



The PUMPKIN SPICE CAFÉ

IT'S THE SEASON TO FALL IN LOVE...

LAURIE GILMORE

THE PUMPKIN SPICE CAFÉ

Dream Harbor Series

Book 1

LAURIE GILMORE



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*To the bearded, most-flannel-wearing guy I know. Thanks for always
providing so much inspiration.*

Playlist



We fell in love in october - girl in red
Dancing With Your Ghost - Sasha Sloan
invisible string - Taylor Swift
Autumn Leaves - Ed Sheeran
Amoeba - Clairo
Falling - Harry Styles
Remember That Night? - Sara Kays
Hands To Myself - Selena Gomez
Another Love - Tom Odell
ceilings - Lizzy McAlpine
Wildest Dreams - Taylor Swift
Before You Go - Lewis Capaldi
Haunted House - Holly Humberstone
cardigan - Taylor Swift
Video Games - Lana Del Rey
Flicker - Niall Horan
34+35 - Ariana Grande
The Night We Met - Lord Huron
Dandelions - Ruth B.
Kiss Me - Sixpence None The Richer
Everything Has Changed - Taylor Swift
Dreams - The Cranberries
Maroon - Taylor Swift



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Chapter One

Jeanie Ellis had never killed a man before, but tonight might be the night. Desperate times and all. She clutched the baseball bat tighter in her fist and crept down the rickety, back staircase.

She hadn't slept in three nights. Not since moving into the apartment above her aunt's café. Well, *her* café, technically. Jeanie was officially the new owner of The Pumpkin Spice Café, her Aunt Dot's pride and joy until exactly two weeks ago, when the older woman announced she was retiring – and taking off for the Caribbean for a few weeks to work on her tan. Apparently, Dot could think of no one better to take over her beloved café than her favorite – and *only*, as Jeanie pointed out – niece. An idea that now seemed completely absurd as Jeanie tiptoed off the last step prepared for battle.

Every night, she'd heard strange noises. Scritch-scratch type noises with the occasional clanging-bang type noise. At first, she'd tried to chalk it up to the wind, or maybe an animal scurrying through the back alley. She absolutely refused to let her mind take off down a path to the worst-case scenario, like she usually did. She would *not* allow herself to imagine an escaped serial killer creeping up her back steps. That banging was definitely *not* an armed robber, here to take the meager change her aunt kept in the cash register.

Jeanie was starting fresh.

Jeanie was a new woman.

The quaint seaside town of Dream Harbor and its inhabitants knew nothing about her, and she planned to take full advantage of that.

A shuffling noise at the back door caught her attention. She would take full advantage of her ‘New Life, New Jeanie’ plan as soon as she figured out what was keeping her up at night. No one could live a laid-back, quaint, small-town life with a murderer outside their back door. That was just logical.

She choked up on the bat and crossed the small hallway between the stairs and the door that led to the alley behind the café. Although ‘alley’ wasn’t quite the right word for it. Alley conjured images of overflowing trash cans and scurrying rats. But Jeanie wasn’t in Boston anymore. She was in Dream Harbor, which she was convinced someone must have actually dreamed up. It was far too idyllic to have sprung up naturally. No, the space behind the café and the other businesses on Main Street was more like its own little side street, with room for delivery trucks and tidy trash bins. She’d even seen some of the other shop owners taking breaks and chit-chatting back there during the day. Not that she’d talked to anyone yet. She wasn’t quite ready for that, for being the new kid.

Jeanie shook her head. Her thoughts were way off track, and she was about to be potentially murdered. Alley or not, whatever was out there was keeping her awake, and after three nights without sleep, she was barely holding it together. She rested the bat on her shoulder and reached for the doorknob. It was nearly dawn and a weak gray light seeped through the window over the door.

Oh, good, Jeanie thought vaguely. At least I’ll be able to see my attacker before I die. With that less-than-pleasant thought in her head – not at all the positive new persona she was shooting for – she yanked open the door—

And came face to face with a crate of small pumpkins. Gourds? It didn't matter, because before Jeanie could get her produce names sorted, the giant man holding the crate of small pumpkins spoke.

Or at least he made a gruff startled noise that reminded Jeanie that she was currently holding a baseball bat in a very aggressive manner. She nearly dropped it to her side, but then she remembered; this was still a large, strange man. Gourds or no gourds, she probably shouldn't let her guard down just yet.

'Who are you?' she asked, keeping one hand on the door in case she had to slam it in this mysterious pumpkin-man's face.

His dark eyebrows rose a fraction of an inch as though he was surprised by her question. 'Logan Anders,' he said as though that would clear things up for her. It didn't.

'And what are you doing in my back alley, Logan Anders?' she asked.

He blew out a frustrated-sounding breath and shifted the crate in his arms. It was probably heavy, but Jeanie would not compromise her safety just because this man was the picture of autumnal bounty with his crate of vegetables and his worn, flannel shirt and thick beard. Her gaze lingered on his face for a beat longer. So she could pick him out of a line-up, she reasoned. She might need to know that above his beard was a long, straight nose and ruddy cheeks. The police officer might ask her if he had lashes for days, and the answer would be yes. It might be of the utmost importance to the investigation to know that even in the dim light of the morning she could see that his eyes were a devastating blue.

'It's Thursday.'

Jeanie blinked. Did the day of the week have something to do with why this man was here keeping her awake?

'And you've been keeping me up since Monday,' she said.

Now it was Logan's turn to look confused. 'I just got here.' He shifted the crate again, his forearms flexing under the strain. It really must be

heavy, but he hadn't made any move to come in or set it down.

'Well, I've been hearing strange noises all week and I tried to pretend it was just the wind or a raccoon or something. But then I started thinking that's probably what people tell themselves right before the killer bursts through the door.'

Logan choked a little, his eyes going wide. 'Killer?'

Jeanie felt her cheeks heat up. Maybe she'd let her imagination get the best of her. 'Or something...' Her voice trailed off. She wasn't really sure what to say to this strange man and he seemed to be equally at a loss. 'So, what are you doing here?' she prompted.

'Right, uh, I deliver produce every Thursday.' He nodded toward the box of said produce.

Jeanie winced. The produce delivery. Of course. Aunt Dot had told her so many things in the day before she left and Jeanie had written none of it down. The café had been closed since she'd got here and she still hadn't wrapped her head around everything that needed to be done. Thankfully, Norman, the café's long-time manager, was here to help. He assured her they'd have the café up and running by the weekend.

Logan shifted the box again. The heavy box he was still holding.

'So sorry!' Jeanie stepped back and swept her arm toward the café. 'Come in. We'll find a place to put those ... uh ... pumpkins?'

Logan hesitated in the doorway, his gaze shifting between Jeanie and the bat still poised over her shoulder.

'Gah! Sorry. I won't hit you on the head. I promise.' She tried to give him a reassuring smile but it didn't seem to help. He still hovered in the doorway.

'I'm really sorry, I assumed you were a murderer. It's nothing personal. I just haven't slept in three nights, and something's been making noise down here, I swear. And I'm still trying to wrap my head around this whole café-inheritance thing.'

Logan stared at her, a hesitance still in his eyes. Garbage. She'd probably already scared him. Jeanie had been called 'intense' on more than one occasion throughout her life. She was pretty sure it was even on a report card or two. It was something she was trying to work on, part of her new, Jeanie persona. Less talking. Less overthinking. Less intensity.

She took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. Café Jeanie was calm, chill. Just your friendly neighborhood coffee-shop owner, ready with a smile and your favorite drink. Not her theories on who or what was trying to kill her on any given day, or the latest in ice-cap-melting news, or the eighteen things she had to get done later today.

She tried to channel Aunt Dot's free-spirit vibes even as she wished the woman had been slightly less laid-back and had actually left her more explicit directions. She attempted a gentler, sweeter smile. It felt strange on her face. 'Please, come in. That must be so heavy.'

Logan gave a slight nod in acknowledgment. 'I usually leave it out here.'

'Oh.' So it wasn't her monologue scaring him away, she'd just interrupted his usual operating procedure. She understood very well how that could throw a person off. When her favorite coffee place on the corner was closed for a week, she could barely function. And it wasn't for lack of caffeine. There was no shortage of coffee shops in the city, but none of them were hers. She'd been in a bad mood all week.

Her smile this time was genuine. 'Well, you're here now and I'm awake. How about a cup of coffee?'