Counting Time

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Dawn Leigh is a 14 year old just starting highschool. She met three new best friends at band camp the summer before school starts. She doesn't know it yet, but two of her new friends are hiding something. Something deadly that changed their lives forever

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Table of Contents

Counting Time Chapter 1

Dawn Chapter 1

Dawn Chapter 2

Dawn chapter 3

Dawn Chapter 4

Dawn Chapter 5

Dawn Chapter 6

Dawn Chapter 7

Dawn Chapter 8

Dawn Chapter 9

Dawn Chapter 10

Dawn Chapter 11

Dawn Chapter 12

The Afterlife Chapter 13

Counting Time : Chapter 1

Prologue

Its midnight and I'm getting ready leave. My boss called and I have a job to do. I wish I had a say in my job. It doesn't even pay. The company chose me for this job because I am the last one anyone ever suspects. Apparently, I'm too kind and gentle-hearted to commit such crimes.

I'm a murderer or rather an assassin. My boss tells me who he wants dead and I get the job done. It's very simple. The bad part of it is . . . everyone he orders to kill, are innocent teens. I never understood why he wants them gone . . . but i can't question him.

The company quarters are about seven miles from my house. My car is black and I turned off all the lights. So now I'm invisible.

The drive there is very quiet. All the while I was thinking about who he wants dead. I'm not allowed to ask questions. He just gives me a name and a description. I find the person and then I kill them quickly. I have no time to feel bad about it. I try my best to not get attached to the victims, but sometimes they make it so hard.

I arrive at the quarters at exactly twelve twenty five. I have exactly fifteen minutes to make it there before I'm late. I park my car in the garage and take out my card. My card has my name, picture and information/job description.

The place is an abandoned warehouse in the middle of the woods. Very appropriate to host meetings about murdering people.

As I entered, I showed the two guards at the door my card and they escorted me into my boss's office. My boss is a chubby short guy with a wasted face and gray eyes. He's supposed to be dead, but he's in hiding. That's why he's here in this old abandoned warehouse in the middle of the woods.

"Zaq, you're here early," He said in his Irish accent. I stay composed but I'm laughing on the inside.

Yes sir, I figured the sooner I got here the better," I said casually.

"Indeed. I have a job for you," He told me as he got up and went to one of the filing cabinets behind his desk up against the wall.

1

"Okay,"

"There's a girl. Her uncle has caused me trouble. She needs to disappear," He said.

"Alright," I sat down on one of the really old love seats in front of the desk. He plopped down a neat looking vanilla folder full of files.

"Her name is Dawn Leigh,"

"That's a pretty name," I said as I opened up the folder. I looked at her photo for a couple moments memorizing her features. Like the way her wavy hair falls over her shoulders neatly and the way her brown

eyes sparkled with a huge smile.

"She's a very pretty person. Inside and out," He smiled a cruel smile and I looked at all her information. From the paper work, she seemed like the perfect girl.

"Yeah," I said.

"But remember, she needs to disappear. Make it fast Zaq," He said. I nodded and put the folder back on the desk. I got up and left.

I have a feeling that this one is going to be the biggest challenge ever.

I don't think I can ever forget the photo of Dawn Leigh in that folder.

Chapter 2: Dawn Chapter 1

Part I

2

Dawn

One

3

6:30 in the morning and the sun is starting to come up. The day is starting and everything around me is starting to wake up. The birds have begun their early morning song and the sky is turning pink from the sunrise. I guess it's time for me to get up and get ready for the day.

Today is the first day of high school. For others this is an amazing day. Getting to see your friends again and starting a whole new chapter in life. For me, it's totally different. I get to see my friends, yeah, but some of my friends hold precious secrets that they don't know I know. Today is also the day where I count how much time I have left before I leave and never come back.

I'm making the most of whatever time I have left. After all, I want to live life to the fullest. For me, that means speaking up and trying my best to make new friends. I've always been the invisible one. Never seen or heard until I'm called on to answer a question. I've always blended in and made friends with the people who don't care about anything anybody says about them. The Populars call them 'losers' but I call them 'Best Friends'.

My best friend is the boy with the dress pants, the collar shirt with the ugliest tie I have ever seen and with the baby face that has the weirdest expressions on it that always make you smile. That boy's name is Michael Kerrey. Michael has been my friend since the first grade and we've best friends ever since. He's never been the brightest student, but he has potential to do big things in life. He knows more about medical terms/protocols than the school nurse. Maybe one day he can be a big time doctor.

He's not my only friend I'm looking forward to see. I've met a few upperclassmen that I've gotten to know. Zaq Saunders. A tall and really skinny junior. He's about six feet tall with tan skin and light green eyes that stand out in the light and dark short hair. He's a very nice person, or so it may seem. In the short time it took to get to know him a little bit, I know that he's deadly. So is Chase Roriad. He's about five foot six inches with curly dirty blond hair and pretty blue eyes. He keeps to himself when none of his friends are around. He's sweet and kind I have to admit, he's kinda cute too, but I can see in his eyes the same thing I saw in Zaq's. I saw the need to kill. He's a sophomore, but age doesn't matter when it comes to murderers. They can be five years old and already be skilled murderers. I should know, my fathers a cop, and he only deals with murder cases. Most of the criminals are over the age of twenty-five, but on the rare occasion there were kids. Kids my age and younger. The youngest one was about seven years old and he murdered his sister.

The first one I met was Amber. Amber's a short Hispanic junior who plays the trumpet with me in band. She's really nice and is kind of a nerd. My perfect best friend.

4

We are completely and utterly different. That makes us the perfect pair of friends. She's into Comic Con and Star Wars and I'm into Josh Hutcherson and Shopping at Lois Vaton and Dolce Gabbana.

There are times in life where I have thought about death and how I would like to die. That's only about once ever year. I don't want to die. Not yet anyways. I'm too young to die. I haven't even lived my dream. My dream is to be a famous author and someday have my books being read all across the world. It's a shame I'll never live that dream.

So, once I got ready, I went downstairs and packed up my bag. I took a good look at me in the mirror and I look fantastic. Just the way I want to start the year. My wavy hair is brown shiny and loose it stops halfway down my back. I'm dressed in jean shorts and blue T-shirt and converse high-tops. Casual but still pretty cute. I have no makeup on. I'm not allowed anyways.

I grab an apple and head outside where my mother is waiting for me to drive me to school. My mother is very punctual and is always worried about being late. So instead she thinks to herself and we are late that way she'll drive a bit faster then her usual snail's pace and get me to school extremely early.

So I waved my mother goodbye and entered the school. I walked in and turned right into the commons where Michael was already there in his black old-man-shoes, beige dress pants, yellow collar short sleeve shirt with an abstract yellow tie. He saw me and put on one of his weird expressions. This one his eyes are squinted and his smile is really wide which creates wrinkles around his nose and it squishes his baby face. I laughed and he got up and opened his arms.

"Happy Monday!" He greeted. I rolled my eyes and laughed.

"Happy Monday," I said returning the greeting. I looked around I didn't see a brief case. I smiled in relief. This is a good way to start off the year.

* * *

It's time for lunch. I buy food in the cafeteria and decide to eat with my junior friends. They sit in the commons at the round table closest to the 100 wing.

Zaq is laughing as something Amber said and I sit down with a smile. Zaq greets me with a quick solute and a serious face. I laugh and wave. I wave at Amber and she continues to look at her IPod screen. It takes a while to register that she's reading something. Something funny because she's laughing as she reads them.

I'm laughing to the point where I'm so close to tears. I keep glancing at Zaq and

5

every time I do I meet his gaze. Deep inside his eyes is something deadly. Seeing him though, I can't picture him deadly at all. He's such a nice guy. Then again, I see something hidden in the green of his eyes.

Something unforgiving.

Something violent and most of all, something murderous. That's when the bell rang and I walked with them to my next class

After about two hours and fifteen minutes the school day is over. I chose to walk home. It's a pretty far walk, but I need the fresh air. I'm not carrying anything more then a few notebooks in my bag.

"Hey, wait up!" I heard a voice behind me. I turn around and it was Zaq jogging to catch up with me. I smiled and waited.

"Hi," I said I continued to walk.

"Walking home?" He asked keeping pace with me. I looked into his eyes and that something is more present then ever before. I decide to play it safe.

I shook my head, "Nope, I'm headed towards Johnny's. Gonna grab some food for dinner, then I have to go pick up my brother from MJS and then I'm going home," I lied, "You?" I am a good liar. It's a horrible thing to be good at, but it can come in handy in a situation like this.

"Yeah, I live close to Johnny's," He laughed and I giggled some.

"Of course you do," I said sarcastically.

"Where are you from?" He asked suddenly.

"From New jersey?" I raised my eye brow and gave him a perplexed look.

"No, no I meant like what heritage are you? You don't look Italian . . ." His voice trailed off as he studied me.

"I'm Colombian," I answered. This information can't hurt me in any way so I might as well just say it.

"Nice! I'm Qatari," He said.

"Qatari? What the fuck is that?" I asked. Qatar? I have never heard of that before now. From my point of view it sounds like guitar.

"It's only the best middle east country!" He said. You can tell from the tone of his voice that he's got some good nationalism for Qatar. I'm not a big fan of the Middle East. I've never even heard of some the countries there. I really don't bother my time with it.

"Well then, that's good to know," We laughed some and then we made it to Johnny's. I waved goodbye to Zaq and he went the opposite way I'm going. He didn't look back, but just on the safe side I went inside and bough a soda. When I couldn't see

6

him anymore, I left the restaurant and speed walked home.

When I got there, I went inside and locked the doors. I went to my room and pulled the shades. The last thing I need is to get attacked. Just thinking about Zaq gets me nervous.

"What the fuck are you doing?" I heard my brother say. I turned around and glared at him.

"First of all, why the fuck are you in my room and second, I'm pulling down the shades," I crossed my arms across my chest.

"Yeah but why?"

I shrugged, "I want to take a nap and it's too bright in here," I can't tell my brother what's going on. He'll be an ass about it and tell mother. Mother will tell Father and Father will investigate. Nothing good ever happens when Father investigates. Danny looked at me weird then backed away closing my door. Jesus why doesn't

that kid just mind his own business? It's bad enough he lives across from me and he's able to hear everything that's going on in my room, just as I can hear everything going on in his room. It's extremely annoying.

So I decided to take a nap. I'm exhausted from the really long day at school. I closed my eyes and curled up on my bed. It took me a while to fall asleep, but somehow I managed to get a few hours.

Chapter 3: Dawn Chapter 2

Two

If I thought yesterday was exhausting, then today is overly exhausting. At lunch I kept getting these weird glances from Zaq but I pretended not to notice. The more I talk to him the more I like him, but the more I'm frightened by him.

Today was an easy day for the most part. I handed in all the papers that needed to be signed by our parents and I just spaced out until I heard the bell ring. The first couple of days of school are the easiest. The teacher just introduces themselves, spends most of the class period trying to match the name with the face and then with the remaining class time they give us a brief summery of the year. It's easy enough but I don't pay attention. I'm off in my own world thinking about things. Things I would usually never even think about on a regular basis. Like for example, Chase . . . Chase is sweet and nice but something is telling me he isn't all that sweet. I ignored that feeling and I'm starting to like that kid.

As the days go by, I'm talking to him more and more. The more I talk to him the more that feeling grows and the more I regret it. It's not just Chase, its Zaq too. I'm getting attached to the both of them and alarm bells are going off in my brain telling me that I'm doing everything wrong.

It's November now. I've left three months slip away. Three months wasted. I've spent those three months talking to Zaq and Chase and Amber. I've told them most of the things about me. They're like my best friends now.

I can trust Amber. There's nothing about her that ticks me off. She has gained my trust completely. I'm pretty sure that she trusts me too. I mean I think of her like family. We can talk in Spanish and no one else will understand us. It's a great plus to having Hispanic friends.

"Hey, can I tell you something?" Brooke asked me. I totally forgot I was walking

8

home with her. I was in my own little world. I do that a lot when I'm walking and it's completely silent except for the wind in the trees.

"Sure," I smiled and took a deep breath.

"I have a crush on Chase," She said. For some reason I felt a pang in my chest.

"You do?" I asked. I mean I don't have feelings for him . . . at least I don't think I do.

She nodded and sighed. We got to her house and we sat on the bench on her porch. The funny thing is . . . they are both so alike I can see them being together, but knowing them both . . . I know it's not going to last long. Brooke is a little picky about who she dates. The boy has to meet certain expectations and if they don't reach them . . . well she breaks up with them before they break up with her. Chase on the other hand . . . he's not picky. He's sweet so he'll be happy with anyone as long as they treat each other right.

"Well that's cute. You know I think he likes you too," I add. Again I felt that pang. It's like a hurt like I'm hurting inside. It's really hard to explain. I shake myself mentally and pay more attention to Brooke.

"Really?" She asked. A huge smile on her lips.

"Yeah, He's always smiling when he's around you and I just notice the way he looks at you," I shrugged and I put on my best smile. From then on the conversations drifted off. They kept changing. We never really have a lasting conversation. One topic always leads to another. Like when we were talking about Chase then we ended up talking about the color blue and then we talked about the moon and somehow the moon led up to World War III. We are always laughing and goofing off. Zaq's usually in his room and he leaves us alone. I'm glad for that. I don't need him to drop in on us when we're having one of our girl talks. That would just be awkward.

At about seven my dad came to pick me up. From the corner of my eye, I saw Zaq looking from the window. It reminded me of those horror films. When the serial killer or ghost or whatever is watching you leave and getting ready to stalk you and kill you or stalk you and haunt you.

That night, I had nightmares about Zaq chasing me with a huge knife through the woods and then a random robot rainbow unicorn came to my rescue and took me away while it shit out rainbows. It took me to the land of PINK. Everywhere and everything was pink. It's my worst nightmare. Worst of all, clowns were roaming around. The clowns were extremely creepy looking. With the grey-white face and the red-grey mouth with the worn out polka dot uniforms and the big red shoes.

9

* * *

I stayed after school today. I didn't want to go home and I decided to do my homework in the commons. When I was going to my locker, I stopped at the sight of Zaq and Chase. They were having an intense conversation by the seriousness of their faces.

"We have to do it soon," I heard Zaq whisper.

"I know! I can't do this anymore. She's my friend. Today," Chase whispered back.

"No, not today, she'll expect it. Give it some time." Then the conversation stopped and I ran the other way and into the 200 wing. I put my stuff down and I started to pace. That conversation is a huge lead into my suspicion.

My heart dropped into my stomach as I realized what had just been said. My friends are out to kill someone.

I have a feeling that that someone is me.

Chapter 4: Dawn chapter 3

Three

"Hey, you coming over tonight?" Brooke asked me as I opened my locker.

"Yeah," I said grabbing some binders and putting them into my bag. I Shut my locker closed and spun the dial. Then I walked with Brooke to her house. We did our homework in the living room and then we talked about our crushes and girl stuff.

"So, I heard that you like someone," She said nudging me with her elbow. I smiled and my cheeks blushed. At this point I have a boyfriend. His name is Tater Anthony Gallion. He's from Tennessee. I met him over facebook and we would always talk and we got into skyping. He looks a lot like Peter from Narnia. Except his hair a little wavier and his eyes are a little darker.

"Yeah, I do," I said sheepishly. I wouldn't meet her gaze. My eyes always reveal how I'm feeling.

"Who!" She demanded.

I sighed, "I have a crush on my boyfriend," I admitted. I shrugged and met her gaze.

"Boyfriend?! When did this happen?!" She asked. Her voice rose with excitement and curiosity. I told her about Tater. I just left out the part that I met him over facebook. That would be weird and she would tell me to break up with him because she would say, "What the fuck is wrong with you? He could be a rapist with Herpes! He could have AIDS! You need to break up with him!"

"Tater? That's his name?" She asked. I nodded and I shrugged. I really don't care what his name is. I really like him and he cares about me a lot. He would always text me 'I

11

love you baby girl' and that would always make my day.

"He's a fucking potato! Tater," She laughed some, "tater-tots. He's a potato," She said. I laughed some too, even though it hurt that she was making fun of my boyfriend.

"Hey, you guys want something to drink?" I heard Zaq say. His voice was so unexpected I actually jumped.

"Yes! Coke with ice please," Brooke said.

I shrugged, "Sure I'll have a Coke," Zaq nodded and left to get the drinks.

"Sorry, but he's a potato," Brooke shrugged and began to text someone. I took this time to respond to Tater. We're having a normal conversation about anything and everything. Somewhere along the way one of us will say I love you and then the other will respond I love you too, then that would be the end of the conversation.

"Sure," We both laughed and then Zaq came back with the drinks. There were two tall glasses. One with a lemon slices on the glass the other with a lime. He handed the lemon to me and the lime to his sister.

"Thanks bro!" She said taking a drink from the Coke. He nodded and smiled back at her. I nodded my thanks and smiled. He smiled and walked away. When I took a drink, something didn't feel right. The drink tasted funny. It's like someone just decided to put a pinch of salt into the drink. I shrugged it away and continued to drink.

Then my mouth felt fuzzy and dry. I finished the drink and it didn't do anything but make my mouth even drier.

"Can I get some water?" I asked her.

"Sure, it's in the kitchen," She pointed and I followed her finger into the kitchen. I saw the gallon of water on the kitchen table and poured some into the glass. I drank it all and my throat still felt dry and fuzzy. I went upstairs to the bathroom and checked my mouth. Everything looks normal so I decided to ignore it. I sprinted down the stairs and then suddenly I got the sharpest pain in my head. I had to stop short and grit my teeth. Then, as quickly as it came, it left. That pain left me perplexed; I went back into the living room and continued to talk to Brooke about girl stuff. We talked about bras, Victoria Secret and her obsession with saying STD's out loud.

Then at around seven, I started to pack up my stuff. Brooke's upstairs taking a shower and I already said goodbye. I ran up the stairs to grab my charger and I sprinted down the stairs.

I bent down to put it in my bag and then everything went black.

* * *

12

The musty humid air brought me back to the real world. I felt extremely tired and lightheaded. I felt the rough fibers of rope around my wrists and I felt tape on my mouth.

I've been bound and gagged.

The realization of this leaves me flabbergasted and extremely frightened.

I'm in a really small room. It feels like I'm in a closet. I was able to make out the outline of the door. The doorknob had a keyhole underneath it. With all my strength I balanced myself up quietly and kneeled in front of the small hole. I closed one eye and looked through the other.

I saw Brooke sitting on a chair. She's not gagged, but she's tied to a chair with her wrists and ankles tied together. Panicked I looked around the room I'm in. My heart dropped as I noticed there was no form of escape. It's just closet with a door. No light and no window, just spider webs and a lot of dust. I tried to loosen the ropes by moving my arms but it was no use, the rope was too tight. That didn't stop me though, I kept struggling and moving the more I failed the more flustered and frustrated I got. Out of anger I kept trying to move and I was determined to set myself free. Somehow I was able to loosen the ropes just a tiny bit but by then, I had already given up.

This situation is hopeless. For both Brooke and me. I started to think about the future I'll never have. There are so many things I want to tell Brooke, Michael and the rest of my friends. There's so much I want to tell Tater.

My family . . . my mother, my father and even my brother. My annoying obnoxious stupid brother. Deep, deep, deep down inside me I know that I care about that kid. After all, he is my brother.

I started to cry silently as reality hits me. My own death. I'm terrified of death, even though I'm curious as to what lies on the other side . . . I don't want to find out until I'm one hundred.

A cry snaps me back into reality. I rushed over to the keyhole, and I saw Brooke turn pale white and her eyes almost out of their sockets. Then I saw it. A knife where her heart is. Her blood staining the pure white of her shirt. Her body, along with the chair, fell forward and hit the floor with a huge thud. That caused the knife to completely go through her body. I was able to make out the tip of the blade coming out of her back.

My heart started to race and my vision blurred with tears. I was able to see a figure step in front of her body and he shook his head. He was too short to be Zaq. From the outline I was able to make out curly hair. Chase. Chase has killed Brooke.

Chase, my best friend. The boy with the amazing blue eyes has killed Brooke. Every feeling of kindness I ever felt toward him disappeared and has been replaced with

13

hatred.

I hopped back to where I woke up and closed my eyes. The door opened and there he was. In front of me with another blade. His hand came up to my face and to my surprise he ripped of the tape and then covered my mouth.

"Shh! There isn't much time; Zaq's going to wake up at six in the morning. It's three fifteen. I'm going to cut the ropes and then you're going to run and jump out that window. Then you're going to run as fast as you can and get away. As far as you can possible manage. Okay?" He whispered quickly. He's setting me free? He didn't kill Brooke? I'm confused.

He gently and quickly cut the ropes and I couldn't help but give him a hug. I guess it was the relief of him saving me. He hugged back reluctantly and I ran. I had to jump over Brooke's body to get to the window. That was the hardest part of the escape so far. I jumped through the window and I ran away. Just as Chase told me too.

I felt numb. I sprinted but I couldn't feel it. I felt empty. The previous events haven't hit me yet. The reality of everything is still a blur. Like a dream, a dream that happened to a stranger and I'm going to wake up at six thirty and wake up in my bed at home with my mother yelling at me in Spanish to wake up.

I stopped running when I reached Malapardis. I decided to walk and clear up my mind a little. I reached into my pocket and I still had my cell phone, my IPod and some cash. He's such an idiot, I thought as I turned on my phone. I'm not stupid enough to call the cops on this one because one; I don't know what happened and I don't know why it happened. Besides if I tell the cops what am I supposed to say? I'm too late to save Brooke . . . Brooke. The mention of her name brings back memories of a couple years ago when we first met in Outdoor Ed. Then to her party last summer and then to now. Her body falling forward with that knife in her heart. I'll never see her again . . . never hear her voice . . . I just lost my only sister . . .

No, I can't think about that now. I have to put myself together. I have to thank Chase. I can't text him now . . . he's probably asleep and or trying to hide the body. I gave a shudder at the thought.

So, I was right. Zaq's trying to kill me. Why? I'm like ninety-eight point ninety-nine percent positive that I didn't do anything bad to that guy. What can he possible have against me? I've been nothing but nice to him since I met him! This doesn't make any sense.

I don't know for how long I was walking, but I stopped when I reached the high school. The sun was rising, so I decided to sit down behind the school. I looked at my

14

wrists and saw that they were bruised and red from the rope fibers. I looked at my ankles and found the same thing.

Fuck, that's going to be hard to hide, I thought as I sighed. I looked at the time on my phone and it was almost six thirty.

Chapter 5: Dawn Chapter 4

Four

I found Michael at the school at seven and he treated my wounds. He asked many questions about how I got it, but I just told him that my brother and I were just practicing our knot trying skills. He bandaged them up in gauze and all I can feel is the pain in my ankles as I walked to my locker. I put my jacket away and I went to sit.

In all the events that happened, I can't find it in myself to move. I just sat at the table looking at my wrists but when I saw Chase, I got up and went to him. I just noticed that he was holding my bag.

He smiled a tight smile and put the strap over my shoulders.

15

"Thank you," I said. It was more than for the bag, it was for saving me. He shrugged it off and smiled half-heartedly. Then he went to join his friends in the band room. I went the other way and went to buy myself some coffee at the cafeteria.

* * *

I sat lunch with Amber and Zaq today. I know it was a really stupid decision to make. Once he saw me sit down and start to eat, his eyes widened and he somehow managed a very convincing smile. So convincing I had to smile back.

"Oh my god, what happened to you?!" Amber asked as she took in my bandaged wrists and bruised ankles. She was mostly looking at my head. So I put my hand there and felt a huge bump and it hurt when I touched it.

"I, um, fell. I tripped going down the stairs," I lied. Amber is the last person I want to tell the truth to. Chase already knows and so does Zaq. Brooke knows too but she can't help me now. It's too late for her.

Guess who I'm not fooling with that story? Amber. She raised her brow and gave me a weird look.

"Okay, that must've been a nasty fall,"

"You have no idea," I muttered underneath my breath. I finished my water bottle and took a bite of my sandwich. Meanwhile, Zaq stares at me. He's obviously confused and extremely pissed off. I bet he's wondering how I was able to survive in that musty closet.

We sat in an awkward silence until Amber said, "Guys, where's Brooke?" That three word sentence made me cry. Tears started streaming down my cheeks and I had to leave. I speed walked to the bathroom and went inside a stall. I started to sob and images of her body made me throw up twice. When I was done puking, I washed my mouth with water and took a couple mints from my pocket and chewed them. I washed my face and I was able to relax some.

The rest of the day went by extremely slow. Each class seemed like a thousand years. I wasn't paying attention. I was busy thinking about what Zaq might do to me. Obviously he has to kill me. I know too much. I could get him in serious trouble if he doesn't kill me soon. If I were to be completely honest right now? I'm

okay with death. Death right here, right now is better for me than living.

If I continue to live, I'll go crazy. I'll go crazy thinking about death. About Brooke. About Zaq and Chase.

When the final bell has rung, I put my stuff down, went to my locker, grabbed my

16

jacket and went to find Michael.

"I need to talk to you, it's extremely important," I said.

"Okay," We walked outside and I didn't dare say a word until we were on the eight away from the building.

"Brooke is dead," I blurted out. I'm going to die anyways, so nothing I do now will hurt me anymore.

"What?" He asked. I met his gaze and I nodded. I let the tears come and we sat down on one of the benches. I faced him and he's having a hard time believing me.

"How do you know?" He asked me. I took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

"Because I saw her die," I whispered. In my head, it felt like a movie. I saw the knife impale her body. Her eyes wide with fear. Her face drained of color. Then the thud as her body hit the floor causing the knife to go completely through her body. Then Chase coming and rescuing me.

"That's terrible," Michael said. His voice brought me back to reality and I told him what I saw. I told him everything. I started from the moment I took that drink. I told him how I was drugged. How I was bound and gagged. I left out the part about Zaq and Chase. I just told him that they were wearing a mask so I couldn't see their faces.

I explained how I got the rope burn and this bump on my head. As I was talking, he listened very carefully. He didn't interrupt me and he didn't question anything I said. He believed me, because when I finished he was crying a little.

"We have to tell the police," He said.

"And tell them what? That two masked murderers killed Brooke and tired me up in a musty closet? They won't believe us! Think this through Mike," I exclaimed.

"Yes! That's exactly what we tell them! This is serious! Our friend is dead and you were close to die too! We need to tell the police!"

"You can't escape the inevitable Mike! I'm in big trouble! I wasn't supposed to escape! I was supposed to die with her! I know too much, it's going to be a short time, before I die too! I'm begging you do not! Do not tell the police!" I pleaded. Our gazes locked and after a while he sighed.

"Okay, have it your way,"

"Thank you. You have to promise me that you will never tell anyone about this,"

He nodded, "I promise," I believed him of course. He always keeps his promises. He's extremely loyal and will always stay by your side. That's why I love Michael. It's why I told him and not Amber. Amber is really close to Zaq and will not believe a single word I say.

17

"Thanks," I pulled my knees to my chest and buried my face in them.

"Are you okay?" He asked. I shook my head. What an incredibly stupid thing to ask. Um, yeah I'm fine. I just watched my friend die. It's no big deal. Yeah I know I was bound and gagged and almost died but I'm perfectly fine. NO! I am NOT okay! I'm traumatized! I'm petrified! I'm going to die and you ask me this question?! How stupid can you get!?

"So what are we going to do about it?" His question has been building inside me. The answer is simple. Nothing. There's nothing we can do. The only thing that we can do is wait. There's no justice in killing another for the other's death. Brooke wouldn't have wanted me to kill her brother. I don't have it in myself to kill a bug much less a person.

"Nothing, There isn't much we can do and still live," I shrugged and didn't meet his gaze. I know he's probably thinking that I've gone bonkers but he nodded his head.

"Okay," He said and he shrugged. I sighed and decided to walk around some more. The worst part of it is, I have to go home and pretend absolutely nothing happened.

Chapter 6: Dawn Chapter 5

Five

That day when I got home, I went straight for my room. I did all my homework and played the piano all day. I couldn't eat anything but I pretended to for my parents' sake.

Several weeks had passed and everything seemed to be going normally. The confirmation of Brooke's death was announced to the whole school and that made me feel even worse. Even though my physical wounds have healed, my heart remained broken.

Zaq and I had lost our only sister. At lunch nobody would speak. I saw regret in Zaq's eyes and saw that he loved his sister just as much as I did.

"You knew . . . didn't you?" Amber said to me. Her voice took me by surprise so it took me a little while to answer.

"Yes. I did," I answered. My voice sounded hollow. The hurt I was feeling reflected through my eyes and when I met Amber's gaze, the accusation left and her pity towards us replaced it.

"I'm sorry guys," She meant it, but she should know that it holds no meaning to us. I smiled at her and stared at the table. Apologies are just words you say when you can't think of anything else to say.

After lunch, the rest of the day went by a little faster and I would always stay after school with Michael. We would walk around the school and just clear our minds out.

Today was different. Today Zaq called me over. I was reluctant to at first but then I found myself walking over to him.

"Yeah?" I said. I was being kind to him. I looked into his eyes and saw that he was keeping the tears at bay.

"Walk with me?" He asked. I nodded and we put our bags down in the commons.

19

We walked outside and I kept an arms distance away.

"I'm sorry okay?" He blurted out.

"For what? Killing Brooke? Or trying to kill me?" I said. There was true anger in my voice, but it was being concealed over my sadness.

"Both okay! I had to kill her, I had no choice! She knew too much! She saw that I drugged you, she saw me tie you up and throw you into that closet! She had to die!" He said fiercely.

"You took my only sister away from me. That's unforgivable! Besides the fact that you tried to kill me too! I have done nothing to you, have I? Tell me Zaq what did I ever do to you, to make you want to kill me?" I stopped walking and stepped in front of him. He stopped and our gazes locked.

"Nothing, you have done nothing. It's my job. My boss wants you gone and I have to obey him. That means you have to die," He said. I can see in his gaze that he doesn't want to. He has to kill me. He has no choice. What kind of job is that?

"Okay," I said quietly. Then I ran back into the building, grabbed my bag and ran home.

I never want to see Zaq Saunders and ever again.

* * *

It's April, 5 2012. I'm still alive. I've kept extreme distance away from Zaq. Chase is now my best friend. I hate myself for letting him know me. I hate him for making me like him. I hate him for being kind and funny.

That will just make my death harder for him.

Since Zaq is taking a long time to kill me. I have come up with suicide plans. I've been thinking about stabbing myself, but I don't have the balls to do it. Same thing with hanging myself. No matter any form of suicide I can think of, I know I don't have the balls to actually die.

I was hanging out with Chase at my place and I told him of my plans. I told him that I want to commit suicide.

"Don't. Please. You have no idea the whole you'll create in our lives," Chase said. He was scared, that much I knew. I knew that he cared about and doesn't want me to kill myself. But he doesn't know the story.

"Chase â ¦ I know, I promise I would never, ever, do that to you. I wouldn't hurt you that way," I said as I gave him a hug, "You know what Jess said to me before she

20

died? She said, 'That just because a person died â ¦ doesn't mean they're dead. The person continues to live in our hearts. That's the only way a person can be immortal. Our memories will be shared and passed on. We'll be immortal.' Since then I've never forgotten about her and its true. She's still alive in my heart," I let Chase go and I smiled. Jess was my best friend. We went on vacation to Colombia a couple years back and she got killed at a store people were trying to rob.

"I get that but it's never the same, please don't," He begged. I shook my head and a tear rolled down my cheek. I'm so touched right now, it hurts my heart.

"Hey, I promise, I'm not going to, it's okay," I reassured him. It was a blank promise. I hated myself for promising something I can't at all keep.

"Okay, thank you because I was so scared, I couldn't deal with it if you did that," Chase said with a sigh of relief. My heart ached. I can't take this. It was so sweet; he cared about me so much. We hardly know each other. We only met in August. He saved my life but he's best friends with the enemy.

"I wouldn't do that to you," I said.

"Yeah I know, you just scared me, ya know how I am," He gave me a shy smile.

"Yeah, I guess," I smiled and sighed. This is the first time in 3 years that I've been genuinely happy. I guess this is what it feels like to have a true friend you could tell anything to and they would always be there to help

you.

"So you're doing better?" Chase asked.

"I haven't been this happy in 3 years. All thanks goes to you," I said. It wasn't completely true, but right now, I have no control over what I say. All I can think about is what I'm saying to him. Well, nothing can really hurt him after I'm dead.

Chase checked his phone and cursed under his breath, "Good to hear, I'm sorry but I have to go to scouts, if I can get away I'll text you, promise," Chase said as he put away his phone.

"Okay, oh and have fun," I nudged him playfully and he grinned.

"Kind of hard, its scouts," He winked and I couldn't help but giggle.

"Try, for me?" I smiled at him and he nodded.

"Will do, later," He waved and walked away. After that conversation I told myself that I would never bring it up again. I never mentioned it to anyone. I would hardly even think about it but every now and then it would cross my mind.

I had to admit, I'm scared to die. I love my life. I love my family, I love my friends. I'm scared to what I might find on the other side. There's so much I want to do. I want to go to a One Direction concert. I want to marry Niall Horan or Liam Payne or Harry Styles

21

or Louis Tomlinson. I want to have my first kiss. I want a huge Sweet 16 or Quinceniera. I want my own family.

Most importantly, I'm scared that when I die, no one will miss me.

Along with thinking about suicide, I've been training. Well it's not technically training. I've been running. So that if I need to run away, I can run faster. I've been climbing trees and learning to use weapons. Not guns and the works, but knives and swords. I've been training myself how to throw them and defend myself.

I've been taking wrestling/kick boxing lessons to expand my self defense. I've lost weight and built up some muscle. Now that I'm stronger and faster, I'm ready to face whatever challenge Zaq has for me. I doubt he'll be drugging me and tying me up again. He knows I'll just escape again.

Zaq's smart . . . he'll come up with something that will deffinatly kill me. I hope that he'll do it after spring break. My family is going somewhere I haven't heard of, but Zaq knows this place all too well.

I'm going to Qatar.

Chapter 7: Dawn Chapter 6

Six

Last night I relived Brooke's death.

I woke up this morning with tears streaming down my face and my body trembling in fear. Knowing today is April, I relaxed some. Today is the day where I go to Qatar.

Everything is packed and I leave at exactly ten in the morning for Newark Airport.

I slept in today since I'm not going to school, but at eight my parents woke me up yelling that we're going to be late. I got out of bed and got dressed. I went to the bathroom, brushed my teeth and did my hair. I went back into my room and put on a jacket.

I got downstairs and made coffee and had a muffin for breakfast. I'm relieved to be thousands of miles away from here. I'll finally be able to get a goodnight sleep. Of course the nightmares will still haunt me, but at least I won't have to worry about Zaq coming to get me at night.

At least that's a weight off my shoulders.

After my family and I checked in and are now in the waiting place for out flight, I texted my friends and I even sent a message to Brooke. Out of complete normalcy and a force of habit. I know I will never get a response from her ever again.

I can't wait to reach Doha. I hear it's beautiful. Zaq told me all about Qatar a while ago. He told the table that he, Amber and someone named AJ are going to Qatar in 2022. I felt really left out. I mean, I always feel left out when I'm with them. They're always making plans with each other and I'm always standing there awkwardly. I would never let it show that it bothered me. I would never do that I mean after all, I am kind of used to it. I'm always left out. It's just a regular part of life. My friends are always hanging out and of course I don't get invited. I cry about it and then I write about it. I put my emotions in stories and hope when it gets published, they'll read it and realize how much they've been hurting me and not even realizing it.

It's as if I'm only their friend in school and outside of school it's like we're complete and utter strangers. I'm left at home writing and not doing anything, while they go to White Castle or somewhere and then talk about it the next day. They have no idea that I'm really sensitive. If they did, they would either include me or just not talk about.

23

There are times when I just want to cry at the table and just tell them everything but I can't because I'll just be overreacting.

Wow, I got way off track there. Well anyways, Qatar is beautiful. Its capitol, Doha, is in the east of the country. Even though the country is mostly desert, there are beautiful cities and stadiums. The stadiums are amazing! Some are built like a dome, but the top is missing. There are oases in the deserts. It's the only country in the Middle East I'm actually looking forward to visiting.

When our flight was called, we got in line and waiting our turn to enter. The closer we got to the plane the more relaxed I felt. The lighter my shoulders felt.

Once the plane began to take off, I felt completely safe. I looked out the window as New Jersey began to shrink and shrink until all you see is the east coast. Then all you see is the ocean.

I yawned and decided to sleep for a little bit.

I had a dream about Chase. I dreamed about the way we were. After I told him about my suicide plans, he wouldn't talk to me. Not in the hallways at school, not on facebook, he wouldn't even text me. He doesn't know how much it's hurting me that he's just ignoring me like this. Whenever we did talk, we would end up yelling at each other and I would end up crying. My biggest fear is to lose him as a friend. I think I already have. Whenever I lose a friend . . . I will do whatever it takes to get them back. Even if it means apologizing for something I didn't do.

He's been acting like a complete asshole! I mean seriously? I try to be nice and I'm trying not to get myself killed by him and Zaq and in return, I get treated like I'm invisible. I would say hi to him and he would pretend he didn't hear anything. So I decided I would never talk to him again.

* * *

I woke up about six or seven hours later and we still have about five more hours until we reach Doha International Airport. I decided to watch some TV. Now, there are TV screens on the back of every seat on the plane. It only costs six dollars to watch TV for the entire flight. It's not a bad price, six dollars for about fifteen hours of flight.

I watched a movie and ate some chips. From the corner of my eye I saw that my brother and mother are sleeping. I smiled and watched the rest of the movie.

Overall, the flight was extremely boring but peaceful. I saw the sunrise and I ate the breakfast the flight attendant offered. I watched some more TV and looked out the

24

window. I feel that windows are the base of philosophy. Well when you stare out the window you tend to think about stuff, I don't know why, you just do. So I think that windows are the base of philosophy.

So I started to think about things. I thought about Zaq and Chase. I miss them. I know, it sounds demented but I mostly miss Chase. I miss how close we were. I miss his hugs. I miss his laugh. Whenever I'm there he doesn't laugh. Only when I leave does he show some actual emotion. He doesn't know how much that hurts. Does he blame me for Brooke's death? He does or did, have a crush on her. I would blame me if I was him.

I pushed that thought away and stared at the rising sun. Watched as the sky turned light pink, orange and purple until it reached a light blue. I looked out the window and looked at the ocean. I can't think about them right now. I just wish that none of this had ever happened. Then maybe, just maybe, I can get some peace of mind.

When we finally reached Doha International Airport the first thing that went through my mind was the fact that it's big. There are little kiosks everywhere and the area is very spacious. There are many statues decorating the inside. The funny thing about the airport is that from the birds eye view, it's in the shape of an airplane. The body is longer and more narrow and the tail looks like the tail of a whale the wings are more linear and wide and the ends. It's a very interesting airport. As we explored the airport, I looked at the kiosk with the books. I was reading facts about the country. Like 'Doha, the capitol city of Qatar, is situated on the bank of the Arabian Gulf' and more stuff like that.

It's pretty interesting if I do say so myself.

So when we left the airport and got our rental car, we went straight to the hotel. We decided to stay in Doha, since it's a beautiful city and besides the fact that we couldn't pronounce any of the other cities and people would look at us funny whenever we tried and gave us directions in a totally different language. My brother and I would make fun of the way they speak and also make fun of our parents a little bit. Since my parents are Colombian, they can't speak English very well. My parents moved to the United States after they got married. So of course they didn't know the language very well. They speak to us in Spanish and we answer them in English. We understand each other and also my brother and I don't like to speak Spanish outside of school. It's just extremely awkward. We don't know why, we just think it is.

We stayed at the Ritz Carlton in Doha. In the West Bay Lagoon part of Doha I guess. It's a luxury resort situated adjacent to Doha Golf Club and about twenty minutes away from Doha International Airport. Around the hotel there are businesses and shopping

25

districts along with the tennis stadium and the Inland Sea is about 45 minutes away. Not a bad place to build a hotel. The area around the Ritz Carlton is very nice I if do say so myself.

The inside looked like the inside of the Marriot Hotel in Atlantic City. The floors were polished marble the chandeliers were huge and lit up the whole room. Behind the reception desk there was a map of the whole entire building. There's a shopping arcade, tour assistance, car rentals, the Ritz Kids program, babysitting, a beauty salon, a barber shop, technology butler, (I have no idea what that is) an indoor pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, Roman baths, squash court, (That's another thing that I don't know) two indoor tennis courts, children's pool, an outdoor pool with a swim-up bar, whirlpool and a plunge pool. I don't know what half the stuff is, but it sounds amazing.

I took out my laptop and hooked up to the wi-fi. I decided to go online and chat with my friends. The time difference is totally different. It's night time here, so it must be day time there. I don't exactly know what the exact hours are but it's more than six like in Europe.

Chase was online, but as usual I ignored him. Something strange happened though, he messaged me.

"Hey, you got a minute?" He wrote. This can't be good. He has never ever written to me first.

"Sure. What's up?" I wrote back. I didn't dare say more. I wanted to appear indifferent, but kind too.

"Okay, so I wanted to say I'm sorry for acting like a jerk to you," He wrote. I stared at the massage and read it over and over again. He's apologizing . . . over chat . . . and he claims he was a jerk . . . well he's such an idiot! If he's really sorry, he wouldn't have used the word 'jerk' to describe him and he wouldn't be doing it over chat but somewhere deep down in my heart, I knew I had to forgive him. He is, after all, my friend that I care about so much. So much that I've betrayed other friendships to try to save ours.

"Okay, but it was my fault. I kinda deserved that," I wrote back. At this point I'm just saying stuff that I don't necessarily mean. It wasn't my fault and I don't deserve it. I'm just too nice to realize that.

"No it wasn't your fault. Just I was confused and upset and for some reason I took it out on you,"

"That's reasonable," There wasn't really much to say to that. I mean I know that it hurt him and it hurt me too. What he doesn't realize is how much. With Brooke's death and his behavior towards me, I was just about to

call Zaq and tell him to kill me now. That

26

my life isn't worth living. My heart is smashed and it'll break again before it gets fixed. I have explained the situation to Chase, but he didn't seem to be listening.

"I just feel bad about it, and I wasn't just you, I was an ass to a lot of people and I still feel really bad about it," I couldn't help but smirk. Good, at least you have some feeling, I thought.

"That's okay, I forgive you. Just don't get so worked up over this," I can't believe I'm going easy on him.

"But I feel like I need to apologize at least to everyone I hurt, at least make it right ya know?" I do know, I thought, that's how I felt with you, but in return you treated me like shit, I couldn't find it in myself to say that so instead I said something else.

"Yeah, I do know but do me a favor?"

"What's that?" He wrote.

"Never do that again,"

"I won't, could you do me a favor too? If it's not too much?"

"Sure," What could he possible want from me?

"Would it be stupid to just say I'm sorry to her, because I started thinking and I realized I was a huge ass and I just wanna make it right ya know? I just need some advice," He can't possibly thinking about Brooke can he? He wasn't an ass to her. At least I hope not. She would've told me otherwise.

"To who? Brooke? She's dead Chase. Nothing you do will change that, but I guess saying I'm sorry won't hurt anyone. Just keep it simple. She never liked the overreacted apologies,"

"Okay thanks I really kind of suck at this stuff. I appreciate it a lot," Of course you do, you. I know that you suck at this stuff, if you didn't we wouldn't be having this conversation, dumbass.

"You're welcome,"

"Thanks, and sorry again," He wrote. I rolled my eyes and couldn't help but smile.

"I forgive you and I have to say I'm sorry too. I was all pushy about things and I just wanted to save our friendship,"

"It's cool," He wrote. Well I guess that marks the end of the conversation. I guess now that he's apologized we can actually move on.

"I have to go. Our flight's about to leave," I lied.

"Where to?" He asked.

"Qatar," I wrote back and I signed off. I just made the stupidest mistake of my entire life. Why couldn't I just lie and say Aruba? Or maybe even China? UGH! I'm so

27

stupid!

I went to sleep on the surprisingly comfortable bed and had a nightmare about my death.

Chapter 8: Dawn Chapter 7

Seven

At about seven in the morning, Mom woke me up and hurried me to get ready because breakfast ends in about an hour. So I got dressed in a pair of jeans, a cream colored tank top with ruffles on it and a pair of sandals. I let my hair fall in loose waves down my back and got my purse ready. I grabbed my IPod, my cell phone and the chargers. You never know when your devices are about to die.

Breakfast took place in the dining hall, and it looked just like a ball room. Round tables with about ten chairs per table. White table cloth, one wine glass, and regular glass

28

cup per plate. The chandelier in the middle of the room and on the far side up against the wall was the buffet.

I swear to God, this buffet had every single food in the whole world. There were like seven types of eggs and different types of sausages and every kind of bacon you can name. There was every type of juice you could name and every single fruit chopped up in little cubes. There was even a chocolate fountain if you wanted to coat your fruit in, apparently non-stick, chocolate.

There were pastries of many kinds and a bunch of muffins and cereals. I'm very picky about food. So I just stayed away from eggs and oat meals and just took some bacon and sausages, along with grape juice and blue berry muffins. I also made about five chocolate covered strawberries.

I got back to the table and started to eat. As I ate I took notice of the people around us. There were two families of four at this table. My family and a family from England. The English are everywhere, I thought as I rolled my eyes. The family had a set of twin boys which were pretty cute. They looked about fifteen-seventeen years old. They had hazel eyes with Harry Style's hair. I rolled my eyes. You know, they would have Harry Style's hair. Almost all the English guys have his hair.

"Mum, would you like me to fetch you some tea?" One of the boys said. The mother smiled and nodded her head. I looked at my brother and realized he was having trouble holding in a laugh. So I grabbed him by the arm and we left the room. Once we were out of hearing range, we burst out laughing. We aren't making fun of them. Just their accents and it just proves that they think they're better then us. I mean anyone can say that with an accent and be totally posh about it. My brother and I do it all the time at home but seeing it in person, it's fucking hilarious.

So once our laughing fit is over, we collected ourselves and went back into the room smiling.

"Hija por que te ries? My mother said. She said, "Daughter why are you laughing"

"Danny just showed me something really funny on his IPod and I thought that I would be extremely rude to burst out laughing here," I gestured to the area around us and the boy who went to fetch the tea came back. That's when I noticed that they are wearing the exact same outfit. A white shirt with navy blue jeans and a pair of grey Vans. Well I guess in England they have strict rules about twins. Well I'm not going to England any time soon.

My mother looked at me funny and continued to eat her fruit. I took a bite of my chocolate covered strawberry and noticed that the boys are looking at me funny. I cleared

29

my throat and took a sip of my grape juice. I sat up straight in my chair and began to eat in a very posh manner. Just to prove that Americans can be very aristocratic and a bit snobbish. It's a lot of fun. I would talk with a British accent, but that would be insulting to our fellow Brits.

As if on queue, all the grown ups got up and left to get more food or go to the bathroom.

So it was just us kids left at the table. It was very awkward at first. Then one of the boys spoke up,

"So you're from America?" He asked.

I nodded, "Yeah and your from England?" I took a wild guess.

"Indeed. You're bilingual too?" The other guy asked.

"Yeah," I smiled and took another bite of strawberry.

"I'm Henry and this is my brother Jonathan, we're from London," Henry said. Now that they have both spoken, I can tell them apart easier. Henry has hazel eyes with a bit more green than Jonathan. Also Jonathan is wearing a necklace and Henry isn't. Jonathan's voice is a little higher then Henry's and you can easily tell that Henry is the more popular one of the two. I automatically like Jonathan more.

"I'm Dawn and this is my brother Daniel," I said gesturing to the both us just incase they don't know who is who.

"Dawn? As in the time of day?" Henry asked.

I nodded, "Yes," Usually it bothers me when people criticize my name or whatnot but with his accent . . . I really can't get mad at anything they have to say.

"Well, that's a lovely name," Jonathan said. Henry nodded and took a huge bite of omelet. I shuddered on the inside.

"Thanks," I smiled and ate the remaining strawberries.

"So what brings you here to Qatar?" Danny asked.

They shrugged, "We come here every year. Mum loves this place. Father has business here. Henry and I just do whatever in the hotel, like we go for swims every now and then, meet new people and just have fun while Mum goes off shopping and Father does his business and yourself?" Jonathan explained. Well that must be pretty boring. Just chilling in the hotel while your mom goes off shopping and your dad does whatever.

"I don't know, we just decided to get as far away from New Jersey as possible," I shrugged and finished the last bit of bacon on my plate.

"Yeah, New Jersey sucks ass," Danny said taking a huge bite of sausage. I shrugged one shoulder and took my last sip of grape juice. Then the adults came back and

30

everything became silent between the kids.

When my family finished breakfast we left the table but not without a smile and a wave from Henry and Jonathan. I can totally see them being related to Harry Styles. I mean, they have his smile and his hair. I swear, now that I've made this connection I can't not think about them.

We went back to our rooms and we discussed plans on what to do. I'm all out for staying here and hanging out with the British kids but knowing mom, that's out of the question. So I guess we're going to look around and be like regular tourists.

* * *

We got back at exactly four in the afternoon. We pretty much traveled the whole capitol of Doha. We drove around having no real destination. All I can say is that this is one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been to. The buildings are so moderns and so clean. The parks are beautiful and this looks like paradise.

When we entered the hotel, I saw Jonathan and Henry opening the gate to enter the pool. I really want to go for a swim now.

I got inside changed into my bathing suit and brought a towel with me down to the pool. They took a seat on one of the lounge chairs and I decided to take the one next to them. They saw me and smiled.

"Hello there," Henry said.

"Hey," I greeted them as I sat down.

"How was your day?" Jonathan asked.

"Great, yours?"

"Ours was okay, we were in the arcade for a little while then we took a nap after lunch and now we're here," Henry shrugged and Jonathan gave mall laugh.

"Well that doesn't seem too boring," We all laughed then they got serious.

"You know, you're in danger," Henry said. I looked into his eyes and notice that there's recognition in them.

"How do you know?" I whispered. I am in danger and this was an escape. I'm in danger of getting killed off by my best friend.

"We're close with Chase," Jonathan answered. I heard some pity in his voice and my gaze softened.

"Okay, well yeah, I'm in danger. That's why I came with my family here. I thought I would be safer here," I shrugged and sighed. I guess there isn't such thing as safe place

31

for a wanted teenager.

"You'll be safe for a little bit, we'll cover for you," Henry said offering me a slight smile. I looked at him suddenly and began to search his gaze. I saw nothing but honesty.

"Thank you," I said. They nodded and the air began to shift. It was lighter and thinner.

"Hey, it's what we do. It's sort of like our job to protect people in danger. We provide them a cover and then they're safe for a little bit," Henry explained. I nodded in understanding and then Henry got up and dove into the pool. Now it's just me and Jonathan. We smile at each other awkwardly for a little.

"How old are you guys?" I asked.

"Sixteen,"

"Nice, how long are you staying here?" I asked. I'm only curious because they're going to protect me . . . I don't think they can when they're in London and when I'm back in New Jersey.

"Until you leave," He gave a shrug and nudged me with his elbow.

"Okay, I guess that works," I laughed a little and met his gaze.

"Yeah, so tell me Dawn, why do they want you dead?" He shifted so now he's facing me directly. His hands folded and his elbows on his knees.

"I don't know. Zaq said that it's his job. His boss wants me dead and he has to kill me," It all sounded so simple. His boss finds someone to kill. Zaq gets assigned to kill this person and then he kills them.

"Oh, well then in that case, we're going to have to kill his boss," Jonathan said seriously. I laughed. I couldn't help it. The idea is so absurd that I couldn't picture it.

"You can't be serious?" I said. I got serious too and I actually tried to think this through. If we do kill his boss, that means he won't be assigned anyone else to kill, but that would make me or us in this case a murderer and I would never be able to live with that.

"Yes, I'm quite serious," He said. I leaned in closer to him and sighed.

"How will we find them? How would we be able to pull it off Jonathan? We have to think this through," I got serious and I started to think about the end. About how this will all happen and when.

"That's the adventure," He said with a smile. He tapped my nose and winked. I laughed and rolled my eyes. Yes, he's right, this will be the adventure.

Chapter 9: Dawn Chapter 8

Eight

33

Today is a new day, I thought as I got dressed. Today, my family and Henry's family are going on a tour of the desert. There's an oasis that we're going to stop at and spend the night. I saw pictures of the oasis and it's like someone just put a random piece of the jungle and stuck it in the middle of the desert. It's pretty amazing.

Henry and I discussed plans about how to find Zaq's boss. We also talked about inviting Zaq here so we could talk about his boss but we both know that that won't end so well. We discussed strategies and stuff, things I would never have thought I would ever discuss openly with some British guy in Qatar. Especially Qatar, like of all the places in the world!

On our way to the desert, Jonathan told me his cover up. In very simple words, he's just going to tell the people that I've been in a horrible accident and that I'm in a coma. He wouldn't tell me to whom he's going to tell this to but I guess I'm okay with it. I just made a promise to not go online and chat because that will prove that he's lying. It's a huge promise to make that I can easily break, but my life is on the line, I think I can spend some time offline if it means to save my life.

"So that's our plan," Henry whispered in finality. I nodded and looked out the window of the bus. So I guess it's go into hiding or die. I guess I can live with that. I wouldn't mind having Jonathan and Henry as my only contacts. They're nice enough and not to mention really cute.

"Are you alright?" Jonathan said as he nudged me with his elbow. I sighed and looked at him.

"I'm scared," I admitted. I'm so glad that my brother is sleeping and my parents aren't noticing this. I would have a lot to explain.

Jonathan smiled slightly and put his hand over mine, "That's alright. Us too," He gave my hand a squeeze and took his hand away. I smiled back at him and continued to look out the window. Would it be weird to say that my stomach fluttered by his touch? I'm pretty sure my face turned bright red.

"So I can tell from the content of your IPod that you are in love with One Direction, Josh Hutcherson and the Hunger Games," Henry said laughing. I took back my IPod and put it in my pocket.

"Yes I am," I laughed, "I have a weakness for guys with nice hair and cute British accents," I looked down at my hands and back at the window. Through the reflection I saw them smiling at me. I saw Jonathan blush a little.

"Josh Hutcherson isn't British," Henry said matter-of-factly. I couldn't help but laugh.

34

"That's true, but he's very attractive with nice eyes and nice hair," I sighed and thought about him.

"I guess from you're point of view," Jonathan nudged me again and I laughed.

"Yes from my point of view. Does it really surprise you guys?"

"Not one bit," they said simultaneously. I laughed a little harder and that got them to laugh. By the time we got to our stop, we were all rolling on the floor laughing our asses off.

"You ready? There's no turning back," Henry said offering me his hand. I smiled and took it.

"As ready as can be,"

"Shall we?" Jonathan offered me his arm. I looped my arm through his and we walked into the building to register our confirmed tour.

The desert is the most boring place in the universe. . . Next to a baseball game. There is literally nothing to see but the sun, the sky and the occasional Jack Rabbit, lizard and camels.

We are in the desert in Khor al Adaid and so far I want to go back to the hotel. There is nothing to see but that extremely large sand dune that won't let us sea behind it. All I can think about it water. It's so dry here and I'm pretty thirsty. I haven't drunk anything all day. Of course the day I'm not hydrated is the day where we go to the desert. Its jus the way it is for me.

As the wind blows I can smell salt. Like the ocean salt. Is this a hallucination? Well might as well experience one before I die.

After what seemed like an eternity we finally made it over the sane dune and I saw the sea. I don't know what sea it is but all I know is that I saw the sea.

The wind blew and I was certain about the ocean. I looked over at Danny and the twins and we all grinned. At least I wasn't the only one who saw it. As if on queue well all dropped or our stuff took off our shoes and I took off my shirt, leaving a tank top underneath and ran to the sea. I didn't worry about getting my clothes wet, in this heat; it'll dry in a matter of minutes.

The water was real. It was cold and it was heaven. A lovely escape from the burning sun. I was having a blast splashing around and bonding with my new friends. My parents took pictures of us in the water having fun and then on the beach doing funny poses and handstands and stuff. It's the most fun I've had all spring break.

"Okay, if we are going to make it to the Oasis before sun down we have to go

35

now!" Our tour guide said. So we collected ourselves and we left the beach. Our clothes dried in fifteen minutes in the sun and twenty minutes after leaving, I wish we stayed there.

The good part is that I didn't have to walk all the way. We reached this building and it was some thing like a stable but for camels. It was really awkward riding a camel. Two people per camel since the camel has a long back, long enough for two people.

I was behind Jonathan who would keep glancing back at me. I would pretend not to notice and just look around me instead even though there was absolutely nothing to see.

I thought about the plan. The plan was to contact Zaq and invite him here with his boss so that they can finish the job but before they can, we kill them. I don't know how that's going to work, but according to them, we can do it. It sounds really simple, kill them before they kill us, but once we get to the oasis, I know that all hell will break lose.

"You alright back there?" Jonathan asked turning his head to look at me.

"What? Yeah, I'm fine," I lied. I smiled and looked down at my hands. I began to count time.

I've been walking this earth for fourteen years, 222 days and eighteen hours. I don't know how much I time I have left but my gut tells me I don't have very long. Might as well just make the most of what I have.

"Are you sure?" He asked.

"Yes, I'm sure. I'm just going over the plan in my head," I shrugged and he opened his hand behind his back. I was confused but then I realized that he wants me to hold his hand. I shrugged and took it. His hand closed around mine and suddenly I felt a little bit safer.

As I now know, no place is safe.

Chapter 10: Dawn Chapter 9

Nine

When we got to the Oasis, the sun was setting. Perfect timing I guess. Jonathan helped me off the camel and the tour guide gave them a command that got them all to sit.

I looked at the oasis and my heart started to race. There's no turning back now. I took a deep breath and I just remembered that I'm still holding on to Jonathan's hand. When I began to loosen it, Jonathan held it tighter.

So I guess we're all in this together.

The tour guide said it was okay to wonder off, said it was safe. My brother stayed with mom and dad at the camp site or whatever you want to call it and Jonathan, Henry and I set off in to the very small piece of jungle. Henry took out three flashlights from his bag I didn't even know he was wearing and when we turned them on, everything was even creepier. The shadows of the plants danced around and the spider webs glistened in the light when the wind shifted them.

Now I'm glad Jonathan hasn't let go of my hand. I would've run away screaming. I'm more scared of spiders then serial killers. True story.

"Come on, nothing to be afraid of, it's only a spider," Henry walked right through the spider web and I couldn't help but shudder. They both laughed quietly and we continued to venture through the oasis until we came across a spooky looking pond. The eerie fog spreading out and clearing a path where ever we step. Now I'm expecting something to just pop out of no where and kill us all. Nothing good ever happens when there's an eerie fog.

I tensed and began to tremble, "Let's just keep going. I really hate eerie fogs in the middle of the oasis,"

"Yeah, okay," Henry said surveying the area. We kept moving and we stopped in a clearing far, far away from the pond. There is an open spot in between the trees where you can see the moon. The moon was half full with stars dancing all around it. I smiled and decided to sit for a bit.

"Here, drink this," Henry threw me a can and I caught it. Of course it would be a Death. Death is a really sugary energy drink. It speeds up your heart rate and literally gets you to jump off the walls.

37

I accepted the drink and took a sip. It's fizzy, a little sour and really sweet with the flavor of apple cider. I shuddered and couldn't help but giggle. I closed the cap and put it off to the side. I want to save that for when I actually need it. I don't energy now.

I looked around and I noticed that the trees here look just like the tree's back home. The trees that I practiced climbing on and throwing knives from. I smiled and lay down. I stared at the stars until Henry and Jonathan put their faces in front of mine.

"Okay, now we wait. We don't know how long it will take before they get here but let's just move somewhere safe. Like that tree over there. It's got thick branches and a lot of leaves to cover us up," Henry said. I nodded and they helped me up. I climbed the tree pretty easily and propped myself on the branches and formed a fork like structure. I figured it was safe enough. It's almost to the top and we're extremely concealed by the leaves.

Besides, I don't think the twins can climb any longer. So I got them situated on the branch against the trunk and Henry handed us some rope. We tied ourselves to the tree so that we won't fall off.

Henry handed us some sandwiches from his bag and they were quite cold. He told us that it had a built in cooler. We ate the food silently and I had small sips of Death. Quite ironic that I'm awaiting my death and I'm drinking Death. I laughed quietly.

"Here, you're going to need this," Henry handed me a gun. I held it in the palm of my hands like it would combust if I held on to it. There's a gun in my hands . . . what does he expect me to do with it? I can't kill anything with it.

"It's alright; it's just a gun,"

I swallowed and put the gun on a wide flat surface of the branch next to me. I couldn't hold it for much longer anyways.

I relaxed my shoulders and I looked up at the sky. I can't believe I missed my last sunset.

"Hey, lye down, I don't bite," Jonathan said. He patted his thighs. My face flushed crimson and I slowly moved closer to him. I lay down with my head in the hallow of his neck and my body on top of his. Well I have no more time for romance so might as well make the most of it. I relaxed entirely and I concentrated on the beat of his heart. The slow, strong and steady beat of his heart. His arms settled on mine and I felt my stomach do funny flips that only happens when a guy does something sweet. I guess this is something sweet. I haven't been this close to a guy since Javier.

The thought of Javier makes me want to cry. Javier is an ex boyfriend who I still care about. Even though he's thousands of miles away across an ocean. We've dated for seven months. They were the best seven months of my entire life. Even though four of

38

those months were long distance, it still felt like he was here with me.

I pushed that thought away and looked down at Jonathan's arms on top of mine. I smiled and focused on his heart again. I closed my eyes and drifted off to the soothing beat of his heart.

Chapter 11: Dawn Chapter 10

Ten

"Hey, wake up! They're here," Jonathan whispered. My eyes fluttered open and I realized I was in a totally different position then when I drifted off. It doesn't matter; at least I got some sleep. I drank the rest of Death and placed the gun gingerly in my pocket and pray to God that it doesn't go off.

"Where are they?" I asked. I looked down a little and all I saw were leaves. Henry was on the tree closest to ours and he pointed to the ground. I squinted and I could just make out two figures. One tall and thin the other short and thin too. I could just make out their posture. I recognize these boys anywhere. Zaq and Chase. It wouldn't surprise me that Zaq brought Chase along with him. After all, they are partners in crime and best friends. A while ago Chase gave me this really long speech about something that was going on between us and he told me that he knew Zaq for six years. These two could be brothers, I thought as I rolled my eyes.

I'm wide awake now and extremely hyped up but I have enough sense to stay still and quiet. I saw some movement and then I saw them move out.

We climbed down the tree quietly and quickly.

I swear my heart rate is going about 300 beats per minute! Part in fear and part because of that Death drink I drank. There's no turning back now, I thought as I gripped Jonathan's hand. He gave my hand a squeeze and held it tight. I guess we both know that we will not be seeing each other again. Now I'm so glad I gave mom and dad that huge hug and I told them I loved them last night. I was also nice to my brother. We haven't fought at all yesterday. At least that's something.

"Come on," Henry said leading the way. We moved silently through the path that the others had left and we stopped when we had sited them. That's when Henry took out a knife and a sling shot and shot the knife into the chubby guys' side. We heard a scream and that's when all hell broke loose.

There were more then two people here. There was Zaq and another tall guy I couldn't recognize. He's about the same size as Zaq but this guy is thicker.

Suddenly Jonathan is pushing me up the tree. I climb the tree and help him up. When we get to a safe branch, I let my fear show and I wrap my arms around his waist. I

40

have a feeling that he's the last person I'm ever going to hug in my entire life. He hugged me back and I felt him tremble some.

"It's okay, we're alright," He whispered. I shook my head.

"How can you say that when I'm about to die?" I felt tears stream down my cheeks and I buried my face in his chest.

"I won't let you die," He whispered. There was an edge to his voice that made me believe him. I nodded and I didn't let go. We held each other like this for a few slow minutes until we heard three gun shots. I guess that's our queue.

"Listen, that's our signal. We need to split up. You have your gun and you're a fast runner. Kill the boss and the others and then meet us back at the camp site," He whispered into my ear. I nodded and then the moment came when I had to let go of him.

"What if I fail?" I whispered.

He shook his head, "No, you won't fail. I have complete faith in you," He kissed my forehead and took my face in his hands and smiled at me. I nodded and smiled back. He kissed my cheek and then jumped off of the branch. I heard a thud and then he left running south.

I took a deep breath and took out my gun. I have a lot of energy and Jonathan's right. I am a fast runner and training has paid off so far. I jumped off the branch and landed on two feet but with a huge pain in my left heel. There's no time! MOVE! I told myself. So I ignored the pain and started to sprint into the oasis and I shot a man. I aimed and fired but before I did I made sure it wasn't Zaq, Henry or Jonathan. The guy I shot was short and chubby. There was an awful deafening sound and then a huge thud. I didn't stop to wonder who I just killed.

Wow I never thought I would actually think that. Who I just killed . . . Well I don't have much time to contemplate about it. My life is on the line.

I ran and ran until I wouldn't run any longer. When the pain in my ankle was so great I had to stop and climb a tree. I know that I'm deffinatly not safe here I just needed a short break, before I can start up again.

So I found a good hiding place behind a tree and under some bushes with space for about two people. I sat down and forced my heart to slow down.

I leaned against the tree and took deep breaths. I started to calm down when I heard a crash and someone came tumbling into my hiding spot. My heart raced again and I thought I was about to have a panic attack. I sat absolutely still and made no sound. I was too terrified to breathe.

The person made small movements very slowly and silently. He leaned against the

41

branches of the bush and looked directly at me. He clicked on a flash light that I wasn't aware that he had and shone it in my face. I froze in terror but the person sighed with relief. I recognized that sigh anywhere.

It's Chase.

"You had me scared for a second," He said. I was still too scared to move and whenever he inched towards me I moved away. I noticed the knife in his hand was covered in thick blood. I felt like screaming but I couldn't find my voice. It's as though the moment of panic as taken my voice away.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Chase said. He put the knife down and he crossed his legs which where touching my shoes. I don't have anymore space to move away from him so I couldn't move my legs away from him. I was still too scared to speak or make any sudden movements. I was scared to trust him again. Although he did save my life before when Zaq first tried to kill me, then made me feel like shit for something I didn't do. It's very confusing but I decided that I can trust him a little bit. I relaxed a little bit and let out a breath I forgot I was holding.

No one said anything for a while. I had this feeling growing that I can't be here for long that I have to keep going and catch up with Jonathan and Henry.

I looked up and met Chase's gaze. Even in the darkness his blue eyes blazed. I looked away and sighed. Well I guess there's no use in trying to escape an argument with Chase anytime soon.

"I'm on your side you know," Chase said suddenly. My head shot up and I met his gaze again. I gave him a perplexed look and relaxed my legs a little so that I could give my ankle some rest.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it's not right," He answered. He shrugged and wiped the blade on the grass. He's right, but if I were in his position I wouldn't have betrayed my best friend like this. Then again, my best friend will never be a high class murderer.

"So is this your attempt to save me again?" I whispered. I hadn't meant to say that out loud but I might regret it later on so I'm kind of glad I said it.

"Maybe. Not sure yet," He shrugged and I cracked a smile. As quickly as it came, it went away. I heard gun shots and loud thuds. My body went rigid again and I held my breath. Chase did the same but he wasn't holding his breath. When the shots became softer we relaxed.

"I guess that's my queue to get the fuck out of here" Chase said.

I nodded and looked around at a loss of anything else to do. I sat there my arms

42

around my knees hugging them close to me.

"Hey, be careful," Chase said as he started to get up. I smiled and nodded.

"I will, you be careful too," I smiled a little bit and gave him a quick hug, and then he left running away into the distance. I sure hope he doesn't get killed.

After about five minutes, I get up and start to run the opposite way Chase went. I hadn't realized how many people came when I kept tripping over their lifeless bodies. Every couple of yards I would have to jump over or swerve around bodies. I kept thinking that this is some kind of nightmare. That everything will be okay when my mother yells for me to wake up every morning. "Es tarde! Levantate!" I would hear that and wake up to a beautiful sunny day in my aquamarine room and my cat Sasha sleeping in a ball at my feet.

I kept running until I was sure my feet were going to fall off. I don't know how big this place is, but it seems at though I'm running in a complete circle. I find the same tree with the same blood spatter on it every time I make a left turn. So I went right and tripped on a giant root. A huge pain shot up my leg and I grit my teeth together from making any sound.

I wish I had some water. My throat is really dry and my heart hasn't stopped racing. I rest my head mouth against the trunk of the tree and take deep breaths. I decide to keep on running. I'm running out of time.

I jumped off the tree and started running. I forgot to where I'm running to, I'm just running to avoid the inevitable I guess.

I heard a gunshot and I started to run faster. It's dark and I was running into leaves and vines. I was making so much noise anyone could find me. I heard another gunshot and I dove into the brush. I took out my phone and put it on extremely low brightness. I looked at the time. It's exactly two o'clock in the morning. I put my phone back into my pocket and I felt hands on my shoulders. I started to scream but his hands went straight to my mouth.

"It's me, Jonathan, relax," The minute I heard his voice I relaxed and jumped into his arms. I am so relieved to see him I could kiss him.

"I'm so glad to see you!" I whispered. His hold tightened on me and I knew he felt the same.

"Are you alright? Are you hurt?" He said examining my body. I nodded and pointed to my ankle. He held it in his hands and squeezed it gently. Then pain shot up my left and I gasped.

"Okay, your bone might be bruised. Can you walk?" He asked.

"I think so, I mean I was running all this time and I took like three minute breaks.

43

This is my second one," I said.

"Here, Henry gave this to me just incase I needed it but right now, you need it more than I do," He handed me two pills and a water bottle. I noticed that they are pain medication. I swallowed them and drank a little more water leaving Jonathan some. He also took off my left shoe and bandaged up my ankle gently. When he finished he put my shoe back on gently and he sat next to me. I wrapped my arms around him and rested my head against his.

Hey, I don't care if I hardly know this kid. He's protecting me and I'm about to die. I need some kind of romance before I die don't I? Jonathan doesn't seem to mind either. He seems just as happy to see me as I am him.

"Thank you," I whispered. His arm came across my shoulders moving me closer. You know if I wasn't going to die, he'd be the perfect boyfriend. I wish I had more time.

"Don't mention it. I just wish we had more time," He whispered as if he was reading my thoughts.

"Yeah, me too. You would've made the perfect boyfriend," I whispered. I felt my face flush crimson and I heard him chuckle.

"You know, we can pretend. Even for a little bit,"

"Okay," At this point I don't care. I'm running out of time and I'd rather die happy then die with regrets. I sat up and moved my body so that I faced him. I took his hands and entwined his fingers with mine. I realized that they fit perfectly.

At any rate, I wasn't prepared for what happened next. I saw him lean down and kiss me. I was so shocked I couldn't kiss him back. Everything seemed to be going in slow motion.

It seemed that time has stopped.

Chapter 12: Dawn Chapter 11

Eleven

"We need to split up again," I whispered after he broke the kiss. He nodded and pulled me against him. We held each other and I let a few tears slip.

"I know. Please be careful," He whispered. I heard sadness in his voice.

"Yeah I will, promise. I'll see you at dawn," I smiled and he laughed quietly.

"Yes, see you at dawn, Dawn," He kissed me again and I kissed him back. My last kiss, might as well make it last.

"Thank you, for pretending," He said after he broke the kiss. I nodded and smiled.

"Of course, go on, I'll see you in a bit," We held each other for a little bit longer then we both ran off in the opposite directions. Well now the romance has officially ended. I guess now the action has begun.

The pain medications kicked in fast because I can hardly feel any pain in my ankle. I have less energy then when I started but I still have some left over. I find myself in the clearing. Zaq's there and he had Henry by the throat. It's too late for Henry. I felt a huge pang in my chest and felt like collapsing. Henry is dead. I never got to tell him how thankful I am for what he has done. I know it doesn't seem like much, but he had given me time. Right now, time is priceless.

He didn't deserve to die; neither did Brooke or any of his other victims. I charged at Zaq and I kicked his ass, literally. At reaction he flung Henry's body into the lake and he staggered forward hitting a tree and falling backwards.

I pull out my gun and point it at him. Zaq knows I don't have the balls to do it, so he smiled and came at me. He knocked the gun out of my hand and it landed in the lake. Zaq smiled and I glared. I started to use my kick boxing/wrestling skills and all those classes had paid off. I start to kick and punch him. He deflects most of them, but the ones that actually go through, stagger him. Especially when I kick him in the balls and in the face.

45

I punched him really hard in the nose and it begins to gush blood. He doesn't seem to notice because he keeps attacking. I think of Brooke, how she could never have had this opportunity to fight back and I think of Henry, how his kindness and his protectiveness got him killed by my friend. Friend . . . I slow down a little and think about the laughs and good times at the table. I remember how he would always solute to me in greeting or in thanks for something I did. I remember how he would always do physics homework at lunch and how the table would openly discuss how thin he is and how badly they need to go to White Castle and get him a crave case.

All that disappeared when he punches me in the gut, then all my anger accumulated into one blow. The final blow I though. I kicked him and he went flying. I took that time to run to my gun. When I got it I made sure it was fully loaded and I pointed it at Zaq. When he got up, he had a knife in his hand.

I saw him move his arm and in slow motion I saw the knife flying and I pulled the trigger. I felt a huge pain just under my breasts and I collapsed.

"Dawn! Dawn! Can you hear me?" I heard a voice ask. This wasn't just some voice. It was Jonathan.

My eyes fluttered open and at first my vision blurred but then I saw him clear as day. With tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Yes," I said hoarsely. From behind him, I saw the sun begin to rise. Wow I thought I'd never live another day to see the sunrise.

"Oh my god, thank god! I thought you were dead!" He sobbed. He held me and then I felt pain. Excruciating pain. I felt really weak and lightheaded like any minute now I will black out and never wake up again.

"Not yet," I admitted.

"No! You're not going to die! I won't let you!" He sobbed. He held on to my hand and tears were blurring my vision.

"You know, I wasn't pretending Jonathan," I said with a smile. It seemed as though smiling took up a lot more energy than anything else. He nodded and placed my head gently on his lap. He leaned against a tree and stroked my hair.

"Neither was I," He said. Tears were streaming down my cheeks and he started to sob. I felt my heart rate slow down and I felt extremely weak.

46

"Jonathan?" I asked. I wanted to tell him something. I wanted to tell him that he's been an amazing friend. I wanted to thank him for giving me extra time. For making time stop.

"Yes?" Both of his hands were clutching on to mine as if he was my lifeline and if he let go, I would die.

"Thank you, for everything you've done. For giving me extra time," I whispered. I was running out of energy and everything began to blur. I began to see black spots and I was having a lot of trouble concentrating on one thing.

"Please, don't die. Please don't leave me," He whispered. I smiled weakly and brushed the hair from his face a gesture that left me completely dizzy and even weaker. I felt my hand begin to tremble and soon my whole body was trembling. I don't know if it was out of fear, or because of the cold. He put his hand on top of mine and held it there. The black spots became bigger and I felt like I wasn't in control of my body. Like my soul was being set free and my body is no longer attached to my soul.

"I'm sorry. Thank you," I whispered again. I'm sorry because I couldn't save Henry. I'm sorry because I'm leaving him. Most of all? I'm sorry for knowing you. Now it'll be harder on him than it will be for me. He held me tight. I didn't think it was possible for someone to care so strongly for the other in such short time. I guess now I believe in love at first sight.

Everything seemed to move slowly. Jonathan's sobs began to slow and they began to sound so far away. My breathing became weak and short. My eye lids felt suddenly really heavy and I closed my eyes. My head suddenly felt as though it weighed two thousand pounds and I had absolutely no energy left.

Counting Time

I took one more breath and my world went black.

I have been in this world for fourteen years, 223 days and six hours

Chapter 13: Dawn Chapter 12

Twelve

Suddenly, my eyes opened. The area around me was light and bright. Not at all what I saw before everything went black. I looked down and realized that I was glowing. I looked around and I saw my body propped up against a tree with a single white rose in my hand.

I looked at my body and sighed. I look horrible. I look extremely pale with black and blue marks everywhere. Cuts and scrapes all over my arms, face and legs. My whole shirt covered in blood from the knife and I saw trails of tears on my face.

Jonathan, I thought. Where is he? I hope he escaped alright. I walked around and saw a boy. A boy with long curly hair that would always remind me of Harry Styles. As I looked closer, it wasn't Jonathan, but Henry. He was standing in front of a body. A body that looked just like his. How could that be possible? His body was flung into the pond.

"Henry?" I called out. He turned around and smiled in my direction. His eyes were red and puffy. He'd been crying. I didn't know ghosts can cry. I stood beside him and looked down at the body. If my heart would be still beating, it would be crushed. It was Jonathan's body.

"It's alright. We're all dead. We're all together," Henry said as he put a hand on my shoulder. Yeah, it's alright. We're just ghosts staring down at Jonathan's body. It's completely normal. That comment got me mad for some reason. It's alright? How can he say that? Things are deffinatly not alright, yeah we're together and all but that doesn't mean things are okay!

"What about our families? Our friends? We're dead," I whispered to myself. I'm dead. I couldn't believe it; it doesn't feel like I'm dead. The only thing that proves I'm dead is my body on the other side of the lake and my glowing ghost.

48

"They will mourn us, but they will have to get on with their lives. We'll see them again. In a long time I hope," Henry smiled again and I nodded. I trusted his word. He's right after all, they will mourn us, but life goes on. Just like when I moved on when Brooke died or got murdered. A new idea sprung into my head. Brooke is dead . . . and I'm dead . . . that means I can see her again!

"Yeah, you're right. Where's Jonathan?" I looked around and back at the body. He got it worse than I did. He was stabbed several times in the stomach and there are bruises all over his arms and face. There's a huge gash on his forehead and his skin is three shades paler because of the blood loss.

"He got it worse then you did," Henry said practically reading my thoughts. I nodded and I leaned against him. Well apparently ghosts are solid when they're leaning against other ghosts.

"Yes, he did. I hope he didn't suffer," I whispered.

"Well I didn't die quickly, but I didn't suffer so much though," I heard from behind me. I looked behind me and I saw Jonathan. I grinned and literally jumped into his arms. I'm so glad that we're not just 'spirit'. We held tightly onto each other.

"I'm so sorry!" I whispered into his chest.

"Don't apologize you did nothing wrong," He said.

"Did nothing wrong?! I killed you two! If it weren't for me, you'd still be alive and you would be going back home to England!" I exclaimed. I gazed into his eyes and saw that it didn't bother him. Saw that there was no life waiting for him back home, that he didn't want to go home.

"Hey, Henry and I wanted to be Forever Young, you gave us that now and we will be young forever," He smiled at me and I laughed.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes, and I couldn't leave you. After all, we weren't pretending," He whispered. My face would've flushed there was any blood left in me.

"Okay," I said again and I laughed. From the corner of my eye I saw an extremely bright light. It reminded me of the sun. Its light gentle and warm but at the same time strong and bright.

It's the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I guess this is the white light people are always talking about. I hope this is the gateway to heaven.

"Whoa," We all said. I looked at Henry and offered my hand. He smiled and took it. Jonathan took my hand also and we walked hand in hand into the bright light.

Since the day we met, we are in this together.

Chapter 14: The Afterlife Chapter 13

The afterlife

50

Thirteen

Inside the white light was a whole other world. The skies were blue without a single could in the sky and the sun was high shining with its soft yellow/white light. The breeze was beautiful and it made the leaves and grass sway as if they were dancing to music. This whole land reminded me of a beautiful meadow I saw once on TV. It reminded me of a fantasy land.

I was able to see a waterfall behind the hills on the mountains far away and a forest all around us. There were flowers dotting the green grass with many shades of red, pink, purple and yellow and many butterflies that flew around landing on flower to flower.

I felt perfectly safe here. There was really no other way to describe how I'm feeling. As I looked around the land, I noticed that there were paths leading to other places throughout the forest. I was able to see a neighborhood like the one where I used to live in, about a mile from here.

"Hey, what are you doing here?" A very familiar voice asked. I've heard this same voice for three years. I turned around and there she was. In a beautiful yellow sun dress with white flowers growing from the hem and stopping at the waist. Her hair is the same bleached blond hair and her eyes are the same big brown eyes that I would see all the time at school.

"Brooke!" I called out. I ran to her almost knocking her down and hugged her. I never thought I would see my sister again.

"Yeah, hi, what are you doing here?" She repeated. She looked at me with a puzzled expression and I shrugged.

"Well, I'm dead," I said simply. I looked behind me to see Jonathan and Henry having a quiet conversation. I smiled over my shoulder and my attention returned to

51

Brooke. Her eyes widened and she gasped. It seemed a little silly for her not to have realized this. If I wasn't dead, I wouldn't be able to see the light and therefore enter it.

"Oh my god! What happened?" said Brooke. I shrugged and walked her to the portal where she was able to see the scene in front of her. I saw it too and I dropped my eyes. I couldn't see the scene in front of me. My body was in the same position as it was when I last saw it, but it was crowded by my hysterical mother and father and my brother, his back facing my body.

"Oh wow," She said slowly.

"Yeah, I know," I smiled half heartedly and shrugged.

"So, who are they?" She asked gesturing to the twin boys still having their quiet conversation.

"Those are my friends. Jonathan and Henry," I explained our whole story, starting from how we met and to how we died. She listened intently occasionally glancing at the boys who stopped talking and started to listen to the story they are well familiar with.

"Whoa, that's one hell of a story," She said laughing a little. I giggled and shrugged.

"Yeah, it is isn't it?" I smiled and she smiled back. I looked at Jonathan who smiled at me and put a hand on my shoulder.

"So, did Zaq kill you?" She asked. There was a not of sadness and a hint of anger.

I nodded, "Yeah, he threw a knife," my hand instinctually went to the spot where the knife impaled my body. Brooke looked at where my hand went and she put her hand right over her heart.

"That son of a bitch," She snapped. I had to laugh out loud. Brooke joined the laughter after a little while then Henry and Jonathan joined in. Soon enough we were all laughing and generally having a good time. Then we all got tired and took deep breaths.

"So do you guys like it here?" She asked.

"Yes, it's quit lovely," Henry said smiling at Brooke. Jonathan nodded in agreement looking at me.

"Oh, you're British," She said.

"Yes we are, and you're American," Henry said crossing his arms across his chest and smirked at her.

"Yes, yes I am," She said attempting to mimic his smirk. I giggled and rolled my eyes. She is the same Brooke. She may be dead, but her spirit is the same whether she's dead or alive.

"This place is like a fantasy," I said taking time to look all around me. I noticed deer and rabbits lurking around and squirrels climbing trees. Birds chirping and the warm

52

breeze seemed to sing, making the trees and plants dance around.

"Yeah, it's amazing. Much better than home," Brooke said nodding and looking around.

"Way better than home," I agreed.

"I wish I had some tea," Henry said under his breath. I laughed. The memory of the day I first met him came into my head. I remember when he offered his mother tea and when I took my brother outside so that we could laugh out loud so it won't be rude. It's always amazed me how much the British adore tea. I think it's the most appalling drink I have ever tasted in my short life.

"I wish that I wasn't dead," Brooke said. I turned my head sharply to look at her. She was looking at the ground and her arms around herself.

"I know me too. I never got to drive! Are you kidding me? That was like, the only purpose of my life," I said, that got her to look up at me. She smiled a little and so did I.

She giggled, "Yeah, you don't want to see me driving. I'll probably kill a lot of people and destroy many things," I laughed for real imagining the day she got her license. All hell would break loose. Everywhere there would be broken fire hydrants and fires ravaging the neighborhoods. It's probably safest that she doesn't drive at all. So her being dead could be a blessing upon the people of the world.

"Oh yeah, I never want to see that," I shook my head and smiled. It's good to see her again. I feel complete again.

"Dawn? Want to walk with me? I feel like exploring this world," Jonathan said offering me his hand. I looked at Brooke who grinned and I took his hand with a smile. His fingers interlocked with mine and we walked away back into the meadow.

We stopped there and he sat down dragging me down with him. I leaned against him and smiled.

"Doesn't feel like we're dead, does it?" Jonathan said breaking the silence.

"No, it doesn't," I agreed. I smiled and leaned against him. I guess this is where forever starts. I'll be forever fourteen and I'll be forever with Jonathan. I bet that none of us had expected this to happen. I know for a fact that I didn't. I thought I was going to end up with some guy I met at college or something.

"Well at least we are at peace," Jonathan said smiling. I beamed at him. He was right. I am at peace. I don't have to worry about Zaq sneaking up on me at night and killing me. I don't need to worry about Chase hurting me anymore. I don't have to worry about any drama. I'm finally at peace. In a place where magic happens. Where souls come to experience a whole new life.

53

"Yes, we are," I said as I looked at him. My eyes locked with his and his eyes closed slowly as he leaned down to kiss me. When our lips met a whole new feeling came over me. My heart felt like it exploded and my hand went to his cheek pulling him closer and closer until we are closest we can be. My new life starts now. I no longer need to be counting time

Forever starts now.

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