

## Chapter 1

Kasei closed the door to the darkened lab behind her. The rest of the team left three hours ago, and she disabled the cameras that would alert them to an after-hours presence in the building. She knew she was alone.

She rushed to the testing room at the back of the lab and booted up the Domino program, disentangling the neural nodes from the careless knot that Bianca left after the last test subject left. When was that, two weeks ago? She couldn't believe nobody noticed the mess when they spent so much time in this lab. It's no wonder the university was preparing to pull the plug on the project. It's bad enough that their success was clouded by ethical questions, but the careless handling of equipment and data didn't help matters. Perhaps it wouldn't be necessary to take drastic measures if Bianca and Naomi had been more diligent about proper procedure.

As if she wouldn't have tried this anyway. Kasei intended to integrate with Domino from the beginning. That was the plan she and Julissa made when the project began: she would integrate to work inside the program, and Julissa would oversee the program from the outside. Their family money and influence were the foundation of the research team. Favors and generous donations to the university kept prying eyes out of the way, at least until recently.

Until that awful incident a little over six months ago that put them on the media headlines too soon. Again. Some people never learn from past mistakes.

Kasei wouldn't let anybody stand in the way of fulfilling her family legacy. Not the university. Not the government. Not the media. Not even her hand-picked research team. They should have listened to her. She and Julissa had two generations of research and wisdom at their disposal. Now she would finish what her grandfather built. She would follow his footsteps to the final vision that had eluded them until it demanded that they bring more players into the game.

The problem was that one block scared them away. She should have known they couldn't trust Naomi and Bianca. One pass in a game doesn't mean you've lost. It means you need to wait things out to see what surfaces on the tiles. She refused to give up as quickly as everybody else did. She would succeed where they failed.

*What about Julissa?*

Kasei paused. Julissa wasn't just her cousin; she was a best friend and the only true confidant Kasei had in life. They shared the vision of using Domino to take humanity to the next level of evolution by merging man and machine. They were the doublets in this study. Always leading together. Always on the same page. Was it right for her to do this alone?

*No, there's only one lead in the game of dominos, and it's me, Kasei thought. We need a winning play, and the others are blocked. I have to make a play now, or they trump the game and we lose.*

That was true. The message she hacked indicated that the Domino program would be shut down tomorrow if something didn't change by midnight. Strangely, the message was sent at 10:30 p.m., nearly five and a half hours after the "official" closing time. Thank goodness for Bianca's monitoring program, or Kasei wouldn't have known until she found the lab locked in the morning. Bianca might not be a loyal player, but she had skills that opened up the game in ways that she and Julissa couldn't do on their own.

*Let Naomi and Bianca burn, but I won't hurt Julissa.*

Kasei didn't have time to contact Julissa. She had to do this now, pray that it worked, and explain herself later.

Kasei stuck the nodules to various points on her forehead and scalp underneath her long, blonde hair. Removing the nodes would take out chunks of hair, but it didn't matter. Hair grows

back, and she would be online most of the time if this worked. Kasei settled her slender body in the chair in front of the main computer screen. Her fingers flew across the keyboard entering the encryption codes that would unlock the system.

NEURAL CONNECTIONS CONFIRMED. INITIATE DOMINO?

She clicked “yes” and rushed to the examination table connected to the back of the computer. She had approximately two minutes to connect the biological monitors before Domino would induce a beta wave brain pattern to connect her neural chip with the program and begin her data download.

Kasei’s heart raced as she completed the connections and laid on the table. All of the test subjects experienced heightened anxiety when Domino initialized. Her readings were high but within acceptable parameters. They would drop off as the beta wave pattern took over.

The computer beeped, causing Kasei to jolt. What was that? She turned her head toward the computer, only to see the back of the monitor with a flashing red glow spreading against the opposite wall. She sighed at the oversight. She should have launched the projector app to lay an image of the computer screen over her so she could respond to pop up messages. Better yet, she should have brought Julissa with her. She was so desperate to save time that she neglected to think of safety protocols. Domino integration was a two-person process: the subject entering the program, and the outside operator monitoring their progress and making adjustments to the connections as the neurological mapping cloned to Domino. Julissa was a control freak, but surely she would have understood the urgency of the situation. Then again, Kasei was afraid to take a chance on convincing Julissa to act first and understand later when it came to Domino. They were both possessive of the program, but Julissa had always been the more conservative player, both here and in the game that they named this program after. She was never able to

convince Julissa that playing strategically doesn't guarantee wins in every scenario. Kasei was proof of that. She trumped most of their games during childhood and their teens because she would take risks that Julissa didn't see coming.

*Stop drifting and focus. You can't afford to waste time reminiscing.*

It was up to Kasei to save the program.

*It will work, she thought. I'll be the first human in history to become truly immortal.*

*Immortal? Or create a copy of yourself inside the machine?*

Now was not the time to ponder that ethical debate again.

More alerts rang out of the computer. Kasei saw the reflection of a red warning message flash against the opposite wall. She tried to rise from the table but found herself unable to move. Paralysis set in as a wave of drowsiness rolled over her, giving her a small sense of relief. Good, the program was working. The system was probably sending alerts because she was outside the parameters of their typical test subject.

*Yes, by about 80 years and not terminally ill!* She thought as her consciousness drifted from the darkened lab to the tunnels of glistening light guiding her into Domino. All of their test subjects were elderly and sick. Kasei felt a sense of release as she rose from her body.

She was inside Domino.

Kasei willed herself to swim through the connections and nodes in the stream of data bombarding her consciousness. Tendrils of light swirled, connecting with her neural pathways to build an online profile. A skeletal light form of her body formed as the data processed, cloning the neurological mapping from her neural chip and building her online "body" to navigate the web. Now she had to find the back door to the Internet to have full access to the digital world.

*It worked!*

An alarm pierced Kasei's consciousness. A window opened, giving her a view of the camera in the corner of the lab focused on her body convulsing on the table.

*That's impossible! Domino worked. Besides, I disabled the cameras in the lab.*

*You only interrupted the signal to the security alarm application. The cameras monitoring the lab are still operational.*

*Who are you?*

Kasei swirled from the scene in front of her to face a large, dark form standing over her.

What are you?

*Domino is disintegrating. Soon it will be dead; just like you.*

Kasei studied the form, seeking a digital signature. It didn't take long for the quantum code to connect with her neural code, revealing the source.

It was from inside the system, and it had their fingerprints all over it.

Naomi and Bianca. They did it. They developed the virus to destroy the program if anybody tried to access it besides them. They talked about it, but she never thought Naomi would agree to it. That was a doublet she didn't see coming.

"Traitors!" Kasei screamed, but the sound was swallowed in the silence of the web. After all, code doesn't scream. The "scream" reverberated through her form, causing her code to destabilize briefly before coming back together in a staticky form.

The dark form studied her. "Kasei," the mechanical voice said.

It knew her! How did it know her? Did they use the genetic profile from her neural chip to develop the virus?

Her mind flew back to that night nearly four and a half years ago in the lab. The night they initiated their vision.

They didn't just betray her. They knew she would do this, and they meant to kill her. She walked into a trap. The form touched her, ripping off code and data. She tried to scream again, but could only struggle from the grip of the virus. How did you initiate sound in here? She needed to call for help!

The form reached for her again, its swirling darkness ripping off more code. The computations giving her form wavered, causing her to expand slightly before she willed her form to pull back together. Jolts of light erupted from her form, causing a searing sensation.

*How is it possible to feel pain without a body?*

There was no time to figure that out. She had to make a play, and fast! She reached around, looking for data that Naomi and Kasei might have left that night. Of course, they were clever. They had deleted everything and only left the data from the test subjects and that she and Julissa stored in the system as a "placeholder" for themselves, once the time came for them to integrate. She grabbed random data from other subjects in the system, gathering it to ward off the virus. The codes of the others in Domino sparked to activity, scrambling chaotically against the virus. The confusion of thousands of code swarming against the virus finally gave her a break to escape.

Kasei rushed through the light, fleeing the chaos of the virus fighting through the swirling codes and the camera showing her body's final convulsion dropping her on the table in the lab. The darkness expanded and broke free of the code web. Broken links scattered around the system as darkness fell around her. The virus had scattered the light of all those codes, leaving nothing but a system collapsing into darkness. All Kasei would see was the glow of the Internet porthole in the distance with a line of red code running across its frame.

*The link to the web!*

Could the virus survive on the web? It wasn't supposed to. The doorway to the Internet was hidden and could only be opened by her or Julissa. The university didn't want test subjects to have access to the World Wide Web until the final version of the program was ready for worldwide integration. It existed now as only a beta placeholder.

Or so they thought.

Kasei experienced a moment of panic. Did she still have the access code to open the doorway in her memory code? She frantically searched until she found the phrase that she and Julissa designed.

*Please be active*, Kasei thought. The tests she and Julissa ran the past few nights worked, but it wasn't stable. Kasei opened it remotely from her apartment before coming to the lab. Would it work, or at least hold open long enough for her to get through?

Naomi and Bianca were clever, but they weren't insidious enough to develop a virus that would get out of control on the Internet. The virus would be targeted to fracture Domino, and then fracture itself. After all, we don't want to hurt anybody, do we? Nobody but the other players in the game, it seems. So, they played dirty. That's ok. Kasei could play dirty, too.

Kasei hesitated and took one last look at her body on the examination table. She hoped to keep herself in both worlds, but that couldn't happen if her body died and Domino was destroyed. She'd die in both worlds, and three generations of work would come to nothing, leaving her dead and Julissa without the family legacy they committed to carrying on. Plus, Naomi and Bianca might go after Julissa next. If they would design a virus to kill Kasei, then the next logical step would be to take out Julissa. This wasn't just about saving herself; it was about saving the future of humanity. She couldn't let Naomi and Bianca win. Domino wasn't theirs. It belonged to her and Julissa. If she could escape to the Internet then she would not only survive

but would have unlimited access to the physical world through computers and mobile devices. She could reach everybody. She could do anything. She would have ultimate freedom. And she would have Julissa to help her. They could take this game to a whole new level. They would be unstoppable.

And she would have unlimited access and power to rule it all.

The darkness surrounded her, causing code to scatter through the system. Another static scream shook her form as she willed what was left of her neural essence toward the portal. Flashes of light and code were ripped from her digital form. Desperation drove her toward the light emanating from the door as the darkness continued to rip fragments of neural code off of her. Kasei willed herself to move faster. She didn't need everything she brought into Domino. Anything would do as long as the copy of her neurological mapping from the neural chip remained intact. So far, she enough to rebuild once she got through the porthole and was fully immersed in the web. She just hoped Naomi and Bianca had programmed that virus to stay confined to Domino. Otherwise, she would not only die by that virus but would take it to the Internet where it could wreak havoc on worldwide systems. Kasei didn't want to destroy the world. She just wanted to destroy the people who tried to destroy the future that she and Julissa had spent years to build. Why would they want to destroy the only salvation that humanity had? It didn't make sense, but she and Julissa failed to convince the others to stay the course and not give up. It would need some force behind it to press forward.

Kasei intended to be that driving force.

The darkness overtook the outer reaches of the system, spreading a blanket in front of her. Kasei was undeterred. She girded her energy and rushed straight through the middle of the darkness, where the center point was stretched thin. More fragments of light and code ripped off



her, throwing shadows of light and signals against the virus. She gathered what was left of her energy to project the command code to the Internet doorway.

*Shuffle the bones!*

She sensed a burning sensation as she rushed through the red doorway, her code glowing red and shooting off static as she pulled it through the collapsing doorway. She turned to see the darkness reaching toward her, its form dissipating against the security protocols of the porthole, before what was left of her was swept into the light code of the Internet.

Kasei swirled with the bright world surrounding her. She made it. Some of the data she brought from her neural ship was still fragmented in the program, but the neurological mapping remained eighty percent intact, and she made it through the doorway with enough data to survive. It's the Internet, after all, and she had been connected to it her whole life. There was more than enough data online to rebuild herself. She could build a better version of herself. She could be what she wanted, instead of what she had been limited to in the outside world. She stilled her form to look around at the vast networks of rushing lights and signals swirling around her. She made it! She survived! She was the lead in Domino. Of course, she could trump it.

But barely, and her biggest threat came not from a failure in the system, but her friends. Eventually, they would figure out that she made it to the Internet. Could Julissa handle them alone? No, she couldn't. She'd need help.

Kasei was dead, or so they'd think. Let Naomi and Bianca think they blocked her integration to Domino and the online world. It wouldn't take her long to get ready and once she was, they'd pay for what they'd done. She just hoped that Julissa could protect herself from that doublet. They were traitors. Playing smart or strategically wouldn't be enough. Julissa would have to trump them.

I'll make them pay. I will know them as well as they knew themselves once I access all of their data here. Everything is connected. I'll line them up and knock them down.

Just like dominos.

## Chapter 2

“What if they find out what happened?” Naomi asked.

“They won’t,” Bianca said crossly from the video message screen on Naomi’s computer.

“Kasei was alone in the lab, and she never said a word on the internal monitoring video. They’ll never look at us, so stop worrying.”

“I can’t believe Kasei integrated with Domino.”

Bianca shook her head, her curly red hair bouncing around her shoulders. “Why? We knew she was losing it. We developed the virus to stop her from doing it if she made good with her claims to integrate with the system.”

“We didn’t know it would kill her,” Naomi stared at Bianca’s stern face on the screen. “Did we? It was just supposed to fracture the code for the program, not neurological data. She should have been able to pull out.”

Bianca sighed. “I thought Julissa would pull her out of the program when the virus activated. I had no idea Kasei would try to integrate alone. Domino is a two-person system to operate. Kasei should have known it would kill her if she did it by herself, especially after what happened to her father and grandfather.” She paused. “Even so, the computer in the lab is a quantum computer. Even if Kasei were alone, she should have been able to terminate her connection. She’s so arrogant that she probably thought she could beat the virus. I’ll bet she didn’t try to disconnect. She just let it happen. That seems to be a family trait.”

“You lied to me!” Naomi said. “You said it wouldn’t hurt anybody, but everybody in the system is gone now.”

“Everybody in the system, except for Kasei, was already gone. All of the other signatures were copies of the neurological maps from when they were living. They weren’t alive.”

“I’m glad you can make that distinction so clearly,” Naomi said bitterly.

“It’s the truth.”

“The purpose of Domino was to preserve that data. Our virus destroyed it. Whether it was them or not isn’t relevant. They and their families entrusted us with that information, and it’s gone. We’ve betrayed them to protect ourselves,” Naomi said.

“Welcome to millions of years of evolution in action,” Bianca said. “Every one of our test subjects was terminally ill. Most of them are already dead. It’s not like we did anything that hasn’t or won’t happen to all of them. We aren’t stopping death, even if the media portrays it that way. Besides, we didn’t wipe that code. Kasei could have prevented all of this by disconnecting. She’s the one who killed them if you insist on referring to it that way, and herself along with them.”

Naomi dropped her head in her hands. “We knew this was coming for six months. Why didn’t we come up with a better plan?” Naomi narrowed her eyes. “Better yet, why didn’t you run that backup of Domino that Kasei kept asking you about?”

“It’s a huge program. Kasei didn’t want it backed up on Cloud storage, and I couldn’t find an external storage device big enough to hold a backup that included the program and all of the data from thousands of test subjects.”

“You don’t seem concerned about the fact that our friend is dead, the project that funded our education crashed, and pretty much everything we’ve done for the past four years a complete waste.”

Bianca sighed. “I am upset, but I’m also frustrated. We told Kasei and Julissa not to move forward with their crazy plan to integrate with Domino. Julissa was listening, but you know how Kasei was when she got in one of her states. You couldn’t tell her anything.”

“We killed her. This is our fault, and they’re going to find out and put us in jail and our lives will be over –”

“Naomi, stop it. You’re paranoid. I’m sorry Kasei died, but we did warn her to back off. The decision to take a gamble on integrating with Domino was hers and hers alone.” Bianca said.

“She walked into her death. We did kill her, Bianca. We’re guilty.”

“If she decided to plug herself in the system, then maybe she was suicidal.”

“She wasn’t suicidal. Or at least, she didn’t think we would act that fast.”

“Kasei’s problem was that she wasn’t listening to us.” Bianca paused. “Heck, she was so loopy since the incident in October that I wonder if she was in the same reality as the rest of us. Maybe she wasn’t aware of what was happening with the rest of the team, but we did tell her. The virus has been a backup plan if we lost control of Domino since we came on this team. We never made a secret of it. Comprehending and accepting what we said was their responsibility. Julissa listened to us and accepted it, but Kasei didn’t. She made her choice and suffered the consequences of her refusal to accept reality. It’s nobody’s fault but her own if she was stupid enough to ignore us and take dramatic measures to save this project.”

“We didn’t talk about the virus much. It was mentioned what, three times over the past four years?” Naomi sniffed. “Did you tell them we were launching the virus? I haven’t mentioned it since that incident in the lab in October.”

Bianca clenched her jaw. “I did and got no reaction. Julissa shrugged and said keep it as a backup. Kasei gave me a blank stare and walked out of the lab. I didn’t hide what I was doing.” Bianca paused. “Julissa won’t hurt us, and Kasei can’t hurt us. Julissa is a straight arrow and Kasei’s dead. Domino is gone, and the police don’t have anything but our testimony, which will agree if we act wisely. It’s our word against Kasei’s rambling texts and emails over the past few

months. No intent to harm her can be drawn from anything they can find on us. Heck Naomi, we didn't intend to harm her! We did nothing wrong. We aren't mind readers. We didn't know she'd go directly to the lab and proceed with her plan after I intercepted that message that the university was shutting Domino down for good."

Naomi crossed her arms. "What about the virus? They'll want to know why Domino is destroyed."

Bianca smiled. "What virus? I had no idea there was a virus in the system. Domino must have been hacked at some point between when they sent that email about shutting down the experiment and when Kasei integrated with the program." She shrugged. "What's to say Kasei didn't integrate with Domino to deliver that virus?"

"They won't see that we downloaded it ten days ago?"

"Absolutely not, and don't mention it again unless we talk in person. Now I have to go in after we stop talking and delete all traces of this conversation."

Naomi pushed her brown hair away from her face. "Fair enough. If you're deleting this, then I want to ask one more question: Is Kasei gone?"

"She's being cremated. The memorial service is the day after tomorrow."

"You know what I mean. She connected with Domino."

"Domino is destroyed. Therefore, Kasei is gone. May she rest in pieces."

Naomi's throat constricted as she forced mucus down her throat. "There's a back door in Domino that links to the Internet. Maybe she got through it before the virus crashed Domino."

"It was a beta place holder to activate at a later stage of the experiment, which isn't going to happen now," Bianca said. "Stop worrying. You had the least to do with this. Nobody can blame Kasei's death on anybody but Kasei."

“I wrote the virus!”

“You wrote it with my help. One thing I added was that it destroyed itself along with Domino, just like we planned.” Bianca sighed. “It’s gone, Naomi. Nobody will ask questions if we don’t draw attention to ourselves. Go on with your life. We’re free to define ourselves now that Domino isn’t holding us prisoner anymore.”

“I thought you enjoyed the project.”

“I did, but it’s over now. We lost the minute the janitor found the body in the lab, and we’re lucky we escaped that unscathed. We can’t do anything but put the work on our resume, scrounge up a few professional references, and hope it gives us an advantage at a good job.” She paused. “Relax. Enjoy graduation in a few days. Go to grad school. Get a good job, marry Blake, have a few kids, and live happily ever after. Let it go. Domino is gone, Kasei can’t hurt us anymore, and Julissa will probably cave to those people with the university in Columbia that want to use parts of Domino for their development on their proposed Advanced Artificial Intelligence project. They’ve been trying to recruit her since she got her undergraduate degree two years ago.”

“Domino is gone now,” Naomi said.

Bianca waved it off. “It doesn’t matter. Julissa is the main organizer of Domino and probably has enough information to give them a jump start on their crazy idea to integrate artificial intelligence with our neural chips. Even if she doesn’t, she still wins. She’ll use her family money and influence to get away from here and find some other endeavor to chase down. The future is a clear path of open doors for all three of us now.”

“Not the way I hoped.”

“No, but it’s done.”

Naomi paused. “What about you? What will you do?”

“I’m out of money, so grad school is out for me. I’ll find a job. It’s time for me to move on to the next stage of life.” She sighed. “I’ll see you at the memorial service.”

“I’ll see you later.” Naomi clicked off the call screen and stared at the block of text that was a semester’s worth of class notes. Somehow, she had to finish studying for her final exam tomorrow morning. She should probably do laundry too, so she’d have something clean to wear to the memorial service.

Naomi sighed, clicking open social media instead. The headlines screamed at her:

**STUDENT COMMITS SUICIDE IN RESEARCH LAB.**

Small wonder it was the headline. Palmetto University was a mid-size school, located an hour west of Columbia, South Carolina. The entire town of Palmetto City was comprised of the school and a few businesses. Kasei’s death was the top story not only on the campus news but the local news as well. Fortunately, there was no mention of Kasei being connected to Domino when she died. No speculation was offered at all, which was surprising given the high profile of their experiment. The articles simply said that she was a good student with a bright future, and her tragic suicide during finals week was a shock to the campus.

Maybe Bianca was right. Maybe it was over.

Naomi’s message icon blinked. A small text box opened in the top corner of her screen, flowing with red words.

*Do not be deceived.*

Naomi blinked. What was this? A prank? Probably some sick person who knew she and Kasei were friends. Well, she wouldn’t scare easily. She didn’t need sick people feeding her anxiety. She was doing that fine on her own.



*Deceived about what?* She typed.

*Your secrets didn't die with me.*

“She knows,” Naomi gasped.

Yes, I know. I know it all. You're all lined up, and now I'll knock you down.

Naomi's hands shook as she slowly typed. *Kasei?*

*I told you Domino works.*

*Not funny, Bianca.*

*Bianca is the next domino to fall.*

Naomi's face paled as she stared at the text on the screen. *Domino is destroyed. We lost. I'm logging off now.*

*You can run, but you can't hide. The digital world is everywhere, Naomi. It surrounds us. It encompasses us. It IS us. I have perfected the integration. You gave up too soon. Worse yet, you betrayed me killed me. I can't let that betrayal go. I can't let you hurt anybody else.*

*What are you talking about?* Naomi typed.

There was a knock at the door. Naomi jerked. “Who is it?”

“Detective Grace Milone and Officer Reid Garrison with the county police department. We have some questions about the suicide of Kasei Marculya. Can we come in?”

“You better get the door,” a mechanical voice with a female tone said from her laptop.

“What?” Naomi mumbled.

“Naomi Blake?” the woman's voice outside the door called. “Can we come in? We have a few questions about Kasei's suicide.”

“Why are they investigating a suicide?” Naomi mumbled.

“Because they know the truth,” The pixels swirled to the shadowy image of a woman. “You killed me.”

Naomi squinted. “Kasei?”

“Bianca lied. I survived.”

“How is this possible?” She tapped the screen. The pixels wiggled, but the face remained. “You’re dead!”

“You meant for me to die, but I didn’t.” Static filled the room. “You and Bianca aren’t the only players in this game, Naomi. The next play is mine.”

“Miss Blake, we hear you. Please open the door.”

“Yes, please open that door and explain everything to them. I’m sure they’ll understand why you designed and launched a virus that killed me. It was to secure your future. The problem is, it was at the expense of mine.” Static erupted from the small speakers on the computer. “Or so you intended. I’m smarter than you are. Now my future is forever, and yours is over.”

“No, we never meant –” Naomi cut off as the knocking on the door became more insistent. She heard voices in the hallway. No doubt, the noise alerted her neighbors, and now they were putting their two cents worth in with the police. Those girls across the hall were so nosy!

“This can’t be happening. I didn’t mean for you to die!”

“But I did die, at least to that world, and it’s because of you.”

Naomi sprang from her chair, running to the window and throwing it open. She was on the fifth floor. No exit.

“The fire escape,” the voice said from her computer.

“What?” she strained her eyes. The fire escape was damaged from a tropical storm the previous fall. Building maintenance was repairing the network of outside catwalks to escape the buildings, but the closest secure landing was on the third floor.

“You were in gymnastics and cheerleading in high school,” the voice said. “Position yourself correctly, and you can jump down to that landing. You can make it. Go to Bianca, come up with a story, and both of you go to the police station in a few hours with whatever fiction she wants to sell them. I’m sure they’ll believe that neither of you meant any harm; until I send them a random link to Bianca’s dark web activity.”

“What?” Naomi asked.

“That’s not your problem. Play your innocence, and they’ll let you go. Let her take the fall. She set you up too if you believed that the virus wouldn’t kill me and destroy everybody in Domino. Should you pay for Bianca’s crimes?”

“It’s too far,” Naomi whined.

“You always were the weak one. Go ahead. Answer that door. Answer for yourself, and everybody else. Tell them Domino works, and you designed a virus that was meant to kill me and everybody in Domino.” The sound rose to full volume. “TELL THEM YOU KILLED ME!”

“Naomi Blake? What’s going on in there?” the male voice called through the door.

Naomi studied the landing two floors below her.

A laugh resonated from the computer. “What’s it going to be, Naomi? Face the truth, or escape with more lies to have your dream life?”

“I can’t take the blame for this! Bianca made me do it. She should go to jail.”

“You’ll go to jail if they break down that door and see you in here, and that conversation you just had with Bianca. She hasn’t deleted it yet. Do you want to go down with her?”

Naomi took a deep breath and jumped. The door to her apartment burst open to her scream as her body hurled past the landing. Grace and Reid rushed to the window just in time to see Naomi crash to the ground in an explosion of blood and bone. Reid walked to the computer, his eyes wide with shock as the screen glowed against his dark face. “Grace, you need to see this.”

Grace walked next to Reid, the light glowing against her ebony skin and dark, curly hair tied behind her head. A single line of text glowed at the center of the computer screen.

*One by one, the Dominos fall.*

“What is that?” Grace asked. “Is it a suicide note?”

Reid shook his head. “No. I think it’s something else.”

