

Content Table

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	2
Chapter 2	14
Chapter 3	30
Chapter 4	43
Chapter 5	52
Chapter 6	66
Chapter 7	81
Chapter 8	95
Chapter 9	108
Chapter 10	120
Chapter 11	135
Chapter 12	149
Chapter 13	159
Chapter 14	172
Chapter 15	192
Chapter 16	207
Chapter 17	225
Chapter 18	248
About the Novel	272

Introduction:

Emma never thought her life would be anything but ordinary, but everything changed the day the shadows began to follow her. In a world where nothing feels quite right, she is left grappling with fragments of memories she can't piece together. Confused and unsure of who she really is, Emma finds herself caught between a past she can't remember and a future that seems increasingly impossible to grasp.

As dark forces close in around her, Emma is forced to confront the truth that someone she trusted may have played a role in the mysterious events that have upended her world. But even more troubling is the presence of a shadowy entity—one that seems to know more about her than she does. In this race against time, Emma must find a way to navigate a web of lies, danger, and heartbreak.

With each step, the answers she seeks seem further out of reach. But Emma is determined to uncover the truth, even if it means facing her deepest fears and confronting the horrifying reality of her past. As she embarks on a journey that will test her strength, her loyalty, and her very sense of self, Emma realizes that her destiny is far more complicated—and terrifying—than she ever could have imagined.

Chapter 1: The Weight of Ambition

The night air was thick with tension, the only sounds were from his ragged breaths and the hurried slap of his boots against the wet pavement. The dim glow of streetlights flickered against the slick surfaces of buildings as he weaved through narrow alleyways, his heartbeat pounding louder than his footsteps.

His fingers fumbled with the zipper of his backpack, desperation clawing at his movements. He needed to get it out—needed to get rid of it. The small box inside was heavier than it should have been, as if it carried the weight of something far beyond his understanding.

A sudden turn, a miscalculation. He skidded to a stop, eyes darting wildly. A dead end.

Terror gripped him, raw and suffocating. His trembling hands finally pried open the box, but in his panic, a small green crystal inside tumbled free. It hit the cold pavement with a soft clink and rolled, spinning toward the edge of a shallow stream running alongside the alley. He lunged for it, but his fingers grasped nothing but damp air. The crystal vanished into the water with barely a ripple.

Tears welled in his eyes. He turned, breath hitching, chest heaving.

Then—it struck.

A force unseen, a terror undefined. We can only say the night swallowed him whole.

Elsewhere, The shrill beeping of an alarm clock shattered the quiet morning air. A groggy hand slapped at the snooze button before Emma bolted upright, eyes wide in realization.

"The second alarm!" she gasped, throwing off the covers.

She scrambled out of bed, nearly tripping over a pile of clothes as she rushed toward the bathroom. A five-year-old giggle echoed from down the hall, followed by the unmistakable sound of something toppling over.

"Lily! What are you up to?" she called, frantically brushing her teeth with one hand while pulling on a sweater with the other.

"I'm getting ready!" came the innocent reply, followed by a loud thud.

Emma groaned, rinsed her mouth, and rushed into Lily's room. The little girl stood triumphantly on her bed, her tiny arms buried in a sweater three sizes too big.

"That's not your school uniform, sweetheart." Emma sighed, hiding a smile as she helped Lily change.

Downstairs, breakfast was a chaotic affair of spilled milk, mismatched shoes, and a race to find backpacks. Emma tossed a piece of toast in her mouth while wrestling Lily's hair into a ponytail.

"We are going to be so late!" she muttered, ushering Lily out the door.

As they hurried toward the school van, Emma exhaled and laughed as Lily waved goodbye. Another hectic morning, but she wouldn't trade it for anything.

Just as she set off Lily to the school van, her phone buzzed. Emma pulled it from her pocket and saw Jack's name flashing on the screen.

"Emma, where are you? You're late!" his voice came through, tinged with impatience.

"I know, I know! I'm on my way!" she huffed, already unlocking the bike chained to the rack.

She hopped on, pedaling fast, weaving through the morning bustle. The streets were packed—cars honking, drivers gesturing in frustration. Emma groaned. "Great. Just what I needed."

Seeing the gridlock ahead, she veered onto the narrow sidewalk path, dodging pedestrians. "Sorry! Excuse me! Coming through!" she called out, squeezing past startled walkers and tight spaces between lampposts. A man holding a cup of coffee barely moved in time, and a splash of steaming liquid landed on his shirt. "Oh! Sorry!" she yelled over her shoulder, wincing at his disgruntled expression.

She zigzagged between newspaper stands, street vendors, and slow-moving crowds. A vendor selling roasted corn gave her a disapproving shake of his head as she nearly clipped the corner of his cart. "I swear, one day I'm going to get arrested for reckless biking," she muttered to herself.

A sudden blast of wind caught her hair as she sped up, pumping her legs harder. Her mind raced along with her wheels. This job isn't for everyone. It's chaotic, exhausting, and unpredictable. Most people wouldn't last a week. The long hours, the unpredictable calls, the constant state of being on edge—it wore people down fast.

Yet, despite the madness, despite the sleepless nights and rushed mornings, she kept pushing forward. She might be late, but she was getting there. And in this job, that was half the battle won.

Emma finally skidded to a stop in front of the bank, breathing hard. The place was a mess—police lights flashing, officers speaking with anxious bank employees, and shattered glass from a broken window glittering on the pavement. The aftermath of an attempted robbery.

Jack stood near the entrance, arms crossed, shaking his head as he spotted her.