



ONE
FOR MY
ENEMY

OLIVIE BLAKE

ONE FOR MY ENEMY

Olivie Blake

ALSO *by* OLIVIE
BLAKE:

Masters of Death

Lovely Tangled Vices

Fairytales of the Macabre

Midsummer Night Dreams



By OLIVIE BLAKE *and* LITTLE
CHMURA:

Alpha

Alpha, Vol. II: Rising

for LITTLE CHMURA,
who spirits my daydreams to life,

In exchange for the rare gift you so readily share, and
for the magic you have given me:

Here, have this book.

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THE CHARACTERS



THE FEDOROVS

KOSCHEI *the DEATHLESS, sometimes called Lazar, the Fedorov family patriarch,*
DIMITRI, *called Dima, the eldest of the Fedorov brothers,*
ROMAN, *called Roma or Romik, the second of the Fedorov brothers,* LEV,
sometimes called Levka or Solnyshko, the youngest of the Fedorov brothers.

THE ANTONOVAS

BABA YAGA, *sometimes called Marya, the Antonova family matriarch,* MARYA,
named for her mother and called Masha or sometimes Mashenka, the eldest of the
Antonova sisters,
EKATERINA, *called Katya, twin sister of Irina, together the second of the Antonova*
sisters,
IRINA, *sometimes Irka, twin sister of Ekaterina, together the second of the Antonova*
sisters,
YELENA, *called Lena or sometimes Lenchka, the fourth of the Antonova sisters,*
LILIYA, *sometimes called Lilenka, the fifth of the Antonova sisters,* GALINA, *called*
Galya or sometimes Galinka, the sixth of the Antonova sisters,
ALEXANDRA, *exclusively called Sasha or sometimes Sashenka, the youngest of the*
Antonova sisters.

THE OTHERS

IVAN, *the bodyguard of Marya Antonova,*
ERIC TAYLOR, *a classmate of Sasha Antonova,*
LUKA, *the son of Katya Antonova,*

STAS MAKSIMOV, *the husband of Marya Antonova, the*
TAQRIAQSUIT, *shadow creatures controlled by Koschei,*
ANTONOV, *the deceased husband of Baba Yaga,*
BRYNMOR ATTAWAY, *often called The Bridge, the half-fae informant of*
Marya Antonova,
ANNA FEDOROV, *the deceased wife of Koschei the Deathless,*
RAPHAEL SANTOS, *a property manager in Koschei's employ,* JONATHAN
MORONOE, *an influential Borough witch from Brooklyn, and* THE WITCHES'
BOROUGH, *the governing body of magical New York.*

SCENE: *New York City; New York; Now.*

THE PROLOGUE



Many things are not what they appear to be. Some things, though, try harder.

Baba Yaga's Artisan Apothecary was a small store in Lower Manhattan that had excellent (mostly female) Yelp reviews and an appealing, enticing storefront. The sign, itself a bit of a marvel in that it was *not* an elegantly back-lit sans serif, carried with it a fanciful sense of whimsy, not unlike the brightly-colored bath bombs and luxury serums inside. The words 'Baba Yaga' were written in sprawling script over the carved shape of a mortar and pestle, in an effort to mimic the Old World character herself.

In this case, to say the store was not what it appeared was an understatement.

I just love it here, one of the Yelp reviews exclaimed. *The products are all wonderful. The store itself is small and its products change regularly, but all of them are excellent. Duane Reade has more if you're looking for the typical drugstore products, but if you're looking for the perfect handmade scented candle or a unique gift for a friend or coworker, this would be the place to go.*

The hair and nails supplements made my pitiful strands twice as long in less than a year! one reviewer crooned. *I swear, this place is magic!*

Customer service is lovely, which is such a rarity in Manhattan, one reviewer contributed. I've never met the owner but her daughters (one or two of which are usually around to answer questions) are just the most beautiful and helpful young women you'll ever meet.

The store is never very full, one reviewer commented blithely, which is odd, considering it seems to do fairly well...

This store is an absolute gem, said another, and a well-kept secret.

And it was a secret.

A secret within a secret, in fact.

Elsewhere, southeast of Yaga's apothecary on Bowery, there was an antique furniture store called Koschei's. This store, unlike Baba Yaga's, was by appointment only.

The storefront always looks so cool, but the place is never open, one reviewer complained, giving the store three stars. On a whim, I tried calling to arrange a time to see one of the items in the window but couldn't get in touch with anyone for weeks. Finally, a young guy (one of the owner's sons, I believe) brought me in for about twenty minutes, but almost everything in the store was already reserved for private clients. That's fine, obviously, but still, it would have been nice to know in advance. I fell in love with a small vintage chest but was told it wasn't for sale.

REALLY EXPENSIVE, contributed another reviewer. You're better off going to Ikea or CB2.

This store is sort of creepy-looking, another reviewer added. There always seem to be weirdos moving things in and out of it, too. All the stuff looks really cool, but the store itself could use a facelift.

It's almost like they don't want customers, groused a more recent review.

And they were right; Koschei did not want customers.

At least, not the kind of customer who was looking for him on Yelp.

ACT I: MADNESS MOST DISCREET

*“Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes; Being vexed, a
sea nourished with loving tears. What is it else? A madness
most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.”*

Romeo to Benvolio,
Romeo and Juliet (1.1.181–185)

I. 1

(Enter the Fedorov Sons.)

The Fedorov sons had a habit of standing like the points of an isosceles triangle.

At the furthest point forward there was Dimitri, the eldest, who was the uncontested heir; the crown prince who'd spent a lifetime serving a dynasty of commerce and fortune. He typically stood with his chin raised, the weight of his invisible crown borne aloft, and had a habit of rolling his shoulders back and baring his chest, unthreatened. After all, who would threaten him? None who wished to live a long life, that was for certain. The line of Dimitri's neck was steady and unflinching, having never possessed a reason to turn warily over his shoulder. Dimitri Fedorov fixed his gaze on the enemy and let the world carry on at his back.

Behind Dimitri, on his right: the second of the Fedorov brothers, Roman, called Roma. If Dimitri was the Fedorov sun, Roman was the moon in orbit, his dark eyes carving a perimeter of warning around his elder brother. It was enough to make a man step back in hesitation, in disquietude, in fear. Roman had a spine like lightning, footfall like thunder. He was the edge of a sharp, bloodied knife.

Next to Roman stood Lev, the youngest. If his brothers were planetary bodies, Lev was an ocean wave. He was in constant motion, a tide that pulsed and waned. Even now, standing behind Dimitri, his fingers curled and uncurled reflexively at his sides, his thumb beating percussively against his thigh. Lev had a keen sense of danger, and he perceived it now, sniffing it out in the air and letting it creep between the sharp blades of his shoulders. It got under his skin, under his bones, and gifted him a shiver.

Lev had a keen sense of danger, and he was certain it had just walked in the room.

"Dimitri Fedorov," the woman said, a name which, from her lips, might have been equally threatening aimed across enemy lines or whispered between silken sheets. "You still know who I am, don't you?" Lev watched his brother fail to flinch, as always.

"Of course I know you, Marya," Dimitri said. "And you know me, don't you? Even now."

“I certainly thought I did,” Marya said.

She was a year older than Dimitri, or so Lev foggily recalled, which would have placed her just over the age of thirty. Flatteringly put, she didn’t remotely look it. Marya Antonova, whom none of the Fedorov brothers had seen since Lev was a child, had retained her set of youthful, pouty lips, as fitting to the Maybelline billboard outside their Tribeca loft as to her expression of measured interest, and the facial geography typically left victim to age—lines that might have expelled around her eyes or mouth, furrowed valleys that might have emerged along her forehead—had escaped even the subtlest indications of time. Every detail of Marya’s appearance, from the tailored lines of her dress to the polished leather of her shoes, had been marked by intention, pressed and spotless and neat, and her dark hair fell in meticulous 1940s waves, landing just below the sharp line of her collarbone.

She removed her coat in yet another episode of deliberation, establishing her dominion over the room and its contents via the simple handing of the garment to the man beside her.

“Ivan,” she said to him, “will you hold this while I visit with my old friend Dima?”

“Dima,” Dimitri echoed, toying with the endearment as the large man beside her carefully folded her coat over his arm, as fastidious as his employer. “Is this a friendly visit, then, Masha?”

“Depends,” Marya replied, unfazed by his use of her own diminutive and clearly in no hurry to elaborate. Instead, she obliged herself a lengthy, scrutinizing glance around the room, her attention skating dismissively over Roman before landing, with some degree of surprise, on Lev.

“My, my,” she murmured. “Little Lev has grown, hasn’t he?”

There was no doubt the twist of her coquette’s lips, however misleadingly soft, was meant to disparage him.

“I have,” Lev warned, but Dimitri held up a hand, calling for silence.

“Sit, Masha,” he beckoned, gesturing her to a chair, and she rewarded him with a smile, smoothing down her skirt before settling herself at the chair’s edge. Dimitri, meanwhile, took the seat opposite her on the leather sofa, while Roman and Lev, after exchanging a wary glance, each stood behind it, leaving the two heirs to mediate the interests of their respective sides.

Dimitri spoke first. "Can I get you anything?" "Nothing, thank you," from Marya.

"It's been a while," Dimitri noted.

The brief pause that passed between them was loaded with things neither expressed aloud nor requiring explanation. That time had passed was obvious, even to Lev.

There was a quiet exchange of cleared throats.

"How's Stas?" Dimitri asked casually, or with a tone that might have been casual to some other observer. To Lev, his brother's uneasy small talk was about as ill-fitting as the idea that Marya Antonova would waste her time with the pretense of saccharinity.

"Handsome and well-hung, just as he was twelve years ago," Marya replied. She looked up and smiled pointedly at Roman, who slid Lev a discomfiting glance. Stas Maksimov, a Borough witch and apparent subject of discussion, seemed about as out of place in the conversation as the Borough witches ever were. Generally speaking, none of the three Fedorovs ever bothered to lend much thought to the Witches' Boroughs at all, considering their father's occupation meant most of them had been in the family's pocket for decades.

Before Lev could make any sense of it, Marya asked, "How's business, Dima?"

"Ah, come on, Masha," Dimitri sighed, leaning back against the sofa cushions. If she was bothered by the continued use of her childhood name (or by anything at all, really) she didn't show it. "Surely you didn't come all the way here just to talk business, did you?"

She seemed to find the question pleasing, or at least amusing. "You're right," she said after a moment. "I didn't come exclusively to *talk* business, no. Ivan," she beckoned to her associate, gesturing over her shoulder. "The package I brought with me, if you would?"

Ivan stepped forward, handing her a slim, neatly-packaged rectangle that wouldn't have struck Lev as suspicious in the slightest had it not been handled with such conspicuous care. Marya glanced over it once herself, ascertaining something unknowable, before turning back to Dimitri, extending her slender arm.

Roman twitched forward, about to stop her, but Dimitri held up a hand again, waving Roman away as he leaned forward to accept it.

Dimitri's thumb brushed briefly over Marya's fingers, then retreated.

"What's this?" he asked, eyeing the package, and her smile curled upwards.

"A new product," Marya said, as Dimitri slid open the thick parchment to reveal a set of narrow tablets in plastic casing, each one like a vibrantly colored aspirin. "Intended for euphoria. Not unlike our other offerings, but this one is something a bit less delicate; a little sharper than pure delusion. Still, it's a hallucinatory with a hint of... *novelty*, if you will. Befitting the nature of our existing products, of course. Branding," she half-explained with a shrug. "You know how it goes."

Dimitri eyed the tablet in his hand for a long moment before speaking.

"I don't, actually," he replied, and Lev watched a muscle near his brother's jaw clench; another uncharacteristic twitch of unease, along with the resignation in his tone. "You know Koschei doesn't involve himself in any magical intoxicants unless he's specifically commissioned. This isn't our business."

"Interesting," Marya said softly, "very interesting."

"Is it?"

"Oh, yes, very. In fact, I'm relieved to hear you say that, Dima," Marya said. "You see, I'd heard some things, some very terrible rumors about your family's latest ventures"—Lev blinked, surprised, and glanced at Roman, who replied with a warning head shake—"but if you say this isn't your business, then I'm more than happy to believe you. After all, our two families have so wisely kept to our own lanes in the past, haven't we? Better for everyone that way, I think."

"Yes," Dimitri replied simply, setting the tablets down. "So, is that all, Masha? Just wanted to boast a bit about your mother's latest accomplishments, then?"

"Boast, Dima, really? Never," Marya said. "Though, while I'm here, I'd like you to be the first to try it, of course. Naturally. A show of good faith. I can share my products with you without fear, can't I? If you're to be believed, that is," she mused, daring him to contradict her. "After all, you and I are old friends. Aren't we?"

Dimitri's jaw tightened again; Roman and Lev exchanged another glance.

“Masha—”

“Aren’t we?” Marya cut in, sharper this time, and now, again, Lev saw the look in her eyes he remembered fearing as a young boy; that icy, distant look her gaze had sometimes held on the rare occasions he’d seen her. She’d clearly learned to conceal her sharper edges with whatever mimicry of innocence she had at her disposal, but that look, unlike her falser faces, could never be disguised. For Lev, it had the same effect as a bird of prey circling overhead.

“Try it, Dima,” Marya beckoned, in a voice that had no exit; no room to refuse. “I presume you know how to consume it?”

“Masha,” Dimitri said again, lowering his voice to its most diplomatic iteration. “Masha, be reasonable. Listen to me—”

“Now, Dima,” she cut in flatly, the persistence of blithe civility vanishing from the room.

It seemed that, for both of them, the playacting had finally ceased, the consequences of something unsaid dragging the conversation to a sudden détente, and Lev waited impatiently for his brother to refuse. Refusal seemed the preferable choice, and perhaps even the rational one; Dimitri did not typically partake in intoxicants, after all, and such a thing would have been easy to decline. *Should* have been easy to decline, even, as there was no obvious reason to be afraid.

(No reason, Lev thought grimly, aside from the woman who sat across from them, some invisible threat contained within each of her stiffened hands.)

Eventually, though—to Lev’s stifled dismay—Dimitri nodded his assent, taking up a lilac-colored tablet and eyeing it for a moment between his fingers. Beside Lev, Roman twitched forward almost imperceptibly and then forced himself still, dark eyes falling apprehensively on the line of their brother’s neck.

“Do it,” Marya said, and Dimitri’s posture visibly stiffened.

“Masha, give me a chance to explain,” he said, voice low with what Lev might have called a plea had he not believed his brother incapable of pleading. “After everything, don’t you owe me that much? I understand you must be angry—”

“Angry? What’s to be angry about? Just try it, Dima. What would you possibly have to fear? You already assured me we were friends, didn’t you?”

The words, paired with a smile so false it was really more of a grimace, rang with causticity from Marya's tongue. Dimitri's mouth opened, hesitation catching in his throat, and Marya leaned forward. "Didn't you?" she repeated, and this time, Dimitri openly flinched.

"Perhaps you should go," Lev blurted thoughtlessly, stepping forward to join his brother's side, and at that, Marya looked up, her gaze falling curiously on him as she proceeded to rapidly morph and change, resuming her sweeter disposition as she recalled his presence in the room.

"You know, Dima," she said, eyes still inescapably on Lev, "if the Fedorov brothers are anything like the Antonova sisters, then it would be very wrong of me to not reward them equally for our *friendship*. Perhaps we should include Lev and Roma in this," she mused, slowly returning her gaze to Dimitri's, "don't you think?"

"No," Dimitri said, so firmly it halted Lev in place. "No, they have nothing to do with this. Stay back," he said to Lev, turning around to deliver the message clearly. "Stay where you are, Lev. Roma, keep him there," he commanded in his deepened crown-prince voice, and Roman nodded, cutting Lev a cautioning glare.

"Dima," Lev said, senses all but flaring with danger now. "Dima, really, you don't have to—"

"Quiet," Marya said, and then, save for her voice, the room fell absent of sound. "You assured me," she said, eyes locked on Dimitri's now. It was clear that, for her, no other person of consequence existed in the room.

"Spare me the indignity of recounting the reasons we both know you'll do as I ask."

Dimitri looked at her, and she back at him.

And then, slowly, Dimitri resigned himself to parting his lips, placing the tablet on the center of his tongue and tilting his head back to swallow as Lev let out a shout no one could hear.

"It's a new product, as I said," Marya informed the room, brushing off her skirt. "Nothing any different from what will eventually come to market. The interesting thing, though, about our intoxicants," she said, observing with quiet indifference as Dimitri shook himself slightly, dazed, "is that there are certain prerequisites for enjoyment. Obviously, we have to build in some sort of

precautionary measures to be certain who we're dealing with, so there are some possible side effects. Thieves, for example," she murmured softly, her eyes still on Dimitri's face, "will suffer some unsavory reactions. Liars, too. In fact, anyone who touches our products without the exchange of currency from an Antonova witch's hands will find them... slightly less pleasant to consume."

Dimitri raised a hand to his mouth, retching sharply into his palm for several seconds. After a moment spent collecting himself, he lifted his head with as much composure as he could muster, shakily dragging the back of his hand across his nose.

A bit of blood leaked out, smearing across the knuckle of his index finger.

"Understandably, our dealers wish to partake at times, so to protect them, we give them a charm they wear in secret. Of course, you likely wouldn't know that," Marya remarked, still narrating something with a relevance Lev failed to grasp. "Trade secret, isn't it? That it's quite dangerous to try to sell our products without our express permission, I mean. Wouldn't want someone to know that in advance, obviously, or our system would very well collapse."

Dimitri coughed again, the reverberation of it still silent. Steadily, blood began to pour freely from his nose, dripping into his hands and coating them in a viscous, muddied scarlet that may well have been streaked with black. He sputtered without a sound, struggling to keep fluid from dripping into his throat while his chest wrenched with coughs.

"We have a number of informants, you know. They're very clever, and very well-concealed. Unfortunately, according to one of them, *someone*," Marya murmured, "has been selling our intoxicants. Buying them from us, actually, and then turning around to sell them at nearly quadruple the price. Who would do that, I wonder, Dima?"

Dimitri choked out a word that might have been Marya's name, falling forward on his hands and knees and colliding with the floor. He convulsed once, then twice, hitting his head on the corner of the table and stumbling, and Lev called out to his brother with dismay, the sound of it still lost to the effects of Marya's spell. She was the better witch, by far; their father had always said so, speaking of Marya Antonova even from her youth as if she were some sort of Old World demon, the kind of villainess children were warned to look for in the dark. Still, Lev rushed forward, panicked, only to feel his brother Roman's

iron grip at the back of his collar, pinning him in place as Dimitri struggled to rise and collapsed forward again, blood pooling beneath his cheek where he'd fallen to the floor.

"This hurts me, Dima, it really does," Marya said. "I really did think we were friends, you know. I certainly thought you could be trusted. You were always so upstanding when we were children—and yes, true, a lot can happen in a decade, but still, I really never thought we'd be... *here*." She sighed, shaking her head. "It pains me, truly, as much as it pains you. Though perhaps that's insensitive of me," she said softly, watching Dimitri gasp for air; her gaze never dropped, not even when he began to jerk in violent tremors. "Since it does seem to be paining you a great deal."

Lev felt his brother's name tear from his lungs again, the pain of it scratching at his throat until finally, finally, Dimitri fell rigidly still. By then, the whole scene was like a portrait, gruesomely Baroque; from the crumpled malformation of his torso, one of Dimitri's arms was left outstretched, his fingers unfurled towards Marya's feet.

"Well," exhaled Marya, rising from the chair. "I suppose that's that. Ivan, my coat, please?"

At last, with their brother's orders fulfilled, Roman released Lev, who in turn flung himself towards Dimitri. Roman looked on, helpless and tensed, as Lev checked for a pulse, frantically layering spells to keep what was left of his brother's blood unspilled, to compel his princely lungs to motion. Dimitri's breathing was shallow, the effort of his chest rapidly fading, and in a moment of hopelessness, Lev looked blearily up at Marya, who was pulling on a pair of black leather gloves.

"Why?" he choked out, abandoning the effort of forethought. He hadn't even bothered with surprise that his voice had finally been granted to him, and she, similarly, spared none at the question, carefully removing a smudge from her oversized sunglasses before replacing them on her face.

"Tell Koschei that Baba Yaga sends her love," she said simply.

Translation: *Your move*.

Then Marya Antonova turned, beckoning Ivan along with her, and let the door slam in her wake.

I. 2

(What People Can See.)

“Alexandra Ant- ah, sorry, Anto-no-va?”

“Hi, that’s me,” Sasha said quickly, raising her hand in the air. “It’s Ant-nova. I go by Sasha.”

“Ah, okay, cool,” the T.A. said, obviously failing to commit it to memory. “You’ll be with, um.” He skimmed the list in his hand. “Eric Taylor, John Anderson, and Nirav, uh—”

“Vemulakonda,” someone a row down from Sasha’s supplied coolly.

“Yes, that,” the T.A. agreed. “Right, so, if you guys just want to circle up and sort it out, you’ve got about ten minutes left of class. I’ll be here if you have any questions,” he added loudly, though by then his voice had been drowned out by the sounds of students shifting around in their seats, haphazardly rearranging.

“Hey,” Sasha said, nodding as the other student with the unpronounceable name made his way towards her. He wore his black hair in a dramatic wave up from his forehead, the ends of it feathered like a raven’s wing. “Nirav, right?”

“Right, and you’re Sasha,” Nirav replied. “I like it. *Sa-s*ha,” he repeated emphatically, baring his teeth a little as he lolled it around on his tongue. “Good name.”

“Thanks. Solid branding,” she offered wryly, and he chuckled, gesturing over her shoulder to nod as the two others from their group approached.

“Eric,” offered one, extending a hand. He had his blond hair parted cleanly, as impeccably polished as his dark blue v-neck sweater. “This is John,” he added, gesturing beside him to the quiet, dark-skinned student who generally sat some rows behind her. “So, should we plan to meet up and go over the details?”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Eric seemed to consider himself the leader. “I could do noon tomorrow at Bobst,” Sasha suggested, naming the library. “Or, if you guys were up for coffee tomorrow afternoon, I only have class at two, and th-”

“How about a drink instead?” Eric interrupted, speaking almost exclusively to John and Nirav. “Tonight, at Misfit? We can go over the business plan and then work on splitting up the roles.”

“A bar?” Sasha asked doubtfully, feeling her expression stiffen as Nirav and John made tentative noises of agreement. “Don’t you think that’s a little —”

“Brilliant?” Eric prompted, grinning at her. He might have been handsome, she thought, if he wasn’t so ruthlessly irritating; as it was, she had to stifle a general need to shove him down several rows of the theater-style chairs. “What do you guys think, maybe around eight this evening?” Sasha cleared her throat, dismayed. “Look, I really don’t think—” “Eight works for me,” John interrupted, glancing down at his watch.

“Sorry, have to run, got class—”

“Me too,” contributed Nirav, shifting his backpack to both shoulders and giving Sasha an apologetic glance that only frustrated her further. “Cool, see you guys at eight, then—”

“Yeah, see you—”

Sasha watched, dismayed, as the other three proceeded to exit the classroom, Eric winking outrageously at her over his shoulder before catching up with the other two. She grimaced, clenching a fist (her mother would *not* care for it, and frankly, in twenty-two years Sasha had never really been the bar-going type), and slowly made her way out of the building, wrapping her scarf loosely around her neck before bracing herself for the late winter chill.

“Sasha!”

She paused, catching the familiar sound of her eldest sister’s voice, and turned to find Marya walking in her direction, their heftily bundled two-yearold nephew Luka’s mittened hand clutched tightly in hers. Luka was their sister Katya’s son, but as often seemed the case these days, Marya was stooped slightly to walk beside him, unwilling to release Luka’s insistent fingers but equally unwilling to stop wearing her signature stiletto heels.

“Sasha,” Marya said again, finally abandoning her efforts at walking and hoisting Luka up in her arms, sitting him on one hip. Immediately, he wrapped his chubby fingers around a clump of her hair and gave what appeared to be a