

## **CHAPTER 1 - A Normal Life**

Koby yawned and stretched as she sat in her chair. This had been a very exhausting day. She needed a coffee to keep her awake. She ignored the cravings for something sweet and went to the break room. The thought of a "proper coffee" from a café seemed more her tune and she knew she would be at work for a while, but not wanting to take that much of a break, she opted for instant (yuck) and then went back to her desk. Being in middle management meant Koby did not have a say in what was due and when it was due but was able to coordinate and handle the way work was being done. It was her job to make sure everything was collated correctly and that there were no mistakes in any of the calculation's graphs or presentations. She was able to delegate work that was then given back to her to once again check and finalize. Monotony was her middle name. No dreaming today she had to get on with it.

Lucas Marketing was a mid-tier firm for sales and marketing and did have some big-ticket stakeholders, but her boss and her group were in the middle of the middle. So not the small fries and not the big guns but somewhere in between. The meeting that was supposed to happen next Friday was moved up to next Tuesday, which meant all items had to be back to her by tomorrow (Friday) so she could have a workable copy, of the report, for her boss to proofread by Monday morning. She sighed, again, and got back

to organizing and letting the team know they needed to get everything to her by the end of the day, if possible, and if not, to let her know they could not meet the new deadline. She then spent her time seeing what was coming in, what was going to be late and started proofreading what she already had in her email inbox.

After a while, Koby looked up from her desk and saw the sun was going down. As it got dark outside, she remembered that she did not bring brought extra food which meant she would either have to go hungry or quickly go grab something to eat, so. she headed down the elevator, through the foyer, and out the front door. As she quickly rushed through the door, she collided into a co-worker.

"I am so sorry, Aubrey" She grabbed Aubrey's arm to steady her.

"Got you working late again, Kobs?" Aubrey asked.

Koby rolled her eyes and nodded. "I swear, one day I will just say no and then where would they be? Most probably promote someone else, very quickly, and I would be a number with no job," Koby laughed. Aubrey invited her to have some drinks with the girls in a nearby bar.

"I would if I could," Koby answered, "but I need to get this done so that my head does not roll. Will you be there in about an hour?" Koby asked.

"We should be," Aubrey heartedly answered. "Give me a call and I'll let you know if we're still out and about". Aubrey walked away after giving her a hug. Not that Koby's boss would ever fire her or tell her off, as she was a very hard and conscientious worker. She was well valued and usually liked what she was doing. It was when everything got turned on its head, like today, that she did not enjoy it. She did enjoy a bit of a life outside work, even if there was not much to it lately.

Koby was well liked and got along with almost everyone she knew; she was very easy to talk to and very steady and level-headed. She did not roll over easily and could stand up for herself, but also had a lot of pride in what she did and how she got it done. Lately, her thoughts had been drifting. She had not been sleeping well and, when she did sleep, her dreams were vivid and strange. She was well aware that sometimes she would just stop and glare in a daze, and feel embarrassed when she realized what she had been doing. She could not help it. It was like her thoughts were taken over and she was transported to another place. She realized she was doing it right now, shook her head and went and grabbed a chicken salad, then went back

to work. Another hour and she should be done. She rubbed her eyes back at her desk and sighed. Nearly there.

After prioritizing what needed to happen for the next day, she emailed back the work, indicating what needed to be redone, and giving deadlines, but she needed the material to be perfect. In the meantime, she would start working on the presentation and leave gaps where she was expecting the new figures and graphs to be. That, at least, would put her ahead of the race and everything else could wait.

She packed up and grabbed her phone and then dialed Aubrey's number. Yes, they were still out; they already had dinner and were two blocks around the corner at Rigby's having cocktails. Koby needed a wind-down, so she decided an hour would not hurt. It was slightly cool out, so she grabbed her coat and wrapped it tightly around her for the short walk around the corner.

Koby was middle-aged, 34 to be exact. She was 5'6 and slightly overweight but reasonably healthy. Her thick, long, slightly curly, mousey brown hair and deep bright blue eyes made her stand out but did not attract the attention she wanted. She was her best in her twenties when she was going to the gym. Back then she was trim and athletic. But she never seemed to have time for that now. So, a slight bit of weight she could handle. Besides, it made her look more realistic (as opposed to her

former stick figure self), or so she kept telling herself. Her last relationship was three years ago, and she was glad it was over. He wanted too much too soon and was very insecure and quite possessive, so that would be a, "No, thank you. Move along, please". She had several dates since then, blind dates from friends who wanted her partnered up, but nothing she felt she would be interested in in the long term. She did not do one-night stands or "friends with benefits". Koby needed to be invested and attracted to a person to have a relationship or even sleep with a man, and that was that. So celibate, head strong and overworked Koby went and had a drink with her friends.

They all clapped and cheered when they saw her. There were five of them just chilling out in a booth. They were all nice ladies who worked or had worked, at the same company. Some of them in her team, and others on a different level. Thursdays were always girl's night: Casey, Chai, Aubrey, Kim, and Sabrina. Aubrey worked with the big guns and Sabrina had recently left the company, so it was good to see her.

They had already ordered a jug of an illusion cocktail and Koby knew she should only have a few if she wanted to wake up sober in the morning. It tasted so good. They chatted generally about life, with no work conversation on a Thursday night but other days/nights were a different story. Casey had just got a job promotion and Kim had just moved sideways into a different

team and Chai worked with Koby. They were all fun-loving gals just out for a chat and a break. That's what Thursday nights were for. They could then use the weekend for family and loved ones. Although, at the moment, Koby did not really have any "loved ones" and rarely visited family. Life was pretty dull, really, except when she caught up with this lot. The hour went very quickly. There was a lot of laughter and fun.

All the girls booed when Koby went to leave but Casey wanted to go as well, and they lived not far from each other in Mount Hawthorn in Perth. It was safer to go together. They all did hugs and kisses, then off to the train station. Homeward bound and Koby felt happy and calm after a crap day. Not bad.

Casey's place was just two blocks from hers, so they waved goodbye and said, "Catch you tomorrow." The street was empty except for the cars parked on the street and dogs barking as she walked by. Koby liked her street. She knew at least eleven of her fellow street people, both of her next-door neighbors, plus the ones two doors down, and the three houses across the street, and also two of the houses that were behind her. She had friendly, nice neighbors for which she was very thankful.

Her parents lived hours away in Whitfords. Cousins, uncles, and aunties were overseas in England and Ireland. Every two or three years her parents went overseas to visit, but Koby did

not. She always used the excuse that she could not get enough time off work or that it would cost her too much money. She liked her mum and dad, but they were constantly questioning her on her life choices and why she was still single. Her parents always knew someone who knew someone who they thought would make a good match. Did she want to go out with such and such friend's nephew? They could set her up on a blind date.

NO THANK YOU. She worked too hard, she should be out enjoying herself..... nothing she said would deter them or comfort them, so she visited less often, usually going on a Saturday afternoon 'till the evening so she had Sunday to relax and get over the experience. She tried to go once every few months or six weeks depending on if she thought she could handle it or not. She was not due for a visit for at least three (she thought she could stretch it this month) weeks at least. Breathing a sigh of relief, Koby got to her house, number 18 Teemore street.

As Koby went to head up her steps, she felt like there was someone behind her. She stopped, spun around and looked, but no one was there. She was puzzled, so she just stood there looking down and across the street. It was almost like someone was breathing right in her face. She took a step back but, no, it still felt like something was still there.

"Who's there?" she said out loud. The cold night did not answer back. She swirled around as she felt hot breath on her neck. Again, nothing as there. Was her mind playing tricks on her or was it something else? She felt uneasy as she cautiously stepped sideward to her door, keeping an eye on the street as she did so. Not looking away she got her keys from her bag and opened the door, stepped inside, and then closed the door and quickly locked it. Her heart was beating one hundred miles a minute. She slumped against the door until she calmed down. Everything was just too strange lately and she felt very uneasy.

Koby switched on the hallway light and headed up the stairs. The off switch was on the top landing. She had a small two-bedroom, one-bathroom, two-story flat, where the living space was adequate, and the kitchen was easy to cook in. The flat came with a small backyard and a bit of grass, along with curbside parking. The bedrooms were slightly larger than normal flats and the bathroom had a separate bath and shower, which she loved. It was comfortable but nothing special, but it was hers - or the bank's for now.

It was a typical evening when she got home (no dinner to prepare or eat tonight) she first had a shower. Sometimes Koby would run a bath and just soak with some relaxing candles, but there was no time now, so she brushed her teeth, put on her jim-jams and went to bed. Also, no reading tonight because it was



already late. The uneasy feeling stayed with her. She knew she was quite sensitive when it came to the "supernatural" or that she had a "gift." It worked in her favor when she met people as she could tell if they were decent and not decent (she did not like the word bad) people. Koby could also tell if people lied or told the truth and if they were well worth staying away from. When she did not listen to her instinct it would cost her. It had with her last boyfriend, Craig. She got a funny feeling about him in the beginning, but he was charming and paid her a lot of attention. So, she fell for it and disregarded her intuition and then regretted it all in the end. Never again would she make that same mistake.

She did have other encounters that she could not explain. Thoughts just popped into her head. It was as if she was speaking to herself, but the thought was foreign or came from nowhere. Seven years ago, when her mum had a small car accident, she knew it was going to happen two days before the event. The thought popped into her mind and a picture flashed of where the accident was going to occur. She tossed it aside as if it was a daydream. When the event actually happened, it made her sit up and take notice of the memory she had had two days before. Her mum was in a hospital for two weeks and, for some reason, she felt guilty that she did not say anything to her. She also knew when her gran was going to die, what she would be wearing, and the exact minute of her death. This was when she was a bit younger, so she

just thought it was perhaps déjà vu - something she had dreamed or thought she had dreamed. It made everything seem so believable when she blamed it on a dream. These two memories were the harshest of the 'odd' things that had happened to her. She was very good at 'guessing' or 'coming to a conclusion,' so, she put it down to intuition now. She was intuitive, so that was a good thing. Now she would pay attention to what her gut was telling her as she obviously was a good guesser.

Part of the 'Intuition' was that Koby was going to travel. She always felt she would travel - or knew she would travel. Her ultimate dream was to travel and experience the world: Holland, Italy, Venice, Croatia, Switzerland, New Orleans, and Berlin. She had studied where she would go, what time of year to go, what route she would take and where she would stay. But paying for a mortgage and saving for a massive holiday were very hard and her dream, for now, would have to wait. Her eyelids heavy, she began to drowse and seemed to be floating on air, a nice sensation.

Deep in sleep, Koby once again felt a breath on her cheek and immediately woke up. Startled, she starred into her room and then, turning on her light, she looked around. Nothing?

She got up, looked under her bed, in the bathroom, and down the hall. Nothing.

"Who's there?" she once again said but with more force and anger.

"Leave me alone". The emptiness of the room was deceiving as she could still feel ..... something. The feeling was out of place and she could not quite understand what it was. Just as she sighed and decided she was slowly going nuts, she heard a whisper, low and sharp. Her head turned towards her bedroom door.

"It's nearly time," a woman's voice quickly said. Was it a woman? Was Koby still asleep and dreaming?

"Who are you?" again, Koby shouted again into the empty room.

"Where are you, damn it. Show yourself!". Then there was silence as Koby sat in bed and stared at her door. Maybe no sleep tonight after all. Something was off and was not right. She had never heard voices and felt things that were not there before. Alone and not understanding, she sat upright until her tiredness overcame her and could no longer keep her eyes open. Koby could not even remember going to sleep.

Koby dreamed of a foreign place that was unfamiliar to her. The surroundings were strange, and some of the people

looked... well... like creatures from a fairyland. People were dressed in what she thought was the early twelfth century. There were soldiers, lovely dressed ladies, what looked like monks and a range of people and creatures that looked like they were from some sort of fantasy movie: wizards, fairies, odd-shaped creatures dressed in robes with capes and crowns. They were speaking but she could hardly hear them or understand what they were saying. It was as if she was a fly on the wall flying around and seeing what was there. Everything was very vivid, colorful, and warm. It was like she was bathing in the sun. She then felt very drowsy in the dream as everything faded to a dull black.