

Part One:

Grace

Chapter 1

It was one moment in particular. The moment that brought Grace to the shadow world. It was the last in a series of twisted plot lines laid heavy in her lap. It was the sum total of crap moments that led Grace to do it. Grace was eighteen and those moments had been piling up inside her since she was six. She couldn't shrug them off anymore. At first, she could train her mind to forget them, she could write them down and burn the pages with defiance, she could tuck them away in the extra alcoves inside. But she couldn't do this anymore. She was full and the it all needed to spill out somewhere, but nothing was big enough to hold it.

Grace had spent most of her life alone. She didn't have any trusted allies, confidants. She didn't have any friends. She was surrounded by people with whom her connection was dim. It wasn't that she was awkward or different on the outside. But on the inside, Grace felt things that set her apart from the others. She had trenches dug deep in places where there should have been rainbows and unicorns and sweet sixteen parties. Instead there were the faded footprints of a memory that trampled her, there were ghosts of un-lived lives and unspoken truths that appeared before her. There were layers of different that threatened the glue she held herself together with. All of this had placed her squarely in the center of a mystery that she was unraveling. An investigation that set her in motion downhill at high speeds to see what a crash really felt like.

Grace, was the epitome of cool. She was kind to everyone she met and it was easy for her to make people laugh. She didn't appear to take

anything too seriously and that kept her safe from ridicule. She could have been friends with whomever she chose, but she kept most people at a distance. The only people she let in were those as mysterious as her own past, or those who might help her unravel her own mystery.

Grace had one relationship. She was fifteen when she met Austin. He didn't go to school with her, he was eight years older than she was. Austin represented a chance to know more and he played a very particular role in Grace's investigation. Being with Austin alienated most everyone else from Grace's life. He was the driving momentum that led Grace to the site of her crash.

The closer Grace got to her crash site, the more she was seeing and hearing things that others didn't. It was beginning to get hard to tell what was real and what wasn't anymore. Let's be honest, if you couldn't pick reality out from a lineup of insanity, would you tell anyone?

She ended up in front of her bathroom mirror, reliving mistakes, replaying other's opinions and actions and watching shame and regret battle it out on her skin.

She didn't start out like this. In fact, she was quite the opposite.