On September 24th, at exactly 10:37 am, my whole world stopped. Zachary Anson threw himself off Stonewell Academy's roof and nobody knew why.

At first, I was drowned by a wave of distrust – *is this real life, am I just dreaming?* I even pinched myself. But it was to no avail, because I was awake, and my life had become a literal living nightmare.

Two weeks after the event, waking up was still as difficult as the first day. The white plush carpet under my feet didn't feel as soft anymore, and the sun didn't shine as lustrously. My best friend had taken his life and stolen my own will to live along with him.

I sighed, rolling my shoulders and trying to release some of the tension in my back. It was hard going on with my day, knowing that he wouldn't be there with me. And having to return to the Academy, only made it worse.

My cell phone chimed as I got ready, catching my attention.

***[From Evie]: how are you feeling?***

A scoff fled my lips and I typed in my one-word answer.

***[To Evie]: terrible***

"Cleo!" My mother's French accent rang in my ears like a gunshot, "are you ready? Your friend is here to pick you up."

I hadn't made plans for carpooling, nevertheless, I turned my head to face her from where I sat on my bed and slowly blinked. We were quite similar in appearance, with long brown hair and coffee-colored eyes. It made up for the fact that we were complete opposites personality-wise.

"Yeah," I mumbled, picking up my bag and sliding past her.

Outside, I encountered an interesting scene.

"What are you doing here, Nic?"

*Nicolas Costa*. A little over six-foot-tall, tan, and gifted with annoyingly handsome Brazilian genes. We met when we were eight years old, and hated each other at first sight. However, years later, we bonded over mutual friends, and have since then been part of an inseparable group.

We still weren't very fond of each other though.

He stood confident, in front of my building, leaning on the black convertible his father gave him for his eighteenth birthday.

"Thought I could give you a ride. *Vamos*, hop in."

The words rolled off his tongue as smoothly as I slipped into the leather passenger seat. "Thanks," I mumbled, throwing my matte leather backpack on the floor.

I watched the edifices and people from the car window mixed into each other as if they were part of some intricate oil painting for two whole minutes in complete silence until Nicolas spoke up again.

"Have you been sleeping?"

I rolled my head towards him so he could take a full look at my sunken eyes and pale lips. "What do you think?"

"I think you look like *shit*."

A miniature smile escaped as I answered with a sigh, "Feel like it too."

The car slowed down and soon enough we were pulling into Stonewell Academy's parking lot. The school was hauntingly beautiful, even more so after the gruesome occurrences that took place there not too long ago.

Stonewell Academy was built out of the misery of students, unnecessary drama, and masses of money. And now, *death*.

"You ready?" Nic asked.

"*À la folie.*"

That's exactly what it felt like; *insanity*. The moment we stepped out of the car, eyes were drawn to us like moths to a flame. Students and teachers stared, whispered, and pointed.

We were the main attraction of Stonewell's bizarre morning show.

"Well, this is weird."

*Evie Van Doren*, our very own living Barbie. Her barren words and bubbly giggles were as artificial as her bleached white hair. Regardless, she had a heart of gold and when needed, it shone through.

I turned to look over my shoulder and caught her glare at the noisy students.

A sigh left my lips as *Archie Hearst* slipped to my left, slinging his arm over my shoulder. It weighed a ton, thanks to his fixation with American Football. He claims to love it, we all think he does it to impress his soul-sucking father.

"Are we the new *breakfast death club* or something?" Archie asked, with a scowl on his freckled face.

"Ew," Evie whispered, "don't joke like that."

"Guys," my hoarse voice silenced the group, "I just want to get today over with, think we can do that?"

My friends all shared a look before silently nodding and parting ways, each to their class. Evie stuck behind me and wrapped her hand around my arm. Her light blue eyes searched for something in my dark brown ones before she gave up and said; "I'm here for you."

A forced smile sent her trekking up the Academy's stairs, and I watched before slowly following suit.

I knew it was going to be a long day, but it was worse than I could have ever imagined. The constant whispering and gawking had me on my last nerve, and I was just about tired of hearing *"That's the dead kid's best friend"* anytime I passed by someone.

The third period came around, the only one I shared with Sophia.

*Sophia Bryn*, cheerleader, head of the class, and every extracurricular activity you could think of - also, Zach's girlfriend. Or ex. Does she count as a widow now that he's dead, or is that just for married couples?

We hadn't spoken since the incident and she didn't look any better than I did. Luckily, her seat was right next to mine, so I took it as the perfect opportunity to give her my consolation.

"Soph-"

"Save it, Cleo." Her curt tone came hand in hand with a quivering bottom lip and glossy dark eyes. "It's been two weeks."

With furrowed eyebrows, I turned myself completely in my seat to face her. Sophia's black wavy hair was tied up in a messy hairdo, her dark skin looked botched from crying so much, and her lips were cracked.

"I know, I meant to text you before, but-"

"But you didn't. And that's just good ol' Cleo, it doesn't matter who gets hurt in the process, as long as you get what you want."

Dumbfounded. Bewildered. Mute. I couldn't choose one, so I became all three.

"What, *from the bottom of my heart,* the fuck?" I managed to whisper, in shock.

Sophia shook her head, a single teardrop raced down her face. She fumbled to pick up her books, and with difficulty, she called out,

"Mrs. Whiteman? May I be excused? I'm not feeling well."

She didn't wait for an answer and dashed out of the classroom, leaving me and everyone else stunned. Silence reigned for a few seconds until my phone buzzed on top of my desk with a notification.

It was a text message.

From Zachary Anson.

*My dead best friend.*