasses and pinched the bridge of her nose with her finger and thumb. "You were not qualified for the job, young lady. We did not hire you."

My chest tightened. I shifted from one foot to the other, panic squeezing the breath out of me in puffs of vapor.

"But...I left my life to come here."

"I understand, but..." Mrs. Tuttle looked at me with a raised brow. "Are you all right, Ms. Ryan?"

Shaking my head, I couldn't keep the tears from spilling onto my cheeks.

"No." My voice cracked. "I have nowhere else to go."

Mrs. Tuttle regarded me with pursed lips. She waved the letter. "Well just go back home. Go back to your family."

"I can't." I was not able to stop the sobs now. "I'm dead to them."

Behind me, a frigid wind blew across the ground and sent shivers rattling up my spine. I hugged myself and sniffled.

A pathetic, weeping mess on a stranger's doorstep. Shuffling footsteps sounded to my right, and I

turned to see O'Shay climb the steps. "Might as well let her in," he said and pushed past Tuttle. "Storms coming and she won't be able to see her way out tonight anyway."

Mrs. Tuttle stepped aside as O'Shay walked into the house. She looked past me and scowled. "I suppose you planned on staying here when you came? Didn't make any hotel reservations?"

"I thought I would be, yes." I shrugged helplessly and wiped tears from my face with my sleeve. Teeth chattering, I bounced on the balls of my feet, trying to keep warm. "I wouldn't even know how to get back to the ferry in dark like this."

"Well, get your bag, then, Ms. Ryan." Mrs. Tuttle stepped to the side, her eyes held mine. "You leave in the morning."

"Thank you, Mrs. Tuttle," I whispered.

She clicked her tongue at me and nodded towards the car.

"Well, then, Ms. Ryan. Let's not let all of the cold air in tonight."

"Oh, right." Hurrying to the car, I pulled out my purse and my one large suitcase. I found some tissue and wiped my face, struggling to control the worry whirling through me.

I lugged the suitcase up the stone steps past Mrs. Tuttle and into the large foyer. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the low light afforded by the sconces. The golden-orange glow of candles lit up the tapestry walls, and long brocade curtains swooped down on either side of large, wavy-glassed windows. A circular table sat at the foot of a winding staircase leading up to the second floor. Its marble surface was cracked and dusty, and the vase centered on it stood empty.

“Did the power go out?” I asked.

“We’ve had some difficulties due to the wind.” Mrs. Tuttle closed the door behind her and handed the paper back. “You can stay for one night, Ms. Ryan, in the servant’s quarters.”

“That’s...thank you.” I took the paper and folded it slowly, my eyes on the empty vase. One night...and then what? Why did I always leap without looking? Still, it’s not like there was anything left for me back home in San Diego. Not after the trial. Mrs. Tuttle moved, and I realized she’d been talking.

“You must understand, Ms. Ryan, we need a nurse, not a college student, to care for Mr. Hale. He’s quite advanced in age and needs an experienced caregiver.”

“I graduated, Mrs. Tuttle,” I murmured. “I’m twenty-four.”

She paused to purse her lips at me before continuing. “Nevertheless, we need someone with experience.”

“But the job notice said that the position was for a companion with light caregiving duties. In fact, it specifically asked for someone familiar with alternative medicines. That is what I do. Natural remedies for minor illnesses, the ad was specific.”

“Davenport Hale is a strong-willed man and he needs someone that is...” Mrs. Tuttle reached out. “Your coat, please.”

I slipped it off, handing it to her.

“I was able to convince him to put enough duties to attract an actual nurse, and that is who I hired. I don’t quite know what went awry with the post, but I’ll call the service in the morning.”

I glanced around the interior of the old house. My

gaze stopped on the mounted head of a deer, its glassy stare vacant and accusing at the same time. Shuddering, I folded my arms across my chest and tried to force my exhausted mind to concentrate on Mrs. Tuttle's words.

"So you see, it's just not possible." She finished, and I realized I'd lost track of what she was saying again.

I forced a smile and shrugged. It seemed to be the right response because she nodded back.

"Thank you for letting me stay the night. I'd probably crash out there in the fog."

"That's not fog, dear. Back in London, now *that* is fog. This is just enthusiastic dew." Mrs. Tuttle turned to hang the coat. "Leave your bag. Mr. O'Shay will bring it up for you. I don't need anyone taking a fall down the stairs on top of everything else that's happening."

I followed her up the carpeted steps. Reaching out, I ran a palm along the smooth bannister and wondered if Mrs. Tuttle was referring to my own unfortunate mix-up or something else that was going wrong. We walked along a hall at the top of the stairs, down a dark corridor, and up a second set of narrow wood steps to the third floor. The servant's quarters, roughly the size of my walk-in closet back home, seemed bare and lonely.

"The sheets are clean, and the bathroom is down the hall," Mrs. Tuttle said. "I'll trust you won't wander?"

The question caught me off guard.

"Wander?"

"You'll remain in your room, Ms. Ryan. That is a condition of your stay here."



“OK...” I wrinkled my brow, confused. “Why?”

“Because you must,” Mrs. Tuttle snapped. “The lights are unreliable and the carpets are frayed. We wouldn’t want you to take a tumble.”

I glanced at the smooth wood floor of the corridor but nodded.

“I will stay in my room.”

Mrs. Tuttle nodded curtly and pulled the door shut. Her footsteps receded leaving me standing in the small chamber listening to the creaks and settling sounds of the old house. Mrs. Tuttle’s abrasive manner did little to calm my thoughts.

I dropped my purse on the bed and looked around. A wrought iron twin bed, nightstand, and an empty book case were all that furnished the room. Thin white curtains covered a shuttered, crescent-shaped window over the bookcase. They rustled softly as wind forced itself through a crack in the glass making a low whistle.

Tired, I sat on the bed, arms around my knees, and fought back tears. Unsettled as this old mansion made me feel, come morning I had nowhere to go and just a bit of money left. Biting back the frustration, I hugged myself tighter, resolving to be strong. Still, in the ache of my heart, I wondered.

*I did what You asked, Lord, and lost everything. How could You let that happen? How am I supposed to have faith when it feels like You abandoned me right when I needed You most?*

Suddenly, waves of sorrow and shame I’d fought so hard to quell washed over me, and I flashed on my day at the church. The feel of white satin under my hands, the bouquet clasped to my sobbing chest as my would-be sister-in-law led me from the vestibule. He

wasn't coming. He didn't want me anymore.

And now this. I'd summoned all my courage to travel to these wet and cold woods for what? To be rejected all over again. To be not good enough once more? I had to get out of here. I couldn't bear to feel their eyes on me in the morning, looks of pity that I'd grown to dread. Shaking my head, I grabbed my purse and yanked open the door. Walking quickly along the corridor, down the steps, and back to the front door, I moved as silently as I could.

Pushing through the double wood doors, I dragged the suitcase behind me. In my hurry, I stumbled down the stone steps, nearly losing my footing as the oversized case tumbled, coming to rest near the front tire.

I fought with the suitcase, shoving it into the back seat with ragged pleas for its cooperation on my trembling lips. I climbed into the driver's seat, slammed the car door, and tried with shaking hands to start the car. It coughed, then revved. The front door cracked open and Mr. O'Shay stared out at me with a puzzled look.

"Go, just go," I sobbed.

Pulling away, I took the turn around the driveway way too wide, and ran over some bushes as the car barreled back down the road towards the iron gate. Eyes blurry with tears, I didn't react to the headlights that burst suddenly from the thick mist. A horn blared as I swerved. The wheel jerked from my hands, and I veered off the path. The car rattled and bounced down the embankment's uneven ground. A large tree jumped out of the fog right in front of me. I screamed as the car hit it with a jarring blow, and my jaw snapped shut as my head hit the steering wheel.

Everything stopped.

Moaning, I felt the bump on my forehead. Pain flashed behind my eyes, and I gasped with the force of it. Unclasping the seatbelt, I stumbled from the car, groping blindly in the dark fog.

“What were you thinking?” a man’s voice, low and tense, called out from the fog. “You were speeding.”

Confused, I heard movement, and someone scrambling down the embankment.

“Are you OK?” the man shouted.

I couldn’t tell the direction from which it came, and I turned in a circle. A wave of dizziness made my stomach lurch. I staggered for the car.

“My head,” I croaked. “I hit—”

The ground tilted. My head spun. I was falling. Strong arms snatched me before I hit the ground.

“Whoa,” the man said, concern creeping into his voice. “You shouldn’t try to walk ‘til we get help.”

I glanced up. Framed in the glow of the headlight, a man with piercing blue eyes and light hair looked down at me, his handsome face etched with a thin scar that ran the length of his jaw. It made him all the more magnetic. I smiled at him, my thoughts tumbling together; I thought he was old. How did he get that scar?

“I came to take care of you, Mr. Hale.” My words sounded muffled to me; far away.

“Take care of me?” His blond hair, backlit by the headlight, made a halo around him. “You’re hurt. Be still.”

Sudden clarity rang through my mind at his mention of injury, and I tried to stand. “I’m fine, Mr. Hale.” I tried to wiggle free of his hold, but he held

fast.

"You don't look fine." His eyes narrowed. Sounding gruff, almost irritated, he bent and lifted me in his arms and carried me up to the road.

"This is unnecessary," I protested, but my head spun again, and I rested my cheek against his chest as he climbed. Warm and solid, he smelled like grass and sunshine. When he set me on my feet, I glanced back down the embankment at the sedan's off-kilter lights, worry gripping me again. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Hale, really. I'll pay for the damage and for the bushes, too."

He opened his car door, and the interior light cast his face in shadows. My heart thrummed, a flush creeping up my neck under his intense gaze.

"I'm not Davenport Hale," he said. "I'm his son, Simon."

A far away buzzing sounded in my ears. I shook my head, trying to clear it. The movement sent a fresh stab of pain flashing across my vision.

Simon reached for me.

"I'm..." I didn't get the rest out before the world grayed and blinked out.

## 2

Voices, harsh and urgent, pulled me from a fitful dream. I awoke thrashing in the bed with a sob tearing from my dry throat. Panting, I blinked away the remnants of my nightmare and scanned the unfamiliar room, heart racing. An argument floated on the cool wind blowing through the open window. I couldn't make out the words, but the tones were unmistakable. Anger. Frustration. Pleading.

I wasn't in the servants' quarters. I frowned, and the movement sent a spark of pain tearing across my temple. I hissed, felt for the bump on my forehead, and discovered a bandage. It all flashed back—the fog, the crash, and Simon's achingly handsome face staring down at me. I squeezed my eyes shut. I'd made a complete fool of myself. Unwilling to look helpless, or be pitied, I'd panicked and made things worse.

I swung legs over the bed and let my eyes adjust before standing and steadying myself with a hand to the headboard.

Done in blue and cream silks, the bed was dark, canopied, and massive. Across the room, sheer curtains billowed away from open French doors like lazy wisps of smoke. It was daylight, and from the angle of the sun, afternoon or later.

Padding across the wood floor and throw rug, I sidled next to the window looking down into the yard. Mrs. Tuttle stood near the river-rock fence. Knee high,