

## Day 7

*My New  
Normal*

I almost wish I hadn't made it. At least then I'd be dead. I don't really know what happens after we die. But I know it would sure beat this situation I've found myself in. Still, I don't think I'll ever fully grasp how lucky we are to be alive—if you can call it luck. I sometimes find myself thinking that it would've been so much easier to have passed away. I think being dead would be easier than this new life—my new normal.

It was freezing. It felt as if the sun had lost every joule of heat. Sure it was shining bright—a little too bright given the tragedy. But the air was angry, frigid. This was the kind of cold that couldn't be eliminated with sweatpants and fuzzy slippers. This was the kind of cold you got when you had the flu. Not even the hottest bath could make you feel warm enough. The wind penetrated your brain, and every breath you took turned your blood to ice. Our throats were raw.

Finding a decent heat source was nearly impossible. All the power was out here along with the rest of the city. And the state. And the country. At this point I wouldn't have been surprised if the entire planet had been damaged by this catastrophe.

There were no civil humans around. All the people left were fighting for their lives. We were all looking for the same things. Food, water, shelter, and more importantly, an answer to this mess.

Ryan and I kept to ourselves. Thank God I've got him. Pure fate kept us together, that's for sure. From what we've calculated, it's been seven days since *The End*. We don't really have a more suitable name for it right now.

There was absolutely no warning. Quite frankly, I don't think anyone expected anything out of the ordinary to happen. It was three days after Christmas. The only thing unusual was the clear sky. Typically, we're pelted with snow at this time of year. But it was cold and sunny. Perfect holiday weather.

We'd just finished celebrating Christmas. Our two-year anniversary was a short two days away. Then our entire lives were shaken—literally. This earthquake was no ordinary earthquake. I'd grown up in California, and I'd experienced what I thought was the worst. But this was no California quake. It was as if the Lord himself had shaken the earth with every bit of power he held. Every bone in your body rattled and collided. Pain soared through your joints and nerves. Frantic screams could be heard; small explosions, then larger ones.

I do remember seeing panic sweep across Ryan's face. Then darkness. But I'll never fully remember or know how terrifying that day really was. I was

completely unconscious for two days after it happened.

I awoke to Ryan's gentle embrace. That must have been on day three. He was stroking my hair. I remember it being so bitterly cold. After my eyes adjusted, I was hit with a painful dose of reality. This was no dream. No ordinary nightmare either. This was real. This was hell on earth.

The city looked like a creepy ghost town from a cheesy cable movie. Every building in eyesight was destroyed and covered in a blanket of ash and gray snow. Every once in a while, a crazed survivor could be seen, running, calling out, looking for help. Their cries were left unanswered.

We were alone and scared. Nobody