

Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt



Chapter 1

It was a tragedy no one could have predicted. The incident was beyond explanation. Salem Massachusetts is well known for its infamous witchcraft trials during the late 1600's. It was an epidemic of mass hysteria, religious tensions, and social injustice. The aftermath of the incident led to history repeating itself once again, except unlike the Salem Witch Trials, the tragedy was caused by something beyond natural limits, something supernatural.

It was Sunday morning on a gray foggy day. It was roughly the end of the fall semester, a week before finals and two weeks before everyone went home for break. Police were at the scene of a horrific event. They received a 911 call of an attack last night at one of the sorority houses located off campus near Salem University. The officers responded to the call assuming it was a typical college party incident where students got into a heated argument and started fighting, or students with alcohol poisoning. That was until they arrived at the scene. Outwardly the house looked intact except for a window located left of the front door that sustained a huge spider web-shaped crack indented from the inside and the front door on the inside stained with blood caused by the swipe of someone's hand. On the lawn five students were found with superficial cuts and scrapes, barely conscious, mostly due to the remaining alcohol in their systems. Two ambulances that accompanied the police quickly rushed to the lawn and escorted the students to the medical vehicles to treat their injuries.

The police swiftly approach the entrance of the sorority house. Upon entering inside, they all felt their hearts drop to the pit of their stomachs.

"Oh my holy god..." One of the officers said as he cupped his mouth with his hand. One of the officers ran out almost immediately, and threw up on the lawn. It was something out of a horror movie. The inside of the house was destroyed and bodies of numerous victims were found. The walls and floors of the house were scarred with claw marks, from that of a large predatory animal. Pools of blood and splatters of it on the wall looked like a twisted version of Jackson Pollock's artworks. The deceased victims inside the house all had the same injuries: tissue damage, lacerations, bite wounds, broken bones, all indicating that the attack was not done by a human, but an animal. The lead officer of the group pulls out his walkie-talkie:

"This is Officer Henson on the line, Send in a forensic team for a sweep, and be prepared for what you're about to see..."

The forensic team arrived at the scene a few minutes later. They reacted the same way the officers did when they first entered the scene of the crime. Unlike the officers at the scene, they

had grown a pair for the job they signed up for and with their iron stomachs began their analysis. After a brief analysis by the forensics team, they estimated the party had over 30 attendees, 25 of them were found dead. Moments later 10 more students showed up at the scene of the slaughter. They were attendees at the party who left early before the killings, the lucky ones who avoided the vicious attack. Outside the police began to question the survivors. Officer Henson turned his attention to one of the survivors, Anna Wilkins, a third year student of Salem State University who was being treated by paramedics. Officer Henson observed Anna's horrified demeanor, tightly wrapping the blanket around herself, shivering, strands of her blood stained brunette hair covering her face. Henson pulled out his notepad and pen.

"Hello Miss, my name is Officer Henson, do you mind if I ask you some questions?" He asked.

Anna looked up at the officer with her dark brown eyes which looked almost black and lifeless. She quietly nodded as she looked up, her hair uncovering her face. The officer asked Anna questions in relation to before and after the incident.

It was last night close to 10pm. Anna was with her best friend Chelsea Hodgkins and her other friends at the sorority house preparing for a goodbye party before finals and winter break. Anna and Chelsea had been close friends since high school. Anna wasn't part of the Sorority house like Chelsea, but often resided there more than her dormitory on campus. That night Anna helped Chelsea set up the snack and drink table, one of the final preparations before the party started at 10:30. Chelsea was excited for the party.

"O-M-G I am so excited, we are going to party hard tonight!!" Chelsea said.

"Same here girl, I can't wait!" Anna agreed.

"By the way, I invited an additional guest"

"Is it a guy?"

"Oh no, just an old friend who we went to high school with. It's gonna be her first college party"

"Oh really, who is it?"

"Lily Williams"

Upon hearing the name, Anna was surprised, then a heavy feeling began to grow in her stomach. Lilith "Lily" Williams was a third year student at Salem like herself and Chelsea who also attended the same high school. Anna remembered Lilith from high school, Lilith's depressing face and tired body language suddenly popped into Anna's head, having remembered Lilith's notable trait. Anna recalls Lilith's long black hair, her porcelain skin, the black circles

under her dark brown eyes, and below-average body frame. What made Anna more concerned, was recalling Chelsea's relationship with Lilith, and turned to Chelsea confused and in disbelief.

"Isn't she the girl you pretended to be friends with in high school?" Anna asked.

Chelsea stopped what she was doing and sighed to herself, confirming the fact was true.

"Yeah she was. To be honest, it wasn't my idea to invite her. I bumped into her parents the other day at the grocery store when I was buying party supplies. They asked if I invited Lilith to the party. I lied to them, telling them that she was invited" Chelsea explained,

"So you're covering your lie by inviting her to the party?" Anna asked.

"Yeah basically, personally I don't think she'll stay long. Knowing her introverted personality she'll be gone after 10 minutes" Chelsea said in a snide tone.

Certain memories of Anna's high school years, specifically the memories of how badly Lilith was ostracized and abused by her classmates in high school due to her appearance and personality resurfaced. Upon remembering, Anna felt a sense of guilt brew within her chest, for she herself was one of Lilith's tormentors. She and Chelsea's friends from high school were Lilith's worst bullies. Most of the time they would spill juice or soda on her, making it look like an accident. A few times they left insulting sticky note messages on her locker door and sent messages through text messages on a burner phone. The worst thing Anna and Chelsea did with their friends was the time they dumped a bin full of garbage from the school cafeteria on Lilith after school. The worst part about the cruel prank was that the day they committed the prank, spaghetti and meatballs were served during that lunch period. Lilith was covered in pasta sauce which doesn't come out of clothes easily and bits of spaghetti ended up stuck in her hair. Anna looked at Chelsea, looking visibly concerned.

"Chelsea, don't you think we should apologize to Lily? What we did to her in high school? I know it's probably too late but I think we owe her an apology" Anna suggested.

"An Apology? For what? She was a loser back then, probably still is a loser" Chelsea replied with no remorse.

Anna was disgusted by Chelsea's response, her heart skipped a beat. Anna believed everyone could change, a person could see the error of their ways. She was proven wrong

"Well if you won't apologize, then I will" Anna declared as she stormed off.

Chelsea scoffed her off like it was a joke, her indifference towards Anna's advice and her treatment of Lilith in the past cemented her true shallow apathetic nature under the kind, caring facade hidden underneath.

By 10:30, the party guests started flooding in like a flock of seagulls. Almost immediately, everyone started drinking or smoking Mary Jane in one of the guest bedrooms upstairs. Chelsea was with her college girl group hanging out and laughing. Anna did not join her, ostracizing herself from Chelsea, still pissed off at her for her apathetic opinion of apologizing to Lilith. Five minutes later, the doorbell suddenly rings. The music playing in the background was very loud.

“Anna, can you open the door? Chelsea asked with hand signals. That may be Lilith!”

Anna nods without saying a word to her. She walks over to the door and opens it. To her shock and surprise it was Lilith, but she looked different than she did years ago. Her hair was still long but cut a few inches shorter past her collarbone, her eyes no longer had dark circles underneath, and she had a healthier looking body frame. Lilith wore a black sparkly mini dress and black heel sandals.

“Lilith?” Anna asked in a stunned tone,

“Hey Anna, what’s up?” Lilith asked

Chelsea walks over to the door, she abruptly pauses upon seeing Lilith’s new appearance and her stunning outfit. She grew envious underneath her cheery demeanor.

“Oh my god Lily?! Is that you?!” Chelsea shrieked with excitement.

“Chelsea! So good to see you!” Lilith excitedly greeted Chelsea with a hug.

“Oh my goodness you look so gorgeous, I haven’t seen you in so long” Chelsea commented in an exaggerated tone,

“Oh hush it's only been a year and a half” Lilith remarked jokingly,

Ana, who couldn’t take the conversation anymore, excused herself. Knowing Chelsea well enough, her social acting skills around the people she hated were as good as Paris Hilton’s. Lilith’s attitude however seemed genuine, as if what happened in the past was in the past, a person with a forgiving soul for everyone. Anna sensed no deceit in Lilith’s linguistics.

“So how are things?” Chelsea asked,

"Oh you know, my workload was a huge B. I really needed a break from it, thanks for inviting me to your party Chelsea" Lilith thanked.

"Hey that's what are friends for Lily" Chelsea said enthusiastically,

Lilith uncomfortably sighs quietly upon being called that nickname again. She takes a breath and claps her hands together, rubbing them together.

"So what are we waiting for? Stop standing around and let's get wasted!!!" Lilith shouted,

The other attendees howl with excitement. Lilith, Chelsea and the girls start partying and dancing to the blaring music. To everyone Chelsea seemed happy and enjoyed partying with Lilith and her friends. Deep down however, she kept pondering over Lilith's new personality. Lilith was the life of the party. She partook in a drinking game against a male party attendee twice her size and won. He fell down like a hippo in a food coma, shaking the whole room upon hitting the ground. Lilith then held a conversation by telling the students in her circle hilarious dirty jokes that made beer blow out of one girl's nose. The person who hated taking selfies with girlfriends, being with crowds of people, and cared little for her appearance was gone. Internally and externally, Lilith was like a different person compared to who was years ago in high school.

By the time midnight rolled around, the party had died down. Some of the guests had left, walking drunkenly to the bus stop to catch a ride, others chose to take the irresponsible way home - driving themselves back home. The rest of the party guests who are still at the party were either passed out drunk in different areas of the house or hanging in the kitchen talking or standing silently. Anna was sitting by herself on an old living room couch. It had old mysterious stains, wear and tears patched crudely on different areas, and lighter worn areas on the sofa cushions and armrest which evidently showed the favored areas of the couch. Anna drank very little alcohol, the whole time at the party she watched Lilith party and engage with Chelsea, her friends and the other party guests. As she did, she reflected on her past deeds she committed. No amount of alcohol in her system could lighten her mood or take away the heavy pit in her stomach. Lilith who was in the kitchen sees Anna sitting alone in the living room. She walks up to her with her red plastic party cup half full of vodka and cranberry juice in her hand.

"Hey Anna, you okay?" Lilith asked.

Anna who was down deep in her own mind, she jolted, startled by Lilith's voice.

"Oh Lilith! Sorry I didn't see you there" Anna responded in surprise.

"You seem down? Is something wrong?"

Anna quickly glanced at Chelsea and her other friends having a conversation in the kitchen. They were all happy and laughing without a care in the world. Anna sighed to herself, unable to take the guilt anymore. She sat up and looked Lilith in the eye.

"Lilith I have had something to say that's been on my mind for a while now. I know it's probably too late but lately I have been reflecting on what my friends and I did to you in high school..."

Lilith sat down beside Anna, listening to everything she had to say. Anna expressed a genuine long overdue apology to Lilith. Lilith was silent during Anna's apology speech, listening to everything she had to say.

"...Lilith, I am so sorry for what I did to you with Chelsea and the others. I don't expect you to forgive me but I just wanted to tell you what's been on my mind" Anna explained.

Lilith sensed Anna's genuine guilt and remorse for her actions. She puts her hand on Anna's shoulder and smiles softly.

"It's alright, I forgive you Anna. I appreciate you for apologizing, even if its been a few years" Lilith said with gratitude.

Anna hugged Lilith, shedding tears of joy. As they hugged, Lilith's smile faded. She looked across the room at Chelsea who was facing away from Lilith, socializing with her friends in the kitchen, coldly staring at her observantly.

After a while, Anna, feeling slightly better after her conversation with Lilith, went into the kitchen and poured herself a drink. Chelsea who was in the kitchen alone noticed Anna enter.

"So you apologized huh?" Chelsea asked unenthusiastically with a slur.

"Yeah I did and I'm glad I did honestly" Anna responded blatantly,

"Well good for you" responding back with sarcasm,

Before Anna left, she turned around and looked at Chelsea who was swaying while holding herself with one hand on the kitchen counter.

"You know it's not too late Chelsea, you still have a chance to make things right" Anna suggested,

Chelsea rolled her eyes, believing she did nothing wrong. Anna shook her head with disappointment as she left the kitchen. Chelsea then sighs and slowly walks into the living room, at that moment she witnesses a guy walk by and slip something into Lilith's drink without her noticing. Chelsea, who witnessed the entire thing, quietly returned to the kitchen without saying a word.

Meanwhile, Anna was seen cleaning up some trash around the house upstairs. As she was going downstairs with a black trash bag in hand, Anna saw the guy who spiked Lilith's drink carry an unconscious Lilith upstairs and down the hallway. Chelsea slowly stumbled towards the bottom stairs with her drink in hand. Anna looked at Chelsea who was very tipsy. Chelsea smirked at her in a hintful manner. Anna's heart dropped, she knew something very bad was going to happen. She dropped the garbage bag and quickly ran upstairs in the direction the guy went with Lilith. There were five rooms, two on the left side of the hallway, two on the right, and

one at the end of the hallway. A clicking noise echoed from the door at the end of the hallway, Anna quickly ran to the door and tried to open it, it was locked. She began banging on it.

“Hey! Let me in! Hey!!!” She shouted.

Anna reached above the frame of the door, the hidden key used to unlock the door was not there. Anna began to panic and pounded the door again.

“Let her go!!” Anna pleaded with panic in her voice.

Then all of a sudden.

CRASH!!!

The sound of broken glass, loud like a window, was broken.

AAAAAHHHHHH!!!!

Anna heard the guy screaming for his life.

BANG!!! Crash!!! BOOM!!!

Loud noises began to follow, like something large was being thrashed around the room.

THUD!!! Crack!!!!

A loud thud emitted from the door causing it to shake and crack in half, Anna jumped back, falling down two feet away from the door. The broken half of the door started moving then was pushed outwardly to the side. A strange black paw with sharp claws emerged from the doorway. It emitted a strange black mist. Anna was paralyzed with terror.. From the doorway emerged a monster shrouded in black mist. It emerged - a large black monster, ducking its elongated head from hitting the top of the doorway. It stood tall on its two legs, looked down at Anna with its red glowing eyes, letting out a low growl. On its head appeared to be long horn-like appendages, the monster's body shape partially visible through the black mist that shrouded its body, showing a slim structured build, like that of a kangaroo. It whipped out its slim tail which had a tuft of fur at the end of it. Anna had no idea what she was looking at, She turned her attention to what was behind the monster - the body of the guy who took Lilith upstairs, lacerated and bloody. Surrounded by broken glass from the window behind him.

Anna's heart dropped and gasped quietly to herself, cupping her mouth with her hand as she did. She slowly backed away from the doorway before quickly scurrying downstairs, the monster let out a vicious growl and pursued Anna. Anna ran downstairs and into the living room where Chelsea and the remaining guests were, they were startled by her sudden appearance.

“Everyone get out quickly!!” Anna shouted in terror.

The beast immediately jumped through the entrance way and into the living room knocking Anna on the floor.

GRAAAAHHH!!!!

The mood in the room suddenly changed to terror. Everyone started panicking and running to the front door to escape, but it was closed shut. They tried opening the sliding door in the kitchen to no avail. They tried the windows, nothing. It was as if a strange force had locked them inside the house. The beast then started its deadly massacre, slaughtering many who were inside the house. With its sharp claws and pointy teeth it began slaughtering people one by one in cold blood. Anna ran into the kitchen and hid underneath the kitchen table with the half drunken alcoholic beverages and spilled snacks. She curled into a ball, closed her eyes and covered her ears, but the sound of blood curdling screams and the beast's rampage could not be drowned out. After five minutes of cowering, the noises stopped. Anna slowly uncurled herself; she lowered herself to the floor to see the house trashed, bodies lying around, and blood all over the walls and floors.

Anna's heart skipped a beat then sunk to the bottom of her stomach. The beast was nowhere to be seen. For some reason, Anna decided to emerge from under the table. She stood up and walked slowly, shivering as she did into the living room. She looked around slowly. Out of nowhere something appears behind Anna. Anna felt a chill up her spine and slowly turned around. A hand grabs her neck and lifts her without any issue. It was a humanoid surrounded in the same darkness as the beast. The humanoid had blindingly white eyes that lacked pupils, seemingly lacked a mouth, and long black hair that flowed as if there was a breeze. Its body shape appeared to be feminine with an average body frame. Anna was terrified, she couldn't escape its clutches.

"Please...Dont hurt me" Anna pleaded as she struggled to breathe.

Out of nowhere, Chelsea appeared, having hid inside the bathroom. Chelsea paused upon seeing the ghostly humanoid with Anna in her clutches. The ghostly figure looked at Anna and back at Chelsea. Anna quickly blurted:

"Chelsea run!!!"

Chelsea stepped back and started running outside from the kitchen door. The ghostly figure tossed Anna aside. unintentionally into the glass shards of the shattered coffee table and chased after Chelsea. Anna could only watch as they both disappeared into the night.

"...That was the last time I saw her" Anna explained, finishing her interrogation.

Officer Henson along with the other officers who finished interviewing the other survivors were completely flabbergasted. The same stories were told from the perspective of the other survivors, the police were unsure how to react.

“Well, that was the craziest interrogation I’ve had to listen to” he commented,

“I know it sounds crazy, officer but it's true! This humanoid and a huge beast attacked us!!” Anna exclaimed hysterically,

One of the officers ran up to Henson.

“Henson, we found another body. Female, blonde hair, and blue eyes. She was found in the woods slaughtered like an animal” He reported,

Paramedics were seen pushing something wrapped in a black body bag on a stretcher. Upon hearing the description of the body, Anna knew it was Chelsea. She began sobbing hysterically.

“No!!!”

Paramedics rushed to her side, comforting her as they loaded her in the ambulance. The story made headlines. Despite Anna and the survivor’s claims, they couldn’t deem the incident a homicide due to lack of evidence and reliable witnesses who were all hungover. Instead it was reported as an animal attack. The tragedy caused mass hysteria within Salem the entirety of the week. Everyone who believed it was an animal attack began stocking up on guns and hunting weaponry. Religious communities who think the claim that the attack was brought upon by unholy beings began going around town blessing each person’s home, every store and building to keep “Satan’s spawns at bay”.

A few days later Anna was back on campus with her arms and legs bandaged up. She was sitting on a bench, reflecting constantly on the night of the incident, trying to recall something she missed. She knew what she saw was real, as real as the hands that were right in front of her face. She sighed to herself, giving up. She stared off into the distance, despondent. Then a few seconds later, a girl walks past her from her left. Anna snapped out of her trance, looked at the girl passing her - It was Lilith. She was walking on the sidewalk towards her dorm, wearing her winter outfit and wireless headphones in her ears. Anna got up abruptly and watched her walk away, Lilith noticed Anna staring at her and turned her attention briefly before turning her attention away, resuming her walk.

Anna couldn’t believe what she was seeing. Lilith appeared and seemingly acted as if nothing had happened to her the night of the incident. Her calm indifferent demeanor sent a chill down Anna’s spine, just like the one she got from last night when she was about to be faced with death.

Chapter 2

It had been a week and a half after the incident, the town was still shaken by the tragic incident that took the lives that have only started to become independent. The town of Salem began to quiet down, except for the religious communities, who believed the survivors' claims of what they witnessed during the tragedy. They remained firm to their belief that blessing each home and public property would keep “the demons” at bay. Anna’s wounds were close to being fully healed, but the pain from her grief remained as deep as the wounds when they were fresh. Anna had visited the memorial constructed outside the sorority house she once called home. Now it was home to the remembered souls of the victims who died at the hands of a strange supernatural being. The house internally was cleaned up after the investigation was conducted by the police and forensic team. All the furniture was gone, but the walls and floors were still scarred by claw marks, remnants of the victim's blood were still visible if they were observed up close. The web-shaped crack on the window to the left of the front door was still there, the glass had not been replaced yet.

Anna only stopped at the house once after the incident, three days after it happened. It was cloudy the day she visited, As if the clouds were about to cry any minute. She paid her respects by bringing a bouquet of flowers among a sea of flowers and melted candles, some of them half melted, placed at the front door of the house. On her left wrist, Anna then took off a beaded bracelet with cute little charms on them, and placed it beside Chelsea’s portrait. It was a birthday gift from Chelsea last year, on her twenty-first birthday. They shared their first drink together at one of the college bars near campus. Chelsea playfully put the bracelet around Anna’s first glass. It was one of Anna’s most treasured memories with Chelsea, she wanted to remember the good times instead of their worst.

Anna had not left her dorm room since visiting the sorority house. She missed her final day of classes, Anna was despondent, seeing no point since finals were cancelled due to the tragedy. All that went through her mind was survivor’s guilt, Anna replayed the scenario of the incident multiple times in her head. How she could’ve done something more instead of cower and hide, how she could’ve tried to save her despite the odds of succeeding being low. Anna had never seen anything so terrifying. The beast’s unnatural intimidating presence, and the ghostly figure’s blindingly white eyes haunted her constantly since the night of the tragedy. Anna’s heart races whenever the image of their scary demeanors, their piercing gazes, pop up at random moments in her head, engraved in her mind permanently.

The coming weekend was Chelsea's funeral, Saturday afternoon. The Hodgkins had Chelsea's remains cremated to ashes, the brutal lacerations and disfigurement of her corpse was unsightly, even the coroner suggested that Chelsea's body should not be presented as an open casket, because half of her body looked as torn apart as pulled pork. Her urn was light pink, and was decorated with a silver floral band. It was placed centered on the ledge above the living room fireplace. Located below the ledge was Chelsea's portrait, same as the one from the memorial outside the sorority house, only bigger. Family, and the survivors of the incident were all at Hodgkin's residence. Then came Chelsea's friends from high school, Anna's old friend group she hasn't seen in a couple years. All of them came with bouquets of flowers in their hands, which they placed beside the fireplace.

Anna arrived at the Hodgkin's residence on time, in her hand was a eulogy, handwritten on a white piece of paper. Inside the house she was greeted by Chelsea's mother Amy at the entrance of the home. The dark circles under her eyes implied she had not been sleeping well, her emotional state was barely solid. At any moment the dam that Amy built mentally in her mind could crumble at any moment even with all the patches filled in the cracks of the dam. Amy's husband Dan, Chelsea's father, was in the kitchen being consoled by his friends. He was unable to bring himself into the living room if it weren't for their emotional support. In Dan's hand was a beer bottle, still cold but already near finished. The service started with a hymn, introductions were followed, led by one of the local priests of Salem. After the introductions, eulogies were presented by Chelsea's loved ones. Anna decided to let Chelsea's relatives go first and present her eulogy last. After half an hour passed, one of Chelsea's cousins was the last to present before Anna went next. By the end of her eulogy, her voice began to crack and her eyes became teary.

"...Chelsea, I hope wherever you are, you are happy and we will miss you very much"

Everyone in the room began clapping softly, Amy was in the crowd barely keeping herself together, wiping her eyes with a piece of tissue paper. When Anna's turn came, she got up from her chair and walked up to the fireplace. She faced the crowd, standing to the left of Chelsea's portrait. Anna unfolded her eulogy, she sighed to herself softly. The eulogy itself wasn't long, but to Anna it held a lot.

"Chelsea was not only my best friend, she was like a sister I never had. Even now, everytime I get a text message it's Chelsea, asking me if she wants to hang out. Every moment we had was like an adventure, even if it was just having lunch at the dining commons, Chelsea

always made it something bigger and better. I will miss her confidence, the light within her. Whenever she stepped in a room she had a vibe that made everyone feel good.

How Chelsea was taken was cruel and unfair. She didn't deserve to die the way she did. Ever since that night, I've been plagued with guilt. Guilt because more than anything, I wish there was something I could've done to save her. If there's one thing I know, Chelsea wouldn't want us, especially me, to keep grieving. She would want us to remember the good times we shared with her, to always be ready for the next adventure no matter what. Chelsea, I will always carry you in my heart. I will forever remember your infectious laugh, your vibrant spirit, and the memories we shared together, thank you."

After concluding her eulogy, the audience in the room clapped and applauded for her eulogy. Amy then started bawling in her husband's arms, her mental dam had finally crumbled, releasing everything she had held back. Anna remained at the Hodgekin's household after the service, it was now sundown. Food was now being served, everyone except for Chelsea's family members left. It was quiet, with very little chatter. Whispers could be heard, but they could not be deciphered. Anna was about to leave the service. As Anna grabbed her coat, from the corner of her eye, she spotted a woman standing silently by the fireplace. She wore a long black dress that dragged partially on the floor, on her head was a black elegant fedora with a fishnet veil that partially obscured her face, from the top of her hat to her nose. In her hand was a single black rose, gripping it softly by its stem. She was silent, not even the sound of her breath could be heard. Anna suddenly felt a similar feeling of Déjà vu, a chill up her spine. Her heart began to sink into her stomach. Anna couldn't move, she felt paralyzed.

The woman then placed the black rose slowly on the shelf of the chimney, horizontally in front of Chelsea's urn, then lowered her head sorrowfully as she retracted her hand away from the shelf. She then slowly turned away from Chelsea's memorial shrine and slowly walked away without saying a word, disappearing behind the entryway between the living room and the sunroom of the Hodgkin's home. Anna's paralysis faded, she slowly but quickly followed the woman. When she entered the sunroom, the woman was gone. She vanished into thin air. Anna stood silently, lost in thought. She knew deep down in her gut that the woman was most likely the ghostly figure from the night of the tragedy. Amy walked into the sunroom, perplexed to find Anna in the sunroom alone with confusion on her face.

"Anna? You alright dear?" She asked.

Anna nodded her head quietly, Amy escorted Anna softly out of the sunroom and back into the living room. The mysterious woman still lingered in Anna's mind, her heart jittered as

she recalled the woman's eerie, ghostly presence. Anna decided it was best if she left, she wanted to give Amy and her husband time alone to grieve with their closest family members and return to her dorm to try to continue her work, but how could she? The loss of her best friend still weighed heavily on her mind and body. The fear of finals could not compare to the fear she felt when she was certain the night of the attack would be her last night alive. Anna went to grab her coat that she placed in the Hodgkins closet where the guests hung their coats. Anna grabbed her red puffy winter coat and put it on, staring blankly at the wooden floor as she did. She then started walking to the door, as she opened it halfway she looked back at Amy and the other family members who were in the kitchen comforting Mr. Hodgkins. Amy saw Anna leaving and quietly bid her farewell, waving her hand faintly as she did. Anna nodded, smiling softly before walking out the front door.

By the time Anna got out the door it was ten to seven, the sky was dark, remnants of pink and orange glowed below the horizon line. It was quiet. Essex county has established a curfew since the night of the attack: Remain indoors after 7pm until 7am. There were no legal consequences for disregarding the curfew, for the entire community was divided over how the incident was caused. As Anna walked down the sidewalk to the bus stop, she noticed a family across the street hurrying in the house, carrying bags of groceries as they did. They swiftly ran inside and quickly closed the front door, locking it. Every curtain in that house was then hastily closed shut. Lights from behind the curtain-closed windows turned on.

On the same side of the street Anna walked on, there was a male resident with neighbors outside sitting by a fire pit laughing as they drank beer together. Upon seeing Anna meekly staring at them, their demeanor changes. They squinted suspiciously at Anna silently, scared, Anna hurried off down the street to the bus stop, which was just a few blocks away. On Anna's right, a stream of lights from the bus' headlights crept swiftly past Anna. The intensity of its light grew as Anna hurriedly tried to make the bus stop. Anna reached the pole of the bus stop just before it arrived, she sighed with relief as she wiped the beads of sweat off her forehead, panting heavily. The bus driver opened the door, letting Anna inside the vehicle. The bus was nearly empty, with only three other passengers, two male students and an old woman carrying a metal basket with wheels that carried her possessions. Anna sat herself at the front of the bus. As she caught her breath, Anna noticed the driver looking at her strangely, and raised his eyebrows twice at her. The driver was way older than Anna, as if he were in his mid sixties. Anna turned her attention away from the driver, ignoring him, disgusted.

Anna looked out her window, it was dark with very little stars to be seen under the moonlit sky. Anna was tired both physically and emotionally, as she was about to rest her eyes she saw a strange large shape swiftly fly across the sky, its shape only visible under the moon's rays. It flew too fast for Anna to get a clear visual of the moving shape. Anna immediately sat up and leaned towards the window, a second wind. By the time she tried to get a closer look, it was already out of her sight. With what Anna was able to see in that short amount of time, the shape was too big to be a large predatory bird, and too small to be an airplane. What immediately came to her mind was the shape in the sky was the ghostly figure, Anna began to worry, paranoia began to fester. Anna then started thinking that perhaps it was just a figment of her imagination and her mind was playing tricks on her, Anna sunk deeper into her chair unsure.

Meanwhile Yankee Division Highway a little ways north of Salem, the road was almost quiet with a few groupings of people in their vehicles. Out of nowhere a red Toyota Corolla full of college students entered the highway heading southward back to Salem. The students consisted of Jesse, her boyfriend Patrick, and

Jess and her friends are in the car driving at night on the road with beer and weed in the car. They were out at night honoring their deceased friend. The driver Patrick was howling like a mad man out the window.

"We love you Chelsea! Rest in peace you crazy b*tch!" One of the guys shouted,
"Whooo!!" The girls shrilled,

Jess was in the passenger seat next to Patrick. She was looking out her window calmly. Patrick who was there at the funeral had something on his mind.

"Hey Jess" Patrick called out,

"Yeah Patrick" Jessie answered,

"Did you really mean what you said to Lilith? About regretting everything we did back in school?"

"Of course I did. I mean we basically ruined those years that would've been nostalgic to look back at when she's older. Don't you feel guilty?" Jess asked,

"Of course not. None of us do. She was such a loser back in school. Especially high school, she missed a lot of class days during those years. I don't even know how she graduated"

Jess the only one who feels guilty slumps into her chair. Patrick notices.

"Hey forget about it, it's all in the past Jess. Besides we have to keep moving forward. Like we are right here out on this open-"

Out of nowhere, a dark humanoid figure pops in front of the car.

"Road!!" Patrick yells out as he swerves avoiding the figure,

The car spins out of control. It tips on its side and begins rolling like a log off the road and crashes onto the forested traffic island. Everyone except for Jess was covered in bits of broken glass and from the windows. They were unconscious and slumped in their seats bleeding heavily. Outwardly, Jess suffered from whiplash, some bruising, and a few scratches from the bits of glass that flew across her face. Internally, her ribs were broken. One of them had punctured her lung. Upon inspecting Patrick and her friends, Jess realizes they were dead.

Jess struggles to pull herself out of the car and collapses on the cold grassy ground. She could hardly move due to the pain and was gasping for air, for she couldn't breathe. She suddenly notices black mist swirling in front of her. Jess looked up and was startled upon seeing a shadow-like humanoid standing over her. It was the shadow wraith from the college party massacre. It's black misty dress covered Jess' left hand. It's hair and dress were fluttering as if a gust of wind was constantly flowing from below it. Jess breathless and scared could only quiver with fear.

"Please...Please" Jess pleaded with a whimper,

The wraith stared into Jess' tearful guilt ridden eyes. Jess looked into the glowing white eyes unwillingly, as if a strange force was controlling her. The wraith blinks and stops staring at her, releasing her from the trance. It lowers its hand, reaching down towards Jess. Jess' body begins to rise, levitating off the ground. The wraith rotates her body facing up to the starry night sky.

"No wait, what are you doing?! Stop!" Jess begs,

The wraith with both hands releases a black mist that surrounds Jess. The mysterious mist reverses most of the damage on her body, primarily on her ribs and her punctured lung. Jess takes in a deep breath of relief, having regained her ability to breathe. The Wraith leaves the scrapes, whiplash, and bruising untouched. It lowers Jess back on the ground.

When she looks up she finds that the wraith was gone. It had vanished without a trace. Jess saw blue and red lights from a far followed by police sirens. An ambulance came to the scene of the crash along with the police. The police were called by a passing trucker who witnessed the car swerve and crash. Jess was placed into a gurney, and rolled into the ambulance to be taken to the ER.

Chapter 3