

S O L U N A

Volume One – Broken

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Chapter One

Death, the end of life. A random occurrence in one's journey. Aiden knew he was going to die someday, he just didn't expect it to be so soon. It was the first day of summer vacation and being High-School-free forever. His eyes were closed against the sunlight, his alabaster skin absorbing its rays. A vulnerable, introverted, imperfect beauty. Shadows through the window danced on his bed. His eyes open slowly. He wakes up feeling gloriously weightless and thought, *No school*. He quickly removed the covers from his body and jumped out of bed – and winced.

Ouch. That pain in his abdomen again. Sort of a gnawing feeling, as if something were eating its way towards his back. It helped a little if he crouched forward a bit.

No, Aiden thought. I refuse to be sick during summer vacation. A little power of positive thinking is what's needed here. He smiled and then frowned.

Grimly, doubled over – think positive, idiot! – he made his way down the hall to the white-and-green-tiled bathroom.

At first he thought he was going to throw up, but then the pain eased as suddenly as it had come. Aiden straightened up and regarded his tousled reflection in the mirror.

"Stick with me, kid, and you'll be fine," he whispered to his reflection, and gave a conspiratorial wink. He leaned forward, seeing his own green eyes narrow in suspicion. There on his nose was a pimple forming beneath the skin. It was rather small, but noticeable none the less. It was hideous, to be completely honest, which Aiden Melanthius usually was. How disgusting, how just ew! Aiden stuck his tongue out at himself and then turned away with little dignity, without bothering to comb his wild chocolate waves of hair on his head.

He maintained as much dignity as he could until he got to the kitchen, where Conner, his older brother, was eating cereal. He narrowed his eyes again, this time at his brother. It was bad enough to be smaller, skinnier, wavy haired – to look, in fact, as much like an elf as someone could – but to have an older brother who looks nothing related to himself – who was tall, Viking-blond, and classically handsome... well, that just showed a deliberate malice in the workings of the universe, didn't it?

"Hello, Conner," he said in a voice heavy with menace. Conner, who was used to his younger brothers moods, was unimpressed. He lifted his gaze from the sports section of the *L.A. Times* for a moment. Aiden had to admit he had nice eyes with very dark lashes. It was the only thing they had in common.

"Hi," Conner said flatly, and went back to the sports section of the paper. Aiden didn't know many guys who read the newspaper, but

then again it was the sports section... that was a Conner thing after all. Like Aiden, Conner had also just graduated this year, and unlike Aiden he'd made straight A's while starring on the football team, the hockey team, and the baseball team. Also serving as class president. One of Aiden's greatest joys in life was teasing Conner. He thought his brother was too straightlaced. And well... straight. Aiden was gay – openly gay of course. His family knew and accepted it as if it were nothing. Aiden was particularly happy that no one really seemed to care.

He laughed to him self and shrugged, giving up the menacing look. "Where's Abe and mom?" Abe Arpad was their stepfather of three years and even straighter-laced than Conner.

"Abe's at work. Mom's getting dressed. You'd better eat something or she'll get on your case."

"Yeah, yeah..." Aiden went on tiptoe to rummage through a cupboard. Finding a box of frosted wheaties, he thrust a hand in and delicately pulled out one wheaty. He ate it dry.

It wasn't all bad being short and elfin. He did a few dance steps to the refrigerator, shaking the cereal box in rhythm.

"I'm a... sex god!" He sang, giving it a foot-stomping rhythm.

Conner flung the paper down from his face "No, you're not," he said in a devastating calm. "And why don't you put some clothes on?"

Holding the refrigerator door open, Aiden looked down at himself. He was wearing a pair of black briefs and a short, loose t-shirt he had slept in. It covered him he thought. "This *is* clothes," he said serenely, taking a Diet Coke from the fridge.

There was a knock at the kitchen door. Aiden saw who it was through the screen door.

"Hey, Logan! C'mon in."

Logan Armaveni came in, taking off his wraparound Ray-Bans. Looking at him, Aiden felt a pang – as always. It didn't matter that he had seen him every day, practically, for the past thirteen years. Aiden still felt a quick sharp throb in his chest, somewhere between sweetness and pain, when first confronted with Logan every morning.

It wasn't just his outlaw good looks, which always reminded him vaguely of James Dean. He had silky light brown hair, a subtle, intelligent face, and gray eyes that were alternately intense and cool. He was the handsomest boy at Temple City High, but that wasn't it, that wasn't what Aiden responded to. It was something inside Logan, something mysterious and compelling and always just out of reach. It made Aiden's heart beat fast and his skin tingle.

Conner felt differently. As soon as Logan came in, he stiffened and his face went cold. Electric dislike flashed between the two boys.

Logan smiled faintly, as if Conner's reaction amused him. "Hey."

"Hi," Conner said, not thawing in the least. Aiden had the strong sense that his brother would have liked to bundle him up and rush him out of the room away from Logan. Conner always overdid the protective – brother bit when Logan was around. "So how's Jacob and Helena?" Conner added nastily.

James considered. "Well, I don't really know."

"You don't know? Oh, yeah, you always drop your girlfriends and boy toys just before summer vacation. Leaves you free to maneuver, right?"

"Of course," Logan said bluntly. He Smiled.

Conner glared at him in unabashed hatred.

Aiden, for his part, was seized with joy. Goodbye Jacob; Goodbye Helena. Goodbye to Jacobs's strong long hair and Helena's amazing long legs. This was going to be a wonderful summer.

Many people thought Aiden and Logan's relationship was platonic. This wasn't true. Aiden had known for years that he was going to marry Logan. It was one of his two great ambitions, the other being to see the world. He just hadn't gotten around to informing Logan yet. Right now Logan still thought he liked strong-haired - long-legged girls and boys with high labeled clothing and Italian pumps.

"Is that a new CD?" Aiden said, to distract him from his stare-out with his future brother-in-law, Conner.

Logan hefted it. "It's the new Trance-house release."

Aiden cheered. "More waves of electronic sounds and beats – I can't *wait*. Let's go listen to it." But just then his mother walked in. Aiden's mom was cool, blonde, and perfect, like an Alfred Hitchcock heroine. She normally wore an expression of effortless efficiency. Aiden, heading out of the kitchen, nearly ran into her.

"Sorry – morning!"

"Hold on a minute," Aiden's mother said, getting hold of him by the back of his t-shirt. "Good morning, Conner; good morning, Logan," she added. Conner said good morning and Logan nodded, ironically polite, as always.

"Has everyone had breakfast?" Aiden's mother asked, and when the older boys said they had, she looked at her youngest. "And what about you?" she asked, gazing into Aiden's face.

Aiden rattled the frosted wheaties box and his mother winced. "Why don't you at least put milk on them?"

"It's better this way," Aiden said firmly, but when his mother gave him a little push towards the refrigerator, he went and got a carton of low-fat milk.

"What are you planning to do with your first day of freedom?" His mother said, walking across the kitchen.

"Oh, I don't know." Aiden looked at Logan. "Listen to some music; maybe go up to the hills? Or drive to the beach?"

"Whatever you want," Logan said. "We've got all summer before college begins."

The summer stretched out in front of Aiden, hot and golden and resplendent. It smelled like pool chlorine and sea salt; it felt like warm grass under his back. Three whole months, he thought. That's forever. Three months is forever. Or so he thought.

It was strange that he was thinking about it.

"We could check out the new shops at the Village – "

He was beginning, when suddenly the pain struck and his breath caught in his throat.

It was bad – a deep, twisting burst of agony that made him double over. The milk carton flew from his fingers and his body limply found its way to the kitchen floor. Everything went gray.

[End Chapter – To Be Continued]

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