

Fatal Association

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You need to run faster.

Emma's desperate voice echoes through my mind. The soft flakes of snow make the air crisp and thick. My lungs yearn for more oxygen as my feet leave a trail of blood in the snow.

'Emma I can't.'

My breath hitches as adrenaline rushes through me. My eyes blur, and a feeling of disassociation radiates through me. I know she can help me; we've been practising for weeks. The tedious routine at a psychiatric hospital allowed a lot of alone time to utilise for our escape. And here we are, that plan taking place under the obnoxiously large night sky that reflects our internal emptiness. In this world filled with unkind strangers, we only have each other.

Sweat drips from our temples tracking its way to the back of our necks. Irritation grows. We, or rather I, hate unhygienic things. It disgusts me, but to prevent the anxiety attack that's threatening, we focus on the glow of the city in the distance. It looks so alive and inviting to me. Humanity, civilisation, hope. But Emma doesn't think so. She sees cruelty, societal expectations, and constriction.

Raven listen, I'll get us there, but you have to lead when we arrive. I can't handle people; they stress me out. Okay?

The world seems to fade as memories of home flood through our mind. Their hands leaving bruises; their words leaving scars. She never feared the pain that came along with death. She never worried about the afterlife because we were already in Hell.

Before I met Emma, I nearly gave up to the dark abyss that taunted me with its peaceful appeal. My body was never my own. My tears ran dry from exhaustion, and my stomach grew comfortable being empty. My insides yearned to be ripped out as my skin felt foreign and itchy. How much I wanted to peel it off and start fresh. Emma—my saviour—comforted me when I was too fragile and damaged to move. My mind grew clear of the illusions of this world. She came from the depths of my mind, craving darkness, and pain. Her only way to escape from this world of insanity.

‘I understand,’ I say, coming back to reality.

The wind increases, blowing our ripped clothes. We need to change before I flip out. ‘We don’t have any money, food, water, or clothes,’ I tell Emma, trying to form an objective list to help our escape.

Don’t even go there. I don’t want to beg for scraps. They’ll stare and call us psychotic. We’ll be shunned. I won’t go through with it. I can’t Raven.

I stay silent not wanting to bicker. We’re going whether she likes it or not.

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Standing before the skyscrapers, I feel worthless. We could be squished if they came crumbling down. I take the initiative and lead us towards independence. First, we need clothes. Preferably ones that don’t give away our mental status.

‘Emma, I might need you to help me acquire our essentials.’ My voice fades. ‘Emma?’ Moments of silence pass that fuel my fear of abandonment. ‘Emma, are you there?’ My knees buckle and I fall onto the filthy footpath. I need her; where did she go? She can’t leave me. We are supposed to be here for each other. ‘Emma!’ The cry escapes my lips, breaking the white noise of beeping cars and distant chatter of people.

I’m here, love. Don’t cry. I can’t stable myself with people around.

My heartbeat steadies. Emma is still here.

‘What do we have here?’

We glare at a middle-aged man; he radiates danger. ‘What do you want?’ My voice cracks from nervous tension.

Raven, he’s dangerous look at his hand.

I follow her advice and see a brief glint of metal reflecting from his hand. *Emma, I can’t outrun him*, I think, hinting at Emma to use her skills

You know I can’t control myself around other people, especially someone who wants to hurt us.

Please, we need to survive, Emma. I need her to do this for me, for her, for us.

If I hurt him, I’ll lose myself. You’ll lose me, Raven.

I take a breath. This can’t be it. We’ve come so far.

‘Who are you talking to love? Is someone else here?’ His raspy voice sends shivers down our spine.

‘Leave us be please.’

He gazes over our body. Disgust flows through me. I need to stay calm. ‘Are you okay, love? It’s okay, we’re alone—together.’

The world seems to halt. The hate we get isolates us from the world, and the disgust we receive fuels our internal resentment. We are rejected in a world filled with billions of people.

I feel that fuzzy feeling of Emma resurfacing tingles through our bodies. Hopefully, we can escape this nightmare. The sound of my heavy footsteps smacking the ground echo through the alleyway. The shadowed silhouette of the threatening man grows closer. I can hear the erratic rhythm of my heartbeat in my ears. Yet, although I'm racing towards the dangerous man, I feel as though I'm watching a movie. I can't even recognise myself. But amid this ludicrous scenario and my panic attack, I trust Emma.

'Let's make this quick,' he says, as he stabs his blade towards our abdomen.

Emma predicts his move and twists, dodging the weapon. But something doesn't feel right. She disarms the man and cuts his throat. My heart sinks as the scene unfolds.

You killed him!

I scream making her clench our ears. We become still, void of any emotion. We have just proven everyone right. We are nothing but outcasts who cannot control our insanity. I stare at the blood coating our hands like paint, then force my eyes to the man who lays lifeless. In my current state of disbelief, he rises from the pool of blood, smiling crookedly before walking into the dreary night. Didn't he die? Didn't I kill him? What is happening?

Goosebumps scattered over my body as I can't shake the feeling of guilt. He died; Emma killed him. Emma has always been aggressive and unstable around people. Now she has lost herself in her actions. Killing that man was her desire all along. Tears spill from my exhausted eyes as I stare at the man's blood. He isn't dangerous—but I am.

Can't you see, Raven? You killed him, Emma taunts.

'Stop lying, Emma. That was all you!'

Silly girl, I am you—

Her voice resonating through me one last time. The silence that follows is dark and seemingly endless. A scream leaves my lips, as my mind smashes like cut glass. Irreparable. No one can save me from myself now that I'm broken. She's gone—

I walk the streets with bloody bare feet, feeling empty and soulless. I've been used to another voice in my head for as long as I can remember. Two souls in one body. Not even the loud noise of the city can fill that hole. Emma left me. Or was I already alone? A hollow body forced to reminisce our fatal association.

Hello Raven, I'm Charlie. It's nice to meet you.

Or maybe I'm not so alone after all...