

Esmerelda Sleuth

PARAORMAL INVESTIGATOR

THE JOURNAL

Book Four

by

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Notice** Portions of this story may prove too graphic, sexually explicit, or violent for sensitive readers. It is intended for mature readers.

Contents

A Quick Summary to Catch Up

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

[25](#)

[26](#)

[27](#)

[28](#)

[29](#)

[30](#)

[31](#)

[32](#)

[33](#)

[34](#)

[35](#)

[36](#)

[37](#)

[38](#)

[A Sneak Peek at Vickie: Doctor by day. Zombie Hunter by night](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Other Books by Eileen Sheehan](#)

A Quick Summary to Catch Up

Welcome to book four of the Esmerelda Sleuth series.

In book one, “The Other Side of the Mirror”, Esmerelda met and fell in love with Lance Northrup. Introduced to her as a handsome and wealthy realtor, Esmerelda soon discovered that this was simply a ruse that he took on to camouflage the fact that he was a time traveler who’d traveled from the nineteenth century specifically to find her and take her back to marry him. Fortunately for Lance, she fell in love with him almost immediately and happily obliged.

Unbeknownst to Esmerelda, she’d been born in that time frame and had been bonded in marriage to him by her family while an infant. When enemies who didn’t want the marriage to take place threatened her life, her parents had her magically sent forward in time to protect her; making sure that her memories were erased as well.

A private investigator with a practical mind, Esmerelda found it difficult to accept that hers and Lance’s families belonged to a secret society of people who hadn’t lost the ability to tap into nature’s magic like the rest of the world did when religion took hold and made magic an evil sin. It took Lance taking her through a mirror that acted as a portal through time before she even remotely began to believe.

There were rules to using the magic and the supply available to a person could be depleted, which was what happened to Lance after using it during his longtime search

for her. Hence, when she fell in love with him and willingly went back in time to marry him and her life was threatened again, he was unable to return to the future with her. Instead, he stayed behind while he waited for his depleted supply of magic to replenish and he figured out a way to be with her again without danger to her or to him.

She was safe from those who wanted to harm her because she'd been given a drink that slowed down her vital signs to the extent that the physicians of that time weren't able to detect them. In short, she was pronounced dead. A mock funeral was held for her before her distant cousin, Anton, -who was also magical- took her back into the future and left her in the care of her good friend Nora.

This brings us to book two of the Esmerelda Sleuth series, "Magic in the Box".

In book two, Esmerelda and her good friend Nora move into the estate house that Lance turned over to her. While there, they searched for the magic box with no luck.

They were only in the house a day when a handsome homicide detective named, Killian came to the house to question them about Lance's whereabouts, since he was a suspect in the murder of Melanie Gaines. Knowing that Lance didn't do it, but unable to tell the detective that Lance was back in time, Esmerelda feigned ignorance and stayed tight-lipped.

Jason discovered that Esmerelda's death was faked. Thinking himself in love with her and believing that she

would eventually fall in love with him if he kept going to her bed and worried that she would accumulate enough magic to go back to Lance, he transported to the future to visit her in bed as well as to syphon her magic.

In the meantime, Nora saw a transparent man in the house. After which, while at a restaurant, she saw this same man in human form.

Thinking that there was a break-in into her house by someone who knew her alarm code, Esmerelda sought the names of the workers who installed it from the company. While looking for one of them to question him, she was mugged and left with a cracked skull.

While in the hospital recovering, Jason teleported in, drugged her, and then took her magic through sex.

Killian heard about her mugging and visited her in the hospital to ask about it, at which time he learned about Jason's visit. He suggested that he become her boarder for a while so that he could protect her from more harm. She readily agreed.

A friendship bloomed between Killian and Esmerelda while a romance formed between her friend Nora and Killian's partner, Roger. Killian found the missing magic box in a thrift shop and took it to Esmerelda. He informed her that she and Lance were the only ones that it would open for, which was why the thief discarded it.

With things calmed down, Killian went on assignment into the wee hours of the morning. Kidnappers seized the

opportunity to snatch Esmerelda from her bed and stuff her in a trunk. She found a crowbar in the trunk and struck one of her kidnapers with it as soon as the trunk lid was opened. He was knocked unconscious with an enormous gash in his skull. The other kidnapper grabbed her before she could strike so she did the only thing that she could think to do. She bit him in the neck. Sadly, she bit too hard and she bit his jugular and he died.

While finding her way to a phone, she ended up at the man who had astral projected into her home. He was actually the real kidnapper who had hired the two men. He forced her to open the box and sent Lance a picture of Esmerelda along with a threat so that he would cooperate and deliver the message that he wanted to send to someone through the box to them. His doing this used up most of the magic that the box possessed, leaving little, if any, for Esmerelda and Lance to communicate with.

Killian was not only a homicide detective, but he was also a member of the secret society. When he discovered that Esmerelda was missing from her room, he used magic to locate her. The kidnapper was arrested and she was returned to her home where they had their first tryst in the linen closet.

Realizing the mistake that he made - since she was married to and loved Lance- Killian moved out.

Heartbroken by what she considered Killian's "love 'em and leave 'em" use of her and the fact that she and Lance

would probably never be together again, Esmerelda fell into depression. After a long pep talk, Nora convinced her to get back into the investigation mode.

This takes us to book three, “Beyond the Portal”, After finding love – Nora with Roger and Esmerelda with Killian- the pair took their first paranormal investigative job where the two were abducted by the dark lord, Marduke, and taken to a realm of darkness

Here, they were separated.

Esmerelda escapes and returned home without Nora. Killian introduced her to a fellow society member who mentored Esmerelda in developing her magical abilities with the intention of returning to the dark realm to rescue her friend.

After going through the portal, Esmerelda realized that Killian did not follow. She quickly learned that her mentor was a double agent and had intentionally not allowed Killian to follow them.

Learning that Nora was given to the vampire kingdom and realizing that Marduke coveted her ability to open and close portals, Esmerelda made a deal with Marduke to work for him in exchange for the rescue of her friend.

Unfortunately, they found her too late. She had been turned vampire. Since she was a danger to Esmerelda until she came to terms with her vampirism, Nora was locked away.

Esmerelda negotiated a time length for her servitude to Marduke with the intention of using this time to seek out the

portal that would lead her to the woman reputed to have the ability to return Nora's humanity to her.

While serving the dark lord, Esmerelda was forced to interact and work with Jason, who is also serving him. As usual, he imposed his sexual attentions upon her until she no longer resisted.

After passing through a portal that taxed her energy to the extent that she needed to nap and rejuvenate, Esmerelda awakes to find Jason is nowhere to be found. She is approached by a female soldier who takes her to the queen. To Esmerelda's delight, the queen is the very person she sought to return Nora's humanity to her. Esmerelda makes a deal with the queen to use her abilities to help locate their princess who had gone missing in exchange for them fetching Nora from Marduke's captivity and returning her humanity to her.

While having her humanity returned to her, Nora learns that their hosts were cannibals and Jason was locked up in the hold with the other humans intended for food.

Determined to flee them, they detour to the cage to release Jason, with the intention of leaving him to his own device to find his freedom. To Esmerelda's shock and surprise, the man they released was not Jason, but her husband, Lance. They race to a portal that will take them to a safe place.

They fortunately select the portal that will return them to their own realm. In fact, it took them to the old garage on her former captor (Tillman's) property.

Killian is summoned to fetch them home. While waiting for him, Esmerelda and Lance catch up, get clear on fact, and romantically reunite.

This brings us to the final installment of our story, "The Journal".

“It’s only been a few weeks since your return. I can’t believe you’re taking cases already.”

I watched as my handsome friend and former lover slid his large frame onto the sofa. I’d been successfully avoiding being alone with Killian since he’d picked Nora, me, and Lance up from Tillman’s house after our escape from an alternate dimension where I’d been forced to serve the dark lord, Marduke. I knew I would eventually have to speak with him. It was just that I had no idea what to say. How could I explain my feelings for him when I couldn’t understand -or even deal with- them myself?

I loved Lance. He was my soulmate on so many levels. Unfortunately, during his absence and my not knowing if we would ever be together again, I’d fallen in love with the man who I’d befriended. Friendship at the base of a love affair made for a solid foundation. It wasn’t easy to ignore, but ignore it I must. I didn’t live in a society where women could have multiple husbands. Even if I did, the two men that I loved would never agree with it.

The fact was that no matter how I felt about Killian, I was a married woman whose husband had reunited with after suffering a separation that neither of us wanted. Since my basic nature is to be monogamous and I’ve always taken

pride and great pains in honoring my word, my husband's return was enough to keep me on the straight and narrow even if I didn't actually love him. Of course, I did love him. Being faithful should have come easy, but it didn't.

I'd found my mind tormented and confused since Lance's return. Killian had insisted on remaining in residence, giving one excuse after the other as to his reasoning. I hadn't the heart to kick him out. Nor was I sure that I wanted him to go. The thought of him leaving my home -and my life- had such a final and fatal feel that I could hardly bear it. I finally decided that the only way for me to keep my sanity intact was to focus on something other than my own pathetic reality. I needed those cases more than my clients needed me.

"It feels like everything is all topsy-turvy in my life. I have to have some sort of normalcy," I said with a flat tone as I grabbed my cellphone from the accent table near the door. "Focusing on my work will give me that."

"Stay for a minute," he pleaded. "I've yet to have a chance to talk to you about all that's happened. Are you alright? I mean... you look alright. You look perfect, but are you?"

"I've been pretty busy settling back in," I replied as I placed my hand on the doorknob.

“With Lance,” he mumbled with a low underlying snarl mixed in.

I raised a brow, but said nothing. What was there to say? He spoke the truth. The regret that I battled over allowing Lance’s brother to use me as his sex slave while working for Marduke, along with the guilt that I felt about the love between Killian and me, was all consuming. Not only was I ripped from Killian, but my guilt and desire to keep both my love for Killian and my sex relationship with his brother had changed the dynamics between my husband and me considerably. Fortunately, Lance was under the impression that it was because of the time spent apart and not the activities during that time.

“Does he know?” Killian asked as I opened the door.

I hesitated before looking over my shoulder at his sad face and slowly shook my head.

My voice was low and just as pathetic as his look as I choked out, “He thinks that we became good friends after you moved in as a tenant. I’d like to keep it that way.” I shrugged. “It’s the truth. Just not all of the truth.”

“He won’t hear more from me, my love,” he assured me in a low, strong voice. “I can’t say as much for Jason.”

Lance had stepped out to run a few errands, but it wouldn’t do for Killian to develop the habit of using such endearing words. The threat of him slipping up in front of my husband was too great.

I quickly chastised him for his decision to refer to me as his love. “Don’t call me that.” Before he could respond, I added, “Jason’s gone. I’m not worried about him.”

“Jason is never really gone,” he insisted with a tone that hinted impatience. “You should have realized that by now. The man’s a wizard when it comes to escaping captivity and then popping up when you least expect it. I’d keep a close eye on that husband of yours to make sure he remains the man you think he is.”

I sucked in air. Was he saying what I thought he was saying? I quickly shook my head. “I’m not worried about Jason saying anything to Lance. Even if that snake did resurface, after all he’s done to him, my husband would never give him the time of day.” I hesitated before adding, “As for his trying to impersonate Lance... I’d know right away this time. Right away.”

He cocked an eye in my direction. “Would you?”

Pursing my lips tightly together, I wrinkled my brow in thought as my confidence waivered. I’d been fooled by Jason into believing that he was Lance on more than one occasion. Would I really be able to tell that it was him if he tried it again? I’d had plenty of sex with the man. (This was something that no one, not even Nora was aware of, and I wanted to keep it that way.) That type of physical familiarity should have allowed me to know him from Lance. Unfortunately, not only were the brothers close with their

manner of sexual ministrations, the fact that it was Jason pleasuring me was often repulsive so I'd removed my mind from the event while we'd had sex. It could have been the man-in-the-moon manipulating my body into an orgasm for all I knew or even cared.

Where I'd congratulated myself for being able to separate my mind from my body and the situation back then, I now regretted my actions. Killian might be right on this one. If I wasn't careful, Jason just might be able to fool me again.

I took a deep breath. My voice sounded bitter in my ears as I blurted out, "I'm just going to have to trust that you can catch him and keep him this time."

I exited the house before he had an opportunity to reply. I was immediately struck by regret about the tone of voice and attitude I'd presented to him just then. None of this was Killian's fault. Yet, I was putting the heavy expectation of him capturing and containing Jason on his shoulders as if it was. That wasn't fair.

I was about to go back in to apologize and explain that the stress of the guilt that I carried while trying to keep Lance in the dark so that he wouldn't be hurt was almost overwhelming when Nora pulled up with the car.

Using the designated power button

on the master panel, she lowered the passenger's side window and leaned over to speak to me. "I can't believe you were going to go out on a case without me."

Abandoning my worry over Killian, I focused on my friend.

"I didn't think you were up to it," I said with a soft and sympathetic tone.

"And you are?" she said with disbelief.

I nodded. "All I did was open and close portals for Marduke. I didn't get turned over to the vampires by that lord of evil, be drained of my blood until I became one of them, and then magically turned back to a human again. I thought you'd need more time to heal your body and your emotions."

"My body is healed just fine," she snipped. "As for my emotions... well... it will just take time for that." She leaned back into the driver's seat and put both hands on the wheel while she watched me slide into the passenger's side and close the door. Then, looking straight ahead, she put the car into gear while asking, "Did it ever strike your mind that perhaps I needed to get back to a normal life too?"

I shook my head. "Actually, no."

She scowled as she put her foot on the gas and coaxed the car down the long driveway. "Narcissist."

I sucked in air with surprise at her comment before throwing my head back in laughter. “I’ve been called a lot of things, but never something that was as close to the truth as that just was. I have been primarily thinking of myself since we got back and I’m sorry.”

Amy Whitehouse lived on the shady side of town, not far from the building where I'd been mugged. Memories of that night and the fact that it brought Killian into my life rambled through my head as I read off the address to Nora.

"Isn't this the area where you were attacked?" she asked as she slowed the car down to a crawl and leaned close to the steering wheel while studying the street numbers.

"We passed it a few blocks back," I replied.

She glanced at me through the corner of her eye. "It seems so long ago and, in retrospect, not all that big a deal in comparison to everything else that's happened."

"Yes," I said with a nod.

As if suddenly realizing what she'd said, Nora's eyes went wide. "I didn't mean that it was trivial. Being mugged and left for dead is not trivial. Nor is what Jason did to you while you were in the hospital. I just mean that..."

I quickly waived my hand in dismissal. "I know what you meant and I completely agree." Heaving a huge sigh, I added, "Life has changed so drastically since meeting Lance."

She took her eyes off the road and gave me an odd look. "Do you blame him for what's happened?"

The sound of a horn honking a warning brought her attention back to the task of driving. She'd allowed the car to wander dangerously close to the opposite lane. The startling warning caused her to quickly pull it back where it belonged.

“Be careful, Nora. Pay attention to the road,” I scolded.

Ignoring my rebuke, she focused on driving, but asked me once more. “Do you? Do you really blame him?”

I shrugged. “I don't know who to blame or if anyone at all should be blamed. I'm just pointing out that, since I was introduced to the world of magic and the supernatural by Lance, my life has not been the same.”

She nodded, “Nor has mine.” After a moment of silence, she added, “It hasn't all been bad though...”

I vigorously shook my head. “No, it hasn't. Simply different. In some ways it's been spectacular, but, in many ways, more difficult.”

Nora grinned as she turned the car onto a side street. “I would have given anything to have a rich, handsome, and sexy soulmate search for me and take me back in time to marry him like Lance did with you. It's so romantic. Not to mention that you got to experience, firsthand, life back then. What a phenomenal opportunity.”

I leaned against the window as the memories of my time spent back then floated through my head. “Other than the fact that Lilith tried to kill me and Jason impersonated Lance in my bed, it was a wonderful experience. Plus, I met my true parents.”

“Don’t forget your sexy cousin, Anton,” she giggled.

“Him too,” I chuckled.

She gave a wistful sigh. “So much romance...”

“Mixed in with peril and drama,” I sternly offered.

“You need to try to see the glass half full, my negative friend,” she said with a scowl. “You’re too young to have such an attitude. Young people are supposed to be resilient.”

I studied her for a moment before saying, “You certainly seem to have bounced back from your ordeal.”

“Better than you,” she said with a nod. “Although, I think that more happened with you or to you than you’re telling me. I don’t believe it was just about opening and closing portals for that devil.” Then, pointing to a small bungalow she eagerly said, “We’re here.”

Since I had no desire or intention of admitting my sex fest with Jason to anyone, I was grateful for the reprieve from our conversation as she pulled the car onto the short, narrow driveway that looked like it had once possessed a thick layer of gravel but was now mainly dirt with tufts of

grass dispersed sporadically throughout it. It didn't matter that I wasn't really a willing partner. I knew in my heart of hearts that I could have and should have done something to stop him from using me in such a way. The fact of the matter was that I thought I'd been cheated by Lance and I'd lost all desire for life. When Jason informed me that Marduke had basically given me to him as a sexual plaything for some type of recompense as long as he didn't syphon my shine, I simply gave up. Had I not been on a mission to save Nora, I probably would have laid down and died.

I didn't want to admit that to Nora who I knew would ignore the fact that I didn't resist like I should have and would have taken it upon herself to feel guilty that I'd submitted all of that time while I looked for a way to rescue her.

We sat in silent thought while we studied the small house's weather battered exterior. Sadly in need of paint and new gutters, it was clear that the resident was not affluent.

I peered inside the thin folder that Nora had presented to me after I'd entered the vehicle while I mentally questioned if the woman could afford our fees.

"What is the case again?" I muttered as I focused on the information in the file.

Nora chuckled with disbelief as she asked, “Are you so eager to get back to work that you took a case without finding out what it was?”

“We haven’t actually taken the case,” I said with a hint of defensiveness. “Besides, I figured that it was something we dealt with.” I gave a sheepish grin. “It’s probably paranormal.”

She nodded. “I think it is.”

“You don’t know either?” I gasped with amused disbelief. If Nora was anything, she was thorough. For her not to know the facts of a case before taking it was very unusual. I don’t know why, but I found it to be a bit humorous. “You’re the one who collected the information when she called. That’s not like you.”

“The client is being harassed at night by something, but she isn’t sure if it is a person or a thing. She’s called the police with no luck so she turned to us,” my friend and business partner patiently explained.

“So, it’s paranormal,” I sighed.

“Possibly,” Nora mused. “There is the fact that she recently broke up with a longtime boyfriend who sounds like a scumbag. He wants to come back, but she’s come to her senses. It could be him harassing her out of spite.”

“That would be nice,” I said with a wistful smile.

“Essa!” she blurted before giggling.

I shrugged. “It would just be nice to have it be a simple case of ex harassing ex. That’s all. I’ve had enough of the abnormal.”

“An ex harassing an ex is normal?”

she asked with a chuckle of disbelief.

“You know what I mean,” I said as I

opened the door to get out. “Let’s go. I see a woman peeking out of the window. We’re probably creeping her out by sitting in the driveway like this.”