

## Ivy League

### Chapter 1

"Looks like this is it," Rebs said, tilting her head back to stare at the ceiling. "The end of the pact."

"We're all going our separate ways," Kas hummed, ever the bright and bubbly member of our trio. Even she was quiet and sombre today. "Doesn't make sense to keep it going any longer."

"We'll still talk, though. Right?" Rebs asked. "Just 'cause the three of us are going to different colleges, doesn't mean we have to stop being friends."

I opened my mouth, tried to comfort her.

No words came.

Yes, we could try to keep in touch. We could text and message each other, call each other or have video chats, could even potentially meet up on holidays. In \*theory\*, we could keep our little trio together. But 'theory' and 'reality' were two different pieces of pie.

We - all three of us - were going to be busy at college. From studying to socialising to resting. Try as we might, we all knew we wouldn't be able to chat regularly. That we'd all drift apart.

"At least," I said softly, "you won't have to call yourself 'Rebs' anymore. You did kinda get the short end of the stick with that one."

Kas gave a half-hearted chuckle.

Rebs shook her head.

"It's grown on me," she whispered.

And, just like that, the three of us went silent. All of us lost in our thoughts and memories.

Me? I thought about the day we met.

The first day of school. All of us new, in the same small class. All with the same name. Three Rebeccas in one class. What were the odds? Interestingly enough, the fact we all shared a name led to us quickly becoming friends - it was, I supposed, a good conversation started for the three of us.

That'd been the day we'd made the pact.

It would've been too confusing to have three Rebeccas around. We all agreed. And so we, as a group, had decided to split the name up - each of us taking a slice. Re-bec-ca. Rebs, Beck, Kas. All three of us had gone home that day, demanded our parents and family call us by our new names.

We'd been inseparable ever since.

Inseparable until now, at least.

"I'm going to miss hanging out," I found myself saying. "I know we'll all make new friends and such. But... They won't be you guys, you know?"

"Yeah," Kas smiled. "Hopefully the new ones don't snore as loud as \*some\* people."

"I don't snore!" Rebs scowled.

"Yes," I said, rolling my eyes playfully at her, "you do. We have \*proof\*, remember? We \*recorded\* you snoring. Kas still has the files."

"Lies," Rebs huffed, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth. "Lies and slander."

"And don't get me started on the sleep farting," Kas let out a little chuckle. "If be worried about your snoring waking up the dead, if I wasn't certain your farting would kill them dead again."

"I do not fart in my sleep!"

"Kas," I laughed, "play the recordings!"

As Kas began scrolling through her phone, Rebs tackled her and tried snatching it away. A heart-beat later, I was there too, reaching for the phone and its treasures. It wasn't long before the three of us were rolling around laughing, limbs in all directions and worries set aside for a time.

As I watched my parents drive away, I felt a pulse of excitement shoot through me. An energy that'd been pushed down by anticipation and uncertainty, unleashed at last. I found myself grinning, turning around on the spot and taking it all in.

TomorrowTech Campus and University.

Bright green grass with winding, paved paths. Huge buildings all around, constructed in modern styles with walls of glass and metal and clean, white concrete. Tress and bushes grew all over the place, giving the whole campus a feeling of modern, green life.

From the official website, I'd discovered the entire place was powered by nothing but green, renewable energy.

It was - as the advertising materials had said - a modern learning institution to challenge the status quo, openly claiming that TomorrowTech Campus and University would provide more learning potential and qualifications and prestige than even Ivy League schools.

More than a few of my classmates, I knew, would've been poached from Harvard and Yale and the like.

How \*I'd\* made the cut, I had no idea.

Even as I'd been applying for this place, I knew it was unlikely I'd earn a place. Yet, somehow, here I was.

With my parents' car gone, I turned back to the dorm building. My home for the next few years. A white building that was several floors tall, with many entrances and exits located around it.

I walked inside, following the path I'd memorised.

My parents had already helped me move all me stuff to my dorm room, so I knew the way. Even so, I couldn't help but feel like I'd get lost.

The building felt like a maze. Identical white corridors and doors at every turn.

Once I got back to my dorm room, I shut the door behind myself and walked into the centre of the room. Gave myself a moment to take it all in.

Two beds. Two desks. Two empty bookcases. Two sets of drawers. A room split in half, mirrored identically on either side. And, on the wall opposite the door, a large window with voice-activated blinds.

In fact, \*everything\* in the dorm room was voice activated.

The lights. The alarm clocks. The little screen embedded in the wall near the dorm room door.

That probably shouldn't have been surprising. TomorrowTech might be the college I was attending, but it was also a massive tech company known for its smart homes, online stores, ai and robotics research - just about anything involving modern technology, TomorrowTech had its fingers in.

And what better way to ensure you had the perfect workforce for tomorrow than to educate them yourself today?

"Hum," I muttered to myself. "Which bed should I go with?"

It was both an easy decision, and a hard one. Both halves of the room were identical. It didn't matter which one I went with. But, at the same time, I wanted the \*right\* one.

In the end, I went for the bed on the left.

The very first thing I did - before unpacking anything else - was pulling a polaroid photo out of my bag and pin it to the wall beside my bed.

It was a picture of me and Rebs and Kas.

Rebs with her tomboy look; short dark hair, baggy pants and hoodie. She we slouched, relaxed. And Kas, the polar opposite to Rebs. Pink dress, bright blonde hair down past her shoulders, face dolled up. Try as I might, I couldn't remember a time I'd ever seen Kas in a pair of trousers. It was always dresses and skirts.

And then there was me.

Beck. The one in the middle. The bridge between the two opposites. Some days I dressed girly, others I went with pants and shirts. I listened to the same rock bands Rebs did, but I could also appreciate the k-pop Kas loved so much.

My hair was neither dark or bright. A chocolatey brown in-between, shoulder-length and plain. Messy or neat, I could pull off both looks with it.

I glanced down at myself, saw the same t-shirt as the me in the picture was wearing. A black and white, yin and yang t-shirt that'd been a gift from Rebs and Kas. A little more worn and faded these days, but still wearable. Even if it was a little tight around the chest.

Smiling, I shook my head, ran my hands over the front of the t-shirt.

'I have the brains,' I heard the memory of Kas' voice in my head. 'Rebs has the brawns.'

'Hey!' Rebs had grumbled.

'And,' Kas continued with a smile, 'you, Beck, have the \*boobs\*.'

I really was going to miss those two.

But...

I shook off the memory.

But I shouldn't worry about that now! I had unpacking to do!

"I got accepted into Harvard," my roomie was saying, "but then TomorrowTech sent me their invitation. I didn't even apply for this pace! But no way was I gonna turn down the opportunity. If I do well here, I'm basically \*guaranteed\* a job in one of TomorrowTech's marketing departments. Maybe even a leadership

position!"

"Sounds great," I said, not really paying attention.

The girl was nice. Not overly annoying or uptight or anything. I should've had no trouble at all listening to her, getting to know her and hopefully befriending her.

I shouldn't have been distracted.

And yet... I was.

I couldn't put my finger on what it was, exactly. A barely audible hum that seemed to be coming from all four walls at once, vibrating up from the floor and echoing down from the ceiling. Quiet to the point it shouldn't have bothered me.

"So, what are you studying... Huh," the girl blinked at me, confused. "What did you say your name was again?"

Rebecca. Beck. Becky.

I could go with any I wanted. Why was it so difficult to choose?

"Sorry," the girl blushed. "I'm usually really good with names. With remembering things in general. I must be tired or something."

"Beck," I murmured. "My name is Beck."

"That's an interesting name! Is it short for Becky or--"

"I'm sorry," I said, shaking my head. "I think I've got a migraine coming on, so I'm gonna try getting some shut-eye. It's been a long day. Neice meeting you..."

What was this girl's name again?

"Amanda," she smiled.

By the time I'd climbed into bed and gotten comfortable, I'd forgotten my roomie's name once more. My skull throbbed and my body trembled. That sound, that vibrating buzz, was the only thing I could hear. So quiet, and yet so loud in the absence of all other noise.

I wasn't sure how long it took before I fell asleep. But it felt like an eternity.

I woke up to the sight of a naked girl.

Amanda, I reminded myself. Her name was Amanda.

She was standing over her dresser, plucking out clothes to wear.

In my post-sleep daze, it took me a few moments to think to check my phone for the time. Clumsily, I reached for it and lifted it from the dresser next to my bed.

Early. \*Real\* early.

What in the world was Amanda doing up at 3am? And why was she \*naked\*? I watched her, resisting the urge to go back to sleep. Cats and curiosity and all.

Amanda was on the petite side. Small and cute, with a nice butt and wide, dark nipples.

My confusion and curiosity only grew as my red-head roomie slid herself into a black g-string. A few moments later, she had on the shorted plaid miniskirt I'd ever seen. The thing didn't even fully cover her crotch or ass. Then, she took a white blouse out of a drawer and slipped that on too - tying it in front rather than using the buttons.

After that, she slid on some white stockings and some stiletto high heels.

And then she was gone.

Out of our dorm room, headed who-knew where.

I blinked at the dorm room door, not sure if I was hallucinating or not.

"Hum," I said to myself. "Strange."

Hearing my voice, the dorm room's smart system woke up. A smiley face appeared on the control screen next to the door.

"Go back to sleep," I muttered to the smiley face. "I know I am. Good night, dorm bot."

I woke up the next morning feeling refreshed.

A bit of momentary confusion filled me when I saw I wasn't in my bedroom back home, but the memories came flooding back quickly enough.

I was at the TomorrowTech Campus and University. In my dorm room, who I shared with...

A quick glance over and I saw her sleeping in her bed.

"Weird," I found myself saying. "Must've been a dream."

Then I saw the shoes. The stiletto high heels. The stockings too, and the miniskirt. All scattered over the floor around Amanda's bed. I blinked, considered for a moment, then shook my head. Not worth worrying about. I was at college now. What and who my roomie decided to spend her nights doing was up to her.

I got out of bed, put some quick and casual clothes on, left the dorm room.

It was past dawn, but not many people seemed to be moving around. The odd guy here or there, a lot of them looking exhausted.

Had there been some party or something last night I didn't know about?

An uncomfortable feeling in my gut. An odd sense of foreboding.

Something felt... off.

I ignored it as best I could. Just anxious from moving out of my parents' home. That was all. There wasn't \*actually\* anything weird going on. It was just my imagination.

I stepped out of the dorm building, into the fresh air.

A moment of satisfaction and relief, washed away as my gaze shifted around and my eyes narrowed.

Had there been this many security cameras yesterday?

There were a few cars outside the dorm - people moving into the dorms, waving their parents goodbye. Lots of smiles and laughter and joy.

A cold shiver ran down my spine.

I turned on my feet, walked briskly back into the dorm building.

Something was wrong. I could \*feel\* it.

When I got back to my dorm room, my roomie was already up and about. Wearing normal, casual clothes. The shoes and stockings and skirt were nowhere to be seen.

"Amanda," I said, drawing the girl's gaze. "Where did you go

last night? What were you doing?"

She blinked at me, smiled a creepy, too-happy smile.

"What're you talking about Rebecca? I didn't go anywhere last night. I slept like a baby."

Rebecca.

I'd never told her my name was Rebecca, had I? I'd only given her the name 'Beck'.

What the fuck was going on?

"You never applied to come here, right?" I asked, heart thumping a rapid beat inside my chest. "You were going to go somewhere else - Harvard or something - but you were invited here. Are you *\*sure\** you didn't apply?"

How would TomorrowTech have known to invite Amanda?

Why had they accepted *\*me\**?

Outside the dorm building, I'd felt like I was being watched. A dozen cameras all pointed at me.

Why did I *\*still\** feel like I was being watched?

"Harvard?" Amanda blinked. "What's that?"

My mouth dropped open. Just pure, stunned silence.

"Harvard," I said slowly. "You know, the school. Ivy League college. Harvard... The place you were gonna go before TomorrowTech invited you here?"

"Oh!" Amanda grinned, realisation dawning. "Whorevard! Right, yeah. That's where I was gonna go, yes."

Whorevard?

I must've hit my head or something. This must all be some weird dream or fantasy. Everything... It had to be fake. It couldn't possibly be real.

"You know what?" I said, shaking my head. "Fuck this noise. I'm outta here. This place is fucking *\*weird\**. I'm goin' home."

At that point, I tried to turn around.

I'd grab my phone, call my parents to come pick me up, and get the hell outta there.

Only, I didn't move.

My body remained rooted in place.

In the back of my skull, I heard it. The whirring hum.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Amanda smiled. "School hasn't even started yet. You have to stay."

I looked into her eyes, saw a hollowness there. Black pupils that were empty of all personality or thought. Amanda might as well have been dead, what with all the emotion she was showing. A blatantly fake smile that didn't reach her eyes.

"What's going on?" I demanded. "What've you done to me?!"

I climbed out of bed, body pulled along on invisible strings.

Across the room, Amanda mirrored my movements perfectly. As I walked to my drawers, she did the same. When I reached in, pulled out the thong and miniskirt and blouse, Amanda retrieved her own set.

My eyes flicked to the door - to the screen next to it.

An emoji. Smiling with shades on.

The only hint I had as to what my puppet-master was thinking. Not much of a hint, to say the least.

It had to be someone at TomorrowTech. All the electronics in this place were TomorrowTech goods. Who else could possibly have the access and the influence to do something like this? Controlling people. Straight up robbing them of their ability to move by themselves.

Someone at TomorrowTech had taken over my body.

Why?

I gulped as my hands moved - sliding on thong and miniskirt and stockings and blouse. The sluttiest schoolgirl uniform imaginable.

That my controller was forcing me to wear \*this\*, did not bode well.

It was past midnight, just as it'd been last night.

The only difference was that, this time, I'd be leaving with Amanda. She wouldn't be going alone.

It was dim. Dark. Not a whole lot of light to see by. But what I could see made my stomach twist itself in knots. Made me want to hunch over and vomit, or scream at the top of my lungs. I wanted to run away, escape. I wanted \*anything\* that wasn't \*this\*.

Not having control of myself, of my actions, was easily the most terrifying feeling I'd ever experienced.

Dressed in the slutty clothes that'd been provided for us, me and Amanda walked to our dorm room door in unison. Wordlessly, my roomie opened the door, stepped through it into the darkness beyond.

I managed to turn my head back just long enough to glance at the photo on the wall next to my bed.

Me and Rebs and Kas.

I closed my eyes, prayed a silent prayer.

Then I was walking through the door, into the darkness of the corridor. There, in a line with a dozen other girls, my puppet master guided my feet. Led me to the place my roomie had been last night.

A place that would haunt me forever.