

Chapter 1

"It was a bitter winter, when all the flowers grew limp and frosty, and the air was a deathly cold. Causing even the bravest to huddle amidst a toasty fire place. While the snowflakes loomed from above in soft, effortless, grace." I read aloud stopping to ponder after every sentence as they left my lips, clinging to the notebook intently within my fingertips. Enclosing the words themselves in the book, as if they would fly off its pages. To be totally honest I wasn't reading anymore, I was reciting the paragraph by memory. I loved the image the words evoked in my mind, a harsh yet mystical scene of one of the most beautiful seasons. I was so entranced in the thought I hardly noticed the darkness had settled in, and the stars seemed to burn a hole in the night sky. I wanted to lay there, surrounded by its beauty and just freeze time. It was moments such as these that made me appreciate the subtle cooing of an owl or the rhythmic chirping of a cricket. As serene as it all seemed, it was time to leave my haven beneath the mess of tangled trees, and return home. My mother passed away several months ago and ever since that dreadful day, I came to what used to be her favorite place. She'd walk to this abandoned orchard, with its many over grown and intertwined branches to compose herself. To reclaim the sanity she felt diminish with every passing hour. She was a strong woman who never wanted me to see her sorrow, but none the less I wasn't fooled by her bombardment of fake smiles. I used to plead with her to confide in me, but she was a proud woman who believed weakness was in words. I watched her kill herself with her own poison, her own isolation. My mother had a lot of physiological issues, which made her feel like there wasn't a way out. With that feeling she committed suicide at the age of 36 but it didn't change anything really, she was dead long before anyway. Yes I was torn apart when she left me and this earth behind, but it's just selfish of me to be angry at her. It's only in man kind's nature to want a loved one to return but I can't rewrite the scenario in which I lost my mother. I couldn't bear to see her shimmery green eyes fill with tears another day, all though I wish I could have said goodbye. I live alone now in our home, it's all paid for thank god. My mother knew she would leave me alone one day long before she actually did. So in preparation she paid off the house and the car and left it all in my name. It's a two bedroom house with creaky floor boards

and a tiny kitchen with cracked tiles. My car's an old beat up volvo wagon, my mom bought of a used car sales man. I don't have a Lamborghini or much less a mansion, but it's enough to keep me off the streets and off my feet. She wrote that quote you know, the one that is burned into my mind. My mother might not have been very stable in all reality, but in her writing she just captured herself and the outcome was perfection. My neighbors used to say we were just alike, the two of us. It scares me to the core knowing they might be right. Who's to say I don't await the same fate as my mother? I was so lost in my thoughts I failed to notice the street lights flickering above a bickering young couple. Their voices rose in harsh raspy shouts, and I could sense the tension from across the way. The woman looked to be about eighteen or nineteen, with platinum blond locks that flowed down to her waste, and a thin tall frame. The man looked slightly older, perhaps a few years, and quite built with broad shoulders. I couldn't make out their facial features though, since the night seemed to swallow them up. My pace began to slow but my mind nagged at me to quicken it. This wasn't the best neighborhood to be strolling around at these hours, yet I felt compelled to watch this intensifying couple. Within seconds the woman gave the man a hard shove, a loud thud sounded as he fell against the street light. The man lunged for her, clasping his hand around her throat. She let out a terror filled cry as she clawed at his hand to release her. He screamed, "Don't you dare touch me! I own you!" I felt a lump in my own throat as I watched her struggle. Without skipping a beat I stumbled along the street floor for a stone. Within the seconds that followed I hurled it, with all the force I possessed, in the man's direction. The stone sailed into a chain link fence a few feet away from where the man stood. The sound frightened him enough to release his grip around her throat, so that the woman could break away. The man quickly realized what had occurred and in an attempt to compensate for lost time, he lunged at her again, this time pinning her to the floor with his arms and legs. The woman let out a pain filled shrill as her back hit the cold concrete. I was terrified for her and I didn't know what to do. I gathered more stones in my hands to throw, but I didn't trust my accuracy. At that same moment I heard police sirens howling in the distance. When I lifted my eyes to see the feuding couple they were gone, both racing in the opposite direction of one another. The woman ran in the direction of my house and I followed close behind. I was ashamed that I wasn't able to rescue her from her attacker. Ashamed by the

fact that the only reason her skull wasn't bashed in, the only reason she wasn't just another blood stain on the concrete was because police were around the corner. I yelled for her to halt, as she stumbled and wove through oncoming trash cans and street signs. And as she turned to face me, her eyes caught the light of a cars headlight and my soul was shaken. This mystery woman resembled my mother in every sense of the word, even her green eyes, although paralyzed with fear, gleamed like hers used too. And in that instant I was overtaken with desire. The desire to compose myself and be whatever this woman needed, to do for her what I could never do for my mother. I yelled once more, "Please stop, I only want to help you!" This time with a more sympathetic tone. Her pace seemed to slow and shortly after she came to a complete stop. I raced behind her till I was just steps away. Before I could mutter out a word she turned towards me, with her face hung low and with a pain filled whisper she said, "It started out so beautiful...I....I....can't say I know what changed...", through short, muffled, breaths. I instinctively reached out my hand to clasp her shoulder, and I could sense her muscles jump as she winced with pain. There was something that seemed to seep through the arm of her t-shirt and through my boney fingers, a warm fluid, blood. The feeling sent chills dancing up and down my spine as I retracted my quivering hand. I tried again to say something, but it was as if I was mute. I was at a loss, what could I do for this woman, and what would I say to help heal the very visible emotional and physical wounds this woman obtained? Her legs began to wobble and her stance began to waver as she slowly crumpled to the floor. I fell alongside her and placed my ear on her chest as I desperately searched for her heart beat, when I found it I relaxed slightly. I figured I would dial for help but I had lost my phone somewhere during my pursuit and the night made it strikingly difficult to find it. We were only around the corner from my home and I knew that my best bet was to carry her there, but though she was thin she looked to be 130 pounds and I, being mere 5 pounds lighter found it nearly impossible to accomplish. I found it difficult to successfully achieve two pushups let alone carry someone of her size or any size really. My mind seemed to race at the speed of sound as I went over scenarios in my mind. I started to look frantic as I watched the woman lying on the dirty, blackened sidewalk. Her body lay so peacefully as if she were sleeping, even her lengthy blond locks seemed to cascade across her face. The scene gave me an idea. I gently

patted at her pockets until my fingers traced the frame of a phone. I wiggled it out from her almost restricting pant pocket and dialed the all too familiar 9-1-1 number as I raised it to my ear. "9-1-1 what's your emergency?" said the soft, soothing voice that pulsed through the phone. "Hi yes! I have a woman in need of...in need of attention." I stuttered out with an almost harsh tone. "What seems to be the problem ma'am?" The operator said with a more stern voice than before. "She's been beaten and she's bleeding, she collapsed in a heap on the floor now...I'm...I'm just so scared for her," My voice hadn't calmed at all, and it seemed to illuminate my fears even more than before. "Yes ma'am I understand but it's important that you remain calm, what's your location?" The operator chimed. She must have been new on the job because her tone seemed to leap frog between a caring, comforting one to a harsh, intense one. This in no way was helpful in compelling me to relax. "943 Rosemarsh Dr," I let out with one last abrupt gulp of air. "A dispatcher is on their way now," she finally stated. I slowly released the phone from my inhibiting grasp as I hit the glowing cherry red button to end the call. For a few minutes before I heard the blaring ambulance siren in the distance, time slowed and what was once the mysterious blackness that engulfed the night melted away until all I could see with my eyes clamped tight, was the loving express of my mother as she held me tight.

Chapter 2

The following day I awoke with a kink in my neck in the corner of a stark white hospital room. My chair lay directly across from the mystery woman's bed, her limbs lay in a tangle within her sheets as she gazed intently out the window. For the first time since the night before I could see her perfectly, there was no darkness to hide behind, nobody to run from, just her and I. She sensed me shifting in my chair and without moving her gaze she said, "Thank you...for everything. It was all a mistake, he was my mistake. I'm going to leave him, I didn't think I could before. If you hadn't been there...well I might not be here now." She let the words flow out of her as if she was releasing a demon that had been stirring within her for far too

long. I again felt incapable of speech but contrary to before I fought the idea. "You remind me of my mother, a younger version of course. She was beautiful much like yourself, with your shimmering green eyes, long platinum blond hair, even your stance thin and tall resembles her to a T," I stated with a surprising confidence. The woman sat up in a comfortable way propped up by pillows and motioned for me to accompany her. As I walked across the feet of tiled floor to her side she gave a radiant smile. She seemed inviting and even more similar as I lifted myself up onto the edge of the bed. "I know what you did for me, well as much as my foggy memory allows me to anyway. What I failed to remember the doctors filled in for me, they let me know you never left my side. Not from the moment they arrived for me last night to the moment I opened my eyes this morning. I know that I expressed my thanks earlier but I'm not quite done," she felt around along her side until her hand fell upon whatever she was looking for. "Here," she let out with harmonious shrill as she handed a crisp white envelope my way. "I'm much better at writing than I ever will be at speaking," she let out with a chuckle. I smiled a little as I took it from pale fingertips. "You didn't have to do that," I said innocently with my face hung low. At that moment the nurse pushed through the double doors and reported that the visiting hours were over along with the regulation that only patients were allowed on the hospital beds. I leaped off with a bit of embarrassment and a rush of blush formed along my cheeks. "How long will she have to be here?" I inquired of the nurse. "She looks like she'll be checking out tonight, we just have to run a few more tests dear," The nurse replied. Her face looked weathered from her years of work but yet it still reflected a kind of youth. I was unsure if my responsibility to the woman sitting on the bed was through or if it had just begun. Before I could finish the war within myself she spoke to me from across the room saying, "I don't want you to open that envelope until you're far away from me, do you hear me? I'm probably the worst at confrontation after someone's read one of my works. I'm sure that above anyone else, I am my toughest critic. I know it sounds silly but it's who I am, you'll have to forgive me." I turned my face in her direction with an understanding smile though I doubted her, as I said my final words, "It's honestly all right, I promise you that I won't open a single thing until I'm far out of your radar. I'm thrilled that you're doing better and I am glad to have met you." That was it and without even knowing her name I walked out of that hospital room with a peace. A peace

that I'm sure I will never forget. Even though I failed to save my mother's life months ago, I got the chance to help a woman much like my mother before it was too late. I tucked the envelope in my jacket pocket and headed to the bus station. I fully intended on keeping my promise, for that I was sure of. When I arrived, there was a misty blue bench posted vacantly next to a bulletin board holding the bus schedules. To my favor the bus scheduled for my street was just pulling in under a cloudy haze. Once I boarded and had paid my fare I took a seat next to a smudge filled window and reached for the envelope in my jacket pocket. The sky turned to a deep grey hue almost immediately. When I had been in the bus for a good five minutes I assumed as the bus took a turn onto my street, that I was far enough now that I could open the letter. I placed one of my lengthy, bony fingers in the seal of the envelope to rip it open. I took a deep breath and unfolded the paper within the envelope and to my surprise there was but a few words on it, "There isn't a need for goodbyes. You saved me." As the bus came to a complete stop and I was jerked forward, I realized it was my time to get off. As I walked down the black, gum-filled steps I saw my mother waving to me through shining rays of sun light that fell all around her. She raced towards me and held me tight in her arms as we collided. I searched her face for understanding but all I saw was the love emitting through her radiant smile. As I melted into her embrace, I couldn't help but notice it was as if I had traveled through time and rewrote the scenario in which I lost my mother.