

**Alexandria Williams**

***Fireflies***

**Novel**

Summary: *Fireflies* follows the main character Nya as she navigates a very interesting problem: the world has decided she should be the main character of a horror novel. And Nya isn't having it. Every monster gets befriended, every haunted house left unvisited, and every ghoul smacked by a textbook. That is until a monster hunter rolls into town and takes everything she was protecting, forcing her to face a demonic competition alone. This segment includes the first chapter—which introduces the reader to Nya and her ghastly company—the second chapter—which features an encounter with a wolf-like monster—and the third chapter—which showcases yet another creature, albeit this time a little more friendly.

Chapter 1: You want to go where now?

“A haunted house off main street with no electricity.” Nya repeated. “You want to have a sleepover at the haunted house off main street with no electricity?” She blinked at her friends, eyebrows raised.

“Yeah. Are you coming?” Zara asked.

Nya sighed, picked up her bag, and walked off without another word. She would need to find another friend group. Again.

Nya's feet lead her out the school doors and up the hill. She looked straight up. “Nice try, but you're going to have to do better than that.”

Silence.

Nya sighed. She walked down the hill and towards her house. The apartment would be empty. Her family wanted to go to an abandoned cabin in the middle of the woods. She'd told them not to wait for her. She walked upstairs, holding onto the rail so that when a step randomly snapped below her feet she didn't fall into the depths below.

“You're costing the housing firm money,” she scolded the void before continuing up the stairs.

The apartment was void of people, just as she predicted. The refrigerator gurgling was the only sound. Mist spewing from underneath it as she walked past. A post-it note slid out from underneath: Good morning, Nya :)

“Hello, George. And it's evening.”

Another note slid out. A sad face.

“No, George, it's okay. I'm just glad you said hello.”

The next note was a smiley face.

Nya reached into her bag and pulled out something wrapped in tissues. She opened it and revealed a cup of pineapple from the cafeteria. “Bon appetite.” She mumbled, sliding it under the fridge.

The pineapple disappeared and was replaced with another note, this time containing a heart. Nya smiled. "Love you too, bud."

She moved past the kitchen and into her bedroom. A cat she didn't have cried out from her parent's bedroom. "Jerry, I am not giving you cat nip. I already made that mistake once!"

The response was an annoyed, demonic hissing.

Nya rolled her eyes and moved on to her room. The second her light was on, the power failed. She rolled her eyes and started turning on the battery-powered lamps throughout her room. She didn't even get to the second one before the outage gave up and the lights flicked back to life. She scoffed, "Amatures."

She reached into her desk drawer and pulled out her list.

"Alright!" She called, turning around. "Herbert?"

Her wardrobe doors started slamming.

"Glad to see you. Is my purple dress in there?"

More slamming.

"Ok perfect, we have guests tomorrow."

A collective creak and groan of annoyed monsters and haunted furniture rang out.

"At least you guys don't have to deal with relatives." Nya smiled under her breath. This was her army, her kingdom. The one advantage of being surrounded by horrors.

She clicked her pen. "Moving on! Is the bed sheet ghost still here?"

The pillows on her bed jostled as the bed sheet rose up with a ghastly shriek.

"Hey dude. Did you pick a name yet?"

The bed sheet hung its head, dejected.

Nya patted it sympathetically. "No rush. Take your time."

The bed sheet nodded, trying to sound confident. He was a little sensitive, but still very sweet. He'd only shown up to the apartment 2 weeks ago, hovering ominously through the hall (and try to kill her, as always). But after learning Nya had not actually killed anyone or started an evil cult, he'd had a change of heart and decided to stick around and help.

That was the story, after all: supernatural forces try to send agents to kill Nya; Nya befriends said agents; the agents choose to join the army. It was probably annoying the supernatural forces. All the more reason to continue doing it.

Something bumped against her leg. Jerry looked just like a cat, albeit more translucent. He was a dull blue with starkly solid and piercing eyes.

Nya reached down and scratched his ears. The first full smile of today crossed her face. "Hello to you too, Jerry."

## Chapter 2: A Wolf's Paw

Nya walked outside, the cold air biting through her jacket. It was colder than usual today. Not a good sign. The fence on the balcony railing was bent, as if a truck had run through it. Nya sighed. "Alright, who was it?"

A clammer of noises spewed from her half-open door.

“Well?”

The creatures were silent.

“Guys, seriously. I’m not joking about the housing—”

Something slammed into her side, knocking her to the ground. Nya looked up and straight into the face of a wolf unlike any she had ever seen before. Its entire body writhed in shadow, and its breath reeked of death. It growled again, red eyes set on vengeance. It had its paws on her chest. There was not a doubt in her mind: it wanted her head. She tried to struggle against it, trying to push its legs off their newfound perch of her shoulders. It leaned closer, a reaper taking its kill. Then a ladle smacked it on the head.

It bought just enough time for Nya to bring her knee up and kick the thing off her. She rose to her feet. Behind her, the bedsheet ghost was floating, wooden spoon in hand. Jerry was rubbing against her leg, as if daring the wolf to pounce again. After a tea kettle with legs and a snarling mouth hopped on her shoulder, the wolf beast decided Nya was a very overpriced meal and turned around.

Nya rubbed the tea kettle. “See Earl Gray? They never stand a chance.”

Earl Gray hissed steam like a purr. The creatures cheered. They were Nya’s army, Nya’s curse, Nya’s team. The best thing that had happened to her.

They stood there on the balcony, cold morning wind whistling by.

“Now, seriously, did the wolf break the guard rail or was that someone else?”

### Chapter 3: Attack of the Wild English Textbook

The first bell rang loud and clear through the school. People scrambled out of classrooms that weren’t their own, attempting to swim through the mob and up the stairs.

Nya didn’t move. She was in her own class, in her own chair, with her own fantasy book open. Someone slammed their hand on her desk, looming over her.

Nya closed her eyes and stiffened. If this was a vampire already, she was going to smack it with her PreCalculus textbook. She looked up and came face to face with a kid who looked her age. She looked at his smile. Fangs. She reached into her book bag.

“Not even a hello?” The kid before her asked.

She decided the PreCalculus textbook was too generous.

“Aww, no need to be—HEY!”

Nya had a mirror set up, turning the sun into a laser.

The kid’s skin started smoking. He ran out of the classroom, still steaming. She watched him run off, then snuggled back into her seat and continued reading. Maybe he’d think twice before trying to kill her at 7 am in the morning. The second bell rang before she had even managed to read into the first paragraph.

“Alright everyone, Textbooks out!” A cheery voice decreed.

Nya looked up quizzically. A substitute. Maybe this one wouldn't be a zombie. She sounded too chipper to be undead. Then again, she also sounded too chipper to be working with high schoolers.

With a shrug, she pulled out her English textbook. Or... tried too.

She felt the familiar touch of papers, folders, a binder, the spine of the textbook she'd just about killed a vampire with, then—

“Ow!” Nya jerked her hand back.

“You alright, miss?” The substitute asked.

“Yeah, I'm fine.” Nya looked at her hand. “Just a paper cut.”

It was not just a paper cut. Her fingers were red, bleeding from teeth-shaped punctures.

Nya looked into her bag. Her textbook growled at her. And of course, it was the one she needed.

She mouthed “seriously?” at the textbook, then quickly pinched it from both sides and pulled it into plain view. The teeth disappeared, but she could feel the angry vibrations through the desk.

Nya tried to focus on the lesson, making sure to turn the pages carefully. She still had an unusual amount of static shocks and paper cuts. The book was, in turn, dropped off the desk a suspicious number of times. The tango continued until Nya's worksheet was done. She slammed the cover down, getting snagged by a “page corner” on the way. Everyone was giving her quizzical looks, but Nya really didn't care. Her hands were both a bit destroyed, covered in scratches and scrapes. She mentally added “first aid kit” to the list of monsters she really wanted to have. But until then, she had to use the band aids she had bought from the dollar store. Boring, but they got the job done.

By the time the bell rang again, signaling the end of first period, the red on Nya's hands had been replaced by... whatever you call the color of generic band-aids. She turned back to her English textbook.

“Listen here,” she whispered, “I am about to go to PreCalculus. If you bite my hands again, I will put you in the paper shredder when I get home.”

When she picked up the notebook again, it didn't fight her. In fact, she thought she might have scared it. She placed it in her bag and gently patted it.

“Hey, you can have a french fry at lunch if you're good.” Nya whispered before zipping her backpack shut.