

CHAPTER 1

Swirling deep inside an indescribable black void, I bolted upright, a choking sensation forcing me to suck in a lungful of air. Heart pounding, I slapped my chest and blinked over and over, struggling to regain my bearings.

The intensity and frequency of the nightmares—no, night *terrors*—had increased over the last six months. Another vivid image flashed—the fatal car crash, lake water rushing in through a half-open window, filling the interior of my Mustang and engulfing my screaming two-year-old son strapped in the rear safety seat.

Now, sitting on the edge of my saggy, worn-out mattress, I shook the horrific visions from my mind while turning to the empty spot where my husband, Adrian, used to sleep. A wave of exhaustion started in my neck and flowed down through my body, numbing my toes.

From my home office, the pile of manila folders stared back through the hall doorway, providing a clear reminder of last night's efforts to search for answers in Hannah's staged suicide case—my gut told me Martinez murdered her—until, apparently, I passed out.

Blue beams of moonlight stabbed through a crack in a broken vertical window blind, illuminating the ugly scars on my left calf where I had kicked upward through the jagged window glass

five years ago, blood and lake water splashing onto my face as I reached to the rear seat in a vain attempt to release and save Todd, my sweet little baby boy.

The oversized t-shirt, a hole-strewn New York Giants Superbowl Champs 1991 that Adrian used to wear when mowing our lawn, drooped down around my upper thighs as I stood, cracked my back, grabbed my cell, and shuffled to the bathroom sink in my underwhelming Manhattan apartment on East 54th Street.

Parched, I intended to gulp down a full glass of water, but the moment the rim touched my lips, my iPhone vibrated. Message from Sergeant Miller to Kristi Konnors: *new evidence in Hannah's case, get to the ME's office ASAP.*

Time: 3:05 a.m.