



## CHAPTER FOUR

Lizzie was meeting Ali for a girl's night out, and she was running late. Their friend Suzanne usually joined them, but she had to beg off. At first, they hoped that Suzanne had found herself a date, but no such luck. Suzanne's mother had come down with the flu, and she was bringing over chicken soup with matzo balls from Katz's Deli and picking up cough medication from CVS to help her mother recuperate.

While waiting in the ticket line for the latest Star Trek movie, Ali suddenly felt a frisson of fear shoot down her spine, and as she stood there, the feeling intensified. Then out of the blue, Ali received her first psychic flash. There was danger hovering around Lizzie like an ominous black cloud. Ali had to stop Lizzie from getting on the elevator in her building because it had turned into a deathtrap!

Ali reached for her phone and called her friend. She had to catch Lizzie before she left her apartment! If she were wrong about the elevator, she would take an extended vacation in Bellevue's psych ward. Lizzie wasn't picking up, and Ali's panic rose. Finally, on the fourth ring, Lizzie answered.

"Hey, sweetie, what's up? I'm sorry I'm late, but the toilet got clogged and—"

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“Don’t worry about that right now. Just listen to me. I know this is going to sound crazy, but you can’t use the elevator in your building tonight—no matter what!”

“Are you nuts? It’s twenty flights down to the street. No way am I walking. I just bought new shoes, and they pinch.”

“They pinch. They pinch!” Ali’s voice rose at least one octave. “I don’t care if they make your toes black and blue. Do not get on that elevator!” she ordered.

“But Ali—”

“No buts, kiddo. You’ll have to trust me on this, no matter how crazy it sounds!”

Tears were streaming down Ali’s cheeks. She didn’t know if Lizzie would listen to her or believe her rant was due to a bad PMS day and ignore her pleas.

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Lizzie heard the fear in Ali’s voice. She knew there had to be a good reason for the strange request, or she wouldn’t be that upset. There was no one in the world Lizzie trusted more than Ali, so she changed into a pair of sneakers and hiked down the stairs to the main lobby. Lizzie stood outside waiting to hail a taxi when she heard a giant blast that sounded like a bomb exploded! She raced back to her building, where a crowd was gathering. The shrill noise of sirens cut through the night, and ambulances pulled up to the curb. Finally, the police arrived, and Lizzie watched as firefighters rushed inside.

Paramedics came out of the building carrying two people in body bags on stretchers. Both were declared DOA. The word on the street was that the cables in the elevator broke. The cab had fallen, crashing into the pit and crushing the occupants who were trapped inside.

Lizzie didn’t know the people who died, but she mourned them nonetheless. A neighbor informed her that one of them had been an elderly widow, and the other was a fifteen-year-old kid

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delivering a pizza. In a panic, she called Ali back. “Oh my God, you saved my life. But how in the world did you know?”

Now was not the time to try and explain to Lizzie about Ali’s vision. Instead, when they were together, she would try and make sense out of it. “Calm down, Lizzie. Everything will be okay. You’re fine, and that’s all that matters.”

“But elevators are supposed to be safe! How could something like this happen?” Lizzie asked, dissolving into tears. The sirens were blasting, and people stopped to look at the latest catastrophe to befall the city. Lizzie knew that if Ali hadn’t warned her, she would be lying on stretcher number three, on her way to the city morgue. “It’s a mob scene in front of my building,” Lizzie told Ali. “I have to get out of here. Meet me at the café around the corner from my apartment. If I don’t sit down soon, I’ll collapse.”

“Okay. I’m going to grab a taxi, and I’ll be there shortly. Love you.”

“Love you too.”

A blast of air-conditioning felt terrific as Lizzie walked inside the café. The place was small, lacking in ambiance, and overpriced. Despite that, it was bustling with patrons. Thankfully, Lizzie got the last available table, and she sat down on the bent-wood chair with its hard vinyl cushion.

Ali arrived at the café and spotted Lizzie’s bright-red curls. She raced over to the table and embraced her friend, relieved that Lizzie had taken her warning seriously. Both women ordered wine to begin their odyssey into mind-numbing inebriation. The waiter left them with menus, and they sat quietly, sipping the wine and chilling out.

“Let’s eat something. It’s been hours since I had lunch,” Lizzie groused.

“But food will dilute the effects of the wine, and I’m starting to get buzzed.”

“I’m happy for you, but my stomach is demanding sustenance.”

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Ali laughed because she knew it was the truth. “Okay, let’s feed you. You’re always hungry, and you never gain an ounce. It’s not fair.”

“I couldn’t agree more. You got the looks, and I have a freakishly fast metabolism and no curves.”

“Bullshit. You look terrific with your red hair, and with your height, you could pass for a model.”

“Hah! You and Suzanne tell me that all the time. I’ll bet you even believe it by now. Ali, you’re a true friend, and I appreciate your efforts on my behalf—but cool it for now.”

Lizzie ordered rye toast, scrambled eggs, home fries, and turkey bacon. Ali skipped the home fries and bacon. She watched as Lizzie ate hers and wished that she could indulge, but the calories went straight to her hips, which she hated.

“So tell me,” Lizzie inquired as she ate the toast, “how did you know about the elevator crashing?”

There was no logical explanation for it. How could Ali explain something that she didn’t understand herself? “I got a psychic flash.” It was all that she could come up with for an answer.

Lizzie looked at Ali as if she had grown another head. “But you’re not psychic. Don’t you think I’d have noticed something like that?”

Ali’s eyes shone with excitement as she explained to Lizzie what was happening to her. “I can see the future now, and I’ve become empathic. The only plausible explanation is that I was supposed to save your life.” Lizzie thought that made sense. “My newfound abilities started with something that didn’t seem important at the time,” Ali told Lizzie.

“What was that?” Lizzie asked as she turned to signal the waiter. “I’d like another order of home fries, but please make them crisper with extra onions. And bring a basket of popovers and butter. Thanks.”

Ali’s mouth was watering at the thought of eating a buttery popover, and she tried not to obsess over what Lizzie did or did not choose to eat. She had been watching her friend eat nonstop since

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they were children. Sesame seed breadsticks were in the breadbasket, so Ali helped herself to one and *schmeared* herb butter on it.

“Umm. This tastes good.”

“I’m happy that you like the breadstick, but I’m still waiting to hear what made you become a soothsayer.”

“When I was getting dressed to meet you, I couldn’t find my necklace.”

“Which one?”

“The small diamond horseshoe on the white gold chain. I was searching for it when something contacted me. It told me that it was my inner guide.”

“You heard someone speak to you?”

“Yes, but without words. It was just random thoughts that went through my mind, like telepathy.”

“I don’t get it.” Lizzie was becoming more and more perplexed by Ali’s answers.

“I’m not sure that I do either. It’s hard to explain. My inner guide led me to the living room, and suddenly, I had the urge to lift the corner of my Aubusson rug.”

“And then what happened?”

“The diamond horseshoe necklace was hiding under the rug. I picked it up and cleaned it. I need to vacuum better under there. It was full of dust bunnies.”

“Screw the dust. Go on. I can’t wait to hear more.”

“Later this evening, I got a strong feeling about you. I was waiting to purchase the Star Trek tickets when the visions started coming. I saw the elevator in your building, and I felt death. I panicked and called you right up, thinking that I’d lost my mind. My only thought was to stop you from getting on that elevator.” Ali wiped away some tears. “I was afraid that I might never see you again.”

“That would never happen,” Lizzie promised, hoping it was the truth. “Ali, I’m a nervous wreck. Could you sleep over? I don’t want to be alone.”

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“That’s a good idea because I don’t relish being alone either.” Ali made a quick call to Gwen, a nineteen-year-old future veterinarian who adored Fred. The pet sitter had no school the following day and could spend the entire evening with Fred. Gwen always looked forward to interacting with the verbose cockatoo, and she would be happy to watch him for free. The college student raced down the subway steps, eager to see the bird.

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Police were patrolling Lizzie’s block. The maintenance specialists were working as Ali and Lizzie made their way to the staircase. Danger and warning signs were everywhere as they trudged up the twenty flights to Lizzie’s apartment.

With the heat and humidity hitting a record high, both women desperately needed a cool shower, so they flipped a coin to see who would go first. After they showered, Lizzie lent Ali a pair of her pajamas. She turned on the television, and they lay together on the bed, watching repeats of *Sex and the City* on HBO. Ali fell asleep after one episode, and Lizzie shut the television. Mentally and physically exhausted, Lizzie was out like a light also.

Later, something awakened Lizzie. She heard Ali moaning in her sleep, but it was not the kind of sound you make when you’re in pain. If Lizzie didn’t know better, she would have sworn that Ali was having down and dirty sex. Then she heard Ali cry out for more. More what?

Lizzie turned on her bedside lamp and screamed loud enough to wake the dead. The shadowy form of a naked man lay atop her best friend, and he was passionately kissing Ali and caressing her breasts! Lizzie’s first thought was that a rapist had come in through the window. Her hysterical screams broke through Ali’s sensual dream, ending it. Ali was upset because it was getting steamy, and she wanted it to continue. The dream lover was gone, and Lizzie was staring at Ali with abject horror and fear in her eyes.