

Chapter 3

Chicago

Sadie

Sadie watched as people rushed past her, on foot, wheelchairs, and stretchers. This steady stream would continue on for another three minutes, most likely, end and then return another hour later. It was her late shift, and the only thing keeping her at this hour was the promise of a bed when she got home. As she watched the people sitting in the waiting room, she turned to see a woman standing at the desk with tears streaming from her eyes, which were bloodshot and puffy. Her heart ached with empathy, and so she handed the woman a box of tissues and offered her a water bottle. The woman looked up at Sadie with gratitude in her eyes.

"Thank you s-so much, m-my daughter..." the woman faltered.

"Yes?" Sadie didn't want to press, but she had to know what was causing this woman distress.

"My d-daughter" the woman started again, "was hit b-by a c-car, and I-I d-don't k-know if sh-she's even a-alive!"

The woman collapsed into sobs, and Sadie walked around her desk to give her a comforting side-hug.

"Now, would you mind telling me your daughter's name?" Sadie questioned. She was hopeful that the doctors would be sympathetic enough to let this woman see her child, who was in such pain.

"M-Melanie A-Anderson" The woman stuttered as she blew her nose, quite loudly, into a tissue. Melanie Anderson. Sadie had heard that name before, but she didn't recall where. All she could think about now was helping this woman find her child before it was too late. She knew all too well what that sense of panic felt like, when she had found out that her boyfriend had fallen, and was in critical condition at the hospital only five months ago. She had rushed to the hospital and made it there, just to find that she had made it there too late. She pushed those thoughts aside and searched the database for Melanie.

"Melanie, Melanie, Melanie...ah!" Sadie had found her. She was still alive, thank goodness, in room 314, and was eligible for visits. Sadie looked at the woman, now surrounded by a pile of used tissues, and spoke up.

"Ma'am, your daughter is going to be okay and you will be able to visit her, as soon as you fill out this paperwork and give it to my coworker," Sadie informed her as she handed the woman a clipboard and pen. Sadie's shift had finished a minute ago, but she felt emotionally unable to abandon the woman. She walked back to her office, grabbed her bag and headed out the door. Huh. That's weird. Sadie thought to herself. Her bag was heavier than usual. She sat in the driver's seat of her car, turned on a light, and began digging through the items in her handbag. Her hand found a cube shaped box and pulled it out. Scrawled in the neatest handwriting Sadie had ever seen, was her full name, Sarah Penelope Davis. No one had called her Sarah in over two years. She pried open the box with her fingertips, careful not to

its contents. Inside, she found a small toy car with an undefined figure in the second row to the left. There were four rows in total and two columns. All the other spots in the car were empty for a reason, one that Sadie was unsure of. But the strangest thing was, the car was made out of pure sapphire. She knew this of course because, when she and her previous boyfriend, Nathan, had started dating, he gave her raw sapphire earrings that complimented the blue in her blue-green eyes. Grief over Nathan filled her head as she started to tuck the box away, but it was quickly replaced by the new information on the underside of the car. A date, a time, and an address. Who would want to give me an address? She wondered. She looked at it more closely with curiosity, before tucking it away for good and driving homewards. It wasn't like she was actually going to go. That could be dangerous! She warned herself, but she couldn't shake the feeling that this was destiny, and that there was no other option.

Chapter 4

Chicago

Xander

Xander took a deep breath as he sat at his desk alone in an office. The light in the day was fading, and it was almost time to go home. Home. If that was even a real word for him anymore. It hadn't been home to him for a long time. 10 years to be exact. Today was the 13th anniversary of his mom's death, or whatever it really was, and his father still hadn't told him what had happened. One day she was there. And the next... A loud banging on the door interrupted Xander's thoughts. He didn't even realize that he had been crying, he wiped away the tears and held his water bottle against his eyes in an attempt to remove any evidence that he had been...Again the door shook from the force of a hand ramming into it. "Hold on a second!" Xander yelled out. "Jeez..." he muttered to himself. He pushed back from his desk before walking towards and unlocking it. He opened the door to see his coworker, Rebecca, standing in the door frame. Oh my gosh, not again. He thought to himself. This was the third time this week that she had shown up at his door after work hours. This time she was twirling a piece of her strawberry blonde hair in between her fingertips, and blinking at him with her heavily mascara-covered eyelashes. "Hey Rebecca, what is it this time?" He asked her, already annoyed.

"Yeah," she started, "I was wondering if you wanted to come eat dinner with us."

Xander, wanting to be a respectable person, declined this offer as politely as he could.

"But Xan!"

Xander flinched inwardly at the nickname Rebecca had given him. She is the most aggravating person in the world! He complained to himself. "Sorry!" Xander apologized, "I have a lot of work I need to get done," not true "and I'm really busy these next couple nights," also not true. Xander had absolutely nothing scheduled, and he had absolutely no idea what he would even be doing the next couple of nights.

“FINE” with as much melodrama as one could, she let out a sigh, and huffed herself out of the doorway, and down the long, tiled hallway.

He closed the door and turned around to see a small box sitting on his desk. On it was inscribed his full name, Alexander Ryan Torres. That was weird. He didn't remember anyone putting a package on his desk, and it definitely hadn't been there earlier. He opened the lid of the box to find a small toy car inside. The car was made out of pearl and had seven empty spots in it. One spot, the one on the second row to the right, had a small figurine in it. He looked at it in confusion, before turning it around in curiosity. On the bottom of the car he could make out a date, a time, and an address. He popped the address into his phone to see that it was only a five minute drive from his house. Perfect! However, the satellite image showed a grassy field, unlit and empty. He decided that he might as well go, since there weren't any big sports events that he would be watching with his friends. He tucked the small trinket into his briefcase, before leaving the building and heading back ho...to his house.

Chapter 5

Dallas

Gwen

Gwen stared at her computer screen in frustration. Solving mysteries isn't supposed to be this hard! She told herself. Gwen had spent the last three days stuck on one piece of a single crime. None of the evidence was fitting together. She took a deep breath and stood up from her chair. She pulled open her curtains and looked outside. It was a beautiful day. Wasn't it always in Dallas? She shook those thoughts aside and stepped into her kitchen. She was a detective, and had chosen that Wednesday as her work-from-home day of the week. She looked to her oven, reminding her of the cookies that she had yet to bake for her neighbors. Gwen stored the thought on a mental to-do list in her head and walked out the front door. Sure enough it felt amazing outside. She took a few careful steps down her walkway before turning onto the main sidewalk on her street. She could smell fall in the air, and could see the effect it had on the trees all around her. Piles of leaves in front yards were slowly invading the street, being blown around by bursts of wind, and blowing her dark chestnut hair directly into her face. “Ugh!” Gwen spat out strands of her hair in frustration, before securing the temperamental strands with a hair tie. As she walked, thoughts of the case filled her head. What made it worse was that “the case” was a cold case and had been for ten years. A woman had been murdered, shot actually, and they still hadn't found who did it or how. She ran through facts in her head; they were what grounded her. Truth. Truth was always the answer, well at least it was in her department. Her thoughts were interrupted by a painful shove to the shoulder that caused her to fumble. She turned around, annoyed to see a man of about twenty-six running down the street. He looked back at her and she glared at him, only to be met by sad, brown eyes. She quickly looked away, embarrassed and continued on her walk. That was so

stupid! She reprimanded herself. She wondered how she had gotten so distracted, that she hadn't even seen a literal human walking, no running down the sidewalk towards her. She decided to turn back around and head home, in hopes of baking the cookies that she had been meaning to. That would help her solve the case, she knew it would. Keeping her eyes ahead, somehow Gwen made it to her porch without any more incidents. A small bag hung from her door handle. That was curious. She looked at it more closely. On the bag was written her full name, Gwendolyn Amelia Jones. No one had called her by her full name since, well since her best friend's death. Stop yourself. Now is not the time to be thinking about that. There are more important things to do right now. She reminded herself. She gently pulled the bag off of the door handle and went inside, placing the bag on the counter. She opened it to find a small car, made of...diamond. The small car had seven empty cylinders carved into it, and inside one cylinder was a small diamond figure. It was seated on the third row to the left. She didn't understand. Who would've sent that to her? She didn't even like cars all that much. She rotated it in her hand, inspecting it, when she found an inscription along what would've been the undercarriage. It was a date, a time, and an address. She scribbled all three down on a notepad, before placing the figurine in her closet. She didn't know what to do with it. She thought for a minute. Wait. She hesitated, it could have to do with my case. She knew at that moment that she had to go. She had to know if it connected to that woman. Kitty.

Chapter 6

Dallas

Nicholas

Nick's day had been going fine, until he had decided to go on a run. After that, everything was...well different, that was one way to put it. He was proud of himself actually, he hadn't thought once about Marion. He had gotten his work done and finished the plans for his next big project. He'd even surprised himself by planning a bike trip with a couple of his friends. Maybe things will finally be back to normal. Is what he had thought to himself that very morning. Things did not go back to normal. At all. He had gotten home, and decided to go on a run, because after all, it was a beautiful day. He stepped outside and let the Dallas sunshine on his face for a second. Fall was here, which meant that swimming season was over, but it also meant winter was coming, and winter was a bit too emotional of a season for him. He shook those thoughts of and began on his run, enjoying the crisp autumn air as it rushed past him. His pleasant thoughts didn't last long. He began to think of Marion, his best friend, who had died roughly five years ago. It wasn't that he missed her necessarily, he just didn't ever know what to do with himself anymore. Ever. He often found himself sitting on his living room couch, just thinking about his life before she had been killed. Well he didn't ever really learn what had fully happened to her, but all he knew was that one day she was there, and the next she was found dead in White Rock Lake. Everyone had told Nicholas, it was probably an accident, she probably drove off of the road.

But no, it couldn't have been, he refused to believe it all, because he knew Marion never would have left him to face the world alone. He was shaken from his thoughts by a sharp push by his side. It was an actual person, and he had almost knocked her into the street. He looked back to make sure that she hadn't, and he was met with a harsh glare. The glare came from a woman, who looked to be about...twenty-four or so. She was relatively short compared to Nicholas, and had medium-length, straight, brown hair. She looked almost shocked for a second when she saw him looking towards her, but she quickly turned away, the tips of her ears red in embarrassment. He looked back ahead and continued to run, until he felt something fall out of his pocket. He stopped and bent to pick it up. It was a small parcel and on it, his full name was scrawled, in a loopy, cursive-like font. It read, Nicholas Benjamin Williams. He took the parcel in his hand, and made his way back home, curious to learn of its contents. When he finally made it back home, Nicholas took out a pair of scissors, and made quick concise cuts along the edge of the packaging. He deposited the item on the counter. It was a small toy car, but strangely it was made of an odd amber colored gem. Topaz. The topaz car had eight holes drilled into it, and only one of which held a small, topaz, undefined, figure. He looked at it carefully, inspecting its shape and definition. This led to his discovery of a date, a time, and an address engraved on the "undercarriage" of the car. He quickly realized that he was available that same day, because a few of his co-workers were going to be out that same day. Not that it mattered. The invitation told him to meet there at midnight. This is the kind of adventure that Marion would encourage me to explore, he told himself. That alone was enough to motivate him to mark it on his calendar.

