

Emily

My feet pound against the black road, the rush of the wind fills my ears in the otherwise silent night. I clutch the gun tighter, afraid I might drop it from my sweaty hand. My breath is labored, I want to stop, but I can't. The voice in my head won't let me. The voice that should be mine, but isn't.

Faster, faster, your mission is not complete, you can't stop now. Hurry.

My legs speed up, protesting more and more with every lunge forward. Finally, I stop, and I'm in a pitch black alleyway. When my eyes adjust to the dark, I'm startled by a man standing in front of me. His face is masked by fear as his hands slowly rise up in surrender.

There's someone behind me. Fear grips my stomach; my feet are rooted to the ground. I force myself to concentrate on what's in front of me. It's really the only explanation for the look on the guy's face.

"P-p-p-please, I-I didn't do anything'." *What's he staring at me for?*

Yes, he did. He robbed a bank. He deserves this. I don't quite believe The Voice, but as I glance down at my mysteriously tired arms, I realize that there isn't anyone behind me and there never was. I'm the only threat. I try to stop myself, but nothing changes, and I watch in horror as my steady hand pulls the trigger of a gun I don't know how to use. I watch as the bullet whizzes toward the petrified man. Then it's over and he crumples at my feet, motionless. But it doesn't seem wrong. *He robbed a bank, right?*

Then I'm back in the lighted street, crouching by a bush about to stash the gun when the world goes dark. When I wrench my eyes open from the dream. I look around, expecting my room, but no. I'm in the city, in the middle of the night, standing in the middle of an empty road.

"Did I fall asleep?" I mutter to no one in particular.

For a little while. A voice that's not mine replies.

"-want you to do one hundred of these problems every night this weekend. Alright, class dismissed." I'm pulled away from the thoughts swirling in my head when I realize class is over.

"Miss Turner?"

Oh great. I stepped on the principles toes, didn't I?

I look up, expecting to see my principal, Mr. Escher, with his chubby cheeks, peppered beard, and oversized cat sweater on under a navy blue blazer, at least one size too small. To my dismay, I find myself facing a much bigger problem than a principle's hurt toe.

The men in white coats have come to take me in.

Clara

"How did this bloody happen?" I watch fearfully as Adele, my boss, paces back and forth.

"I'm not entirely sure, ma'am. Everything was going alright and then she just-just-"

"Start from the beginning and explain what happened...I'm waiting." Adele glares at me, still pacing.

"Subject 9672-" My voice shakes as I start from the beginning.

"Emily Turner?"

"Yeah, Emily started out around 1AM for a simple task, the killing of a bank robber. She questioned why she was killing him, but that's normal, and doesn't affect the outcome because we are still fully in control of their bodies, even if their minds aren't entirely on board-"

"I want the story, not the logistics." She snaps, sounding almost bored.

"Right, sorry. As I was saying, once there was indication that she wasn't sure about the whole 'killing the guy' thing, we used The Voice, as she calls it, where we transfer thoughts into her head from a comput-"

"ARE YOU DEAF, OR JUST TOO STUPID TO UNDERSTAND THAT I KNOW ALL THIS?"

"Sorry, sorry, I-"

"Sorry doesn't cut it. Next time you start treating me like an idiot, you're dead." Panic rushes through me, because I know she isn't bluffing. I've seen many innocent lives ended by my lovely boss just because she was bored.

"It won't happen again, I promise. We had The Voice convince her to do it. She showed no emotion after the kill, and was doing everything as planned until she just...fell asleep, before her mission was complete." I breathe out a sigh of relief that I haven't been obliterated. Yet.

“And what exactly, do you think happened?”

“I think that her subconscious somehow stopped the control. There is no way to control that part of her brain, because it’s just well, impossible. However, all we need to do is create another accident, so there will be more control areas.”

“And how do you plan to create this accident? We need her back ASAP.”

“I’ve got some guys picking her up right now. They’ll give her a concussion, and then make her believe she fell down the stairs.”

“I wanted something far more juicy and interesting, but I suppose with your...limitations, it’ll do. Now get out.” I leave, not bothering to point out that Adele was kicking me out of my own office.

Emily

“Don’t even think about screaming.” The guy on my right, an attractive blonde, growls in my ear as I’m dragged down the hall in front of everyone.

“Where are you-taking me?” The guy on my left, who’s about forty and balding, immediately clamps his hand over my mouth.

“Shut up.” He growls so close to my face that his stubble grazes my cheek. His hand smells bad, and tastes even worse. The hall is mostly silent now, but I hear people whispering my name.

“-Emily Turner. What do you think she did?”

A bit of my fear turns into anger. I’d like to punch all these people for staring and gossiping, and not saving me from these lunatics. They successfully get me out of the school, without one faculty member objecting, and shove me inside a white van. *How cliché. Maybe I really am Chicago's newest loony.*

“Excuse me, but where exactly are you taking me?”

“A place.” The balding one answers in a bored voice.

“Listen, smartass-” They close the van door in my face. *How rude.* In the cold dark of the van, my fear starts to really sink in. *Oh god, what are they going to do to me? What do they want?*

"You know why they're here, it's the dreams. It was always about the dreams, and you know it." My muttering just makes me feel worse; because of course it's true, I just haven't wanted to admit it. I'm officially terrified by the time the van comes to a screeching halt.

Clara

RING, RING, RI-

"WHAT?" I snap, still very much annoyed that I had to spend the last twenty minutes of my life milling around, acting important, because Adele decided she likes my office.

"-Clara? CLARA? Are you even listening to me?"

"No, sorry...what?" I hear a loud sigh on the other end.

"We have subject number 9672 ready for her 'accident'."

"Send her down to the basement." I hang up, dreading having to see Adele again to tell her Emily's here. I usually try to keep my encounters with her at a maximum of one per day.

Emily

I've been lying in bed for hours, and I'm not sure how much longer I can go without falling asleep. It's my first night back from the hospital after falling down the stairs, although I don't really remember it. The only memory I have is of guys in white coats taking me away in a white van. *What if the dreams never even happened? Am I going crazy? But still, don't fall aslee...*

I'm back in the dark street. Rain pours from the sky as I walk briskly, watching as my clothes become soaked, but I can't feel it, I can't feel my body at all. Now I've stopped, no longer in the open street, but in a dark corner of the world. There's nothing I can do as The Voice is back in my head. I try to ignore it but there's no way to not hear it.

This guy killed a man, don't you think he deserves to di-

I've killed a man, and probably more-

But you did the right thing, unlike this man.

Am I crazy, or...is this real? Now I'm pointing the gun at the man, who's talking, but I can't hear him. Blood is rushing in my ears, I feel like I'm going to pass out, which is ironic, because aren't I dreaming? I try so hard to feel my legs, to be able to run away from all of this, but there's nothing, and now I'm falling, falling through the dark and-

Relief floods through me, as I feel myself shaking. Fearfully, I lower the gun and let it drop to the ground. I'm filled with dread as I finally let myself admit that I'm probably not crazy. They did this, whoever they are. At this point I don't even care. I just want it to stop.

With a sinking feeling, I realize that the man in front of me probably is a murder, as he slowly points his own gun at me.

"No," I whisper, "NO!!" I'm not going to die just because some idiots decided to use innocent people to do their dirty work. I start to run, but it's too late. I hear the gunshot; it seems to come from everywhere. The pain comes together, into a searing ball of torture in my leg. I stumbled to the ground, and for the first time since all this started, I start to cry.

Through my pain and half-consciousness, I see people swoop down and take the man. Then someone lifts me up, making the fire in my leg a million times worse, I close my eyes and wait for death. The only thing that could fix my life right now. ***

White. All I see is a sea of blurry white. There are no distinct shapes, just white surrounding me everywhere.

"Emily. Emily, can you hear me?"

The whisper becomes louder, and louder, until I can make out the words. I wince at the noise, opening my eyes again. This time I can make out the blurry lines of a guy. I swear I know him from somewhere, but the memory is foggy. Something tells me I should be scared of this man, so I try to move, to scream for help, but it's hard. Then I feel a hand clamp down on my mouth. *At least I can feel my body now.*

"Shhhh." He slowly pulls his hand from my mouth. "It's okay; I'm trying to help you."

"W-where," I swallow, my throat crackly and dry, "Where are we?" The man in front of me is clearer now, and I suddenly know where I've seen him before. He was the man. The man from the memory they took away. He hurt me. I can feel panic bubbling up my throat.

“GET AWAY FROM ME!” I scream, attempting to pull myself to my feet.

“Okay, okay, sorry.” He raises his hands in surrender.

“Who are you?” I attempt to sound demanding.

“I’m Louis. I’ll explain more later, but right now we need to get you out of here. They’re probably already onto us, thanks to your screaming.”

“Oh, so now it’s my fault? The last time I saw you, you kidnapped me, and -I’m assuming-took me here.”

“I know, I’m sorry, I was just doing my job I-” He stops and stares at me, “How do you remember that?”

“Probably had something to do with being stuck in the same cell with the same guy.” I snap.

“Okay, yeah, that makes sense. Do you think you can walk?”

“I think so,” I let myself be pulled up, supporting my weight on Louis as we slowly walk out of the cell, and into the hallway. When we reach the next room, I can’t help but gape. It’s some sort of dome shape that makes the whole thing look like a panorama. The walls are completely covered by holographic computer screens. Some show long, complicated equations, others show what appear to be video feeds of glassy eyed people armed with guns. *The same thing I was doing during all of my “dreams”*. Next to the videos, are diagrams that appear to show each person’s thoughts and emotions. *What the hell?*

In the split second I spend taking everything in, we’ve been surrounded. I lean into Louis even more, scared out of my mind.

To my utter dismay, Louis’ mouth is turned halfway up in a slight smile. *Is this some psycho suicide mission to get both of us killed?* I stand there, rooted in place, and wait for someone to fire at us. A second later, I’m surprised by the fact that I’m still alive, and am just about to take a deep breath, when a gun goes off. I’m ready for the pain, death, whatever, but it never comes.

A scream comes from the crowd of people surrounding us. I stare unbelieving at the soldier writhing on the ground. So does everyone else...for about a second, before they begin firing at each other. I feel Louis start to move.

"Come on!" He shouts at me above the cries, pushing me to my knees, and half dragging me across the floor as we crawl through the chaos. Just as I'm about to give up to the swarm of bodies, we come to the elevator. He hauls me up and into the cramped space. I feel myself losing consciousness, watching from a thick veil of darkness as Louis presses some buttons before the elevator starts to slowly rise.

When I come to, I'm leaning against Louis on a moth eaten, dirty couch. Wind whistles through the cracked windows. I think longingly of my own room, my family. *If you went back home, they'd find you, take you back.* I force myself to stop thinking about them, and instead I turn to Louis.

"Okay, we got out, but I need an explanation. Now."

"It started with the limbs, the improved ones, I mean. The government realized they could control people through them. They control you while you're sleeping, make you go out and kill criminals. When you wake up, you're in your bed again, and you only remember it as a dream. That's what all those "dreams" you had were. You were never supposed to wake up in the street, and when you did, everyone freaked out." He stops, waiting for me to say something, like this is a normal conversation.

"I-uh...why even-what were they going to do to me?" I have to admit, I was a bit speechless.

"I'm not entirely sure. I know they were going to run a lot of tests, and try to figure out how you broke the control, but after that, I have no idea."

"So, how do you fit into all of this, and why'd you save me?"

"I worked as a security guard, so I could spy on them. There were others helping me, which is the only reason we escaped." I stare at him, just trying to wrap my mind around everything when suddenly, there's a loud crash.

I shake with fear as the doctors circle around me like hawks. I'd been taken back to the underground building, tied up, and wired to a million machines. The doctors had been studying read-outs of my brain, but now they've turned their beady eyes to watch me.

"I hate to say this Clara, but it looks like you've fixed the Emily problem." A harsh looking woman glares at me as she speaks quietly to the girl beside her. "You always needlessly explain how everything works, but now you're quiet. What's wrong, have you gone mute? Explain your little gadget." My eyes widen as someone wheels in a strange metal contraption.

"I've created a robot-like shell that we will be putting Emily into. It wirelessly hooks up to all areas of her brain, so that she will always be under our control. She may be partially conscious, but that's only bad for her. She'll be aware that she's being controlled, but won't be able to do anything about it." My stomach drops to the ground as I catch on to what they're saying.

"I like it, I really do, and it's all your creation. Emily will be our test, and if it goes well, then we can start mass production."

"Mass production?" The girl's voice has a sudden shake that matches the violent shaking of my hands.

"Oh, yes, we'll be using these on all the idiots in the world that shouldn't be trusted to think on their own."

"No. NO! You wouldn't, you can't, you-I'll stop you, I will. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO BE CONTROLLED!"

"If only you were around to stop me..." I watch as the girl freezes, a horrified look on her face.

"You won't get away with this, you won't!"

"Just remember Clara, without you, I never would've been able to pull this off. Thank you." I watch in horror as the woman shoots Clara, then turns toward me as someone else wheels the robot case over.

I scream as loud as I can, kicking at anything I can connect with, but they still shove me into the robot shell, closing it up until only my head is free. I scream even louder, but it doesn't help. Then someone latches a helmet into place, and I'm suddenly alone, in a world of quiet. There's a flash of blue light, and I feel something enter my brain. It's almost like there's another person inside me, but no, that's not it.

It's more of a thing, a thing that's taking away my control.

I can no longer feel my body. I try to break free, just like the dreams, but this time there's nothing.

You're their slave now.