

CHAOS THEORY

MUSTAFID RAIYAN KHAN

They found Jake half-buried in a sticky mixture of mud and blood, a stark silhouette on a grassy moonlit field, 20 miles off and under the colossal Delta Bridge that connected Dhaka City to the West. It had rained heavily that night, but neither the musky smell of dirt nor the chemical stench of rain could disguise the pungent smell of death that permeated the air.

Ava felt compelled by the body — she gravitated towards it, barely believing her eyes. How'd Jake look so utterly peaceful in death?! She loved that about him, the never-ending serenity of his visage, how gentle he always was. You could poke at him, embarrass him, and anger him but, he'd never let it show, or he couldn't. He sure as hell tried to feign anger, but the playfulness was right there in his eyes, giving it away. Was all that gone?

"He's dead," Avon whispered behind her, without his voice quivering even the tiniest bit. But it just wasn't sinking in. Ava sat down beside the body, desperately searching for a sign of life, maybe a whisper, the flicker of an eyelid, anything. Maybe it was all a big joke, and he'd spring up laughing like in those clichéd moments of death in the movies he loved watching so much, where the protagonist, at the brink of death, manages to survive at the very last second. "It's not funny anymore," she whispered. Silence.

"Death is no joke, Ava. One could say it's the doorway to a greater existence, a necessary step. His time here... had to end."

Had to? They've been searching for him for days. Did she miss something in her frantic haste? "What the hell do you mean by had to? Did the order sanction this? You killed Jake?"

"That is correct. The Order doesn't tolerate 'mingling', let alone with mortals. Love is an abstract concept, destructive concept. It has no shape, no form and no limits. It is the chaos that destroys

us. You know the sentinel code."

Yeah, she knew the code alright. She must've told him they couldn't be a thousand times. Their worlds were too separate, the niches they filled polar opposites. She dealt in steel and blood, and he stitched wounds and mended hearts. But Jake was one of those incredibly stubborn types, convinced he could make the sentinel-cardio surgeon thing work. Unfortunately though, he just knew her too well, and no level of hurt, pain or distancing she tried kept him away. The stubborn bastard.

"He didn't deserve this." She traced her fingers across gently across his chest,

momentarily lingering over the dark stain etched across his shirt. She remembered this shirt only too well; she gave it to him. The memory left a gaping hole inside her, deeper and more thorough than the bloodied hole Avon had left in Jake's heart. She knew this technique to give a swift death. Not that Avon's supposed act of mercy made this any better. She stood up to face Avon, her mentor, and finally saw him for what he was.

"That is irrelevant. This world is far from an ideal place, girl.

Nobody gets what he or she deserves. The order exists to rule and protect. We do not have the privilege of being disrupted by silly fallacies of love and fairness in this existence. We accept what is, and we do what we must. This boy clouded your judgment, and questioned our requirement. Jake asked you to leave us.

Do not deny it. And in doing so, presented a threat to the order that keeps us alive."

Well, Jake did. He hated the order's abuse of power under the pretense of peace. Ruling with an iron fist, the order preferred fear as weapons opposed to love. Love was a catalyst for chaos, and fear the deterrent. Ava's world was black and white before Jake came into her life. He saw the world in shades of grey, and taught her that there was perfection in this imperfect world. And no amount of order could change that.

Anger flashed white hot through her head. "Did you really think killing him would change anything? The order swore an oath to protect the innocent, not murder them in cold blood." The injustice of it crashed over her in waves. How worthless was the oath she swore to live by?

Avon's lips curled into a sinister smile. "You don't get to decide

that, do you? Jake's filthy life served a higher purpose here, a message to you, and to his brethren. Caged little birdies shouldn't dream of flying."

Then several things happened in a split second.

Something inside Ava snapped, and without conscious thought she slammed into Avon's chest elbow-first, her free hand instinctively searching for the hilt of her katana.

Years of sentinel training had taught her that one clean blow was enough. A flash of silver, and Avon never saw her coming. He sunk to his knees, struggling to keep his guts from spilling out into his arms.

"What... what... do you think you're doing?"

He was dying slowly, excruciatingly. It was perfect. "Let's just say I've made my decision." Avon looked pathetic as she pondered her blood soaked blade and built up her resolve, a blatant contrast to the man she loved, graceful and calm even in death.

She kneeled down beside Jake. Killing Avon wasn't nearly enough. Nothing would ever be enough anymore.

"This... this is the chaos, Ava. Love breeds love and lost love breeds hate... and this hate will consume you, destroy you and the world. Please... just help me..."

She stood up. "Maybe this dysfunctional world should be destroyed, shattered to bits. Your death will be its genesis." Another flash of silver, and Avon was dead. "We'll glue the shattered pieces back together, into a better tomorrow."

It was time to bring chaos.

