

## 1 CHAPTER

The alley seemed endless. In the darkness of the night, silence is not necessarily peaceful, and the only thing scarier than the loud silence that pervaded the narrow road where Emily walked was the heat that seared through her skin from the silver locket around her neck. Emily could not remember for how long that heat had scared her, but she could remember the first time she had felt it. Her father had given it to her on her 16th birthday, and she had been thrilled, but only till the next day.

Emily's mind ran back to that fateful day when she first felt the necklace burn. Soon after, she had seen the silhouette. It was faceless, standing beside John Wilkins. Emily squinted her eyes, unsure of whether what she was seeing was not an illusion induced by the LSD she had consumed at the frat party. John had invited her over, and for the first time, she had tried a hallucinogen. As Emily stumbled through the darkness of the hall and hit her head, she could feel some pain, but it had subsided.

"I'm okay," Emily told herself, but as she looked at the shadowy figure of a man that literally looked like the grim reaper, she wondered whether she truly was okay.

"Woah!" Emily exclaimed as something resembling a timer appeared on top of John's head.

"What is it, Emily." Joanne, one of the cool girls in her class, asked as she raised her head, leaving the bright screen of her phone.

"You can't see that?" Emily asked, pointing both at the timer and at the reaper-looking silhouette.

"Girl, you tripping," Joanne said and returned her head to the phone. In the brightness of her screen, Joanne's nose piercing twinkled at night, and Emily was about to say something when the silhouette that she had been trying to ignore suddenly stuck its hand out.

"Bloody hell!" Emily exclaimed once more, drawing the attention of a few people at the party who had not passed out from being drunk or completely stoned.

"What the hell, Emily?" Joanne said.

None of them could see it, but the being had stuck a knife into John Wilkin's chest. Emily was about to explain what she had seen when the figure disappeared, and John stood up. She breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe she had exaggerated Emily told herself. Maybe she did not just see a shadow stab the jock who had been hitting on her since junior high.

"Relax, Emily, you're tripping." She told herself as she took deep breaths, yet, the digital timer refused to disappear, and as the party went on, she watched in awe as the timer only began to countdown than normal, moving at an alarming rate towards zero. She wasn't sure what it meant, but even in her confused state, she knew it could not be good. Emily had barely turned to look at two people kissing, not too far away, when she heard a scream.

"He's not breathing. Help him; he's not breathing." Someone in the crowd screamed. Emily pushed her way through the crowd, watching as a few students tried frantically to save John Wilkins, but as soon as she saw the last grain fall, she knew he was gone.

"He's dead," Emily murmured.

"Don't say that!" Jakob said. But before long, he knew she was not wrong. John Wilkins was really dead.

John had died clutching the part of his torso that had been stabbed. After that day, Emily had never remained the same. She would be working down the street, and the necklace would be hot, then suddenly, the dark silhouette would appear. After he left, Emily alone would see the timer of whoever he appeared to visit, and before long, she would learn that the person was dead.

Her train of thoughts was suddenly rerouted from the past to the present by the loud honking that came from a fast-approaching truck.

“Get out of the way!” The angry driver yelled as she increased her speed, almost getting herself hit by other drivers who cursed her.

Emily cursed in a breathless whisper as she kept running, looking back intermittently.

Ever since the day John died, the same thing had repeated itself, she could see when certain people would die, but it was different as she ran into the street off the corner of 66th and Monroe.

Today, not just one or two timers had appeared. It wasn't evening yet, and Emily had already seen about ten timers. Even as she ran through the road, she could see timers atop cars, and she had even seen a few on some kids who looked like they were on their way from school.

“Pick up Aidan, please.” She begged as she ran through an alley. The silhouette being had apparently noticed her, and Emily was convinced that it was following her. She remembered when her dad had died. Emily had seen his timer, she had known he was going, and as she had tragically learned, there was almost nothing she could do about it in most cases. Her dad's death had broken her heart. On a couple of occasions after that, Emily had been able to save a few individuals, and now she had apparently angered the angel of death, a title she had now given it.

“Hey Emily,” Aidan said into the receiver.

“Where are you.” She said in an exasperated tone, cleaning a tear that had somehow made its way to her face.

“I'm close to you,” Aidan said. When Emily had called him that afternoon, telling him that she needed him to pick her up, Aidan had been confused, but Emily was a darling, and he could not say no to her. However, she had moved away from where she asked him to pick her up, and as a result, Aidan was barely surprised when she made the following statement.

“I'm no longer at – “ He did not let her finish, instead choosing to save her the stress.

“I have your GPS on here. Jakob helped me rig it so I could find you.” He said.

“Okay, but I don't have much time, I – “ The words were still finding their way out of her mouth when the angel of death appeared before her. At every point when she had seen the being move, it did not seem to walk, but it was never fast, it did not run but was never slow, and even though its legs seemed to be on the ground, there was a mysterious feeling as though it was flying.

“Damn,” Emily muttered underneath her breath as the silhouette closed in on her, with little more than three feet between them both. Emily's hand suddenly went to the necklace her father had given her. Maybe it was out of instinct, or perhaps it was because the necklace was burning her skin, but as soon as her skin touched the necklace, the silhouette seemed to be in pain.

A loud shriek escaped the being as it made a lunge for her, but she touched the necklace again, and it burst into smoke. No sooner had this occurred than did Aidan appear with his red cameo.

“I'm so glad you're here,” Emily said.

“What's wrong? You... you know what, fuck it, we'll talk later, get in.” Aidan said and zoomed off as Emily relaxed into the seat for some much-needed rest. The being had, after all, never appeared to her in a closed space, and it seemed to have disappeared. Or had it?

Aidan's red cameo glided down the tarred spiral road that led to Mathew's house, the location where Emily had asked to be taken to. Trees stood on either side of the long road while Emily's chest heaved slightly as she slept. Aidan watched her quietly. They had been driving for about twenty minutes, and in less than half that time, Emily had slipped into sleep.

“We're here,” Aidan announced as he parked into his driveway. For show, and because he liked the sound of it, Aidan revved the engine two times and switched off the car, while Emily's eyes fluttered open.

