

Delta Obscura

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My name is Sadie Collins.

A quiet, introverted girl from Montana, who recently moved to Seattle to attend college. Blonde, blue-eyed and naturally pretty, I've always been relatively popular but I only had one serious boyfriend before college.

I was the first in my family to go to college. My dad slapped me on the back and called it a "damn miracle" when I got accepted to biology in Seattle. My mom cried. They were hard workers but never had a chance to succeed in life and were happy for me. I knew I had good grades, but I was still overjoyed when I read the admission letter.

Relocating to Seattle however was a different experience for me. First of all, finding housing in Seattle was a nightmare. After dozens of unanswered listings and three scam attempts, I ended up in a creaky third-floor walk-up that smelled faintly of incense, dust, and nail polish remover. But the rent was cheap. And I wasn't in a position to be picky. I would live there with two other girls. They were... different from me. Dark clothes, heavy eyeliner, goth items—but honestly? They were friendly.



Elise had green eyes and jet-black hair. Luna was more aloof, her dyed blue hair wild and jagged like sea glass, her brown eyes calmer, observant. I immediately suspected they weren't just friends, but they probably didn't want to scare off a country girl like me. Or maybe they were just really close friends.

They were a few years older than me and didn't seem too focused on their classes—assuming they were still enrolled at all. They had a way of making college life feel like background noise to something more important.

Before classes started, I tried to look into joining a sorority—mostly because I was desperate to belong *somewhere in that environment*. But every house I checked was already full. I was starting to feel like I didn't belong anywhere.

That's when my roommates mentioned their sorority still had open spots. It was called Delta Nocturna. I hesitated. The name alone sounded like a vampire fan club. Did I really want to hang out with a bunch of goth girls? But I didn't have many options, and they promised it wasn't *that* weird. Just... different. And different, I guess, was better than alone.



So I said yes. Why not?

For the semester kickoff party, I had to borrow one of my flatmates' outfits—none of mine made the cut given the strict dress code. The only condition I gave them was *no black*. I thought that was reasonable. So they handed me a shiny red dress, tight and laced up the front. It was... cute, in its own way, but way bolder than anything I'd ever worn. They paired it with fishnet stockings and called it "entry-level."

I looked at myself in the mirror and barely recognized the girl staring back—fishnets clinging to my thighs, the dress hugging me in ways that felt unusually sexy. My heart pounded, but it wasn't from fear. I smiled, just a little. Maybe this is what it takes to be part of something. Elise draped a choker around my neck. "Welcome to Delta Nocturna, Sadie."

The party was something wild, nothing like I had seen before. The sisters of Delta Nocturna moved like shadows in the flickering strobe lights, their confidence slightly intimidated but also fascinated me. They belonged here, in this haze of cigarette smoke and bass-heavy music.



I noticed that many of them seemed to be lesbians, or at least bi, which alarmed me a bit - I had nothing against LGTB people but I was straight and I didn't want to end up in a lesbian club. Imagine what would people say!

But... I had fun. I laughed. I got a little tipsy. I danced. I even forgot I was plain Sadie from Montana for a while. I just felt like a cool girl hanging out with my friends. Luckily, they had invited some guys too, from a similar fraternity, also aiming at people with goth/emo-inspired looks. They seemed to be more interested in girl with a heavy goth look though. I drank more than I should have. Not just beer, cocktails of all kinds. Not enough to black out—just enough to relax. Elise did her best to keep my glass full all the time.

Around midnight, I slipped outside and waited in my flatmate's car. She said she'd just be a minute. The night was not too cool, and the hum of the streetlights felt oddly soothing.

I must've nodded off.

That was my first mistake.



I woke up in my bed, still wearing the red dress from the party. My head was spinning, and my mouth was dry—but something else felt off. My nose. There was something in my nose.

Oh God. I stumbled to the mirror, and the second I saw my reflection, I froze. A septum ring. Two nostril studs. No. No no no— My stomach dropped. I nearly fainted. “What the fuck is this?” I whispered, then yelled.

Elise appeared in the doorway, way too calm. “Hey, hey—calm down, sweetie. It’s just... an initiation rite. Sorta. You’re one of us now. We had to push you a little, but look at you—you look amazing. Push me a little?!” I snapped. “You got me drunk. You pierced my face while I was asleep!” I slammed the door and sank to the floor, the tears coming fast and hot.

I thought about packing. Just grabbing my bag and disappearing back to Montana. But then I thought about my parents. About all the people who’d said I wouldn’t make it. About how I was the first in my family to come this far. So I wiped my face. I wasn’t going to quit.



I spotted a tray on my desk, arranged with different piercings. I reached up and slowly removed the ones they had put in while I slept. My nose stung slightly. Carefully, I tried one of the smaller rings. When I looked in the mirror, it wasn't all bad. I looked... kinda hot? Besides, I could just take them off, right? I turned to grab my clothes, only to realize they were gone. My closet was full of tight skirts, lace, leather, chokers, sheer tights. Mostly black. I stepped out of the room. "Hey... uh, sorry for my outburst earlier," I said. "I mean... I kinda do look cute." "That's my girl!" Elise smiled, lounging on the couch. "Yeah—only one thing... where are my clothes? Are they in the laundry or—?" She shook her head. "No, they're gone. See, Delta Nocturna has a strict dress code. You're one of us now. So we had to make some adjustments. What you have now are donations from sisters." I blinked. "So... all the time?" "All. The. Time." She gave me a wink. "It's not just a sorority, Sadie. It's a lifestyle." I stood there in silence, processing it. This was starting to feel less like a social group and more like a cult. I didn't have the money to replace my wardrobe. I didn't have other friends. And I needed *something*—some kind of support system in this city. So I nodded slowly.



Most days, I toned things down. I'd swap out the heavier piercings for a simple silver septum ring and pick the most conventional black outfit I now owned—ribbed turtlenecks, pleated faux-leather skirts, nothing too flashy. I still looked a little extravagant compared to the average student, but not too much. I guess it gave me a little more personality and I didn't mind that at all.

The reactions were instant. A raised eyebrow in lecture halls. A whispered "*Delta Nocturna?*" from strangers. The funny thing? I'd started spotting sorority sisters everywhere. It was easier to stay in the orbit of my sorority sisters than to explain myself to others. Even if I wasn't *quite* like them. Most of them leaned hard into the aesthetic. Dark lipstick, full-black eyeshadow, jet-black hair, spiderweb tights and velvet everything. I was impressed by their commitment. Compared to them I looked quite vanilla. I liked my blonde bob. And I could tell. Some of them noticed. The side-eyes. The quiet pauses. As if I wasn't goth enough. But I'd found my balance.

Somewhere between who I was before, and who I was now. And for now... that was enough.



I thought things had finally settled. I'd found my rhythm, my balance—even if I wasn't the most committed goth in Delta Nocturna, I felt like I belonged. So when the sorority hosted a party in our apartment to celebrate new members, I didn't think twice. I wore the red dress, now a favorite of mine, laughed a little too loud, drank a little too much. What I didn't realize was that it marked exactly three months since I joined. That wasn't just a milestone. It was a threshold.

Someone handed me a drink. The next thing I remember, I was in one of our leather chairs, half asleep but still conscious. I couldn't move. Couldn't speak. But I could hear them. The buzzing of clippers. The clink of metal.

Most of them had side gigs—or full-blown businesses—as tattoo and piercing artists. And now, I was the canvas. They started with plucking my eyebrows. Needles followed. My earlobes, already pierced, now stretched with cold steel rings. Then they went lower. My nipples. Somewhere along the way, they started tattooing. Symbols. Words. Lines I didn't understand. When I finally woke up, hours later, my skin wasn't smooth anymore and my life had forever changed.



My skin burned in places I couldn't see. I stumbled to the mirror, hands trembling. My reflection made my stomach drop. New piercings tugged at my ears, my nipples. Tattoos. Everywhere. Black ink crawled over my collarbones, wrapped around my arms, bloomed on my hands.

"Are these..." My voice cracked. "Permanent?"

Elise, leaning against the doorway, tilted her head. "Did you think Delta Nocturna was *just* a sorority? It's a permanent commitment, girl!". These marks would outlast jobs, relationships, my entire future. I imagined my mother's face when she saw them. I was ruined.

"You should be happy" she said with a smirk. "You look *amazing*."

I shook my head slowly, trying not to cry. "My skin is marked for life. What am I supposed to tell my family? My friends?" My two flatmates stepped forward without hesitation. They wrapped their arms around me tightly. "You don't need to tell them anything," one whispered. "We're your family now," said the other.



I didn't know what else to do, so I hugged them back. I wept silently into their shoulders—part shock, part grief, part the sheer need for someone to hold me.

To celebrate my “transition,” they took me to a hairdresser across town. I stared at my reflection. My skin was inked. My piercings clicked softly when I moved. I didn't even know who I looked like anymore. So the idea of changing my hair didn't scare me. Not after everything else.

While the stylist worked, I found myself mumbling, “This was all a mistake. I'm not like you two.” They didn't flinch. “Sweetie,” Elise said gently, “most of us weren't ‘into this’ before we joined. We kinda grew into it.” “Yeah,” the other chimed in. “I used to find goth girls super intimidating. Now I *am* one. And honestly? I love the community. I don't like other people that much anymore though.” They exchanged a look, then added, “You'll see. People will make all kinds of assumptions about you now. That's the price of looking different.”

When it was done, I blinked at my new reflection. My hair was still blonde—but no longer natural. It was lighter, icy, synthetic. I wasn't a natural blonde anymore.



“Why the hair? What’s your plan?” - I asked.

They just smiled. “Trust the process.” As the final rinse drained down the salon sink, I sat upright, blinking at the mirror. My hands trembled slightly as I touched the unfamiliar texture of the extensions—half of them dyed deep, glossy black, the other half bleached a pale platinum. No trace of my original hair color remained.

The girl looking back at me had black lipstick, heavy lashes, piercings glinting from her lips and nose, tattoos curling up her arms and across her chest. My outfit screamed sex, defiance, power. I looked like most girls at Delta Obscura. Her eyes... my eyes... were the only thing left unchanged.

“I look like someone whose entire personality revolves around goth aesthetics,” I muttered, unable to tear my gaze away. “Nobody is ever going to take me seriously now.”

I felt no connection to the person I looked like. But if what they had just told me was true, that they were perfectly normal girls before joining the sorority, that meant that I could also change inside to match that persona. And that scared me more than anything.



Going to lectures had become a nightmare. People stared. Whispered. Some laughed. And worse were the ones who pretended not to notice, their eyes sliding over me like I wasn't even human.

I tried sitting with my usual friends, but they wouldn't shut up. Comments about my look. Jokes that weren't jokes. Half an hour in, I couldn't take it anymore. So I stood up, gathered my things, and crossed the hall. To the row where the Delta Nocturna girls always sat.

They saw me coming. Made space. Smiled. No questions. No judgment. Just... belonging. From that point on I skipped more lectures. I stopped replying to old friends. I began relying entirely on my sisters' notes for exams.

One evening, Elise looked at me thoughtfully. Her kohl-rimmed eyes were soft. "You know," she said, gently brushing a strand of my black-and-blonde hair behind my ear, "Sadie feels like a name someone else used to wear.



"You should pick something new," she continued, her voice a low murmur. "Something that fits the woman you've become." Her lips curved into a smile. I stayed silent, my heart hammering against my ribs. "How about... Synn?" I tasted it in my head. It didn't sound like me.

I began hitting the clubs, always a part of a moving constellation of Delta Nocturna sisters. We were a spectacle of leather, lace, and pale skin, easy to spot and impossible to ignore. Only the other goth guys had the courage to approach our circle. For the first time, I didn't just fit in; I belonged. I was an integral part of the beautiful community. And the attention was undeniable—a flicker of interest in a stranger's eyes, a compliment on my boots, a smile shared over the thrum of a bassline. Then I met him. A nice guy, with a gentle manner that belied his sharp style and a smile that reached his eyes. We talked, and then we danced. And just like that, I was hooked. The message hit like a lightning strike:

My parents would be visiting that weekend. I froze. My stomach twisted. I would be happy to see them but how could I hide all of this?



I wasn't ready. Not for *that* talk. Not for *those* looks. Not for the shock of who I'd become. I dropped everything and ran to the salon, nearly out of breath as I slammed the door open.

"I need my blonde hair back," I begged the stylist. "Please. I need to look... normal for my family." He blinked at me, confused. Then slowly shook his head.

"Going back to blonde right now would fry your hair. Best I can do is take it all to black—at least you'll look like a natural brunette."

I nodded, defeated. Anything to erase the split-dye, the rebellion, the *message* my hair sent. He dyed it. Cut it blunt and sleek. The girl in the mirror didn't look like Sadie, but she didn't scream *Synn* anymore either. She looked like someone trying to disappear. After that, I scoured my room for anything remotely conservative—no fishnets, no vinyl, no chains. I found a long, loose black dress. High collar, long sleeves, chosen to cover all my tattoos, including those on my hands.

"Hi... Mom. Dad."



I stood in the doorway. Elise had insisted I *shouldn't* hide everything—so I kept the septum ring and a few earrings. Just enough to feel honest. Just enough to let them know that their little Sddie had changed.

Their faces went immediately pale. Tense. “What... what did you do to yourself?” my mom finally whispered. My dad just stared. His eyes scanned the black-dyed hair, the piercings, the emptiness of my expression. “You’re wasting everything,” he growled. “You think we’re paying for *this*? For you to dress like a damn Halloween character?” Before I could answer, my flatmates—Elise and Luna—appeared behind me, calm and collected. My dad pointed at them. “*You*. You two did this to her. Filling her head with whatever garbage—”

“Dad, stop,” I said, sharper than I meant to. “They’re my friends.” I still couldn’t believe I was defending *them*. Then Mom took my hand. Her fingers curled back my sleeve just slightly, and she froze. She had seen the edge of my tattoos. The rest happened fast. Shouting. Crying. Ultimatums. By the time they slammed the door behind them, I was shaking.



My bank app confirmed what I already knew—support suspended. Disowned. Cut off. The words echoed in my mind, a cold confirmation of what I already knew. I was on my own, completely and utterly alone. Or so I thought. In a way, I wasn't. I had my sisters.

They swooped in like a rescue team, offering to cover my bills until I could get back on my feet. They practically dragged me to the salon, a place I never would've gone on my own, to restore my makeup and my shattered confidence. I needed something to cheer me up, so I didn't resist them.

I spent the whole time moping and mumbling about my lost future, the life that had been snatched away.

Luna left soon, tired of my rants, while Elise sat next to me to have her hair done as well.



She smiled to me. "You're a brave girl, Synn, I mean it."

"You have no idea how fucked I am." - I replied, in tears. "I had a chance to succeed in my life but I blew it. I'm not a rebel like you."

Elise's smile faded, replaced by an expression of deep empathy. "I understand you better than you think," she said, her gaze fixed on mine. "You always see me as the 'goth pothead,' but I told you before, I was very different a couple of years ago. Look at these." She gestured to the delicate crosses tattooed on her cheekbones, symbols of a past I didn't fully understand. "I still remember the day they tattooed me. I looked in the mirror and knew I'd never be a CEO." She paused, a flicker of something close to defiance in her eyes. "But I did it anyway. I've found myself, and I'm not afraid of anything anymore."

I stared at her, my mind reeling. "You, a CEO?" The question was a gut reaction, a mix of disbelief and surprise.



Elise's smile was a bitter thing. She showed me a picture of her from a few years back, with red hair, an elegant suit, standing in front of a resort. "See, my family is ridiculously wealthy, they own several resorts in Florida. I was supposed to be the one to lead the business into the future. I had top marks in high school, got into economics here, and with a degree in management, I would've been the clear frontrunner. Especially since my brother is so lazy."

She ran a hand over her black hair, the movement a silent shrug. "But then I joined Delta Nocturna, and all that just... faded away. At first, my parents thought the black hair and goth outfits were just a phase. But then came the weed, the piercings, the tattoos. It was too much. My lazy brother swooped in and stole my position. Now I'm the family disgrace, and he's the successful one."

My mind was still trying to process the idea of Elise in a boardroom.

"And Luna?"



"Her story's different from mine, but not too much." Elise said, her tone softening. "She's the daughter of a very respected and wealthy dermatologist. Her career was practically a foregone conclusion. She practically grew up in sterile offices. She wasn't very happy as a teenager. She never partied, you know? She never explored life. When she got to med school, her career was already mapped out for her. Not that she needed the help—she was an excellent student—but it was an easy path either way. Her family was extremely conservative, by the way. Very religious. She was even engaged to her father's colleague's son, with a wedding date all set."

"Then what happened?" I asked, leaning forward, my own problems momentarily forgotten.

"Well, then she became the queer, polyamorous rebel she is now! Well, first she found our little community. She started by just coming to shows, but soon she was spending all her free time with us. Her fiancé couldn't handle the change, and her family couldn't stomach the idea of her dating a woman."



"I was the first girl she kissed. She told me she had been having weird thoughts and wanted to get them out of her system."

Elise's gaze grew distant, as if she were reliving the memory. "She kind freaked out when she realized she was into girls. She was in denial for a while, dated a guy or two, trying to forget about me. But she couldn't. It wasn't easy for her. She felt pretty lost and started smoking weed regularly, then did LSD—pretty heavy stuff. It was her way of coping with the life she was losing."

"But now she's cut all ties to her past" Elise continued, her voice filled with admiration. "She's still studying medicine, but she claims private medicine is only for profit now. She wants to work with STDs in the LGBT community. Her family disowned her ancestors called her a communist and a d*ke. But she's found her purpose, even if it cost her everything."

Elise took my hand and squeezed it. "You're gonna be ok, girl!"



She gave me a pair of brown contacts to alter my look further. "Are you serious?" I asked, playing with the contacts in my hand. "You girls just... ruin lives for fun?" The question came out sharper than I intended, the shock of their stories overriding my self-pity for a moment.

Elise's expression hardened. "Ruin lives? You think my life was something worth saving?" She gestured to the salon chair where I sat. "And you? You were going to be a biologist, right? What kind of life is that? Playing with microscopes like a little kid? Or ending up as a high school teacher?" Her voice was laced with a familiar mockery, the kind I knew so well from our sisterly squabbles. "Come on. We saved you. We gave you a better life. You have the potential to change even more radically than us, since you're not leaving anything that precious behind."

"Boring?" My voice was a shaky whisper. "It was my life. My path." Elise's eyes blazed, a mix of frustration and something I couldn't place. "A boring path," she repeated, her tone sharp and unforgiving. "Yes, Synn. A boring path. And it would have swallowed you whole. We're offering you a way out." - she said, sending me a black latex top.



I checked my reflection. The dark bob framed my face perfectly. My once-blue eyes, now warm brown thanks to Elise's insistence on the lenses. *They do look better*, I admitted. Softer. And yet a little bit dangerous. And definitely more in line with the new Synn. The piercings had healed. The tattoos had stopped feeling foreign. Even the black latex, once so loud and absurd, felt... comfortable. Like it belonged on me.

"I look like someone you'd cross the street to avoid," I whispered, half-joking.

But deep down, I knew what Elise had meant. Everyone in Delta Nocturna had walked away from something. Luna from med school. Elise from an empire. Compared to them, giving up biology in favor of this twisted little sisterhood felt almost reasonable. At least she had a community. A role. A look.

I started enjoying the idea of playing with my appearance. And now, the thought slipped in—gentle, unwelcome, but persistent: *What if I got implants?* Not huge. Just... enough to stand out even more?