

---

## Chapter 1

---

Kate  
Day Zero: 10:13 AM Pacific Time  
Canyon City, California

**K**ate Garnett drove up Bell Canyon road too fast. It was narrow, twisting and turning, and at least once a year there was a terrible wreck along here somewhere. She knew she drove it too fast, she did every day, but this route was the only way she could cut five minutes off the path from the boys' school back to the house. That was a good thing. She had to make the round trip to the school twice a day, which meant that taking this route saved her twenty minutes a day, five days a week, which was a hundred minutes a week and... well, she wasn't sure how much that was a year but it was a lot.

She had never driven off the road before, she reasoned, so she probably wouldn't today.

She checked the clock on the screen in her Mercedes SUV, 10:13. Damn, there was no way she would have time to shower

before her 10:30 call with her agent. It wouldn't be a problem except he always wanted to see her, always insisted they talk on video, and after an hour at Elements Hot Yoga studio, she was, well, a hot mess.

Maybe Franklyn could push the meeting off until 11:00. That would give her time to shower, manage a quick blow dry, and put on some make-up. She had to look good, even if the meeting was just with her agent. Kate was 41, and the last three roles she'd been offered were two grandmothers and an aging prostitute. An aging prostitute that died in the first act of the film, and Franklyn's reassurance that it was a "big scene" had been anything but reassuring.

Kate took a turn a little too fast and drifted into the oncoming lanes. As per usual, this stretch of Bell Canyon was deserted, but it would be just her luck to hit the one oncoming car of the last ten minutes. Then, she reflected cynically, she'd really be late for her meeting.

Though why she even bothered anymore, she didn't know. No, that wasn't right, Kate knew exactly why she still bothered. While her career withered on the vine, Liam's had exploded. At 43, his roles just became more and more lucrative. If there was anything above the "A-List," her ex-husband was on it, while she hadn't had a major role in a big picture since before Jackson was born. And Kate hated the fact that she was becoming a Wikipedia footnote to Liam Garnett's career.

The thumbpad on the steering wheel allowed her to activate her phone. "Call Franklyn Powers," she ordered and...

The steering wheel went heavy in her hands, and in the same instant the hand-free screen faded to black. The engine in her car sputtered once, twice, then stopped. She couldn't steer. Pulling against the impossibly hard resistance, she managed to get the wheels to turn just a bit, but it wasn't enough. The SUV crossed over the centerline.

She braked, the car slowed a bit. Totally confused, Kate

## Day Zero

looked down at her feet, at the Gucci ballet flat pressing against the brake pedal, as if somehow the answer would be there.

It wasn't, and when she looked up again, her windshield was filled with bushes and she was falling.

Then.

Nothing.