

# JORDAN

THE KELLERS OF BEAUMONT FALLS



MIRA BROOKS

BLUSHING BOOKS

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*Close your eyes. It's time...  
The fight's over. The bells rung...  
Fly away, from the pain  
To a place cancer can't come...  
I'll hold your hand. Stay right here  
Just to help you be brave,  
This is it, you'll be free, from all the pain...  
Feel my love, not my tears  
This is far from goodbye,  
Close your eyes.*

*To all the survivors, and families of the victims...*

## CHAPTER 1



It had been a good fifteen years since Tegan Forester had packed her bags, tossed them in the back of her 1992 Civic and high-tailed it out of her hometown of Beaumont Falls. Approaching the *Welcome* sign now, in her 2013 black Ford Mustang, brought back a flood of memories, both good and bad. How many times did she sit on the school bus dreaming of driving past that little sign? Never had she imagined that she would be willingly coming back after seeing more of the world than even that big-dreaming girl she used to be could conceive.

Provence. St. Croix. Johannesburg. They were on a list she had constructed that were some of the possible settling grounds when she left. Anywhere on earth except this place would have sufficed, she once believed. Tegan almost laughed at the irony of it all. She had seen everywhere she had ever hoped to see, and more. Yet, every place she traveled she found something wrong enough with it to prevent her from actually putting down roots. There were some warmer climates, prettier landscaped sceneries, and richer cultures. However, if one thing about leaving home taught her anything it was that no matter where you went, you couldn't hide from the past. It traveled with you.

The world was harsher beyond that sign than the young naive dreamer who left this town could ever have imagined. Ah, to be the whimsical teenager who left this place again. She sighed. After so many years of living out of a suitcase, flying here, there and everywhere for work and taking pictures of some of the world's most spectacular and cruel sights, it was time to return to the place where it all started. Putting on her blinker, she slowed down to the all too familiar Main Street, and basked in the familiar pleasure of being home.

As soon as she drove past the sign, she reverted to being the daughter of Gerald and Grace Forester, older sister to Luke and shy girl who worked weekends at McNabb's serving food. She almost forgot that she grew up and accomplished her dream. It was as if no time had lapsed at all. Here she wondered if she would find the peace she desired that all the accolades and celebrity had failed to provide her with.

Her 5'7", buck twenty frame made her look more like the model than the photographer. She was happy she had gone that route, after seeing some of the issues that some girls had gone through. She had taken self-defense classes when she knew she'd be working in parts of the world that were not so kind to women. Especially pretty young blondes. She decided to change her hair color to a light brown, just to test the stereotype. It proved accurate, and she fell in love with the darker hue. It made her look more professional, she thought.

The self-defense had come in handy a time or two. One client in Montego Bay had tried to get handsy, and she broke his arm. Fame, she learned, was not for everyone. Having a famous face was more captivating than being friends. It also put her more on a disadvantage with strangers. They seemed to know more about her, and while it came with the territory, it was also very intrusive at times. Many people suffered from mental illness, and when they developed fixations it made life more challenging. Once, near her hotel in Rome, a man tried to climb to her balcony and was arrested.

Tegan went to court to put a restraining order in place, but he followed her to another country and approached her on a shoot.

Usually now, if she worked on location where the shoot was outside, she hired security. A piece of paper could only do so much. In one way, it had made her desire to move home stronger. Most people knew everyone, and there was a general knowledge of the stableness of people. Tegan didn't care if they were crazy, so long as they weren't dangerous crazy, and in Beaumont Falls if they were that way, they'd never be stupid enough to touch the former girlfriend of Jordan Keller.

It was hardly surprising, and oddly comforting, to note that nothing had changed as she rounded the corner to the Main Street. Normalcy, it was all she craved now. The Riverside High School sign still posted the weekly events. The week it was flashing Bake Sale Sunday at 1:30. Church wasn't something she had grown up with, so that aspect of small town living wasn't something she was concerned with. Miss Millay's Hair Salon, where many of the older ladies frequently hung out on Saturdays, still had that awful faded sign that was at least sixty years old when she was a child. Tegan couldn't help but smile. The little things that used to drive her nuts about this place now made her feel so at peace.

An overwhelming feeling of excitement at the thought of taking some photos here, and making an homage to the town that had made her who she was, came over her. Perhaps when the Art Gallery opened she would host a party with the photos as her first showcase. All sales could go to a charity in the community, and be a way to give back to the place that she was looking forward to calling home again. Excitement built, as her creative juices began to flow. Who says you can't come home? She mused, as she turned up the radio and focused back on the road. *Better Man*, by Little Big Town was playing. It was completely ironic that as she entered the place where her first love resided that should be blasting through the speakers.

As she passed the graveyard an onslaught of reminiscing

coupled with her guilt of not being home in so long caused her emotions to bubble over. She'd go up to her Dad's grave soon, but not yet. It was as if everything that had happened since leaving Beaumont Falls in the first place was a dream. She had flown her mother out to see her a time or two when she could get her on the plane, but she hadn't seen Luke in person since she had left. Her career had exploded fresh from university, and with a lot of memories as excuses not to return to visit, she hopped plane after plane as a chance to escape. Skype was the only way she stayed in touch, and being able to give them both a big hug was going to feel so good. Silently, she said a prayer to her father who was buried behind those gates. After so many years, it still hurt to know he was gone. A tear began to roll down her cheek as relief overwhelmed her. She was returning with a lot to be proud of, and yet a part of her still felt like that self-conscious teenager who was saving up to get the hell out of dodge.

What would her life have been like if she had just stayed in this little town and had a family? Tegan felt a twinge of sadness for the loss she had never thought of until this moment. Would she have married Jordan? Would they have had children when they were ready? Was he married with children now? Would she be forced to smile awkwardly, and be polite as she watched her replacement live the life that could have been hers? She didn't think she could handle an *Unanswered Prayer* moment like from the Garth Brooks song.

She knew Jordy was no angel, and hadn't expected him to magically transition into one when she left. Time had changed her in some ways, but she still felt awkwardly the same, too. Shaking her head furiously at herself she scolded the thoughts flooding her mind. For all she knew, Jordan could be dead by now. Lord knew in his kind of work that the majority died young.

Over the years living away from Beaumont, she had desperately tried to forget the name Jordan Keller. She wasn't past the sign two seconds and she was daydreaming about pointless what ifs. Was she crazy? A part of her had to admit, seeing him was one of the draws

that made her come home. Even after so many years, Tegan could admit only to herself, that she was still madly in love with him. No other man had come near to bringing her the excitement that he made her feel.

A throbbing began in her heart remembering the day that Jordan told her he was joining his father's motorcycle club King's Knights, more commonly referred to as The King's. It was a known façade for illegal activity, and a new Keller Tradition. Mike Keller started the local chapter, and his two eldest sons worshiped him. It was no shock when Jordan became a pledge. Everyone knew he would be trained to one day take over the family business.

However, what Tegan did not expect was to show up at his parent's place to celebrate his nineteenth birthday, and see his father present him with a signature King's vest. She had thought that Mike would be more respectful of Ruth, who was a strictly religious person. She had to admit that remembering it now was cathartic. She felt a sense of peace because that was who Jordan was. It was like someone asking her not to be a photographer or globetrotting introvert. It was her. The club was Jordan.

The club was a known gang, with affiliates in The Angel's, and the meaning of the vest was not lost on Tegan. It was a lower scale than The Angel's, but in Beaumont Falls it was equivalent to the global chapters. They trafficked drugs, and owned the town's only strip club. They also had their fingers in all illegal activity in the state. Off the Purple Haze, they had a garage clubhouse for all the members. It was a crash place for those on call at the club, or members who wanted to sleep off a night of partying. All illegal activity that happened in Beaumont was policed and monitored by the club. They were not people you wanted to mess with, although much of the nastiness that they demonstrated was filtered for Tegan. Jordan had kept her blissfully safeguarded from much of the chaos.

At sixteen, Tegan had mistakenly fallen hopelessly in love with Jordan, and turned a blind eye to most of the violence that people



knew accompanied the Keller family. Her mother disapproved at first when she realized who Jordan was. It was mostly fear that her little girl was dating a Keller. They had a throw down fight, and Grace told her Dad would be spinning in his grave. Gerald Forester was killed in a car accident when Tegan was only twelve. He had been a fourteen-year member of the Beaumont Falls police force, and was not in Jordan's father's pocket. However, at sixteen the heart and head do not communicate as well as they should with one another, and Tegan's good girl reputation was getting very annoying to a girl who desperately sought adventure.

When the local bad boy, who just happened to be a few years older, focused his attention on her, it quickly went from flattering to exciting and head over heels in love. For Jordan, he fell equally as hard for Tegan who was unlike so many other girls in town. Her quiet innocence, and shy nature endeared her to him. Her father had been a cop, but since he died, there was no male authority in her life to complicate things. He was used to girls hitting on him because they wanted the chance to tame the bad boy persona. His reputation always preceded him, which added to the drama with their obviously displeased parents.

They were all out at Boon's Lake one night after a game. Tegan walked up to him, and said, "Hey Keller, come talk to me for a minute."

Jordan had been intrigued. Tegan Forester was younger than him, but hot as hell. She was dressed in a white tank top and black mini skirt. When they were alone, she asked him who he was taking to the dance the following Thursday. Jordan didn't normally go to things like that, but took his opportunity, "You," he answered, cocky as hell.

Tegan felt the twinge of excitement, as he took complete control of the situation. "Is that so?" she asked, with a flirty tone.

Jordan nodded his head. Little girl didn't know what she was asking for, but be damned if he was going to warn her. No emotions were involved yet. Just pure uninhibited hormones. He

wanted to nail her, just like most of the teenage boys in Beaumont. "It is." Leaning down into the side of her neck, he swept back her hair with his hand and whispered, "Be ready at seven."

It was meant to be flirty, and leave her wanting more, which was precisely the impact it had. She was fifteen, almost sixteen, and he was the older mysterious sex symbol of all her friends' desires.

Tegan felt her insides flip. That was so incredibly hot! He was so insanely sexy. She felt her legs nearly give out, as he pulled away from her and walked back toward his friends. She had never done anything like that before, and felt a little overwhelmed by the outcome. She had a date with Jordan Keller. Holy Shit! Little did she know the significance that night would have on her life. All because of one impulsive question, that even now she would go back and ask again.

Grace had reluctantly given him a chance. Given him her trust, but warned him that if he ever hurt Tegan there would be no forgiveness. He always valued the older woman's trust and friendship. Tegan allowed him to be him, and he just couldn't resist her naturally relaxed personality.

They dated for three years, until the week Jordan and his best friend Lincoln Kyte were involved in a shootout with some rival members over a drug deal. Jordan was shot in the shoulder, Lincoln was shot twice with one bullet piercing his heart. It was as if Tegan realized for the first time that the dangers in the club were real, and the fairytale of it all went out the window. Gone was the illusion that if she married Jordan, and he stayed in the King's, they would live happily ever after. In truth, she would most likely be a widow in her 20s, and the idea was too heartbreaking to even consider. When her father died it near ripped her mother to pieces. She had never seen a person so completely broken. If they had children, and the cycle repeated, it would be worse. When she lay in bed with her own thoughts, she remembered how she felt when her dad died. As a child on the brink of womanhood, it was life changing. The only comfort she took from it was her father died as a man who was

highly respected. Could she say the same about Jordan to her own kids if the unthinkable happened? Willingly putting herself in a similar position was unimaginable. However, it was highly possible staying in Beaumont Falls and marrying Jordan was basically writing the same fate for herself.

The day they buried Lincoln Kyte was one of the hardest things she had ever gone through. Jordan was devastated as he took his place amongst the brothers. All the King's, young and old, were all in uniform with their women dressed impeccably in black dresses for respect. The dark purple and gold vests were worn proudly as six members carried the coffin to the burial plot. Chris and Andréa Kyte stood together next to Lincoln's younger brother Wade, and his girlfriend Sara Lyle watching as the box containing their son was paraded before them by the very people who were partly responsible putting him in it. Jordan stood silently beside Tegan, his arm still in a sling recovering from the bullet he took trying to defend his friend, with his head bowed out of respect as shameful tears filled his eyes. It was a day she'd spend a long time trying to forget.

Tegan remembered feeling terrified as she fiddled with her purse all the way back to Jordan's. She had applied in and out of state to various universities that past spring, and had only received some of the acceptance letters two weeks ago. She hadn't told Jordan she had applied to other universities besides Lexington, but as her mother had pointed out, applying to a few places couldn't hurt. After all, it was better to turn down a place than to place all your eggs in one basket and not get in anywhere. It was early August, so the time was coming close that she needed to make a decision.

Lexington University, a few counties over, was offering her a full year scholarship and had been her first choice. It would mean she wouldn't have to be far from Jordan, and could still pursue the degree in design she wanted. Oklahoma State also responded and offered her a small scholarship in the same course. The University

of New England was the last she received which offered a similar scholarship. It was also close to visit personally, and it had a very reputable Art and Design program that she was interested in. She had the option of going to their campus in Morocco and decided that might be a great experience and way to get away from the club's pull. The other option was a campus in France, but Morocco had spots available. The multi-campus option was why she had applied in the first place. When she heard that Jordan was okay, but Lincoln hadn't made it, impulsively she accepted the offer from New England. Tegan hoped that she could use her leaving as leverage to get Jordan to put what they had above the King's, and insure that she was not crying at his grave site next.

That night, after all the fuss from the funeral died down, Tegan went back to Jordan's apartment. As the last of his buddies left, Tegan grabbed two beers from the fridge and sat down next to him on the sofa. Jordan had barely spoken all day, and she almost felt bad for what she was about to do. Rationalizing with herself, she ignorantly thought this might impact him enough to make him change. Such a trauma was devastating, and it had the potential to change a life. She was also nervous that he might smack her butt for hiding such a huge thing from him.

Jordan and many of the men in the King's were old fashioned in their approach to their relationships with their women. The women rarely worked, except at hobbies or charities. They did all the household work and raised the children, while the men took care of all the business. It wasn't a typical nine to five job, the King's. At a moment's notice, they had to be ready. Getting used to this was not very hard for Tegan who knew many residents in the town felt the same way, including her father. However, the first time that Jordan paddled her butt for getting too drunk at Macy Jessome's seventeenth birthday party was unexpected. He set a few rules then about hiding things, lying, and putting herself in unnecessary danger that would result in many more hard lessons. It seemed odd he'd spank her butt for not wearing a seat belt when he

sold drugs and had to carry a gun for protection. It was part of a defense that she planned to use if he got cross with her today.

“Jordy, we need to talk.” Her voice didn’t even sound familiar as she spewed out her belief that club would kill him, and all the fears she had regarding their future. Her hand shook as she handed him the acceptance letter, and his eyes snapped to her tear stained face. Tegan told him they could go together, since the scholarship took care of school and she had saved enough working at McNabb’s the past few years to do them until they got on their feet with jobs. Jordan looked at the paper as if he was in a trance. When he finally spoke, it was not the words she expected, “You obviously gave this considerable thought.”

He folded the letter and handed it back to her without any show of emotion. It was as if he was numb to all the pain inflicted upon him the last few days. Guilt and heartbreak washed over her. She could tell by his tone and reaction that he was going to let her go. Tegan nodded, as the tears kept flowing.

“If you want out ‘cause you can’t handle this life, I don’t blame you for it. They say Morocco is beautiful.” Jordan stood and walked to the kitchen to place his beer on the counter. “When do you leave?” he asked despondently, removing his vest and shirt.

“Next Saturday,” she replied as she glanced at the bruises peppering his incredible abs. One was huge and stretched almost his entire mid-section. He must have gotten them when the bullets began to fly. An image of what it must have been like made goose-bumps form all the way down her arms as a lump rose in her chest, it suddenly hurt to breathe. It could have been him they buried today. Why couldn’t he see that?

“We can go!” she reiterated, desperately hoping he’d say he’d follow her anywhere like the princes in fairytales, but knowing what he was really saying with his silence was that this meant the end. Worst of all, he was placing all the cards in her hand. It was her choice whether they lived happily ever after until a bullet decided otherwise, or she moved on with her life without him.

Jordan just shook his head and walked to his bedroom. As the door closed, Tegan grabbed her jacket and purse, hoping beyond hope that Jordan would come around before the following Saturday. However, the pain of knowing that was unlikely gripped her heart in a paralyzing squeeze. She took a long melancholy glance at the closed bedroom door willing it to open. When it didn't she fought back the tears that were threatening to spill, and left. Jordan would never leave the King's and she couldn't stay and watch his demise.