

Cianney Saunders

October 19th, 2022

Mr.Kay's, Copper Stream

## Tick

As the sun sets, the skies turn orange-yellow. The sky appeared to be being used as an ashtray due to the smoke coming from the burning dilapidated New York style skyscrapers. Cars remain stationary, street lights flicker on, and the chill of winter air picks up. A piece of the ACB Newspaper blew by, reminding the world that it was November 1st, 3456. As Athena shuts down her bookstore for the evening, she pulls her coat closer to her body. She casts a quick glance around, observing the black shapes emerge from the night's shadows. She glances down at her phone and sees it's 6:30pm, which sets up sirens in her head. The fact that she stayed at the store until so late surprised her, and as the temperature decreases, the atmosphere around her begins to change.

She mutters to herself as she hurriedly grabs her possessions from the icy ground, *"Sh\*t, sh\*t, sh\*t."*

Athena begins to hurry home while doing her best to avoid slipping on any ice that might be in her route. From the corner of her eyes she noticed that shadows began to form around her.

Though Athena tries to blend in with the burning buildings, a man with gold-plated teeth spotted her, "Hey Athena, what are you doing out this late? Do you have any time to spare?"

Athena murmured, "Sorry Jay, don't have time for you," as she felt her heartbeat against her chest.

"Come on A, let me take a look at your wrist," he said, grinning at her with a hint of mischief in his eyes.

Athena accelerated her stride while disregarding Jay's mocking voice. She simply couldn't give him any more time.

As he kept pace with her, he sang in an eerie tone. His band of shadows drew even closer to her.

Blood begins rushing to Athena's ears. She looked down at her time on her wrist, it read *00:00:03:33*. She only had 3 minutes left, but it takes her 10 minutes to get home and she needed to take some more hours from her best friend so she can last to see another day.

Athena feels an icy hand snatching her waist. She screams, yet no sound comes out. She feels the darkness of Jay consume her as he brushes his hand against her tinted red cheek. She's never been this close to Jay, and she can already taste the bile building up in her throat as she can smell every bit of his rotting skin.

"Did you think you could get away from me A?"

She giggled nervously, "Of course not, Jay, I'm just trying to get home."

Jay's friends circled around the two, taunting Athena with their devilish eyes.

She had two more minutes to escape his hold, Athena thought as she glanced down at her wrist.

All of a sudden, shots were being fired all around her, each one narrowly missing Athena. Jay and his shadows fall to the ground with no hesitation. The time on their wrist starts to flicker as she observes, signaling that they will pass away and their time on their wrist would disappear

unless someone came and took it. Athena knew this was the universe telling her they didn't want her to die yet, even though this was the 3rd time she's gotten out of death's grasps. She observes as her personal timer quickly changes from 30 seconds to 3 days.

She looks around her and notices a jet black car standing right in front of her. A man looked dead at her in the passenger seat. The brightness in a normal person's eyes was nowhere to be found in his.

She then heard the click of the door unlocking, and watched as size 13 mens italian leather shoes stepped out of the car. Following the shoes came a 6'6 caucasian platinum blonde bombshell.

After a few seconds of silence, he whispered to himself, "What to do, what to do?"

Athena tilted her head in confusion, "What do you mean?"

The man circled around her and the now dead bodies, "Where should I bury these men, Athena?"

Athena was shocked that the man knew her name. She was even more shocked that he felt so comfortable to ask her such a question when all she needed to do was scream for help to have someone come and rescue her.

The man shook his head mockingly, to Athena, as though he was reading her mind.

"Don't scream, you're going to wake up your neighbors," he then paused, watching Athena's reaction, "only if they didn't already die from the blistering cold."

"What makes you think they aren't already woken up," asked Athena, "I mean, you did shoot so many bullets."

He chuckled, kicking Jay in the groin to see if he would flinch, “Look around you sweetheart, there’s nothing here but snow for miles on. I didn’t expect this time zone to have the worst outcome from the storm.”

“You say that as though you created the storm.”

The man smiled and walked back to his car. Athena watched as he pulled out a gallon of gasoline from his tank. He then began to pour the gasoline all over the dead bodies. He took a cigarette from out of his back pocket, and a lighter from the front. As he put the lighter in his mouth, Athena started walking away.

“Where are you going ignis? You’re going to miss all of the fun!”

Athena turned her head over her shoulder and yelled back, “I’m not sticking around to watch a stranger burn a bunch of dead bodies!”

The man ignited his cigarette and shrugged. He took a drag as he watched Athena leave; in the winter night, he could still make out her fiery red hair. Then, as Jay's body started to erupt in flames, he threw the lit cigarette into it. The other bodies were then stacked next to Jay's which caused the rest of the bodies to burst into flames. He then threw in the lighter he had used to light the cigarette. The chilly winter air carried the smell of burning flesh. Athena was sufficiently away, but she could still smell the charred corpses, which caused her to cover her nose with the scarf slung around her neck. When she glanced around again, mixed-colored eyes were staring back at her. She accelerated, sending a chill down her spin.

*What a night,* she thought to herself.

With a smile on her face, Athena walked more quickly as she could see the lights of her home. Before she could reach the front door, Athena's vision abruptly became blurry and her head began to pound.

~

The blindfold came off of Athena's head, as her eyes adjusted to the light, she noticed a familiar figure.

"Hey, you're the guy who killed Jay and his shadows," Athena yelled angrily, "you're also the guy who took time away from my mother."

She noticed that the man had a name tag on that read, *Time Zone One: Grey Rivers*. The first born to the man who made everyone's life a hellhole.

"Indeed," Grey nodded.

"So, after saving me, you decided to abduct me and then murder my mother?" Athena laughed incredulously.

Grey shook his head in disagreement, "Your mother isn't dead, she wanted my help, and now I need yours."

"Why would I ever want to work with you," Athena asked?

"Because I saved your life. You wouldn't be here if it weren't for me. Jay and his shadows would've snatched you up."

Athena rolled her eyes, "They would have not, I can protect myself."

He chuckled, "Can you? I got you right from your own home."

She rolled her eyes, changing the subject. "Why would you take her time away?"

Grey answered, "If someone wants to get out, I help them, no matter what."

"Why would you help them? Your father is the one who created all of this. He is the one that wants the population to be controlled by time. Without--"

Grey then cuts her off, "I know Athena, trust me, I know. I was his first experiment to make sure by the time 3300 hit, he could control the way we are. It took him three tries to get it

just right. It took him three children to prove to the world that he can do whatever he wants to whoever he wants. He is practically God in this world, and we are just his pons.”

Athena was shocked by his outburst, “What do you mean you were his first experiment?”

Grey chuckled darkly, “Exactly that Athena. He experimented on his children to make sure there was a way that he could rewrite the genes in our body so we all had a certain time limit to live. He brought me back to life again and again to make sure that the time actually worked. He did the same thing to my other brothers too. Why do you think I know so many loopholes against the system?”

Athena begins to put two and two together, “Is that why you can jump between time zones? Since you’re the first, you can crack the time and go wherever you want?”

Grey nodded his head again.

“You have more power in three’s. My fathers third try gave me a new perspective of the world. The population isn’t the problem. He is.”

Athena asked slowly, “All you want... is peace?”

Grey smiled as Athena began to understand, “So I will ask you again, will you help me?”

Athena thought about it but in the end, she said yes. To seal the deal, they shook hands, Grey pushed his finger onto her wrist and flipped their hands, causing him to be on top of hers. He then gave Athena more time than she has ever seen in her lifetime.

*Brrrrrrr!*

Athena's phone began to ring, she picked it up and saw that her mother was calling her.

“Yes mom?”

Her best friend's voice could be heard on the other end of the phone instead of her mother's, hastily saying, "She's dead."

Athena dropped her phone in shock, causing Grey to look at her in confusion.

After a few minutes of silence, Athena spoke slowly, “My mother...she’s dead.”

For the third time in Athena’s life, she understood that some things in her world don't always go as planned.