

Part Three: The Loop Breaker.

Narrated by Helen and Billy

INTRODUCTION

There are things I never told anyone.

Because I didn't think they'd believe me.

Or worse... that they'd lock me away for saying it out loud.

I used to think I was just haunted.

By my family.

By my dreams.

By something passed down in the blood.

But now I know—It wasn't ghosts. It was me.

A version of me that got stuck somewhere between sleep and suicide.

Between memory and madness.

Between the person I was supposed to become... and the one I was terrified of becoming.

This book isn't fiction... not really.

It's what it feels like to wake up and not know who you are anymore.

To hear whispers when no one's there.

To stare into a mirror and wonder if the thing staring back is more real than you are.

It's about the moment before you break.

The one no one talks about.

The one where you don't scream.

You just decide.

So if you're reading this, and something in you has ever wanted to disappear—this book is for you. Because I made it through... barely. I'm writing this from the other side of the loop. Not to scare you. To remind you: You are not alone. You are not broken. You were never meant to die in that mirror. You were meant to walk through it.

CHAPTER 1: GRANDMOTHER'S ORIGIN

She was sixteen the first time it happened.

Not the voices.

Not the nightmares.

Those had always been there.

This was different.

My grandmother was brushing her teeth in the hallway bathroom—door open, lights buzzing overhead, steam on the mirror. Nothing unusual.

Until she looked up and saw herself... not moving.

Her own reflection had stopped mid-brush. Mouth open. Eyes locked forward.

But the hand in the mirror didn't move. Didn't mimic her. Didn't blink.

She stared.

So did it.

Then the reflection's mouth moved—out of sync—and whispered:

"You're not supposed to be here yet."

She dropped the toothbrush.

Didn't sleep that night.

Didn't tell anyone.

Because how do you explain a mirror that watches you blink first?

Weeks went by. The shadows got louder—not in the corners, but in her mind. Thoughts that didn't feel like hers.

"You're being watched."

"They're testing you."

"Your body isn't yours."

Her mother blamed hormones. Her father didn't believe in therapy.

So she hid it.

Until the sleep paralysis began.

It always started the same. Middle of the night. Frozen. Eyes open. Breath shallow. A weight on her chest like gravity had turned personal.

In the corner of her room—
A silhouette made of static.

Sometimes it was tall. Sometimes small. Sometimes it wore her face.
But it never moved. Just watched.

Until one night, it whispered:

“You’re the first. And if you break, the rest fall too.”

She started skipping school. Filling notebooks she’d never show anyone. Drawing eyes in every margin like wards.

The whispers didn’t stop.
She just stopped trusting mirrors.
Started covering them with sheets.
They still talked when she passed.

One day, she told her grandmother. My great-grandmother. Just a whisper.

“I think something’s wrong with me.”

And her grandmother looked her dead in the eye.

“You sound just like your grandfather... before he disappeared.”

No one ever found him. Just a mirror face-down in the woods and a note on the back:

“They said I couldn’t escape, but I can stay still forever.”

That’s when she knew.

This wasn’t just mental illness. It was a curse. A legacy. It would be years before she learned the name for it. Schizophrenia. But deep down, she knew that wasn’t the whole truth. Because it wasn’t just in her mind. It was in the mirrors. And they were watching her... waiting.

CHAPTER 2: THE DREAMWALKER

She was twenty when she learned to control her dreams.

Not through books.

Not through meditation.

Through desperation.

“If I can’t survive the day,” she wrote in her journal, “Maybe I can build a better night.”

So she experimented. Scribbling on her hand before bed. Repeating mantras until her brain blurred.

“You’re dreaming. You’re dreaming. You’re dreaming.”

One night, it worked. She was in the hallway again—but this time the walls dripped like melted wax. Gravity didn’t pull.

She knew. This wasn’t real.

It felt better than real. Safer. She could breathe.

So she kept going back.

Every night, she built more.

Rooms that moved.

Skies that flipped upside down.

A staircase that led to her childhood bedroom... inside a church.

She became the architect of her own dreams.

But it didn’t last.

Because one night... she saw the mirror again.

Only this time—she wasn’t in it.

Something else was.

Tall. Pale. No face.

Wearing my great-grandmother's nightgown.

She blinked.

It was closer.

"You don't belong here," it said.

She ran. The world folded sideways. She fell through color, memory, and music.

Woke up sweating. Nose bleeding.

"It followed me back," she wrote.

The dreams got harder to control.

She'd wake up in the middle of one—only to realize she was still dreaming.

False awakenings stacked like Russian dolls.

Reality layered like paper. Something moved between them.

One night, she looked in the mirror and saw her dream self watching her. Breathing. Smiling.

"You made this world," it said. "Now let me live in it."

That was the first time she screamed herself awake.

But not the last.

The dreams weren't safe anymore. They were doorways.

And the thing in them?

It wasn't just hiding in the background.

It knew her name.

It wore her face.

It used her voice in conversations with people she didn't remember having.

Sometimes she'd hear herself saying things she never meant.

"I'm fine."

"I'm just tired."

"It's nothing."

But the tone wasn't hers.

Every time she passed a mirror?

It smiled before she did.

She started locking doors behind her. Even when she was alone. Even in her own house.

But the dream kept following.

And it kept whispering:

"You're not sick.

You're sacred.

You're the first."

And deep down, beneath all the fear...

a darker thought took root:

"What if that thing in the dream...

is the real me?"

CHAPTER 3: POSSESSION BEGINS

It started with the blackouts.

At first, she thought it was just stress. Losing a few minutes here and there. Waking up in rooms she didn't remember walking into. Sketches in her notebook she didn't remember drawing.

Once, she woke up kneeling in front of the mirror, forehead pressed to the glass.

Her reflection was still smiling... even after she stood up.

Then her voice started to change.

She'd say her own name and it didn't sound like her. She'd hum lullabies she never learned. Answer the phone with a phrase she never used:

"She's not here right now. Can I take a message?"

But she was alone.

The whispers came next. Not from outside. From inside.

Always at 3:14 AM.

That same frozen hour.

She'd wake up and the mirror would be tilted—like it had moved on its own.

Then the voice would say:

"You're just the first vessel.

She's next.

Then the boy."

She thought maybe it was schizophrenia. A doctor gave her a name. Pills. Labels. A way to pretend it was normal.

But none of it explained why her mirror fogged with breath when she hadn't touched it.

Why her dreams collapsed into false awakenings. Each layer deeper. Harder to escape.

Why she kept seeing a little boy in the corner of her room—watching—vanishing the moment she blinked.

One night, she woke up in bed. Eyes open. Frozen. Chest heavy.

Something was at the end of the bed.

Dark. Shifting.

Sometimes it wore her face. Sometimes it wore my great-grandmother's.
Sometimes... it had no face at all.

It crawled toward her. Sat beside her. Pressed its mouth to her ear.

"I'm getting used to your skin."

She finally screamed herself awake—

Only she didn't.

She was still frozen. Still dreaming.

This time, the boy was by the closet. Not blinking. Just pointing at the mirror.

She turned—slow, terrified.

And saw him clearly.

He looked like me, but older. His eyes were too sad. Too aware.

He reached out and whispered:

"Don't kill Bill... just chill."

She woke up sobbing. Shaking. No idea who Bill was. No clue what it meant.

Was it a warning? A name?

She didn't know.

But she carved it into the underside of her nightstand anyway:

DON'T KILL BILL. JUST CHILL.

Then came the test. Two pink lines.

Pregnant.

She wasn't shocked. The Entity had been whispering for weeks:

"Vessel confirmed. Arrival pending."

The next dream was darker.

A black room. Walls pulsing. A crib in the center—rocking.

Inside... nothing.

She leaned closer. Heard a heartbeat coming from beneath the floorboards.

Then the mirror appeared.

Her reflection was ahead—weeks into the pregnancy. It was smiling.

"I've always wanted a son," it said.

That night she felt something move inside her.

Not a kick.

Taps.

Three, then a pause. Then three more.

She lifted her shirt. Placed a hand over her belly.

And heard it.

A child's voice, from *inside* her.

"You're the door."

She shot up in bed, trembling.

The mirror began to fog again.

This time she saw something impossible—

A hospital room. The same boy.

Eyes closed. Wires in his arms.

Alone.

She turned away, heart pounding.

But the mirror whispered one last time:

“He’s the key.”

She didn’t understand. Didn’t know why this boy haunted her sleep. Why his name echoed in her skull.

All she knew was... it wasn’t over.

She started writing again. Not to survive.

To leave something behind.

A warning.

A weapon.

She didn’t know which.

But the name stuck.

Bill.

It whispered through her dreams. Her mind. Her mirror.

She didn’t know if she was supposed to protect him—or protect the world from him.

Some nights she felt love for him, like he was hers. Like she’d been chosen to guide him.

Other nights, she woke up with blood on her hands. No memory of sleep. The mirror would show her holding him—not gently. Holding him like something was trying to escape from inside him... or maybe like she was trying to stop *him* from escaping at all.

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

It sounded like a command. But was it for her? Or for the Entity? Was she meant to save him... or destroy him? She didn’t know. And the fear in her gut told her this— Whatever this boy was...He was going to need protection. From the dark. From the mirror. Maybe even from her.

CHAPTER 4: THE LEGACY CONTINUES

I was born under a full moon.

The hospital lights flickered twice during delivery.

The machines glitched—just long enough to draw blood where there shouldn't have been any.

No one noticed but her.

No one ever did.

She held me for the first time and wanted to cry. Not from joy. From recognition.

Something in my eyes felt... familiar.

Like I had stared through her before.

In dreams.

In mirrors.

In whispers.

The first few weeks were quiet. Too quiet. No screaming fits. No restlessness.

She'd just watch me. Silent. Calm. Studying me as I stared into corners.

At two months old, I started smiling in my sleep. Always at exactly 3:14 AM. I'd smile, then turn my head—right toward the mirror across the room.

At six months, the whispers returned.

Not in her head—this time, in my nursery.

Soft, looping hums. Lullabies made of static.

One night, she stood at the doorway and listened.

I was humming along. Eyes open. Watching the ceiling.

She started seeing things again. Not in dreams. In real time.

Once, she walked into the room and saw me floating.

Just an inch.

Just for a second.

When she blinked—I was back in the crib.

Smiling.

A small crack in the mirror behind me.

It only got worse.

I started speaking words no one had taught me.

Words in reverse. Words from my mother's dream journals—the ones she had locked away.

I drew symbols in condensation on the windows, in food, on the tub wall.

One of those symbols? The exact glyph from the dream where the crib vanished.

That's when she stopped calling it mental illness.

This wasn't schizophrenia.

This was something else.

Something older.

One night, when I was four, I stood in the hallway. 3:14 AM.

Holding my stuffed rabbit.

Blank face. Head tilted.

I wasn't asleep.

And I wasn't awake.

She stepped out of the shadows like gravity had pulled her there.

"Helen?" she whispered. "Why are you up?"

I didn't blink. I didn't even look at her.

I just asked:

“Who is Bill?”

She froze. The air thickened.

“W-What?”

“Bill. The boy you wrote about.”

“Why do you want to kill him?”

She dropped to her knees. Panic rising.

She hadn’t said that name in years. Hadn’t written it anywhere I could’ve seen.

“Helen... baby, I don’t want to kill anyone. I—”

“You said it,” I interrupted.

“You wrote it. Everywhere.”

Then I began to chant:

“Don’t kill Bill. Just chill.

Don’t kill Bill. Just chill.

Don’t kill Bill...”

She backed away. Whispering through tears.

“Please stop. Please. You don’t understand what you’re saying.”

“You don’t understand what you’re saying,” I echoed.

And then—I stopped.

Froze completely.

My eyes turned black.

Not clouded.

Not glazed.

Void.

When I spoke again...

It wasn't my voice.

"You don't have to be afraid anymore, Little Mirror."

Her spine locked.

"Avery...?"

The voice in my mouth chuckled. Gently.

"Sort of. I'm what's left of him."

"What... what does that mean?"

"It means I broke. So I became what couldn't be broken.
I became the mirror."

She gasped.

Crawled back until her spine hit the wall.

"That name... Avery..."

I nodded. Still black-eyed. Still smiling.

"You'll hear that name again.
He'll help Billy when I can't."

"But—why are you here?"

"To give you a chance I didn't have.
To remind you that he matters.
Even before he exists."

She sobbed.

"I don't know what to do.
I don't know what I am anymore."

I smiled—soft, sad.

Then said, in her own voice:

“Don’t kill Bill.
Just chill.”

That broke her.

Not the message.

The voice.

Because hearing the mantra in her own voice...

From my mouth...

From her dead husband...

That didn’t feel like comfort.

It felt like a command.

I collapsed.

Back to myself.

Eyes clear. Sleeping peacefully in the hallway.

She was spiraling now.

The house pulsed.

The walls breathed.

Every mirror began to hum.

And in the corner, the mirror tilted.

Her reflection stepped out.

Still smiling.

Still whispering.

CHAPTER 5: THE MIRROR WINS

My mother hadn't slept in three nights.

She told me once she couldn't tell if the whispers were coming from inside the house—or from inside her own bones.

Every mirror she had covered started uncovering itself.

Glass bending. Reflecting back versions of her that she didn't recognize.

Versions she never became—but maybe could have.

One was already dead.

One had no face.

The worst one... was holding me by the wrists, screaming something she couldn't hear.

The house didn't feel like hers anymore.

She said gravity pulsed beneath the floor. Windows wept like they were grieving. Light flickered through cracks in the walls that hadn't existed the day before.

She saw the drawings again. Mine.

The symbols.

But now they were burning into her skin when she woke up.

She stopped making sense after that. Just wandered from room to room. Whispering things. Nonsense. Or prophecy. Maybe both.

That last night... she didn't speak at all.

She just stared at the living room mirror.

Eyes wide. Breathing shallow.

She whispered:

"Am I looking in... or looking out?"

"Which version of me is the real one?"

Her reflection smiled.

Not in sync. Not even close.

“You could end this,” it told her.

“You already know how.”

She stepped back—and everything shattered.

Thousands of mirrors exploded into the space around her.

Each one showing a different outcome.

Her laughing.

Her screaming.

Her killing me.

Her hugging me.

Her running.

Her never being born.

And then the mirrors pulsed:

“Don’t kill Bill...
Just chill...”

“Don’t kill Bill...
Just chill...”

Over and over. Louder. Then softer. Then distant. Like echoes from every version of her.

She dropped to her knees. Clutching her head. Crying. Begging it to stop.

“I DIDN’T MEAN TO OPEN THE DOOR,” she sobbed.

“I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT THE MANTRA MEANT.

I DIDN’T KNOW IT WAS FOR ME—HELEN PLEASE... PLEASE REMEMBER TO TELL HIM—
DON’T KILL BILL. JUST CHILL.”

Her final act of desperation?

She stood up.

Walked toward the mirror.

Placed both hands on the glass.

And whispered:

“I’m sorry, Helen.”

Then she leaned forward—and walked into it.

Glass shattered around her in slow motion.

Blood hit the frame.

And the house went still.

Somewhere upstairs, I sat up in bed.

Eyes wide. No tears.

Just a whisper leaving my lips—

“Don’t kill Bill. Just chill.”

That was the last thing I ever heard my mother say.

And I’ve never forgotten it.

Not in my dreams.

Not through my darkest moments.

Not even when everything else fell apart.

That mantra...It became the only thing she left me.

The only thing I ever truly trusted. Even if I never fully understood where it came from.

CHAPTER 6: BILLY'S AWAKENING

The last thing I remember was the journal.

No symbol.

Just a sentence burned across the page:

“PART 3 has already begun.”

Then the page caught fire.

And everything went black.

I gasped. Sat upright.

My shirt clung to me—drenched in sweat.

The room looked... normal.

Too normal.

The Compass was gone.

The journal was ash. But I could still smell the smoke.

Everyone was there.

Laughing.

Eating.

Like nothing had happened.

“Good dream?” DeAndre asked.

“Yeah,” I lied. “I guess so.”

Then I blinked.

And the room shifted. Just slightly. Like the furniture breathed.

I blinked again.

Naya was now Salem. Sitting where she shouldn't be. Smiling like she never stopped.

Zeke had become my mother. Mouthing words she hadn't spoken in years.

Avery was my grandmother. Staring through me, not at me.

My chest tightened.

"DeAndre—" I started.

But his eyes had gone fully black.

And he smiled.

"You were always dreaming."

I stumbled backward.

The table dissolved into smoke.

I looked at my hands—

They weren't mine.

Too small.

Then too old.

Then... bleeding.

I blinked again—

I was in my childhood bedroom.

Something was wrong.

The windows were gone. Replaced with mirrors.

Each one showed a version of me:

One crying.

One laughing.

One screaming.

One... smiling in slow motion.

The mantra echoed from nowhere:

“Don’t kill Bill. Just chill.”

Over and over.

I covered my ears.

The voices only got louder.

My mother’s voice.

Then my grandmother’s.

Then... my own.

But not me now.

It was deeper.

Like a black hole had swallowed my throat and spat back something older.

“You built me,” it said.

“Now I want to live.”

The mirror cracked.

I collapsed. When I opened my eyes... I wasn’t alone. I could feel someone else inside me. Breathing with me. Thinking with me. Waiting.

“You’re not hallucinating,” the voice whispered.

“You’re remembering too fast.”

The room spun. The Compass flickered in midair. Every mirror reflected something new. Not me. Not my past. But what’s coming and it’s already too late to stop it.

CHAPTER 7: BREAKING THE FIRST SEAL

The Compass shattered.

Not in my hand.

Inside me.

Each piece pulsed with a different color. A different voice. A different scream.

“You built me.”

“You sealed me.”

“Now unmake me.”

I fell through mirrors, spiraling like I was being flushed through memory and madness at once.

Then—stillness.

I opened my eyes.

I was inside a school.

But not mine.

Everything was off.

The walls were too soft.

The hallways stretched forever.

And the lockers?

They were mirrors—with my name carved into each one.

I turned a corner.

Saw Naya sitting at a desk, alone, writing.

Except... it wasn't really Naya.

Not fully.

Her hair was longer. Her face younger. Her posture perfect.

She looked like... my mom.

"Mom...?" I whispered.

She didn't look up.

She just kept writing.

Her hand shook. Tears hit the page.

I looked down and read the words:

"If I stay here, maybe he won't see the world.
Maybe I can keep him in this dream.
Maybe I can protect him from everything I couldn't survive.
Maybe he'll never have to wake up."

Then everything snapped.

The desk cracked in half.

The walls folded into themselves.

And Naya screamed:

"DON'T WAKE ME UP!
DON'T MAKE ME GO BACK!"

The lights turned red.

The floor turned to glass.

And underneath it?

I saw her real body.

Lying in bed.

Lifeless. Peaceful. Dead.

Naya stood in front of me now, but her face kept shifting—

Mother.

Friend.

Stranger.
Monster.

“Why did you come here?” she snarled.

“To save you,” I said, shaking.

“You can’t save me.
I died to keep you asleep.
I BUILT THIS WORLD SO YOU’D NEVER HAVE TO FACE THE ONE THAT KILLED ME.”

I stepped forward. Tears filled my eyes.

“I know.
And I love you for it.
But it’s time for me to wake up.
And it’s time for you to rest.”

She sobbed. Not out of sadness. Because someone finally saw her. I held her hand. The world around us shifted. The dream faded. The nightmare dissolved.

She whispered:

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

Then she smiled through the tears.

“I’m so proud of you.
You’re stronger than all of us.”

I hugged her. Held her tight.

Let myself cry like I was five years old again.

In that moment, she wasn’t Naya.

She wasn’t the Architect.

She was just my mom.

And even though she was gone, her love never left me.

The seal glowed white—And then shattered.
One down. Six to go.

CHAPTER 8: BREAKING THE SECOND SEAL

The Compass spun violently.

Not pointing—pulsing.

Then a burst of green light snapped me sideways—and I landed in a room so chaotic it barely held shape.

The ground shifted like rubber.

Walls stretched, then snapped back.

Lights blinked in erratic Morse code.

The smell—burnt paper and gasoline.

The sound—laughter, crying, and static... all at once.

Zeke's realm.

I stumbled forward, trying to make sense of the place, when I heard a voice cut through the noise:

“BRO DON'T—WAIT—NO—STOP—”

I turned.

Zeke.

Frantic. Sweating. Running in circles. Knocking things over left and right.

Except... nothing stayed down.

Every object he hit glitched, reversed time, and stood back up like it had never been touched.

“WHY WON'T THIS STOP?!”

He turned toward me—his face shifting every second.

Happy. Angry. Terrified. Laughing. Numb. Crying.

“I CAN'T SLOW DOWN,” he yelled.

“EVERYTHING MOVES TOO FAST.”

“AND WHEN I STOP—”

He grabbed his head. Shaking.

“When I stop...

I think. And when I think... I break.”

I reached for him.

“Zeke, I’m here—”

He backed away like I was fire.

“NO!

You’ll break too!

People leave me, Billy.

People always leave.”

Suddenly, the ground exploded into looping staircases.

I was falling up.

Running down.

Breathing backward.

A version of Zeke sprinted past me, laughing like a maniac.

Another curled up on the floor in the fetal position.

Another just whispered:

“If I die, at least my brain will be quiet.”

I kept moving.

And I found him.

The real one.

Sitting at the center of it all. Eyes wide. Frozen.

"I'm not broken, am I?" he asked.

"No," I said.

"You're brilliant.
You just needed a beat."

I took his hands. Grounded him. Breathed with him.

And slowly... everything shifted.

The noise softened.

The glitching reversed.

The mirrors stopped spinning.

Zeke... finally still... whispered:

"I just wanted to be seen without being fixed."

I hugged him.

"You're not a mistake.

You're the one who showed me how to bend time.

You didn't break the loop, Zeke...

you disrupted it."

He smiled.

For the first time.

The Compass behind him glowed green.

And shattered.

"Don't kill Bill...
Just chill."

Zeke laughed.
"Lowkey... Bars."

CHAPTER 9: BREAKING THE THIRD SEAL

I stumbled into a new space.

Cold. Still. The air smelled like ash and concrete.

The Compass hovered above me—dim, flickering orange.

It wasn't spinning. Just pulsing. Like a heartbeat that had been held too long.

I took a step—and heard screaming.

Not far away.

Inside the walls.

The floor cracked beneath me. The scent of burned cloth filled my lungs.

Then I saw him.

Rowan.

Standing in the middle of a charred living room.

Frozen. Covered in soot. Clothes scorched, like he'd just stepped out of the fire.

His hands clutched a photograph—half-burned, edges curling from heat.

I walked closer.

"Rowan...?"

He didn't look up. Just whispered:

"It should've been me."

"What happened?" I asked gently.

He raised the photo.

It was him and four other people.

Their faces... burned out.

"I saved myself," he said.
"I left them.
I ran.
I survived.
And I've never slept since."

Then he looked at me.

Eyes wild.

"Tell me how to live when my peace smells like smoke.
When silence sounds like screaming."

The air pulsed.

The photo ignited in his hands.

He didn't flinch.

"Let me burn," he said.
"That's what I deserve."

Suddenly—flames erupted all around us.

The house reset.

Everything caught fire again.

Over and over.

Rowan was trapped in it.

Running.

Burning.

Surviving.

And hating himself for it.

I stepped into the flames.

Through the smoke.

Grabbed his shoulders.

"You're not a coward," I said.

"You're a survivor."

He screamed in my face:

"I SHOULDN'T BE HERE!"

And I shouted back:

"THEN MAKE IT MEAN SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE!"

The world stopped.

The flames froze.

Then vanished.

Rowan collapsed.

Crying—for the first time in years.

"I miss them," he said.

I knelt beside him.

"Then live in a way that honors them.
Not in a way that buries you with them."

He looked up at me. Eyes red.

"You think I still can?"

I smiled.

"I know you can."

Behind us, the Compass pulsed orange. Then burst into light.

"Don't kill Bill... just chill."

Rowan laughed through the tears. "Fuck man," he said, "I was the fire. I never knew I was also the warmth."

CHAPTER 10: BREAKING THE FOURTH SEAL

The Compass didn't just spin this time—it fractured.

Shards of memory floated around me as I was pulled in.

Dragged.

When I opened my eyes—I was in a hall of mirrors.

Endless.

Infinite.

Silent.

No ceiling. No floor.

Just me and hundreds of versions of myself.

Some smiled.

Some wept.

Some... stared with rage in their eyes.

"This isn't real," I whispered.

One reflection answered:

"That's what we all said...

Until one of us didn't come back."

I walked forward.

Each mirror flickered like a dying screen.

In one: I was a child, hiding under the table.

In another: A teenager, screaming into a void.

In another: Grown, holding a blade, whispering:

"Just one cut. Just one time. Just make it quiet."

I dropped to my knees.

"I'm not all of these," I said.

"I'm not all of these."

And the mirrors responded in unison:

"You're not.

But we are."

Then the center mirror began to hum.

A strange glow lit up from within.

I stepped closer.

The reflection didn't mimic me.

It was someone else.

Avery.

And for the first time—they looked up.

"You finally made it," they whispered.

"I didn't think I'd see you before I... before I let go."

"Who are you?" I asked.

They smiled. Eyes tired.

"I was the first to get trapped.

Not because I was weak.

But because I was the one who never got to choose."

The glass flickered.

A memory played behind them like a projector:

A bathroom mirror...

Face-down in the woods.

A note scrawled on the back:

“They said I couldn’t escape,
but I can stay still forever.”

I gasped.

“Grandfather...
It was you.”

Avery nodded.

“I didn’t disappear.
I dissociated so hard I shattered.
I became the mirror.”

The lights dimmed.

The reflections around us went quiet.

Avery stepped forward.

“I was supposed to end the loop.
But I froze instead.
I didn’t know how to face what I saw.”

My hands shook.

“You’re not a failure.
You’re me.”

Avery looked up. Tears welling.

“And you’re me.
But I need to hear it, Billy.
I need to know this reflection isn’t meant to die.”

I pressed my hand to the glass.

The mantra rose from my chest like breath:

“Don’t kill Avery...
Just chill.”

The mirror cracked—but didn’t shatter.

Behind it—a city.

Neon. Glowing. Alive.

The world Avery dreamed of.

The one they never thought they'd live to see.

I stepped back.

And Avery walked through the mirror.

Paused.

Eyes wide.

Because standing there—

Was Naya.

Was Helen.

Was me.

Waiting.

Smiling.

Whole.

Avery turned around.

“We made it.”

“We really f*cking made it.”

The Compass pulsed with light.

And another seal... broke.

CHAPTER 11: BREAKING THE FIFTH SEAL

I felt it before I saw it. A ringing in my ears. A tightness in my chest. That feeling—like something was watching me... from inside me.

The Compass turned black.

No glow.

Just a pulse.

Like a heart.

Like a trap.

And then I was pulled in.

Into a room made of breathing walls. Every surface—mirrors. Every mirror—pulsing like flesh.

And behind the glass... was her.

Eli.

She wasn't screaming.

She wasn't shaking.

She was quiet.

Too quiet.

Her eyes were open, but her pupils spun like tiny galaxies falling in on themselves. She sat on a hospital bed in a room with no doors. Only reflections. They surrounded her—each mirror showing the version of her they wanted her to be:

Smiling. Sane. Silent.

But the real Eli? She was whispering something under her breath. Over and over. I leaned closer.

"I don't know who I am.

I don't know who I am.

I don't know who I am..."

Then—she looked up. Eyes black. Veins glowing beneath her skin like maps drawn in static.

"I saw everything too early," she said.

"I saw myself before I was ready."

"They called it sickness."

The walls shifted. The mirrors began to HUM. One cracked open and something crawled out. It looked like her but it had no eyes. No mouth. Just a face that opened—and screamed without sound. I backed up.

Eli didn't move.

"That's what they said I was," she whispered.

"An echo. A shadow. A thing to medicate, not understand."

The creature dragged itself toward me—leaving fire in its wake.

I yelled:

"You're not that thing!"

And she laughed.

Broken.

Beautiful.

"That thing saved me.

It sat with me when no one else could.

It held me through the sleep paralysis and whispered, 'You're still here.'"

Suddenly—

I was frozen.

Flat on my back.

The room changed.

The creature was on my chest.

Its face inches from mine.

I couldn't move.

Couldn't scream.

Eli stood behind it. Watching.

“You can’t fight it,” she said.

“You have to learn to float through it.”

I let go, took a breath and the creature...It stopped. It backed away.

And then—it became light.

Eli walked toward me. Kneeling beside me. No longer trembling. Just glowing.

“It’s not about getting rid of the voices,” she said.

“It’s about making peace with them.”

“I still hear them.

But now?

They sound like me.”

I reached out. Held her hand.

“You survived it all.”

She smiled.

“So will you.”

And then... she said it.

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

The Compass lit up white.

And shattered.

And Eli?

She faded—peacefully.

One with her echoes.

CHAPTER 12: BREAKING THE SIXTH SEAL

I stepped through a veil of static—and immediately dropped to my knees.

Voices.

Hundreds.

Whispers. Screams. Laughter. Prayers. Prophecies.

All overlapping. All in languages I couldn't understand... but somehow still knew.

I opened my eyes.

I was inside a chapel—but nothing about it felt holy.

The stained glass was fractured into visions.

Each panel showed people in torment—screaming with no mouths.

And on the altar, twitching in the flicker of a dozen candles—was Salem.

Head down.

Arms limp.

Eyes glowing faintly under closed lids.

Around her neck was a crown—made of radio wires and rosaries. She muttered endlessly.

I stepped closer.

“Salem...?”

Her head snapped up. Eyes wide. Pupils spinning.

“You shouldn't be here,” she hissed.

“They don't like it when you listen too closely.”

The walls shivered.

I turned.

Shadows stared at me through the stained glass.

They had no faces.

Only ears.

Salem stood.

Her voice layered—like multiple versions of her speaking at once.

“They call me delusional.
But I’m not the one who lied.”

“I warned everyone... and now they think I’m the problem?”

Her skin started glitching.

Flickering between now and somewhere else.

“I HEARD WHAT’S COMING, BILL.
I HEARD YOU SCREAMING BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN BORN.”

She clutched her head.

“TOO MANY SIGNALS.
TOO MANY NAMES.
TOO MANY GODS.”

Then she dropped.

Sobbing.

“I tried to speak the truth...
All it did was break me.”

I knelt beside her.

“You were never broken.
You were the speaker.
The world wasn’t ready to listen.”

She looked up.

Her eyes... calm.

“For once.”

“So why now?” she asked.

“Because I’m here now,” I said. “And I’m ready.”

She smiled.

Not wide. Not manic.

Just soft.

“I was so scared I was just noise.”

I took her hands.

“You weren’t noise, Salem.
You were the signal.”

The chapel went quiet.

The candles dimmed.

The stained glass turned blank.

For the first time in her life—
her head went silent.

And above the altar, the Compass cracked.

Then bloomed into violet light.

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

She chuckled softly.

“I told them what was coming...
Now it’s finally here.”

CHAPTER 13: THE FINAL ECHO

The Compass stopped beating.

No glow. No spin. Just dead center.

A final pulse—and then...

Silence.

I stood in a void.

No floor. No ceiling.

Just static in the air and mirrors floating in the dark like moons.

Each one showed her.

My grandmother.

Younger. Older. Screaming. Smiling. Disappearing. Reappearing.

I took a step forward.

The mirrors hissed.

“You should’ve left her alone.”

“You broke the seal.”

“You opened the door.”

Then they multiplied.

Thousands of them.

All showing the same moment—

Her last breath.

The night she died.

The night she shattered.

I turned—And there she was.

Standing at the center of it all. The real her. Eyes wide. Breath shallow. Hands shaking.

She was holding her own reflection—

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

Over and over. Saying it aloud. Like a mantra. Like a spell. Like a curse.

“Grandma...” I whispered.

She didn’t hear me.

She was stuck in the loop.

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

“Don’t kill Bill... just chill.”

“Don’t kill—”

She screamed.

Slammed the mirror.

The reflection didn’t move. It whispered back in her voice:

“Do it.”

I watched in horror.

Again it whispered:

“Do it.”

“You’ll save him.”

“You’ll silence it all.”

Her breathing cracked.

Her hands trembled.

And then—

She stabbed the glass.

It shattered.

And the world turned black.

I fell into the memory.

I was in the room.

Watching her body on the floor.

Watching Helen—just a child—screaming.

Clutching her mother's lifeless hand.

"She didn't know," I said out loud.

"She thought she was the danger."

"She thought it was the only way to keep me safe."

Then I heard it...

From behind...

Her voice. Alive. Clear.

"Billy..."

I turned.

And she was there.

Not broken.

Not screaming.

Just tired.

"I was scared," she said.

"I thought the only way to end the echo...
was to end me."

"But I was wrong."

"The echo doesn't want to be silenced."

It wants to be heard.
Held.
Healed.”

I cried.

I ran to her.

Held her.

And for the first time—she held me back.

“I love you, Billy.”
“I always did.
I just didn’t know how to stay.”

I nodded, sobbing.

“You didn’t fail me.”

She pulled back. Eyes wet.

“Promise me you won’t become the mirror.”

“Promise me... you’ll remain calm... you’ll chill.”

I smiled. Through pain. Through love.

“I promise.”

She stepped into the light.

Peaceful. Whole.

And the final mirror?

Shattered into gold dust.

“Don’t kill Bill...” she whispered one last time.

“Just chill.”

And then? Silence. True silence. The kind that means it’s finally over.

CHAPTER 14: THROUGH THE MIRROR

I stood in the aftermath.

Ash floated like snow.

The Compass was gone.

But I wasn't scared.

Not anymore.

For the first time since all of this began—

The mirrors weren't whispering.

They were listening.

And then it appeared.

One last mirror.

Face-down.

Old. Cracked.

The one from the woods.

The one from the beginning.

I flipped it over.

On the back...

"They said I couldn't escape...
but I can stay still forever."

My grandfather's final words.

Avery.

I looked into the glass—and this time, I didn't see a reflection.

I saw a city.

Futuristic.

Cyberpunk.

Glowing.

Alive.

It was beautiful.

It was peaceful.

It was home.

I stepped through the mirror.

And inside...

I saw them.

Naya.

My mom.

Avery.

Already waiting.

Already building.

Already living the life we were told we didn't deserve.

"We made a pact," Naya said.

"To build a world for those who survive."

"A place beyond stigma.

Beyond diagnosis.

Beyond fear."

"You just had to break the loop first."

I cried.

Not because I was sad.

But because—for the first time—

I believed I deserved this.

All of it.

I turned to Avery.

“How did you know I’d make it?”

They smiled.

“Because you were me.
And I chose to stay.”

I looked up at the sky.

Then back at the mirror behind me.

And whispered:

“Don’t kill Bill...”
“...just chill.”

AFTERWORD: STAYING IN THE LIGHT (Billy's Voice)

If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, depression, trauma, or any form of mental illness—



Please know:


You are not alone.
You are not broken.
And you are not beyond saving.

There is always a way forward.
There is always someone who cares—
Even when the voices say otherwise.

Please reach out. Even if all you say is:
“I don’t want to be alone with this anymore.”

MENTAL HEALTH + CRISIS HOTLINES

United States
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
 Call or text: 988
 988lifeline.org
Available 24/7, free, confidential.

International Support
 Visit: <https://www.opencounseling.com/suicide-hotlines>
Find suicide hotlines and mental health services by country.

If you survived this book—You’ve already proven you’re stronger than your worst night. The loop doesn’t control you. The darkness doesn’t define you and if no one else tells you this today:

We’re so damn glad you’re still here.

Stay.
Create.
Chill.

And if you ever forget how powerful you are...Go look in the mirror. “Don’t kill. Just chill.”

EPILOGUE: THE MIRROR NEVER LIES

Narrated by Grandmother

Stories don't end.

Not really.

They echo.

Through bloodlines. Through memory. Through sleep.

Billy's gone now—out there, walkin' toward a truth that most folks never get close to. But if you listen close... real close... you can still hear him.

In the hum of the night.

In the silence just before you fall asleep.

In the mirror that seems too still.

He left behind more than journals and sigils.

He left behind a blueprint.

For survival.

For awakening.

For becoming whole.

So if you're hearin' whispers...

If your sleep feels like fallin'...

If your dreams ain't yours anymore...Don't run. Don't break. And whatever you do? Don't kill Bill....Just chill.

Because maybe—

Just maybe—

The part of you that's been tryin' to survive this whole time? Ain't broken.

It's just waitin' to wake up.