

Chapter Eleven:

Calltime

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Clay tries to convince me not to come back to the theater. They insist that I'm still healing, but the doctors have cleared me to leave the hospital.

I'm not letting them confront a killer alone. Especially not the same person who abducted me.

The hallways are busy with cast and crew rushing back and forth. The show will start in half an hour. Clay stops me in front of the library doors. They're running on three hours of sleep and several shots of espresso. The caffeine can't erase the dark circles and tired look of their face.

"Parker," Clay says, holding gently to my shoulders. "You don't have to do this. You don't have to stay."

"Yes, I do." I press my hand against their cheek. The tension in their features does not cease. "This is my case, too. I want justice for Lewis, and I want to make sure that no one else gets hurt."

"Okay." Clay takes a deep breath but nods. "I trust you."

"Good." I kiss their cheek. "Now, go get ready. Art should be backstage with the cast. I'm going to the audience to look for Blake. She said she managed to get someone from the police station here. They'll be able to arrest Art and all of this will be over."

"This will all be over," they repeat, and for the first time the pain in their expression lessens. "We can find a home in the country."

I sigh. "That would be nice."

"Be careful, Park."

"I will." I give their shoulder a small shove. "Be careful yourself."

"I'll see you soon."

I stay by the doors of the library as Clay disappears through the cast door to get to the dressing rooms behind the theater. I take a deep breath. The brick feeling in my stomach has returned, and my heart races in my chest.

Everything will be okay; I try to tell myself but I don't really believe it.

I move quietly through the hustle and bustle of the cast and crew making their preparations for the show. A few audience members have begun to arrive and wait in the theater's lobby.

When I get into the theater, it's almost completely empty. The house lights are on and shroud bright fluorescents over the plush red seats. I don't see Blake's head of platinum hair anywhere. She must've gone backstage.

I start to head toward the steps, when I spot Art standing at the sound box. My heart skips in my chest.

All I can think about is Clay and their name on the list. The memory of being tied under the pit resurfaces in my mind. I can still smell the chloroform.

"*You!*" I storm up to the sound box. I reach instinctively toward my jacket for Clay's pocket knife. "It was you all along!"

Art's head bounces up from the soundboard, and he removes his headset. "Park? Is everything alright? Has Clay found anything?"

"Like you don't know," I spit. "I can't believe you would hire Clay to solve your own crime. When were you going to kill them? After they thought they solved it?"

Art frowns. "Park, what are you talking about? I don't understand."

"It was you," I accuse. "You're the one who killed Lewis. You abducted me, and now you're planning on killing Andrea and Clay."

"*What?*" He exclaims, his eyes widening. "I haven't done any of those things. What are you talking about? Is someone going to hurt Andrea and Clay?"

My heart plummets to the floor. His eyes are wide and horrified. His hands are shaking on the sound board, and he's pulled out his phone.

"Oh God," I breathe. "It's not you."

The theater swirls in my vision.

"Is this about the investigation?" Art asks, his voice shaking. "Did you find something? Park, are we in danger?"

My throat is tight. I can't breathe.

Joel's voice rings in my mind; "*I've only seen two people in our production wear pieces in this material. Art and his assistant Callie.*"

Callie.

Art's demure and quiet assistant. She never talked much and could be easily overlooked.

It was the perfect disguise.

It was her all along.

“Art, where is Callie?” I demand.

“Callie?” His brows furrow in confusion. “I think she’s backstage with everyone. Why?”

“Oh my God. Clay.” I grip my chest where my heart is pounding. I turn toward Art, who is watching me with a mixture of horror and confusion. “Art, it’s Callie. She’s the killer, and she’s going to try to kill Clay and Andrea.”

Art curses. We both start running toward the stage.

Without warning, the red stage curtains fly open. I stop in the middle of the aisle, and Art slams into my back.

“No,” I breathe. “Please, no.”

Andrea’s body is lying in the middle of the stage. Her pink ball gown swirls over the blood pooling around the stage.

Only a few feet to the left is Callie. Her hair is now black and hangs in long waves down her shoulders. The glasses and brown wig are gone. Clutched in her fist is a bloody dagger that glints underneath the stage lights.

Standing next to her, the dagger pressed against their chest, is Clay.
