



THE HAWTHORNE LEGACY

A DEADLY GAME.

A PUZZLE TO SOLVE.

A FORTUNE AT STAKE.

∞ AN INHERITANCE GAMES NOVEL ∞

JENNIFER LYNN BARNES

New York Times bestselling author

THE HAWTHORNE LEGACY

∞ AN INHERITANCE GAMES NOVEL ∞

New York Times bestselling author

JENNIFER LYNN BARNES



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

New York Boston

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

Copyright © 2021 by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

Cover art copyright © 2021 by Katt Phatt. Cover design by Karina Granda.
Cover copyright © 2021 by Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Hachette Book Group supports the right to free expression and the value of copyright. The purpose of copyright is to encourage writers and artists to produce the creative works that enrich our culture.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book without permission is a theft of the author's intellectual property. If you would like permission to use material from the book (other than for review purposes), please contact permissions@hbgusa.com. Thank you for your support of the author's rights.

Little, Brown and Company
Hachette Book Group
1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104
Visit us at LBYR.com

First Edition: September 2021

Little, Brown and Company is a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc. The Little, Brown name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not

owned by the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Barnes, Jennifer (Jennifer Lynn), author.

Title: The Hawthorne legacy / Jennifer Lynn Barnes.

Description: First edition. | New York : Little, Brown and Company, 2021. |

Series: An inheritance games novel | Audience: Ages 12 & up. | Summary: Rumors spread that Tobias Hawthorne's lost son may still be alive, casting doubt on seventeen-year-old Avery's inheritance and changing the rules of the game.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020048435 | ISBN 9780759557635 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780759557642 (ebook) | ISBN 9780759557659 (ebook other)

Subjects: CYAC: Inheritance and succession—Fiction. | Wealth—Fiction. | Puzzles—Fiction. | Missing persons—Fiction. | Secrets—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.B26225 Haw 2021 | DDC [Fic]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020048435>

ISBNs: 978-0-7595-5763-5 (hardcover), 978-0-7595-5764-2 (ebook), 978-0-316-39401-7 (international), 978-0-316-36613-7 (Barnes & Noble special edition), 978-0-316-38917-4 (signed edition), 9780-316-38927-3 (Barnes & Noble signed edition)

E3-20210816-JV-NF-ORI

Contents

[COVER](#)

[TITLE PAGE](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#)

[DEDICATION](#)

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[CHAPTER 17](#)

[CHAPTER 18](#)

[CHAPTER 19](#)

[CHAPTER 20](#)

[CHAPTER 21](#)

[CHAPTER 22](#)

[CHAPTER 23](#)

[CHAPTER 24](#)

[CHAPTER 25](#)

[CHAPTER 26](#)

[CHAPTER 27](#)

[CHAPTER 28](#)

[CHAPTER 29](#)

[CHAPTER 30](#)

[CHAPTER 31](#)

[CHAPTER 32](#)

[CHAPTER 33](#)

[CHAPTER 34](#)

[CHAPTER 35](#)

[CHAPTER 36](#)

[CHAPTER 37](#)

[CHAPTER 38](#)

[CHAPTER 39](#)

[CHAPTER 40](#)

[CHAPTER 41](#)

[CHAPTER 42](#)

[CHAPTER 43](#)

[CHAPTER 44](#)

[CHAPTER 45](#)

[CHAPTER 46](#)

[CHAPTER 47](#)

[CHAPTER 48](#)

[CHAPTER 49](#)

[CHAPTER 50](#)

[CHAPTER 51](#)

[CHAPTER 52](#)

[CHAPTER 53](#)

[CHAPTER 54](#)

[CHAPTER 55](#)

[CHAPTER 56](#)

[CHAPTER 57](#)

[CHAPTER 58](#)

[CHAPTER 59](#)

[CHAPTER 60](#)

[CHAPTER 61](#)

[CHAPTER 62](#)

[CHAPTER 63](#)

[CHAPTER 64](#)

[CHAPTER 65](#)

[CHAPTER 66](#)

[CHAPTER 67](#)

[CHAPTER 68](#)

[CHAPTER 69](#)

[CHAPTER 70](#)

[CHAPTER 71](#)

[CHAPTER 72](#)

[CHAPTER 73](#)

[CHAPTER 74](#)

[CHAPTER 75](#)

[CHAPTER 76](#)

[CHAPTER 77](#)

[CHAPTER 78](#)

[CHAPTER 79](#)

[CHAPTER 80](#)

[CHAPTER 81](#)

[CHAPTER 82](#)

[CHAPTER 83](#)

[CHAPTER 84](#)

[CHAPTER 85](#)

[CHAPTER 86](#)

[CHAPTER 87](#)

[CHAPTER 88](#)

[CHAPTER 89](#)

[CHAPTER 90](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[ALSO BY JENNIFER LYNN BARNES](#)

For Charlie

Explore book giveaways, sneak peeks, deals, and more.

[Tap here to learn more.](#)



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

CHAPTER 1

Tell me again about the first time the two of you played chess in the park.” Jameson’s face was candlelit, but even in the scant light, I could see the gleam in his dark green eyes.

There was nothing—and no one—that set Jameson Hawthorne’s blood pumping like a mystery.

“It was right after my mother’s funeral,” I said. “A few days, maybe a week.”

The two of us were in the tunnels beneath Hawthorne House—alone, where no one else could hear us. It had been less than a month since I’d first stepped into the palatial Texas mansion and a week since we’d solved the mystery of why I’d been brought there.

If we’d truly solved that mystery.

“My mom and I used to go for walks in the park.” I shut my eyes so that I could concentrate on the facts and not the intensity with which Jameson locked on to my every word. “She called it the Strolling Aimlessly Game.” I steeled myself against the memory, letting my eyelids open. “A few days after her funeral, I went to the park without her for the first time. When I got near the pond, I saw a crowd gathered. A man was lying on the sidewalk, eyes closed, covered in tattered blankets.”

“Homeless.” Jameson had heard all of this before, but his laser focus on me never wavered.

“People thought he was dead—or passed out drunk. Then he sat up. I saw a police officer making his way through the crowd.”

“But you got to the man first,” Jameson finished, his eyes on mine, his lips crooking upward. “And you asked him to play chess.”

I hadn't expected Harry to take me up on the offer, let alone win.

"We played every week after that," I said. "Sometimes twice a week, three times. He never told me more than his name."

His name wasn't really Harry. He lied. And that was why I was in these tunnels with Jameson Hawthorne. That was why he'd started looking at me like I was a mystery again, a puzzle that he, and only he, could solve.

It couldn't be a coincidence that billionaire Tobias Hawthorne had left his fortune to a stranger who knew his "dead" son.

"You're sure that it was Toby?" Jameson asked, the air between us charged.

These days, I was sure of little else. Three weeks earlier, I'd been a normal girl, scraping by, desperately trying to survive high school, get a scholarship, and get out. Then out of the blue, I'd received word that one of the richest men in the country had died and named me in his will. Tobias Hawthorne had left me billions, very nearly his entire fortune—and I'd had no idea why. Jameson and I had spent two weeks unraveling the puzzles and clues the old man had left behind. *Why me?* Because of my name. Because of the day I was born. Because Tobias Hawthorne had bet everything on the long shot that somehow I could bring his splintered family back together.

Or at least that was what the conclusion of the old man's last game had led us to believe.

"I'm sure," I told Jameson fiercely. "Toby's alive. And if your grandfather knew that—and I know that's a big *if*—but if he did know, then we have to assume that either he chose me because I knew Toby, or he somehow masterminded bringing us together in the first place."

If there was one thing I'd learned about deceased billionaire Tobias Hawthorne, it was that he was capable of orchestrating nearly anything, manipulating nearly anyone. He'd loved puzzles and riddles and games.

Just like Jameson.

"What if that day in the park wasn't the first time you met my uncle?" Jameson took a step toward me, an unholy energy rolling off him. "Think about it, Heiress. You said that the one time my grandfather met you, you

were six years old, and he saw you in the diner where your mother was a waitress. He heard your full name.”

Avery Kylie Grambs, rearranged, became A Very Risky Gamble. The kind of name a man like Tobias Hawthorne would remember.

“That’s right,” I said. Jameson was close to me now. Too close. Every one of the Hawthorne boys was magnetic. Larger than life. They had an effect on people—and Jameson was very good at using that to get what he wanted. *He wants something from me now.*

“Why was my grandfather, a Texas billionaire with a whole host of private chefs on call, eating at a hole-in-the-wall diner in a small Connecticut town that no one’s ever heard of?”

My mind raced. “You think he was looking for something?”

Jameson smiled deviously. “Or someone. What if the old man went there looking for Toby and found *you*?”

There was something about the way he said the word *you*. Like I was someone. Like I mattered. But Jameson and I had been down that road before. “And everything else is a distraction?” I asked, looking away from him. “My name. The fact that Emily died on my birthday. The puzzle your grandfather left us—it was all just a lie?”

Jameson didn’t react to the sound of Emily’s name. In the throes of a mystery, nothing could distract him—not even her. “A lie,” Jameson repeated. “Or misdirection.”

He reached to brush a strand of hair out of my face, and every nerve in my body went on high alert. I jerked back. “Stop looking at me like that,” I told him sternly.

“Like what?” he countered.

I folded my arms and stared him down. “You turn on the charm when you want something.”

“Heiress, you wound me.” Jameson looked better smirking than anyone had a right to look. “All I want is for you to rifle through your memory banks a little. My grandfather was a person who thought in four dimensions. He might have had more than one reason for choosing you. Why kill two birds

with one stone, he always said, when you could kill twelve?”

There was something about his voice, about the way he was still looking at me, that would have made it easy to get caught up in it all. The possibilities. The mystery. *Him*.

But I wasn't the kind of person who made the same mistake twice. “Maybe you've got it wrong.” I turned away from him. “What if your grandfather didn't know that Toby was alive? What if *Toby* was the one who realized that the old man was watching me? Considering leaving the entire fortune to me?”

Harry, as I'd known him, had been one hell of a chess player. Maybe that day in the park wasn't a coincidence. Maybe he'd sought me out.

“We're missing something,” Jameson said, coming up to stand close behind me. “Or maybe,” he murmured, directly into the back of my head, “you're holding something back.”

He wasn't entirely wrong. I wasn't built to lay all my cards on the table—and Jameson Winchester Hawthorne didn't even pretend to be trustworthy.

“I see how it is, Heiress.” I could practically *hear* his crooked little grin. “If that's how you want to play it, why don't we make this interesting?”

I turned back to face him. Eye to eye, it was hard not to remember that when Jameson kissed a girl, it wasn't tentative. It wasn't gentle. *It wasn't real*, I reminded myself. I'd been a part of the puzzle to him, a tool to be used. I was still a part of the puzzle.

“Not everything is a game,” I said.

“And maybe,” Jameson countered, eyes alight, “that's the problem. Maybe that's why we're spinning our wheels in these tunnels day after day, rehashing this and getting nowhere. Because this isn't a game. *Yet*. A game has rules. A game has a winner. Maybe, Heiress, what you and I need to solve the mystery of Toby Hawthorne is a little motivation.”

“What kind of motivation?” I narrowed my eyes at him.

“How about a wager?” Jameson arched an eyebrow. “If I figure all of this out first, then you have to forgive and forget my little lapse of judgment after we decoded the Black Wood.”

The Black Wood was where we'd figured out that his dead ex-girlfriend had died on my birthday. That was the moment when it had first become clear that Tobias Hawthorne hadn't chosen me because I was special. He'd chosen me for what it would do to them.

Immediately afterward, Jameson had dropped me cold.

"And if I win," I countered, staring into those green eyes of his, "then you have to forget that we ever kissed—and never try to charm me into kissing you again."

I didn't trust him, but I also didn't trust myself with him.

"Well then, Heiress." Jameson stepped forward. Standing directly to my side, he brought his lips down to my ear and whispered, "Game on."

CHAPTER 2

Our wager struck, Jameson took off in one direction in the tunnels, and I went in another. Hawthorne House was massive, sprawling, big enough that, even after three weeks, I still hadn't seen it all. A person could spend years exploring this place and still not know all the ins and outs, all the secret passageways and hidden compartments—and that wasn't even counting the underground tunnels.

Lucky for me, I was a quick learner. I cut from underneath the gymnasium wing to a tunnel that went below the music room. I passed beneath the solarium, then climbed a hidden staircase into the Great Room, where I found Nash Hawthorne leaning casually against a stone fireplace. Waiting.

"Hey, kid." Nash didn't bat an eye at the fact that I'd just appeared seemingly out of nowhere. In fact, the oldest Hawthorne brother gave the impression that the whole mansion could come crashing down around him and he'd just keep leaning against that fireplace. Nash Hawthorne would probably tip his cowboy hat to Death herself.

"Hey," I replied.

"I don't suppose you've seen Grayson?" Nash asked, his Texas drawl making the question sound almost lazy.

That did nothing to soften the impact of what he'd just said. "Nope." I kept my answer short and my face blank. Grayson Hawthorne and I had been keeping our distance.

"And I don't suppose you know anything about a chat Gray had with our mother, right before she moved out?"

Skye Hawthorne, Tobias Hawthorne's younger daughter and the mother

of all four Hawthorne grandsons, had tried to have me killed. The person who'd actually pulled the trigger was the one in a jail cell, but Skye had been forced to leave Hawthorne House. By Grayson. *I will always protect you*, he'd told me. *But this... us... It can't happen, Avery.*

"No clue," I said flatly.

"Didn't think so." Nash gave me a little wink. "Your sister and your lawyer are looking for you. East Wing." That was a loaded statement if I'd ever heard one. My lawyer was his ex-fiancée, and my sister was...

I didn't know what Libby and Nash Hawthorne were.

"Thanks," I told him, but when I made my way up the winding staircase to the East Wing of Hawthorne House, I didn't go looking for Libby. Or Alisa. I'd made a bet with Jameson, and I intended to win. First stop: Tobias Hawthorne's office.

In the office, there was a mahogany desk, and behind the desk was a wall of trophies and patents and books with the name *Hawthorne* on the spine—a breathtaking visual reminder that there was nothing ordinary whatsoever about the Hawthorne brothers. They had been given every opportunity, and the old man had expected them to be extraordinary. But I hadn't come here to gawk at trophies.

Instead, I took a seat behind the desk and released the hidden compartment I'd discovered not long ago. It held a folder. Inside the folder, there were pictures of me. Countless photographs, stretching back years. After that fateful meeting in the diner, Tobias Hawthorne had kept tabs on me. *All because of my name? Or did he have another motive?*

I thumbed through the photos and pulled out two. Jameson had been right, back in the tunnels. I was holding out on him. I'd been photographed with Toby twice, but both times, all the photographer had captured of the man beside me was the back of his head.

Had Tobias Hawthorne recognized Toby from behind? Had "Harry" realized we were being photographed and turned his head away from the camera on purpose?

As far as clues went, this wasn't much to go on. All the file really proved