



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

The Harvest of Lies

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1:** Return to Ashen Fields
- **Chapter 2:** Whispers in the Barn
- **Chapter 3:** The Skeleton in the Straw
- **Chapter 4:** The Reporter's Instinct
- **Chapter 5:** Fractured Histories
- **Chapter 6:** Uneasy Alliances
- **Chapter 7:** Shadows of the Eighties
- **Chapter 8:** Threads Unraveling
- **Chapter 9:** Faces from the Past
- **Chapter 10:** Crossroads at Dusk
- **Chapter 11:** Warning Signs
- **Chapter 12:** Night of Storms
- **Chapter 13:** Locked Doors, Open Secrets
- **Chapter 14:** A Test of Trust
- **Chapter 15:** Confessions in the Dark
- **Chapter 16:** The Cooper Farm
- **Chapter 17:** Old Letters, New Lies
- **Chapter 18:** The Price of Silence
- **Chapter 19:** Bound by Blood
- **Chapter 20:** Ghosts in the Silo
- **Chapter 21:** Revealed
- **Chapter 22:** The Weight of Truth
- **Chapter 23:** Broken Promises
- **Chapter 24:** No Going Back
- **Chapter 25:** Into the Light

Introduction

Lana Cooper squinted through dusty glass as the bus rolled past familiar fields gone gold in late summer. Greystone looked unchanged—tidy farmhouses, red barns, neat lines of corn and soy. But as she stepped onto cracked pavement at the edge of Main Street, she felt the weight of years and unspoken history pressing in from every corner. This was the town she'd left with big-city dreams, carrying the hope she'd never need to come back. Now, failure nipping at her heels and purpose drifting away, Lana was home again, knowing Greystone offered comfort but wrestled with ghosts of its own.

Her return was not as triumphant as she'd once imagined. Her mother's welcome was clipped and uncertain; her father worked the land with a distance that had grown since Lana last called this county home. At the local paper—barely scraping by—Lana found an uneasy quiet, the town's news now only whispers of lost crops, church bake sales, and the weariness of economic drought. Yet beneath the neighborly smiles and polite exchanges at the diner, an unease simmered, small-town tempers straining against harder times and old divisions.

Greystone wore its history proudly—statues in the park, faded photos in the meeting hall, stories told and retold each season. Still, some stories had never been spoken and some wounds, Lana suspected, ran too deep to ever heal. Rumors fluttered along the fence posts and through the grain elevators: a feud between founding families, betrayals long past, the sense that, here, secrets grew like weeds between the rows of corn. The land never forgot, even when people did.

Lana's homecoming wasn't just about restarting her life; it was also an escape—from her own mistakes, from a career soured in scandal, and from a city that never quite fit in her bones. Yet Greystone's quiet was deceptive. There were signs—a glance held too long at the market, a whispered warning over pie at Betty's Café—that something waited, crouched in memory and regret. Lana sometimes wondered whether she belonged anywhere at all.

Her first nights back echoed with the creaks and sighs of the old Cooper house, stirring memories of childhood games and darker recollections she'd tried to leave behind. The familiar landscape both comforted and confounded her, and as each day passed, Lana found herself examining her own family with fresh suspicion. There were questions no one wanted to answer, and histories best not disturbed. Despite herself, curiosity—and maybe the need to prove she still mattered—began to take root.

She couldn't yet know that one story, hidden under a blanket of dust and straw in a

forgotten barn, would set everything in motion. Before the leaves changed, old secrets would rise from Greystone's fields, and Lana would be forced to reckon with what it means to belong, the cost of keeping silent, and whether home is something you earn or something that's always out of reach.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: Return to Ashen Fields

Lana Cooper's first assignment back at the *Greystone Gazette* was to cover the annual 'Harvest Blessings' festival, a predictable parade of prize-winning pumpkins and slightly off-key brass band music. She'd tried to infuse her pitch with urban cynicism, suggesting an exposé on the true cost of local produce, but her editor, a kind-faced woman named Helen who still believed in community news, had merely chuckled and handed her a schedule of events. "Just focus on the corn maze this year, dear," Helen had advised, her voice as warm and flat as a prairie sunrise. "People need something wholesome."

Wholesome. Lana chewed on the word like a tough piece of jerky. Her own career in the city had been anything but. A misquoted source, a hurried deadline, and a high-profile retraction had sent her packing, her tail between her legs. Now, she was back to writing about pie contests and scarecrow displays, a far cry from the investigative pieces that had once fueled her ambition. The irony wasn't lost on her, especially as she navigated the crowded main street, past faces that held both recognition and a subtle, unsettling pity.

Her mother, Sarah, had greeted her with a hug that felt more like a polite pat, a gesture that spoke volumes about their strained relationship. Sarah was a woman of routines, her days meticulously planned around church socials, garden clubs, and the quiet upkeep of their old farmhouse. Lana's unpredictable nature, her urban adventures, had always been a source of quiet disapproval. "You're home now, Lana," her mother had said, looking around the slightly disheveled living room as if expecting Lana to instantly transform into a domestic goddess. "Time to settle down."

Settle down. The phrase echoed Greystone's pervasive whisper, a constant reminder of the life Lana had rejected and now found herself forced to reconsider. Her father, Thomas, offered an even more reserved welcome. A farmer through and through, his hands were gnarled from years of tilling the same land, his gaze fixed on the horizon, perpetually anticipating the next season's yield. He'd barely looked up from his supper plate when she arrived, offering a curt nod that somehow felt heavier than any embrace. The farm was his life, and Lana, with her city ways, had always been an enigma, a strange seed that had blown too far from the fertile ground.

She wandered the festival grounds, her camera feeling heavy in her hand. The air was thick with the scent of fried dough and damp hay. Children, sticky with caramel apples, chased each other through bales of straw. Farmers, their faces weathered and wise, discussed crop rotations and fluctuating market prices, their conversations a tapestry of shared history and quiet anxieties. Greystone, for all its surface tranquility,

felt like a community holding its breath, a town quietly weathering a storm that hadn't quite broken yet.

An old rivalry, Lana remembered, had always simmered beneath the surface. The Carpenters and the Millers, two of Greystone's founding families, had been at odds for generations, a silent feud that manifested in everything from property line disputes to whispered accusations at church potlucks. Lana knew the stories from childhood, embellished tales told by her grandmother over pitchers of sweet tea. The reasons for their animosity had long been forgotten, lost in the mists of time, but the tension remained, a thin, taut wire running through the town's social fabric.

She spotted Mayor Thompson, a man whose smile never quite reached his eyes, shaking hands with a representative from a large agricultural conglomerate. The air buzzed with talk of corporate buyouts, of family farms struggling to survive against the might of industrial agriculture. It was the same story playing out across rural America, a slow, inevitable march toward an uncertain future. Greystone, with its quaint charm, was not immune. The economic decline was palpable, a silent erosion eating away at the edges of their seemingly solid world.

Lana knew many of the faces. Mrs. Gable, her third-grade teacher, now moved with a slight tremor but still possessed the same piercing gaze. Old Man Hemmings, who used to scare her with tales of ghosts in the old barn on the edge of town, was slumped on a bench, a half-eaten hotdog in his hand. She offered a polite nod, a small, tentative smile, but kept her distance. They remembered the little girl who'd left, not the woman who'd returned with tarnished dreams.

She snapped a few desultory photos – a particularly plump pig, a child winning a ribbon for a drawing of a tractor, the mayor cutting the ribbon on the new 'Agri-Tech' exhibit, which was essentially a glorified computer screen displaying weather patterns. Her heart wasn't in it. She craved something real, something with teeth. The placid surface of Greystone felt like a lie, a carefully constructed façade over something darker, something waiting.

As the sun began to dip, painting the sky in hues of burnt orange and bruised purple, Lana decided to cut through the old Miller farm on her way back to the Cooper place. It was a shortcut, one she'd taken a thousand times as a kid, a path that led past a series of dilapidated barns and overgrown fields. The Miller farm had been abandoned for years, its once-thriving acres now a testament to neglect, its buildings slowly succumbing to the ravages of time and weather. The Miller family had just up and left one day, without a word, a mystery that had long been fodder for local gossip.

A flickering light caught her eye from the deepest part of the property, near the oldest, most dilapidated barn. It wasn't the kind of light that suggested human presence, more like a hesitant, solitary blink. Curiosity, the same nagging instinct that had led

her into trouble in the city, pulled her forward. Maybe it was just a faulty light fixture, or some kids messing around. But as she drew closer, a faint, metallic smell, sharp and distinct, pricked the evening air, a scent utterly out of place in the bucolic landscape. It was the smell of something old, something forgotten, and something undeniably unsettling. The silence of the abandoned farm stretched around her, thick and heavy, punctuated only by the distant murmur of the festival and the beating of her own heart. She felt a prickle of unease, a premonition of sorts. Something was wrong. And for the first time since she'd arrived back in Greystone, Lana felt a familiar stir of purpose, a journalistic instinct she thought she'd lost. This wasn't about pumpkins or pie. This was about something else entirely.

SAMPLE COPY

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY