

I

Porter

Day I • 8:23 p.m.

Darkness.

It swirled around him deep and thick, eating the light and leaving nothing behind but an inky void. A fog choked his thoughts—the words tried to come together, tried to form a cohesive sentence, to find meaning, but the moment they seemed close, they were swallowed up and gone, replaced by a growing sense of dread, a feeling of heaviness—his body sinking into the murky depths of a long-forgotten body of water.

Moist scent.

Mildew.

Damp.

Sam Porter wanted to open his eyes.

Had to open his eyes.

They fought him though, held tight.

His head ached, throbbed.

A pulsing pain behind his right ear—at his temple too.

“Try not to move, Sam. Wouldn’t want you to get sick.”

The voice was distant, muffled, familiar.

Porter was lying down.

Cold steel beneath the tips of his fingers.

He remembered the shot then. A needle at the base of his neck, a quick stab, cold liquid rushing under his skin into the muscle, then—

Porter forced his eyes to open, the heavy lids fighting him. Dry, burning.

He tried to rub them, his right hand reaching out only to be pulled back when the chain at his wrist went taut.

His breath caught, and he forced himself to a sitting position, his head spinning as the blood rushed out. He almost fell back.

“Whoa, easy, Sam. The etorphine will work out of your system quickly now that you’re awake. Just give it a minute.”

A light blinked on, a bright halogen aimed squarely at his face. Porter squinted but refused to look away, his eyes fixed on the man beside the light, the dull, shadowed shape.

“Bishop?” Porter barely recognized his own voice, the dry gravel of it.

“How you been, Sam?” The shadow took a step to his right, turned over an empty five-gallon paint bucket, and sat.

“Get that damn light out of my eyes.”

Porter yanked at the chain on his wrist—the other end of the handcuffs rattled around a thick pipe—water, maybe gas. “What the fuck is this?”

Anson Bishop reached over to the light and turned it slightly to the left. A shop light, mounted on some kind of stand. The light struck a cinder-block wall with a water heater in the far corner, an old washer and dryer along the far side.

“Better?”

Porter tugged at the chain again.

Bishop gave him a half smile and shrugged.

The last time Porter saw him, his hair was dark brown and close cropped. It was longer now, and lighter, unruly. Three or four days of scruff marred his face. His business casual attire was gone, replaced by jeans and a dark gray hoodie.

“You’re looking a little ratty,” Porter said.

“Desperate times.”

He couldn’t change his eyes, the coldness behind them.

His eyes never changed.

Bishop pulled a small spoon out of his back pocket, a grapefruit spoon, and twirled it absent-mindedly between his fingers, the serrated edge catching the light.

Porter didn't acknowledge the utensil. Instead, he looked down, tapping the metal beneath him with his index finger. "Is this the same kind of gurney you chained Emory to?"

"More or less."

"Couldn't find a cot?"

"Cots break."

A dark red stain pooled out from under the gurney, a deep bluish on the filthy concrete floor. Porter didn't ask about that. His fingers came away sticky after touching the underside of the metal. He didn't ask about that, either. A few shelves lined the wall to his left, stacked full with random painting supplies—cans, brushes, tarps. The ceiling above was constructed of wood, two-by-six boards spaced about sixteen inches apart. Exposed electrical wiring, water pipes, and air ducts filled the space between. "This is a residential basement. Not a big house. Older, though. That pipe above your head is shielded in asbestos, so I wouldn't recommend chewing on it. I'm guessing the place is abandoned, because your light there is plugged in to an extension cord running upstairs to . . . what, some kind of battery pack? Not a generator. We'd hear that. You didn't bother with any of these plugs along the wall, so that tells me the power isn't on in this place. It's also cold as balls. I can see my breath, so the heat isn't on. Again, that points to an abandoned house. Nobody wants to risk frozen pipes."

Bishop appeared pleased with this, a thin smile edging his lips.

Porter continued. "Wall to wall, this house is fairly narrow. That suggests a shotgun home. Considering you wouldn't want to be in one of the trendier neighborhoods where residents have Starbucks, the Internet, and tend to report known felons to the police on sight, I'd say you're more likely to stick to the West Side. Maybe someplace like Wood Street. A lot of empty houses on Wood."

With his free hand, Porter reached for his gun under his thick coat but found only the empty holster. His cell phone was gone too.

"Always the cop."

Wood Street was a good fifteen-minute drive without traffic from his apartment on Wabash, and Porter had been a block from his house when he felt the stab at his neck. Of course, this was all a complete guess, but Porter wanted to keep Bishop talking. The more he talked, the less he thought about that spoon.

The throbbing in Porter's head settled behind his right eye.

"Aren't you going to try and convince me to turn myself in? How you can spare me from the death penalty if I cooperate?"

"Nope."

This time Bishop did smile. "Hey, you want to see something?"

Porter would have said no, but he knew whatever he said didn't really matter. This man had a plan in mind, a purpose. Snatching a Chicago Metro detective off the street was not a risk one would take without a good reason.

He could feel his key ring in his right front pocket. Bishop had left it when he took his gun and phone. He had a handcuff key on his key ring, and most handcuffs took the same key. While he was a rookie, he was told this was because the person who cuffed a perp most likely wouldn't be the same person who would later uncuff the perp. A suspect could easily be transferred two or three times during booking. That in mind, they were taught to take away keys when patting someone down, *all keys*. Any criminal worth their salt owned their own handcuff key on the off chance some rookie forgot to check. Porter would have to remove the key ring from his right pocket, somehow maneuver it to his left hand, unlock the handcuffs, and take down Bishop before the man could cross the five feet that separated them.

The man didn't appear to have a weapon, only a spoon.

"Eyes front, Sam," Bishop said.

Porter turned back to him.

Bishop stood up and crossed the basement to a small table next to the washing machine. He returned to his seat, carrying a small wooden box with Porter's Glock sitting on top. He set the gun down on the floor beside him and thumbed the latch on the box, opening the lid.

Six eyeballs stared up at Porter from the red velvet lining inside.

Bishop's past victims.

Porter looked down at the gun.

"Eyes front," Bishop repeated with a soft chuckle.

This wasn't right. Bishop always followed the same pattern. He would remove his victims' ear, then the eyes, followed by the tongue, and mail each to the victim's family along with a note in a white box tied off with a black string. Always. He never deviated from this. He didn't keep trophies. He believed he was punishing the family for some wrong they committed. Twisted vigilante justice. He didn't keep the eyes. He never kept the—

"We'd better get started. "Bishop ran his hand over the top of the box, a loving caress, then set it down on the floor beside the gun and held the spoon up to the light.

Porter rolled off the gurney, crying out when the metal of the handcuff tore into the flesh of his wrist, the pipe pulled back. He tried to ignore the pain and awkwardly shoved his left hand down into his right pocket to retrieve the keys while also kicking the gurney in Bishop's direction. His fingers slipped over the keys as Bishop dodged the gurney and thrust his leg out, impacting Porter's left shin. Porter's leg fell out from beneath him, and he crashed down to the ground, the handcuff on his right arm catching on the pipe and yanking him hard enough to dislocate his shoulder.

Before he could react, he felt the sting of another needle, this one at his thigh. He tried to look down, but Bishop pulled at his hair, snapping his head back.

Consciousness began to drift away. Porter fought it, fought with all he had. He fought long enough to see the grapefruit spoon approach his left eye, long enough to feel the serrated edge cut into the tarsal plate beneath his eyeball as Bishop forced the spoon into his eye socket, long enough for—

"Was she hot?"

Porter jerked in his seat, a seat belt holding him back. He took in a deep breath, his head thrashing side to side, his eyes landing on Nash in the driver's seat. "What? Who?"

Nash smirked. "The girl from your dream. You were moaning."

Six eyeballs.

Porter, still disoriented, realized he was in the passenger seat of Nash's Chevy, an old '72 Nova he'd picked up two months back when his prized Ford Fiesta sputtered and died on the 290 at three in the morning, forcing him to call headquarters for a ride when he couldn't reach Porter.

Porter looked out the window. It was coated in a thin film of road grime and ice. "Where are we?"

"We're on Hayes, coming up on the park," he replied, flipping on his blinker. "Maybe you should sit this one out."

Porter shook his head. "I'm all right."

Nash made the left into Jackson Park and followed the recently plowed access road, the red and blue flashing lights bouncing off the dark trees around them. "It's been four months, Sam. If you're still having trouble sleeping, you should talk to someone. Doesn't have to be me or Clair, just . . . someone."

"I'm all right," Porter repeated.

They passed a baseball field on the right, forgotten for the winter, and continued deeper into the bare trees. Up ahead there were more lights—a half dozen cars, maybe more. Four uniform patrol vehicles, an ambulance, a fire department van. Large floodlights lined the edge of the lagoon, and propane heaters littered an area roped in by yellow crime scene tape.

Nash pulled to a stop behind the van, dropped the car into Park, and killed the engine. It sputtered twice and sounded like it was gearing up for a stellar backfire before finally going silent. Porter noted several officers staring in their direction as they climbed out of the car into the icy winter air.

"We could have driven my car," Porter told Nash, his boots crunching in the newly fallen snow.

Porter owned a 2011 Dodge Charger.

Most of their coworkers referred to the vehicle as Porter's "midlife crisis car"—it had replaced a Toyota Camry two years back on his fiftieth birthday. Porter's late wife, Heather, bought the sports car for him as a surprise after their Toyota was vandalized and left for dead

in one of the less “police-friendly” parts of town on the South Side. Porter was first to admit sitting behind the wheel shaved a few years off his subconscious age, but mostly the car just made him smile.

Heather had baked the key into his birthday cake, and he almost chipped a tooth when he found it.

She led him down the steps and out in front of their apartment blindfolded, then sang “Happy Birthday” to him in a voice that had little chance of getting her on *American Idol*.

Porter thought of her every time he climbed in, but it seemed fewer and fewer things reminded him of her these days, her face gradually becoming a little more fuzzy in his mind.

“Your car is part of the problem. We always drive your car, and Connie over there spends her days rotting in my driveway. If I drive her, I’m reminded of the fact that I want to restore her. If I’m reminded of the fact that I want to restore her, I might actually get out to the garage and work on it.”

“Connie?”

“Cars should have a name.”

“No, they shouldn’t. Cars shouldn’t have names, and you have no idea how to restore her . . . it . . . whatever. I think you got that beater home, and the first time you picked up a wrench you realized you wouldn’t be done in forty-three minutes like those guys on *Overhaulin’*,” Porter said.

“That show is bullshit. They should tell you how long it really takes.”

“Could be worse. At least you didn’t get hooked on HGTV and convince yourself you can flip a house in your spare time.”

“This is true. Although, they knock those out in twenty-two minutes for a much bigger return on investment,” Nash replied. “If I did a house or two, I could pay someone to restore the car. Hey, there’s Clair—”

They crossed under the yellow crime scene tape and made their way toward the shore of the lagoon. Clair was standing next to one of the heaters, her cell phone pressed to her ear. When she saw them, she nodded toward the shoreline, covered the microphone, and said, “We think that’s Ella Reynolds,” before returning to her call.

Porter's heart sank.

Ella Reynolds was a fifteen-year-old girl who had gone missing after school near Logan Square three weeks earlier. She was last seen getting off her bus about two blocks from her home. Her parents wasted no time reporting her missing, and the Amber Alerts were running within an hour of her disappearance. Little good they did. The police hadn't received a single worthwhile tip.

Nash started toward the water's edge, and Porter followed.

The lagoon was frozen.

Four orange cones lined the ice offshore, yellow tape running between them, creating a rectangle. The snow had been swept away.

Porter tentatively stepped out onto the ice, listening for the telltale crackle beneath his feet. No matter how many boot tracks waffled the lagoon's frozen surface, it always made him nervous when they were his boots.

As Porter edged closer, the girl came into view. The ice was clear as glass.

She stared up through it with blank eyes.

Her skin was horribly pale, with a blue tint except around those eyes. There, her skin was a dark purple. Her lips were parted as if she were about to say something, words that would never come.

Porter knelt to get a better look.

She wore a red coat, black jeans, a white knit cap with matching gloves, and what looked like pink tennis shoes. Her arms were loose at her sides, and her legs curved beneath her, disappearing into the dark water. Water normally bloated bodies, but at these temperatures the cold tended to preserve them. Porter preferred bloated. When they appeared less human, he found it easier to process what he was looking at—he was less emotional.

This girl looked like somebody's baby, helpless and alone, sleeping under a blanket of glass.

Nash stood behind him, his eyes scanning the trees across the water. "They held the World's Fair out here in 1893. There used to be a Japanese garden across the lagoon, that whole wooded area over there. My father used to bring me up here when I was a kid. He said it went to shit during World War II. I think I read somewhere they

got the funding to restore it in the spring. See all the marked trees? They're coming down."

Porter followed his partner's gaze. The lagoon split into two branches—east and west—enclosing a small island. Many of the trees on Wooded Island had pink ribbons tied around them. A couple of benches littered the opposite shore, covered in a thin layer of white. "When do you suppose this freezes?"

Nash thought about this for a second. "Maybe late December, early January. Why?"

"If this is Ella Reynolds, how'd she get under the ice? She disappeared three weeks ago. It would have been frozen solid at that point."

Nash loaded a recent photo of Ella Reynolds on his phone and showed it to Porter. "Looks like her, but maybe it's just a coincidence—some other girl who fell through back when it was still soft."

"Looks just like her, though."

Clair came up beside them. She blew into her hands and rubbed them together. "That was Sophie Rodriguez with Missing Children—I sent her a picture, and she swears this is Ella Reynolds, but the clothes aren't a match. She says Ella was wearing a black coat when she disappeared. Three corroborating witnesses put her in a black coat on the bus, not red. She called the girl's mother—she said her daughter doesn't own a red coat, white hat, or white gloves."

"So either this is an entirely different girl, or somebody changed her clothes," Porter said. "We're a good fifteen miles from where Ella disappeared."

Clair bit at her lower lip. "The ME will have to get a positive ID."

"Who found her?"

Clair pointed to a patrol car at the far perimeter. "A little boy and his father—the kid's twelve." She glanced at the notes on her phone. "Scott Watts. He came out here with his father to see if the lagoons had frozen over enough for some skating lessons. Father's name is Brian. Said his son brushed away the snow and saw part of her arm. The father told his son to stand back and cleared away a little more on his own—enough to confirm it was a person—then he called 911. That was about an hour ago. The call came in at seven twenty-nine. I stowed them in a patrol car, in case you wanted to speak to them."

Porter scraped at the ice with his pointer finger, then glanced along the shoreline. Two CSI officers stood off to their left, eyeing the three of them warily. “Which one of you cleared this?” he asked.

The younger of the two, a woman who looked to be about thirty, with short blond hair, glasses, and a thick pink coat, raised her hand. “I did, sir.”

Her partner shuffled his feet. He looked to be about five years her senior. “I supervised. Why?”

“Nash? Hand me that?” He pointed toward a brush with long, white bristles sitting on top of one of the CSI officers’ kits.

Porter motioned for the two officers to come over. “It’s okay, I don’t usually bite.”

Back in November, Porter returned early from a leave of absence forced on him when his wife was killed during the robbery of a local convenience store. He had wanted to keep working, mainly because the work distracted him, kept his mind off what happened.

The days following her death, when he locked himself in their apartment, those were by far the worst. Reminders were everywhere.

Her face watched him from pictures on nearly every shelf. Her scent was in the air—for the first week, he couldn’t sleep unless he spread some of her clothes on the bed. He sat in that apartment and thought of nothing but what he would do to the guy who killed her, thoughts he didn’t want in his head.

Ultimately, the Four Monkey Killer had gotten him out of that apartment.

It was also 4MK who exacted revenge on the man who killed Porter’s wife. 4MK was the reason people like these two CSI officers acted odd around him. Not exactly intimidation, more like awe.

He was the cop who had let 4MK into the investigation under the guise of CSI. He was the cop 4MK stabbed in his own home. He was the cop who caught the serial killer and let him go.

Four months later, and they all talked about it, just not to him.

The two officers walked over.

The woman crouched down beside him.

Porter used the brush to clear away the snow nearest the shoreline and along the outer edges they’d previously cleared. When he ex-

panded the circle by another two feet, he set the brush down and ran his palm over the ice, starting at the center and slowly moving out toward the edge. He stopped about four inches from the snow. “There. Feel that.”

The younger investigator removed her glove and hesitantly followed his lead, her fingertips brushing the ice.

She stopped about an inch from his palm.

“Do you feel that?”

She nodded. “There’s a small dip. Not much, but it’s there.”

“Follow it around. Mark it with this.” He handed her a Sharpie.

A minute later she had drawn a neat square over the body, with two smaller squares approximately four inches wide jutting out on each side.

“Guess that answers that,” Porter said.

Nash frowned. “What are we looking at?”

Porter stood, helping the woman to her feet. “What’s your name?”

“CSI Lindsay Rolfes, sir.”

“CSI Rolfes, can you explain what this means?”

She thought about it for a second, her eyes darting from Porter to the ice, then back again. Then she understood. “The lagoon was frozen, and someone cut the ice, probably with a cordless chainsaw, then put her in the water. If she’d fallen in, there’d be a jagged break, not a square like this. But this doesn’t make sense . . .”

“What?”

She frowned, reached into her kit, took out a cordless drill, attached a one-inch bit, and made two holes, one outside her line, the other near the body. With a ruler, she then measured the depth of both from the top to the water. “I don’t get it—she’s beneath the freeze line.”

“I don’t follow,” Clair said.

“He replaced the water,” Porter said.

Rolfes nodded. “Yeah, but why? He could have cut a hole and pushed her body under the existing ice, then let the hole freeze up naturally. That would have been much faster and easier. She would have disappeared, maybe for good.”

Clair sighed. “Can you explain for those of us who didn’t take Ice-hole 101?”

Porter motioned for the ruler, and Rolfes handed it to him. “The ice here is at least four inches thick. You can see the water line here.” He pointed at the mark on the ruler. “If you cut out a square of this ice and removed it, there would be a four-inch ledge from the top of the ice to the water. Then let’s say you put the girl’s body in the hole, she sinks, and you want to make the hole disappear. There’s only one way to do that. You’d have to wait for the water to freeze around her, at least a thin layer, then fill the hole with more water to the top of the ice, level it off.”

“It would take at least two hours to freeze,” Rolfes said. “Maybe a little less, with the temperatures we’ve had lately.”

Porter was nodding. “He kept adding water until this fresh ice was at the same height as the surrounding ice. Our unsub is patient. This was very time consuming.” He turned to the CSI supervisor. “We’ll need this ice. Everything on top of her, and at least a few inches surrounding this square. There’s a good chance some trace got in with the water while it froze. Our unsub hovered here for a long time.”

The supervisor looked like he was about to argue, then nodded reluctantly. He knew Porter was right.

Porter’s gaze went back to the overgrown mess of trees across the water. “What I don’t understand is why whoever did this didn’t dump her over there. Dragging a body out here in the open, taking the time to cut the ice, fill it, wait for it to freeze . . . that’s a lot of risk. The unsub could have carried her across the bridge and left her anywhere over there, and she’d go undiscovered until spring when they started work. Instead, he spends hours to stage her in the water near a high-traffic area. Risks getting caught. Why? To create the illusion that she was here much longer than she really had been? He had to know we’d figure that out.”

“Dead bodies don’t float,” Nash pointed out. “At least, not for a few days. Look at her. She’s perfectly preserved. I’m still not sure why she’s floating.”

Porter ran his finger along the edge of the square, stopping at one of the two smaller squares on the side. He lowered his face to the ice, looking down at her from the side. “I’ll be damned.”

“What?” Rolfes leaned in.

Porter ran his hand over the ice, above the girl's shoulders. When he found what he was looking for, he placed Rolfes's hand over it. She looked at him, her eyes growing as her fingers dug slightly into the ice. She reached for the same spot on the other side. "He kept her from sinking by placing something over this hole, probably a length of two-by-four based on these marks, then ran a string or thin rope around her body at the shoulders, and secured it to the board while the replacement water froze. When he was done, he cut the string. You can still feel the nubs here in the ice. There's enough left to keep her near the surface. You can see a thin rope if you look through the ice at the right angle."

"He wanted her to be found?" Clair said.

"He wanted to make an impact *if* she was found," Porter replied. "He went through a lot of trouble to stage this so it appeared like she froze beneath the lake's surface months ago, even though she's only been here for a few days at best, possibly less. We need to figure out why."

"This guy is playing with us," CSI Rolfes said. "Twisting the crime scene to fit some kind of narrative."

Self-preservation and fear are two of the strongest instincts of the human condition. Porter wasn't sure he wanted to meet the man who possessed neither. "Get her out of there," he finally said.

2

Porter

Day 1 • 11:24 p.m.

“You want me to come up?”

They were parked in front of Porter’s building on Wabash. Nash tapped at the gas to keep Connie from stalling. The night had grown bitterly cold.

Porter shook his head. “Go home and get some rest. We’ll hit the ground running in the morning.”

Using chainsaws, CSI had cut the ice around the girl as one large square, then carefully broke the ice away in manageable pieces, which were loaded into buckets and transported back to the crime lab for analysis. The girl’s body went to the morgue for identification. Porter put a call in to Tom Eisley, and the man agreed to go in early and contact him as soon as they made a positive identification. Uniformed patrol officers were still searching the park when Porter and Nash left, but at that point they had not found anything. Clair agreed to stay and review footage taken by the lone security camera placed at the park’s entrance. She wasn’t quite sure what she was looking for, and Porter couldn’t give her any direction other than to watch for something unusual over the previous three weeks, particularly after hours. The park itself closed at dusk, and after that, aside from a few lights in the most common areas, the grounds were dark. There were no

permanent lights at the lagoon. Anyone coming or going after dark would stand out.

“About earlier, on the way to the lagoon—” Porter began.

Nash cut him off. “You don’t have to explain. It’s okay.”

Porter waved a hand in the air. “I haven’t been getting a lot of sleep. Not since Heather died. Every time I step into our apartment, the place feels so empty. I expect her to come walking in from one of the other rooms or through the front door with an armload of groceries, and she never does. I don’t want to glance over and see her side of the bed empty. I don’t want to see her toothbrush in the bathroom, but I can’t bring myself to throw it out. Same with her clothes. About a week ago I nearly boxed everything up for Goodwill. I got the first blouse into a box but had to stop. Shuffling her clothes around had filled the air with her scent, and it was almost like she was back again, if only for a little while. I know I have to move forward, but I’m not sure I can. Not yet, anyway.”

Nash reached over and squeezed his friend’s shoulder. “You will. When the time is right, you will. Nobody is rushing you. You just need to know we’re all here for you. If you need anything at all.” Nash fumbled with the steering wheel, tugging at a flap in the faux leather. “Maybe it would help to move. Find a new place, start over.”

Porter shook his head. “I can’t do that. We found this place together. It’s home.”

“Maybe a vacation, then?” Nash suggested. “You’ve got plenty of time off saved up.”

“Maybe, yeah.” Porter stared up at the face of his building.

He wouldn’t move. Not anytime soon.

The door of the Chevy squeaked as Porter tugged the handle and stepped out. “Holy balls, it’s cold.”

“Time to break out the long johns and whiskey.”

Porter knocked on the roof of the car twice. “If you put some time into this thing, it could be one sweet ride.”

Nash offered a smile. “Meet in the war room at seven?”

“Yeah, seven’s good.”

Then he was gone.

Porter watched the car disappear down the road before making his way into the small foyer of his building, carefully avoiding the piles of frozen dog poop on the steps. He passed the mailboxes and took the stairs. He didn't do elevators anymore, not if given a choice.

Stepping into his apartment, he was assaulted by the mixed odors of a dozen take-out meals. The worst of the perpetrators, a pile of pizza boxes on the kitchen table, filled the air with stale cheese and old pepperoni.

Porter hung his coat over the back of a chair and stepped into the bedroom, flipping on the light.

The bed had been pushed to the far corner of the room, along with the two nightstands.

Hundreds of pictures and notes, Post-its, and newspaper articles filled the wall where the bed used to be. Some were connected by string. When he ran out of string, he drew lines with a black marker.

This was everything he had on 4MK, or Anson Bishop, or Paul Watson—all of them one and the same. He had details on Bishop's past crimes, but mostly he focused on just where Bishop might have gone after his escape.

In the corner of the room, a laptop sat on the floor, the screen glowing bright. Porter lifted it up and studied the display. He used Google alerts (surprisingly simple for someone lacking the most basic computer skills) to flag every mention, every story, every sighting of Bishop, Watson, or 4MK on the Internet and drop the results into his personal e-mail account. Sometimes it would take hours, but he would sort through each message and plot out the locations mentioned on the large world map tacked to the wall at the center of all his other data. Maps too. Dozens of detailed maps, all the major cities.

Four months of data.

Thumbtacks filled the maps—red represented a sighting, blue for the location of the reporter writing the story, and yellow for the home of anyone who had gone missing or had been murdered in a way similar to 4MK's MO. The copycats were everywhere. While many of the thumbtacks centered on Chicago, they went as far as Brazil and Moscow.

Porter picked up a yellow thumbtack and located the lagoon at Jackson Park on the Chicago map. “Ella Reynolds, missing since January 22, 2015, possibly found February 12, 2015,” he mumbled to himself. He had no reason to believe 4MK was responsible, but that tack would stay there until he was sure he was not.

His eyes were heavy with lack of sleep.

He had a brutal headache.

He sat in the middle of the floor and began sifting through all the Google alerts for today, all 159 of them.

When his phone rang two hours later, he considered ignoring the call, then thought better of it. Nobody called at one thirty in the morning without reason.

“Porter,” he said.

Why did his voice always sound louder in the middle of the night?

At first there was silence. Then: “Detective? This is Sophie Rodriguez with Missing Children. I got your number from Clair Norton.”

“What can I do for you, Ms. Rodriguez?”

More silence. “We have another missing girl. You and your partner need to get down here.”

3

Porter

Day 2 • 2:21 a.m.

Here turned out to be a graystone in Bronzeville on King Drive.

Rodriguez didn't provide any details when she called, only said this case tied to the body of the girl found in the park earlier, and he'd want to be there.

Porter parked his Charger on the street behind Nash's Chevy and trudged through the snowbank at the side of the road and up into the home at the corner. There was no need to knock. A uniformed officer at the door recognized him and ushered him inside. He found Nash and a woman he didn't recognize sitting in a parlor to the left of the entrance. A man in his late forties, salt-and-pepper hair, fit, wearing a tweed sport coat and jeans, stood beside Nash. Another woman, no doubt his wife, sat on the couch with a crushed tissue in her hand.

The woman sitting beside her rose as Porter entered the room. "Detective Porter? I'm Sophie Rodriguez from Missing Children. Thank you for coming. I know it's late."

Porter shook her hand and studied the room.

Most of these graystones had been built around the turn of the twentieth century. This particular one had been painstakingly restored with original trim and fixtures. The rugs looked authentic too but had to be knockoffs, careful reproductions of the originals. Antique furniture filled the space.

The man who had been speaking to Nash offered his hand. “I’m Dr. Randal Davies, and this is my wife, Grace. Thank you so much for coming out at this hour.”

The man gestured to a chair next to the couch.

Porter declined. “It’s been a rather long night. I think I’d better stand.”

“Coffee, then?”

“Please. Black is fine.”

Dr. Davies excused himself and disappeared down the hall.

Porter glanced at Rodriguez, who had returned to her seat on the couch.

“My office received a call from Mrs. Davies shortly after midnight, when her daughter didn’t come home,” Rodriguez said.

Mrs. Davies looked up, her eyes red and swollen. “Lili works downtown at an art gallery. On Thursdays she goes straight there after school and takes an Uber home when they close at eleven. She is always home by eleven thirty. If for some reason she’s running late, she texts me—she knows her father and I worry, so she *always* texts me. She is a responsible young lady, and this is her first job and she knows we worry . . .” She dabbed at her eyes with the tissue. “I hadn’t heard from her by eleven forty-five, so I called her, and it went straight to voice mail. Then I called the gallery and spoke to her supervisor, Ms. Edwins. She said Lili didn’t show up for her shift. She had tried to reach her several times and got the same thing: voice mail. No rings, just voice mail. I know that means her phone is off, which is very unlike her. She never turns her phone off. She knows I worry. I called her best friend, Gabby, then—”

“What is Gabby’s last name?” Porter asked.

“Deegan. Gabrielle Deegan. I gave her contact information to your partner.” When she said this, she glanced at Rodriguez. Porter didn’t correct her.

Mrs. Davies continued. “Gabby said she hadn’t seen her all day. She wasn’t at school, and she wasn’t replying to text messages. This isn’t like Lili, you understand. She’s a straight-A student. She hasn’t missed a day of school since the fourth grade, when she had chicken pox.” Mrs. Davies paused, studying Porter’s face. “You’re the detec-

tive who chased . . . oh God, do you think 4MK took our daughter? Is that why you're here?" Her eyes went wide and flooded with tears.

"This isn't 4MK," Porter assured her, although he wasn't certain of that himself. "At this point there is no reason to assume anyone has taken your daughter."

"She wouldn't disappear like this."

Porter tried to change the subject. "Where does she go to school?"

"Wilcox Academy."

Dr. Davies returned and handed Porter a steaming cup of coffee, then stood beside his wife on the couch. "I know what you're thinking, and like we told your partners here, Lili doesn't have a boyfriend. She wouldn't skip school. She most definitely wouldn't skip work—she loves that gallery. Something is wrong. The Find My iPhone feature is activated on her phone, but it's not coming up on our account. I called Apple, and they said her phone is offline. Our daughter would not turn off her phone."

Nash cleared his throat. "Mrs. Davies, can you tell Detective Porter what Lili was wearing today when she was last seen?"

Mrs. Davies nodded. "Her favorite coat, a red Perro parka, a white hat, matching gloves, and dark jeans. On cold days, Lili preferred to change into her uniform once she arrived on campus. She stopped in the kitchen and said goodbye to me before she left for school this morning. That's her favorite coat. She bought it at Barneys with her first paycheck. She was so proud of that coat."

Rodriguez pursed her lips.

Porter said nothing.

4

Porter

Day 2 • 3:02 a.m.

“How is that even possible?”

“We can show them a photo of the jacket to try and confirm,” Nash suggested.

Porter shook his head. “We can’t show them a picture of a dead girl.”

The three of them stood outside the Davieses’ graystone, their breath creating an icy fog between them.

“There is no way someone had time to kidnap Lili Davies, put her clothes on Ella Reynolds, and bury her under the ice at the park. There is no way. There just isn’t enough time.” Porter shuffled his feet. The temperature must be in single digits. “That means he would have been out at the lake during daylight hours, while it was open. Somebody would have seen him.”

Nash thought about this for a second. “In this weather, the park is nearly deserted. The only real risk would be when the unsub carried the body from his vehicle to the water. Unless someone got close, nothing else would really jump out as a red flag. He would just look like some guy out by the lagoon, maybe ice-fishing or something. If he set up with a fishing pole, I bet he could spend the day without anyone giving him a second glance.”

“Logistics aside,” Rodriguez said, “what’s the point?”

Porter and Nash exchanged a glance. They both knew serial killers rarely had a point, at least not one that made sense to anyone but them. And although they only had one victim, if she tied to this second missing girl, they might be looking at a serial.

“Do Ella Reynolds and Lili Davies know each other?” Porter asked Rodriguez.

Rodriguez shook her head. “Her parents only knew the name from television.”

“We should check with Lili’s friend Gabby,” Porter suggested. “What time did she leave for school?”

Rodriguez glanced at her notes. “Quarter after seven.”

Nash closed his eyes and crunched the numbers. “That only allows about twelve hours from the time Lili disappeared to the time Ella was found frozen in the lake.”

“Look at you doing math.” Porter said, and snickered.

“If this is one guy, he’s fast. Efficient,” Nash said.

Porter turned back to Rodriguez. “Sophie, right?”

She nodded.

“Go back in and search the girl’s room. Look for anything out of the ordinary. Get her computer—check her e-mails, saved documents. Look for a diary, photos . . . You find anything at all, you call me. Find out her route to school. Does she walk or get a ride? With friends or alone? Got it?”

Rodriguez chewed on her bottom lip. “What does this mean for Lili?”

Porter wasn’t ready to go there. He turned back to Nash. “Let’s go wake up Easley.”

5

Porter

Day 2 • 4:18 a.m.

The Cook County Medical Examiner's Office and morgue was off West Harrison in downtown Chicago. At this hour, Porter and Nash ran into little traffic, and they found the parking spaces out front to be relatively deserted. The guard at the front desk looked up at them with groggy eyes and nodded a hello. "Sign in, please."

Porter scribbled *Burt Reynolds* on the clipboard and handed it to Nash, who wrote *Dolly Parton* before returning it to the desk and following him to the bank of elevators at the back of the lobby. Porter wasn't a fan of elevators but he was even less a fan of several flights of stairs.

The second elevator from the left arrived first, and he followed Nash inside before he could change his mind.

Porter hit the button marked 3. "Dolly was hot back in the day."

"Still is," Nash replied. "A true GILF."

"GILF?"

"I'll explain when you're a little older, Sam."

The doors opened on an empty hallway.

Nash eyed the vending machine, then gave it a pass, heading for the double doors at the end of the hallway.

They found Tom Eisley at his desk. He glanced up at them as they came in before returning to whatever he was reading.

Porter expected him to say something about the time. Instead, he asked, "Have either of you ever seen the ocean?"

Porter and Nash exchanged a look.

Eisley closed the book on his desk and stood. "Never mind. Not sure I'm ready to talk about this yet."

"I take it you're working on our girl?" Porter asked.

Eisley sighed. "I'm trying. We've been warming up her body since they brought her in here. She wasn't quite frozen, you understand, just way below normal temperature. It's going to make time of death difficult to determine."

"Do you know the cause?"

Eisley opened his mouth, prepared to say something, then thought better of it. "Not yet. I'm going to need a few more hours. You're welcome to wait, if you'd like."

Before they could respond, he disappeared through the door leading to the autopsy room.

Nash nodded at Porter. "Sounds like this might be a while."

Porter fell into a yellow vinyl chair near Eisley's door, his eyes heavy with lack of sleep.

6

Porter

Day 2 • 7:26 a.m.

“Gentlemen?”

Porter’s eyes fluttered open, and it took him a moment to realize he was in Eisley’s office at the morgue. He had slid down in the yellow vinyl chair, his neck cricked from being at an odd angle. Nash was slumped over at Eisley’s desk, his head resting on a stack of papers.

Eisley picked up a medical text, lifted the book about three feet above the desk, then released. The book crashed down, loud and hard, and Nash snapped back in the chair, drool rolling down his chin. “What the—”

“Chicago’s finest, hard at work,” Eisley chided. “Follow me.”

Porter glanced up at the clock on the far wall—about half past seven. A little over three hours had passed since they arrived here. “Shit, didn’t mean to fall asleep,” he mumbled. He pulled his cell phone from his pocket—three missed calls from Clair, no voice mail.

Eisley led them past his desk and through the double doors at the back of his office into the large examination room. Both Porter and Nash grabbed gloves from the box hanging on the wall near the door.

Noises echoed in here.

This was always the first thought that popped into Porter’s head when he entered. Everything sounded different due to the beige tile on the floor and walls. The second thing that always hit him was the

temperature—he didn't know what the actual temperature was in the room, but it felt like it dropped nearly twenty degrees. Goose bumps prickled the back of his neck, and a shiver ran over him. The third thing, the one he'd never get used to, was the smell. It didn't smell bad, not today anyway, but the room smelled *strong*. The heavy scent of industrial cleaners attempted to mask the underlying odor of something else, something Porter preferred not to think about.

Fluorescent lights burned bright above, glimmering on stainless steel cabinets. A large, round surgical light arched over the examination table at the center of the room where the body they pulled out of the lake rested.

Eisley had closed the girl's eyes.

Sleeping beauty.

An electric blanket and four large lamps sat off to the side.

Eisley caught Porter looking at them. "We got lucky. She wasn't in the lake very long, and her body was below the freeze line. If she froze through and through, we'd need to wait a few days before we could autopsy. In her case it only took a few hours to raise her body temp enough to proceed."

"You haven't cut her open yet," Nash pointed out. "It doesn't look like you've started at all."

"You'd be surprised what a body can tell you if you know where to look," Eisley replied. "I won't be able to open her up until tomorrow; she's still quite cold. If I warm her up too fast, we run the risk of crystallization and cellular damage. That doesn't mean she can't offer up some answers while we wait. Unlike you two, I've been busy." He ran his hand through her hair. "She's been talking, and I've been listening."

"Okay, now you're creeping me out," Porter said.

Eisley offered a smile and took a step back from the table. "Would you like to know what I found?"

"That would be lovely."

He walked over to the side of the table and lifted her hand. "The cold water was extremely preserving. With most bodies found in the water, they can be difficult to print. The skin tends to expand, and we

have to reverse the effect before we can print. Like an extreme version of the pruning you probably experience in the bath.”

“I’m more of a shower guy,” Porter told him.

Eisley ignored the comment. “The near-freezing water kept her fingerprints completely intact, probably would through spring thaw.” He lowered her hand back to the table, placing it gently at her side. “The results came back about two hours ago. I confirmed this is Ella Reynolds, the girl who disappeared three weeks ago.”

Porter sighed. He expected as much, but there was something deflating about hearing the words spoken aloud. “What about a time of death or the cause?”

“As I said earlier, time of death can be a bit tricky because of the icy water. At this point, I would have to say no more than forty-eight hours ago but at least twenty-four. I’m hoping to narrow that down once I can get a look at her liver and other organs,” he explained. “Help me turn her over?”

Porter and Nash exchanged a look. Nash took a slight step back. For a homicide detective, he had an odd aversion to dead bodies.

Porter took the girl’s legs, and Eisley held her shoulders. Together, they turned her over.

Eisley ran a finger along a long, dark mark running across her back. “This is from the rope he used to hold her up in the water. The coloration tells me she was suspended post mortem. Soon after, though, otherwise it wouldn’t be so prominent, particularly through that thick coat she was wearing.” He nodded at her clothing, neatly piled on the stainless steel counter.

Nash walked, picked up the red coat, and began going through the pockets. “Did you see any identifying information on the clothing?”

“The clothing isn’t hers, is it.” Eisley said this more as fact than a question.

Porter turned to him. “Did you come to that conclusion?”

“I suspected as much, but I’m not sure I’d be willing to call it a conclusion. Everything seemed like a tight fit on her. Under normal circumstances, I would chalk that up to bloating from the water, but since there was so little, it seemed strange. Her undergarments and

jeans in particular were at least a size or two too small. She squeezed into them, but they're tight, uncomfortable even. Take a look at the hat," he said, gesturing at the counter. "There are letters written on the tag, most likely initials."

Nash set down the coat and picked up the white hat, turned it inside out. "L.D. It's a bit faded, but that's definitely what it says."

"Lili Davies," Porter said.

"Yeah, probably."

"Who's that?" Eisley asked.

"Another girl, went missing sometime yesterday," Porter told him.

"So whoever killed this girl dressed her in the other girl's clothing?"

"Looks that way."

"Huh."

Porter asked, "What about cause of death? I don't really see anything on the body. No wounds, no strangulation marks."

At this, Eisley lit up. "Ah, yes. And you're going to find this strange."

"How did she die?"

"She drowned."

Nash frowned. "That doesn't sound so strange. We found her under the ice in a lake."

Porter raised a hand. "You said the mark on her back was post mortem. Are you saying she was alive when he put her in the water?"

"Oh no, she was dead at that point. I'm saying she drowned, and then he put her in the lake." He went over to a microscope on a raised table to his left. "Take a look at this," he said, pointing at the device.

Porter walked over and looked down into the eyepiece. "What am I looking at?"

"When they first brought her in, I was able to snake a tube down into her lungs, and I extracted water, that water."

Porter frowned. "What are these specks floating in it?"

The edge of Eisley's mouth curled up. "That, my friend, is salt."

"She drowned in salt water?"

"Precisely."

Nash's face went from lost to confused, then back again. "We're in Chicago . . . the nearest ocean is what, a thousand miles from here?"

“The Atlantic would be the closest,” Eisley told him. “Baltimore, Maryland. About seven hundred miles.”

Porter’s cell phone rang. He glanced at the display, then answered. “Hey, Clair.”

“Back from vacation? I called you about a dozen times.”

“You called me three times.”

“So your phone *is* working,” she replied. “You should never ignore a woman, Sam. It won’t end well.”

Porter rolled his eyes and walked slowly across the room. “We’re at the morgue with Eisley. He confirmed the girl in the lake is Ella Reynolds. It also looks like she was wearing Lili Davies’s clothes.”

“Who’s Lili Davies?”

He thought he’d told her about the second missing girl, then realized he never had. They hadn’t talked since the park. He needed sleep; his head was a foggy mess. “Can you meet Nash and me in the war room in thirty minutes? We all need to get up to speed.”

“Sure thing,” she said. “Aren’t you going to ask me why I’ve been calling you?”

Porter closed his eyes and ran his hand through his hair. “Why have you been calling me, Clair?”

“I found something on the park video.”

“Thirty minutes in the war room. We’ll talk then. Grab Kloz.”

7

Lili

Day 2 • 7:26 a.m.

“Would you like a glass of milk?”

Lili Davies heard his voice before she saw him, truly saw him.

He spoke slowly, softly, only a breath, each word enunciated with the utmost care as if he put great thought into what he wanted to say before releasing the words. He spoke with a slight lisp, the *s* in *glass* troubling him.

He'd come down the stairs nearly five minutes earlier, the boards creaking under his weight. But when he reached the bottom, when he stood at the foot of the steps, he remained still. Shadows engulfed him, and Lili could make nothing out but the outline of a man.

And this was a man, not a boy.

Something about the way he stood, his broad shoulders, the deepness of his breaths, these things told her he was a man, not one of the boys from school. Not someone she knew playing some kind of sick joke, but a man, a man who had taken her.

Lili *did* want milk.

Her throat was as dry as sand.

She was hungry too.

Her stomach kept making little gurgling noises to remind her of just how hungry.

She said nothing, though; she didn't utter a sound. Instead, she huddled deeper into the corner, her back pressing into the damp wall. She pulled the smelly green quilt tighter around her body. Something about the material made her feel safe, like being wrapped in her mother's arms.

He'd been gone for at least an hour, maybe more. Lili used that time to try to figure out where she was. She hadn't allowed herself to be afraid, she wouldn't allow herself to be afraid. This was a problem, and she was good at solving problems.

She was in the basement of an older home.

She knew this because her house was older, and she remembered what the basement looked like before her parents brought in the contractors and construction crews to renovate it. The ceilings were low and the floor was uneven. Everything smelled like mildew, and spiders thrived. Every corner and cranny had either an old web or a new web, and the spiders crawled everywhere. When her parents brought in the contractors at her home, they gutted the basement, leveled the floor, sealed the walls, and coated everything in fresh drywall and paint. That drove the spiders out, at least for a little while.

Her friend Gabby lived in a brand-new house, built only two years ago, and her basement was completely different. High ceilings and level floors, bright and airy. They carpeted, brought in furniture, and turned the space into a fun family room. Basements in old homes could never be fun family rooms, no matter how much work was done. You could cover up the moisture, even level the floors, drywall, and paint, but the spiders always came back. The spiders wouldn't give up their space.

This basement had spiders.

Although she couldn't see them from where she sat, she knew they were right above her, creeping in and out of the exposed floor joists. They watched her with a thousand eyes as they spun their webs.

He gave her clothes, but they were not *her* clothes.

When she woke on the floor, wrapped in the green quilt, she quickly realized she had been stripped nude and left here, in this cage, a stranger's clothes folded neatly and left near her head. They didn't

fit. They were at least a few sizes too big, but she put them on because she had nothing else, because they were better than the green quilt. Then she wrapped herself in the green quilt anyway.

She was in a dimly lit, damp basement. More precisely, she was in a chainlink enclosure set up in a dimly lit, damp basement.

The enclosure went from floor to ceiling, and the pieces were welded together. It was meant to be a dog kennel. She knew this because Gabby's family owned a dog, a husky named Dakota, and they had a very similar, if not the same, kennel in their backyard. They bought it at Home Depot, and she and Gabby had watched her father put it together over the summer. It didn't take him long, maybe an hour, but he hadn't welded it.

When Lili stood up, wrapped in her green quilt, and ran her fingers over the various pipes and thick metal wire that made up her cage, she sought out joints, remembering how Gabby's father assembled his, then her heart sank as she found the bumpy welds. The gate at the front was locked tight with not one padlock but two—one near the top and the other near the bottom. She rattled the gate, but it barely moved. The entire structure had been bolted down into the concrete floor. It was secure, and she was trapped inside.

"You should drink something, you need to be strong for what is to come," the man said, his voice catching for a second on the *s* in *something*.

Lili said nothing. She wouldn't say anything. To talk to him would give him power, and she wasn't ready to do that. He didn't deserve anything from her.

The only light came from what was probably an open door at the top of the stairs. He stood perfectly still at the base.

Lili's eyes fought with the darkness, slowly adjusting.

He remained out of focus though, a darker shadow among other shadows, an outline against the wall.

"Turn around. Face the back wall, and don't turn back again until I say it's okay," he instructed.

Lili didn't move, her posture firming.

"Please turn around." Softer, pleading.

She gripped the quilt and pulled it tighter around her small frame.

“Turn the fuck around!” he shouted, his voice booming through the basement, echoing off the walls.

Lili gasped and took a step backward, nearly tripping.

Then all went quiet again.

“Please don’t make me shout. I prefer not to shout.”

Lili felt her heart pounding in her chest, a heavy *thump, thump, thump*.

She took a step back, then another, and another after that. When she reached the wall, the back of her cage, she willed her feet to turn around and faced the corner.

Lili heard him as he walked closer, the living shadow. Something about his gait was off. Rather than steady steps, she heard one foot land, then the other slid for a second on the concrete floor before it too fell into place, repeating again with the next step. A shuffle or limp, a slight drag of the foot, she couldn’t be sure.

Lili forced her eyes to close. She didn’t want to close them, but she did anyway. She forced her eyes to close so she could concentrate on the sounds, *picture* the sounds behind her.

She heard the jingle of keys before the telltale *click* of a padlock—it sounded like the top lock—then the other a moment later. She heard him slip both locks from the gate, then lift the handle and open the door.

Lili cringed in anticipation of what would come next.

She expected his hand on her, a touch somewhere or a grab from behind. That touch never came. Instead, she heard him close the gate and replace the locks, both clicking securely back into place.

His uneven shuffle away from her cage.

“You can turn back around now.”

Lili did as he asked.

He returned to the stairs, lost to the dark again.

A glass of milk sat on the floor just inside the cage, a thin bead of water dripping down the side.

“It’s not drugged,” he said. “I need you awake.”