

Chapter 1

I am not crazy. I may have been told I was for a long time, but I know my mind and in its own way it does make sense. I refuse to believe that the definition of crazy is the same as the meaning behind a girl seeing apparitions without warning. I was convinced there was other people like me, but so far the others at the centre where I went to seemed to fit the same description. It did not help that I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone. My life was blank and colourless like the snow falling constantly just beyond the deck I took refuge on. "May, I know you like the fresh air, but it's cold out," my brother peered outside and I looked away from the storm.

"I am used to it," I said swinging my dangling legs back and forth.

"You're too old for this type of behaviour," he pulled me up to my feet, "Come inside until your session at the testing centre."

"Fine," I gave in going inside then headed towards the living area. The blizzard outside was a common occurrence since the ice storms started about twelve years ago. After that, bunkers were built to protect us when it got too cold for humans and the government took a secondary position to the military's might and science's new medicine. I took little yellow pills when I was young to help me adapt to the cold, my brother worried too much.

"Hello dear," a short woman came out of nowhere.

"You," I looked at her scared.

"I am not your enemy," her frigid hand touched my cheek. Ice covered my vision and bodies laid near me empty of life and warmth. Fear surrounded me entirely and winds blew strands of pale blonde into my vision. "It will come and freeze everything," she said quietly, "Protect and serve."

"Yes," I walked through her then ran into the wall and fell back onto the floor.

"Maya Garnet, were you talking to ghosts again?" Cass picked me up and carried me into the living room where I curled up in a ball on the couch.

"Yes," I mumbled.

"This has to stop, sis your affliction is destroying your life chances," he warned me.

"You keep saying that," I muttered.

"This time I mean it in less than a month all of the afflicted will be gathered and sent into

asylums,” he asked, “Mom and dad wouldn't want you there.”

“Mother and father are gone,” I hugged a nearby pillow, “Have been for ten years.”

“Give their memory some respect, life is nothing without power and strength and right now you have neither,” he told me, “Our family name has been respected for over hundred years; keep up that legacy.”

“Cass,” I started to tell him about what I saw. I wanted to tell him about the storm.

“Just go get some sleep before your session,” he commanded then stopped at the door, “What did the ghost say?”

“Nothing,” I lied. It was the first time I'd ever been dishonest with my brother and I was a horrible liar.

“Do not socialize with the other afflicted,” he left the room.

“Wouldn't dream of it,” I bit my lip then closed my eyes.

I got to the testing centre right on time. The lines were long and everyone was in an uproar, the news was playing everywhere. I looked outside at the moon knowing that once the TV's were on that I was going to wait twice as long to get into the testing facility. I should have stayed home for today, but my brother insisted that this was helping me. I did not see how they could cure my affliction. My eyes wandered to the snow falling on the ground and I wondered how long we had left. The reporters today were talking about a cold front coming and I thought about the mega storm from my vision. I did not want to be in a bunker that long.

I did not do well trapped in a small space did not help my condition. “Hey, ghost girl,” someone called and I looked over to see a boy I didn't recognize standing next to me.

“Excuse me,” I inquired.

“You're the girl who sees people of the past right,” he questioned. I hid my eyes behind my bangs and didn't respond. “I am just curious, I am not from the patrol,” he assured me, “I'm the defect in the system, I am the disease upon our perfect society.”

“I am a bug they can never fix,” I peeked over at him again, “You've been to the testing centre.”

“As the cold front approaches more people are checking into the centre permanently because of unusual issues,” he quoted last night's report.

“That's one way of putting it,” I saw a flash of light then the woman was back in her vapour form.

“Hello darling,” the woman smiled at me, “The cold will not end.” I shuddered slightly then she laughed. “You can pretend I am not here, but you cannot escape any of us,” she told me.

“I highly doubt that some of these people actually need to go there, paranoia has set in,” my living neighbour commented and I had to agree.

“The only law of the people is that it is better to be tested and proven wrong then to let sickness surprise you,” I muttered.

“As if there are any surprises in life,” he was watching me, “I haven't seen you at the meetings downstairs.”

“My brother...I mean I don't like interacting with other...” I bit my lip.

“Your brother doesn't want you to interact with other people with mental instability as our group leader says,” he guessed.

“Why do you ask so many questions?” I asked.

“Well the line today is long and I guess you're just too interesting for your own good,” he laughed.

“What is your name?” I inquired.

“Seth Adams,” he answered, “What do people call you other than ghost girl?”

“Maya Garnet,” I replied, “What do people call you here?”

“Freak, super genius it depends on the crowd,” he smiled over at me, “I have an eidetic memory and I can see numbers everywhere.”

“I see, so how are they trying to cure that?” I brushed my bangs out of my face.

“Medication, therapy, they are trying to convince me to hand over my brain to science when I die,” he informed me.

“I think it's a little early to be writing a will quite yet,” I remarked.

“It's never too early,” he insisted, “You know about those mysterious disappearances, some people do not like having crazies in their town.”

“I know that for sure,” I agreed.

“So what kind of testing are you getting done today?” he continued his interrogation.

“Injections,” I ran my hands up and down my arms.

“Ouch, I do not think I will try that one,” he remarked, “Are you afraid?”

“No, the doctors will be safe in the procedure and I should be fine afterwards,” I shrugged.

“Do you believe that?” he asked. I wondered if he'd heard the rumour about our people being rounded up and stuck in asylums. I won't betray Cass's confidence and tell a stranger though.

“I can only hope for the best,” I said seriously, “What are you here for?”

“My father is insisting I get a sedative drug because I say things out loud in my sleep,” he said casually, “Usually equations, but I have been known to talk about the history of corruption in my sleep as well.”

“That must be fascinating if an officer is inspecting your house,” I sighed, “I do everything I can to fix this affliction.”

“Affliction,” he nodded, “That's a good word for it, but there is nothing wrong with you, Maya Garnet you know that, correct.”

“I see dead people,” I reminded him.

“I see a thousand numbers on that glass and I remember every time we've ever seen each other,” he replied, “I may be creepy, but I am not some kind of monster.”

“They don't put 'normal' people in asylums,” I blurted out.

“Asylums,” he shuddered slightly.

“It's nothing, forget I said it,” I saw how pale Seth got, “I think you stalking me is kind of creepy so focus on that.”

“Why would they send us there?” he muttered.

“Some people would say government conspiracy, others would say convenience,” I watched him carefully, “That's why your sedative has to work and why my injections cannot fail.”

“I thought I was smart,” he ran a hand through his messy red hair.

“Hey, I am not smart I just listen to people and I know some military personnel,” I

explained.

“Your brother.”

“Yes,” I gave in, “He tells me everything in confidence I shouldn't have said anything, but I think people should be warned.”

“Yeah,” he muttered then stayed silent until we were two people away from the front.

“You're right.”

“Right about what?” I looked over at him.

“People should be warned,” he told me, “Look I know you don't trust me yet, but there are a lot of good, honest people in Cold's Fire who are torturing themselves trying to get better I need them to know what the government really wants to do.”

“You have my permission to tell your friends, I do not want anyone else suffering,” I ordered, “Cold's Fire is a strange name for a group, Seth.”

“Well it works we are the light in the dark and a new hope,” he informed me, “I am a little eccentric during group meetings, so it would sound better coming from you.”

“My brother won't let me go to those meetings,” I argued.

“Tell the doctor you have the flu and meet us down there in six minutes,” he left the line.

“Wait,” I started to say, but he was already talking to a well dressed, raven haired girl in the next line.

“Next,” the woman said and I stepped up taking my ID card out of my pocket.

“Maya Garnet,” I swiped my card.

“The doctors will be in with you soon,” she handed me a clipboard to update any medical information.

“Okay,” I started towards the doctor's main office then a blonde lady came stumbling out. Her eyes were bloodshot and she was crying. The worst part though was seeing the injection shot on her arm and knowing it was causing her a lot of unnecessary agony.

“Miss. Garnet,” Dr. Peck peeked out, “Are you ready for the procedure?”

“Actually, sir,” I could already feel my body shaking, “I...”

“You look pale, my dear,” he started forward.

“I think I may have the flu that's going around,” I took a step back. That was the second lie they felt like they were piling up.

“You best go home then, come back when you are better this procedure only works if you're healthy,” Peck smiled, “I'll call your brother to pick you up.”

“I'll walk home, it's not a long trek,” I ran a hand through my hair, “I am sorry for wasting your time.”

“I just want you to get better, Miss. Garnet,” he put his hand on my shoulder, “I will see you in a week's time, do not get another illness on the way home.”

“Yes sir,” I replied then headed down the hallway I came from. Once out of view, I veered off to the stairs and took them two at a time until I reached a big open basement where people were gathered together in a large circle. I went around the perimeter until I spotted my new acquaintance near the middle of the pack. I pushed my way through until I reached him.

“Everyone we gather today as a society onto ourselves,” a tall guy with unnaturally white hair announced, “We have been oppressed, tampered with and experimented with, but we know the truth.”

“Say it, Rogers,” one of the guys shouted.

“We are not of our own creation, they made us this way.”

“What?” I said and Seth peered over his shoulder and saw me.

“You came,” he grinned, “Come on you should hear this.”

“My brother is going to kill me,” I warned.

“Blame me, he would have more of a challenge finding me,” he suggested then the white-haired Rogers spoke again.

“When things go wrong in this world, we do not know who to trust so we believed the government would help us when the temper started to drop,” Rogers looked around the circle then focused on me, “They gave us adaptors supplements to make us more immune to the cold, but they did not make us warmer they changed our DNA structures.”

“The little yellow pills my mom gave me,” I said then there was a faded looking man beside me halfway into my neighbour.

“They tricked you kid and they will do it again,” he said then disappeared.

“The pills were experimental at best, their test subjects weren't affected until they'd taken it for six months so the study wasn't long enough,” Seth explained.

“We were all ordered to take it for a year,” I whispered.

“One of our junior participants, Seth Adams has some information for our group,” Rogers kept staring at me.

“Right,” Seth cleared his throat, “Everyone should not be alarmed by what I am about to say, but be cautious from now on.” “The government and our military have made a decision about what to do with their failures,” Seth turned to me, “And Maya here will shed some light on the situation.”

“That's Maya Garnet,” one of the guys said and I knew this was my brother's worst nightmare.

“What could a military brat possibly have to say about our situation?” another guy said.

“Look I took the same pills you did,” I snapped back at him, “I see things that aren't there, they were going to do injections on me today.” Even the guy who spoke winced at the word injection. “As you all know my family has a strong military background, until their defective daughter became ghost girl so my older brother, you probably know as Junior Officer Garnet,” I said and most of them all nodded, “He is good friends with his commanding officer and he was told about upcoming orders to...”

“To do what, Miss Garnet?” Rogers looked curious now, “Are they going to shoot us?”

“No, they're going to lock us up in asylums like the defective machines they leave out of view,” I crossed my arms and then there was silence.

“You did the right thing,” Seth said once the leaders separated off to talk.

“I hope so,” I said looking at all of the people around me scared and unprepared for what was coming. I had to be prepared for them, my ghosts were my affliction and I had to figure out how to control them, or risk losing everything.