



Prelude for Lost Souls

Helene Dunbar

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In Helene Dunbar's *Prelude for Lost Souls*, a charming small town boasts spiritualism and secret societies.

Every summer, St. Hilaire opens its gates and welcomes desperate tourists who are looking for answers from its psychic population. Ruled over by The Guild, St. Hilaire, a port in the storm for visitors, is also a prison for some of its year-round inhabitants, including the ghosts who roam the streets.

Dec, a "former" psychic from one of the town's oldest families, wants nothing more than to leave St. Hilaire and never look back. The town's macabre attractions hold little delight for him since his parents died. One of the only things in town Dec isn't tired of is his best friend, Russ, a talented medium. Russ is conflicted about Dec leaving—and in his feelings about Dec, period—but not about his desire to become a member of The Guild. He'll stop at nothing to earn a spot in their ranks, even if it means losing pieces of himself.

Then Annie, a piano prodigy who's distraught over the death of her teacher, passes through the gates of St. Hilaire when her train breaks down outside of town. Dec, who has become enamored with her music online, agrees to help her finish a supposedly cursed prelude and draws Russ in to help. But is it serendipity drawing the trio together, or something darker?

Small-town staples—no-frills restaurants and chattering busybodies—blend with the supernatural to create a unique backdrop for this paranormal mystery. Small touches, such as a haunted piano, enhance the atmosphere, and are regarded with a normalcy that makes the spiritualism-stepped streets of St. Hilaire feel as American as apple pie.

Working to unravel the mysteries that drew them together, three teenagers find unexpected answers in a town where not only the dead are haunted.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (July / August 2020)

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