


“An absolute treat!” –Christina Lauren,
New York Times bestselling authors of *The Unhoneymooners*

The Lodge



A NOVEL

KAYLA OLSON

Author of *The Reunion*

**Thank you for downloading
this Simon & Schuster ebook.**

Get a FREE ebook when you join our mailing list. Plus, get updates on new releases, deals, recommended reads, and more from Simon & Schuster. Click below to sign up and see terms and conditions.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)

Already a subscriber? Provide your email again so we can register this ebook and send you more of what you like to read. You will continue to receive exclusive offers in your inbox.

The
Lodge

A NOVEL

KAYLA OLSON

ATRIA PAPERBACK

NEW YORK AMSTERDAM/ANTWERP LONDON

TORONTO SYDNEY NEW DELHI

For my parents, Mark and Dawn, who always believed I could (and would) go on to do something great—if *American Idol* hadn't said no to me in the first round of auditions, I might have ended up on a totally different path! Thanks for loving me through all the twists and turns of this creative life.

And for anyone who:

- Loves a hot celebrity tell-all
- Had *Tiger Beat* posters covering every inch of their bedroom wall
- Spent hours trying to nail every beat to Britney's "Oops!... I Did It Again" choreography (this book has nothing to do with Britney, but you are my people if you can relate)
- Had a favorite member of NKOTB, Backstreet Boys, *NSYNC, Hanson, 98°, One Direction, and/or BTS
- Is still in their boy band era and, frankly, never intends to leave

This one's for you.

EIGHT YEARS AGO

True North Lead Singer Jett Beckett Vanishes without a Trace

By Alix Morgan // Starslinger Daily, Staff Writer, Arts & Entertainment

Late this afternoon, the music industry—and world at large—was rocked by a press release of seismic proportions: international boy band sensation Jett Beckett has vanished.

It's been eighteen hours and counting since Beckett was last seen.

Here's everything we know so far:

- The lead singer of boy band True North—and arguably its brightest star—was last seen around midnight in Boston Harbor Hotel's John Adams Presidential Suite, where he was staying with his four bandmates during this leg of their sold-out stadium tour.
- Beckett was reported missing after failing to show up for both a meeting with the band's record label and the sound check for tonight's (since canceled) concert. His personal belongings—wallet and identification cards included—were found undisturbed in the suite.
- Two hours prior to the time of Beckett's disappearance, which is estimated to be around midnight, he had a backstage clash with bandmate Sebastian Green; their heated exchange was partially captured in [this viral video](#). While emotionally charged,

the video lacks the necessary context to show us what, exactly, sparked their disagreement and such a fiery fight.

- Despite that contentious clash, sources close to Beckett report there is no obvious evidence of foul play. The investigation is currently ongoing, but with no body and no evidence, it is presumed that Jett Beckett will be categorized as a missing person and therefore no criminal charges will be pressed at this time.

So where do we go from here?

Management has announced that True North's Diamond in the Sky Tour has been postponed for the next week, projecting optimism that Beckett will reappear to wrap up this month's leg.

Bandmates River Wu, Charly Johannsen, Ayo Okeke, and Sebastian Green could not be reached for comment. The band's manager, Jason Saenz-Barlowe, provided a statement via his social media channels:

“There isn't a person in this world who doesn't know Jett Beckett's face,” he remarked during a video posted this evening, striking a confident, comforting tone. “It's unlikely he'll be missing for long.”

For the sake of the fandom, not to mention Beckett himself, let's hope he's right.



Congrats, everyone—the news is out! Go celebrate tonight!

Everything feels buzzy as I take in the new email at the top of my inbox.

There's hardly anything to it, just that short note—sent from my editor, Maribel, to the whole team—along with a screenshot. I zoom in, see the Publishers Marketplace deal listing for Sebastian Green's book.

For *our* book.

I've been sitting on this secret for what feels like forever. It's a feat, honestly, considering how many times I've almost let it slip.

With the announcement now out, it's finally starting to sink in that I'm writing a memoir—a *celebrity* memoir that will likely take up permanent residence on the *New York Times* bestseller list for at least a year. Not only that, but I'm on a train, headed to a ski lodge in Vermont for an entire month, all expenses paid.

These are the things dreams are made of, and not just because I quit my day job last year to pursue freelance work. Ghostwriting the memoir of Sebastian Green, arguably the most famous member of my all-time favorite boy band?

Yes. Yes, *with enthusiasm*. I signed on in a heartbeat.

But I haven't breathed a word about it, not to anyone.

I've been dying to tell my best friend, Chloe. She's easily starstruck, though, and notorious for inadvertently spilling secrets. Not even my sister, Lauren, knows—and she's

been crashing with me in New York for more than a month while doing an internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In retrospect, maybe she would've let me get some work done if I'd told her.

I had almost nothing to show on my most recent Zoom call with the book's publisher. That wasn't entirely Lauren's fault, but her presence in my apartment has been distracting, to say the least. My editor—the infamous Maribel Tovar at McClendon & Murphy—though gracious, took the opportunity to emphasize our not-so-flexible deadline. Every single aspect of this book is being rushed so it can hit shelves before the holiday season, and as it is currently early March, the deadline felt tight enough even before Lauren made my work hours nonexistent.

Enter Sebastian Green.

Sebastian is a lot of things, but *thoughtful* is not the first word that springs to mind. Trendy to a fault? Yes. Aloof, flighty, a touch self-obsessed? Yes, yes, more yes. Handsome and he knows it? Absolutely.

But he's also a well-connected multimillionaire who wants his book to release in time to cash in on the holidays, for which I will be forever thankful, because as soon as I told everyone about my distracting living situation, he offered to hook me up with an all-expenses-paid writing retreat at an incredible-looking ski resort.

Why would he offer this? No idea. Maybe it's to make sure I want to show his best side as I tell his story? Maybe it also eases his guilty conscience about how he blew off two meetings before we ever got to this point—we'd been planning to meet up for a series of interviews but he took a last-minute trip to Los Angeles, and then another one to Spain, and promised we'd connect soon.

We haven't. Not yet, anyway.

Hence, I am on a train. To Vermont. Where Sebastian will—at some point, hopefully—meet up with me to discuss the more nuanced details of his life story.

In the meantime, he sent over roughly eighty hours' worth of voice memos. Thankfully, the ski resort should provide a quiet place for me to sort through them in peace while also affording the privacy someone like Sebastian needs to meet face-to-face.

As long as he shows up this time.



It's snowing when we pull into the train station.

Sebastian told me to keep an eye out for the driver who'll take me to the lodge, but it's harder than it should be thanks to the weather.

"Alix Morgan?"

I hear my name before I see him, the man holding up a sign meant for me. He takes my luggage as I climb into his sleek silver SUV, an Audi with leather seats and the biggest sunroof I've ever seen.

The ride is beautiful and peaceful, aside from a few disgruntled yowls from Puffin, my cat—Lauren wasn't confident she'd remember to feed him, so he's along for the ride. As we make our way north, the snowflakes gradually become smaller and more delicate, spiraling gracefully outside the windows.

We turn, and the world opens up: it suddenly feels like we're driving straight toward the canvas of a massive, masterful painting.

Snowcapped mountains pierce the lowest clouds; at their base is a sprawling lodge, grandiose and picture-perfect. It looks warm and cozy even at a distance, lit inside and out with the glow of yellow lanterns.

I feel like a starlet as we pull up to the lodge.

This close, it feels absolutely colossal—the covered drive at the entrance stretches at least three floors high, with stone and steel and wooden beams to scale. Entire humans could fit inside the iron frames of the glass-paneled lanterns, if said lanterns weren't ablaze with actual fire.

We come to a stop just outside the main entrance. One of the valets appears with a cart, and my driver steps out to take care of my luggage. Puffin yowls again, bristling at the cold air as we get out of the car.

I rummage in my wallet, pull out a twenty; it was not a short drive, and my bags are not what one would call lightly packed.

When I offer it, the driver waves it away.

"Save it for the next guy." He grins, tucking the last of my bags onto the luggage cart.

What sort of driver refuses an extra tip?

The sort who has already been paid generously, I realize as soon as I've had the thought.

Thanks, Sebastian.

“This way,” the valet says, luggage cart in tow.

I follow him through the gigantic double doors and into the atrium.

The inside is every bit as oversized as the outside. Just past the entrance is a massive fireplace, possibly taller than I am, lively flames flickering in its grate. The atrium ceiling extends four stories, held up by the thickest wooden columns I’ve ever seen—it’s like something straight out of a redwood forest. And then there’s the bookshelf wall: it’s as tall as the atrium itself (yes, *four floors high*) and filled with books that are mostly out of reach, purely there to serve the cozy aesthetic. Lush leather couches—with ottomans to match, and what appear to be hand-woven throw blankets—make me want to curl up with one of the books I packed and a mug of hot cocoa.

But alas, the valet leads me right past the seating area to the concierge desk.

“Ms. Morgan?” a woman greets me, her dark hair neat in a low bun.

I must look surprised, because she nods toward the luggage cart, at Puffin’s carrier. “It isn’t every day we get to make preparations for a cat.”

Oh. Right.

“Your suite is all ready for you—I’m not sure how much Mr. Green told you, but your penthouse is in our Exclusive Access Complex, just down the path from the main lodge, where we are now. I’ll page the tram for you unless you prefer to walk—it takes about eight minutes on foot.”

“The tram sounds great, thanks.”

The tram turns out to be a glorified golf cart with a few extra rows and some clear plastic flaps to keep the cold and the snow at bay. We wind down the path, only a little bit freezing.

It’s hard to get a great view through the protective flaps, but what I can see looks magical: twinkle lights everywhere, sparkling against the snowy afternoon sky; a quaint mini village full of shops and cafés, the entire scene extremely warm and cozy and inviting. I even spot an ice-skating rink, positioned perfectly against the backdrop of the resort’s main attraction: Black Maple Mountain.

We pull up to my building, which looks like a more modern addition to the resort. Apparently, some people live in this building year-round, while others treat it like a

vacation home. I'm guessing Sebastian might be the latter; his attitude screamed *owner* when he offered up this place so cavalierly, but I'm not sure he's ever actually lived here.

"Your key card will give you private access to the penthouse floor—those elevators are around back, just down the sidewalk," the driver informs me. "Would you like assistance finding your way?"

I shake my head. "Got it, thanks."

"If you ever have any trouble, use the intercom and someone will be over to assist you."

He waits until Puffin and I have rounded the corner toward the elevator vestibule before driving off. One flick of my key card against the sensor and I'm in the building—one more, and I'm in the elevator itself. There's only one button: *P* for Penthouse.

I hear the faint vibration of my phone in my bag. It's a text from Chloe, asking where I am.

It's possible I haven't mentioned this whole month-in-Vermont situation to her yet. I know she'll forgive me for keeping secrets—but still, there's a part of me that worries she'll be hurt that I didn't tell her sooner.

I'm supposed to keep as quiet as possible about the fact that I'm ghostwriting for Sebastian. According to my editor, it's best for the book if we don't call attention to the fact that he didn't write every single word himself. Maribel did give me permission to tell Chloe everything once the deal announcement went live, though, so I guess I'm in the clear now as long as I trust her to be discreet.

The elevator opens onto a landing that's even more private than I anticipated—and even more beautiful, with stylish wood paneling, black furniture, a gilded mirror on the wall, and a sprig of greenery in a slim vase. There are apparently only two residences on this entire floor; a pair of battered boots sits neatly outside the door on my left, so I guess the other door must be mine.

I head that way but can't help glancing back at the boots. They're so large they almost certainly belong to a man—a man who recently got back from a long trek through the snow, judging by the sizable puddle underneath. I hadn't even considered the possibility of having a neighbor, especially not a maybe-tall man who could be fairly athletic. *Interesting.*

I call Chloe before I get too carried away. It rings only once before she picks up.

“Hey! Are we still on for happy hour? I started to worry when you didn’t text me back.”

Last night, in between last-minute laundry and placing an overnight order for more cat food, I had the sinking feeling I was forgetting something, but I couldn’t put my finger on what.

Now I know.

“So, um, about that,” I say, tapping my key card to the sensor outside my room. The lock opens on command, and I head inside. “Holy. Crap.”

“Alix—what? Are you okay?”

I blink at the room before me.

Room is not a sufficient word for what’s before me.

Alpine haven for millionaires with expensive taste is a more apt description. *Heaven with a view*: even better.

Sprawling is an understatement. And more than just gigantic, this place is utterly gorgeous. I suppose I should have expected as much, given that it’s a penthouse—and yet.

“Alix?”

“Sorry, Chlo,” I finally say. “No happy hour today. But I have a good explanation, I promise. Give me five minutes? I’ll call you right back.”

“That’s quite the cliffhanger, but okay. I’m setting a timer—do *not* leave me in suspense for too long!”

Dewdrops • For You Page

#superfresh #freshdrops #breakingnews #sebastiangreen

u/SebGreen

2:32PM • March 1

heyooooo

news is out, i'm writing a book.

wanna read it????! (jk i know you do)

preorder here but sorry, it wont land on your doorstep until later this year bc i still have to write the thing. gonna be SO WORTH IT THO

love,
seb

♥ 998.2k • ↻ 747.7k • 💬 421.5k

COMMENTS

 [u/TruestNortherner](#)

I have been waiting for this announcement for LITERAL YEARS and just preordered a copy for everyone I know—Teenage Me is SCREAMING CRYING FALLING OVER. How are we all doing, everyone?

↳ [u/jettbeckettconspiracytheorist](#)

Ok as we all know, I am forever a Jett Beckett stan. BUT. I will binge this in a single sitting the day it's released bc it might be the closest we ever get to finding out what happened the night Jett disappeared

↳ [u/TruestNortherner](#)

STAHHP it did not even OCCUR TO ME that we might get details on what happened that night, now I seriously cannot wait (PS: SEB IF YOU SEE THIS WE VOLUNTEER TO READ ADVANCE COPIES IF YOU GET THEM)

↳ [u/BoiiiBandBoiii](#)

CAN CONFIRM, would read Seb's grocery list, idgaf what he writes I am here for it

↳ [u/jettbeckettconspiracytheorist](#)

If anyone wants to talk Jett Beckett theories, you know where to find me

↳ [u/TruestNortherner](#)

Too depressing at this point, u/jettbeckettconspiracytheorist, I think he's gone forever :(

↳ [u/BoiiiBandBoiii](#)

UGHHH this thread started out so happy and now I want to cry into a pint of chunky monkey

↳ [u/jettbeckettconspiracytheorist](#)

idk, I still haven't given up hope... but admit it doesn't look good :(((

↳ [u/TruestNortherner](#)

It's been eight years

↳ [u/BoiiiBandBoiii](#)

EIGHT. YEARS. (make that two pints of chunky monkey)

↳ [u/SebGreen](#)

it's rocky road on my grocery list, bruh, chunky monkey is the worst (thx for ordering the book!)—seb



2

“I’m sorry—you’re doing *what?!?*”

I yank the phone away from my ear a split second too late. The damage is done: Chloe’s unbridled enthusiasm has pierced a hole straight through my skull.

“Alix. *Alix*. Say it again.”

After so many years of heartbreaking almosts and outright rejections, my news still sounds unreal even to me.

“I get to ghostwrite Sebastian Green’s memoir,” I repeat slowly.

I’ve spent weeks holding this burning secret inside, wondering if it would all turn to ash if I exhaled in just the wrong way—now is the moment it finally feels *real*.

“Stop it,” she says in disbelief. “I cannot. Sebastian Green? What?!”

I’m not easily starstruck, which is probably a substantial part of the reason I landed the job, but Chloe’s specific brand of enthusiasm is contagious. I catch a glimpse of myself in the bathroom mirror of my home away from home, grinning like the naive writer I once was.

“It’s surreal,” I say.

“It’s *incredible*,” Chloe agrees. “Are you sure you can’t make it to happy hour? Drinks on me tonight—we could go somewhere special to celebrate, there’s this new rooftop bar in Williamsburg—”

“I’m not in Brooklyn right now,” I interrupt before she gets too into the idea.

“Wait—you’re not going out celebrating with *Sebastian Green himself* tonight, are you? Alix. If you’re going out with Sebastian Green, I will literally die of envy!”

I sit down on the buttery leather couch near one of the many floor-to-ceiling windows in this palatial suite and take in the view of the resort’s most prominent mountain. It’s absolutely stunning.

“I’m not even in *New York* right now,” I say. “Like, not just the city—the state. I’m in Vermont.”

“Alix?” I hear Chloe say on the other end of the line. “You cut out for a bit, did you say *Vermont*?”

“They’re putting me up in an amazing penthouse so I can write without distractions,” I say.

It’s not *technically* a lie. I’m just keeping it vague as to who, exactly, made all the arrangements and is footing the bill.

“I need pics, like, now. How long will you be there—and when can I come visit?”

I put her on speaker, snap a quick photo of the breathtaking landscape, and hit send. The snow-covered mountain outside my window is exactly the sort of postcard-perfect vista I imagined it would be.

“I’ll be here for a month,” I say. “That’s the view from my living room.”

“*Stop it*, Alix, holy—I will most definitely be crashing your vacay, and *soon*. Wow.”

“It’s not a vacation,” I say, though I admit that fact has been a little slow to sink in. The fancy soaps and modern bathtub, the sleek wineglasses and well-stocked bar, views from every window, multiple shaded balconies, and even a game room with a pool table: literally everything about this place screams vacation. It’s going to take some work to... well, remind myself to *work*.

“Why don’t you plan on coming to see me halfway through?” I suggest. I could get lost in here, it’s so enormous. “I’ll do a ton of work these next two weeks so I can take a good break. We’ll have cocoa and sit by the fire—”

“Say no more, I’ll be there. Also! Keep your eye out for any hot ski instructors who might be interested in cozying up to a petite brunette with big golden retriever energy, please.”

I laugh. “Sounds like a plan.”

“If you happen to see any hot ski instructors for yourself, don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone a little, okay? Just ask yourself, ‘What would Chloe do?’”

“Not this again,” I say, glad she can’t see how hard I’m rolling my eyes.

“It’s been *two years* since Blake,” she says delicately, treading lightly over my sore spot. “This is the perfect opportunity to test the waters again.”

If Chloe has golden retriever energy, I’m the cat who hides under the bed whenever anyone new gets close.

Blake was a lion.

The only good thing about dating him was that I met Chloe; she was dating one of Blake’s Wall Street bros at the time. Of the six guys in that group—and their revolving door of significant others—my friendship with Chloe is the only relationship that survived.

“I probably won’t have a lot of time for skiing, Chlo. Or guys.”

It is the flimsiest of excuses.

“You work too hard as it is,” she counters. “Promise me you’ll make time for *fun*, too? You can work your way up to scouting out the guys, I’ll give you that. But you are in freaking ski heaven right now, and you will regret it if you don’t make the most of that mountain while you’re there.”

“I’ll regret it, or you’ll make me regret it?”

“Do you really want to find out?”

I laugh. “Okay. No promises on anything else, but I’ll agree to ski at least once on this trip.”

“At least once *this week*,” she says. “Do it tomorrow. Get up early, knock out some words, and then take a break in the afternoon—if you love it, you’ll be glad I made you do it.”

Chloe is one of the most productive people I’ve ever met, yet she somehow manages never to seem stressed out. It’s possible I could learn a thing or two from her approach to the whole work-life balance situation.

“Only if I get enough done tomorrow,” I concede.

The mountain really does look tempting. So does the little village over near the main lodge, and the ice-skating rink.

If I'm honest, it's been a lonely two years since Blake. Spending all my time in this gorgeous penthouse, all by myself—even if I'm technically on a tight deadline—might only amplify that loneliness. At least I have Puffin to keep me company. And Sebastian, though I'm not sure yet when he'll be coming.

“Text me a picture tomorrow of your skis in the snow,” she says, and I can hear it in her voice: she knows she's won. “And if you happen to run into Sebastian Green on that mountain, you'd better believe I'm going to need a picture of him, too.”



This penthouse is the coziest place I've ever set foot in my entire life.

I've settled in for my first writing session of the retreat, ready to finally make some significant progress on this project. There are a few workspaces to choose from, but for today I'm going with the sleek desk by my bedroom window. The view is calm but energizing: the hypnotic spiral of snowflakes against the majestic backdrop of Black Maple Mountain, with the resort village nestled in between.

It even *smells* cozy—I've got a steaming cup of jasmine tea on my desk, its fragrance mingling with the candle I lit (orange, cedarwood, and more jasmine).

The silence is almost overwhelming.

No garbage trucks banging around outside this building. No noisy neighbors threatening my sanity with their subwoofer that—on a semiregular basis—makes actual ripples in my water. No Lauren barging in uninvited to talk my ear off for an hour.

I fill it, instead, with Sebastian.

His voice memos are an absolute mess.

I'm not sure I've ever heard someone flit from one subject to the next quite like Sebastian does. Chloe is like this sometimes, but her detours are usually more like little fireworks, distracted bursts of energy she just has to get out before returning to whatever she was talking about before.

Sebastian's detours, though, are something else. It's as if the entire history of his life is detached from any sort of linear timeline in his mind and, instead, is more like an intricate spiderweb.

Fascinating—but not exactly straightforward.

I've wondered about so many things over the years: Was his infamous rivalry with Jett Beckett actually real or convincingly staged for media attention? If it was real, was it pure and simple envy, two gorgeous guys with inflated egos who were forced to share a spotlight, or was there more to it than that?

Will he spill any secrets about the night Jett Beckett disappeared?

Will he spill any secrets about why the band disintegrated a few months later?

Will he spill any secrets that aren't on anyone's radar at all?

As many articles as I've written in a professional context, I've never truly had the freedom to ask the questions *I* wanted answers to. Theorizing and speculating are common on the gossip blogger side of things—but at the various news outlets I've worked for, I've only ever found myself in a position to objectively report the truth.

Now is my chance to dig deeper.

The titles on Sebastian's voice memos are super vague and incomplete, judging from the few I've already listened to. I'm praying the rest won't involve anything more about school talent shows, or how he took his first piano lesson at age four, or how his mother drove him all over the place throughout his childhood to try to get him in front of the right people.

All of that is fascinating in its own right, but I already have enough about his early years to fill more than an entire chapter. That's probably already too much—people want the *juicy* stuff.

And so do I.

I hit play, and Sebastian's voice echoes off the walls and the polished concrete floor. As soon as he starts speaking, I know this particular voice memo will deliver.