Summary

Jay Merrick is about to die, and then he doesn't.
After narrowly escaping Alex at Benedict Hall Tim and Jay are on the run again.
Encountering threats new and old shouldn't be too big of a deal all things considered, but when Jay begins to experience memory loss without having contact with the Operator, sleepwalking, and growing more violent the others begin to grow worried.
The Bullet and the Bluejay

Tim was sick and tired of everything that was happening. For a long time, things had been just fine! But then Jay came back into his life, dragging everything he had tried to get away from back onto him. But then it had gotten better again. They were working together, and had become friends, and had been making the best of a bad situation. Sure, being hunted down by your mutual ex-friend and the tall, faceless eldritch horror he's teamed up with isn't the best scenario, but they were making it work! But then Tim lied. Not outright, but through omission, which is more than enough. After Jay tried to attack him he had tied him up with zip-ties and left him in the living room while he went to explore Benedict Hall. As he was walking through he heard other footsteps, and stopped. Up the stairs he saw Alex, causing him to stop dead in his tracks. He quickly looked around and ran out the front doors to his car, where he passed out as static took over his mind.

When he came-to it took him a second to realize where he was, and then he heard the gunshot. He instantly ran to the doors he had left through, pushed by the feeling that something was deeply, terribly wrong. He ran down the stairs, almost bumping directly into Alex who held a gun in his hand, his arm outstretched. Without even thinking Tim halted his pause and tackled Alex to the ground.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Alex seethed as they writhed around on the ground, each of them grappling for the gun. "I'm going to kill you just like I killed all of them!"

Tim yanked the gun away and kicked at Alex, getting him in his side as Tim scrambled to a standing position, holding the gun shakily in his hands.

"What? Are you going to kill me?" Alex asked with a smirk, as though he knew something Tim didn't.

"Maybe I will," Tim responded as the barrel clicked to the next round. "That's what you think you deserve, isn't it?"

"If you kill me it would be the same as what I've already done!" Alex shouted as he came to a shaky stand.

"I don't know, Alex, I think being a serial killer and doing it in self-defence are pretty different," Tim responded, keeping the gun pointed at Alex's chest despite the tremors running through his whole body. He was trying his best to stay calm, but in reality, he was terrified.

"What I'm doing is going to save everyone! All of this is your fault, and I'm just cleaning up your mess! If you had done the right thing and-"

"What? Killed myself? Killed the others? Alex, this isn't right! You always say I'm making it worse, that it's all my fault, but it isn't, it's yours!" Tim shouted. Anger erupted on Alex's face and he charged towards Tim with a scream. Without thinking he pulled the trigger. He fell to the ground again as the gun emitted a dull click. Static surrounded them as once again they fought each other on the ground. Tim swung wildly, black dots swarming his vision until suddenly it all disappeared. Alex had disappeared as though he had never been there in the first place. Tim whipped around, searching the dark hallway carefully until he heard a noise. Someone was crying in a different room. Tim ran towards them, his mind racing as he yanked on the door until it opened. He hadn't expected Jay to be sitting in the corner, his hand clutched over his stomach as blood pooled on the floor around him. Weakly, he stretched out his hand.
"Tim, please, I'm sorry..." Was all he could say before losing consciousness. Tim rushed over to him. Despite everything that had happened, he was still his friend, and he was not planning on losing another one. As he picked him up the static returned. Tim turned to see the Operator standing in the corner of the room, and quickly ran out into the hallway. As the static set in and he felt his consciousness slip he reached the car. As he set Jay in the backseat and closed the door he fell down into the damp grass.

"Tim... Tim... Tim!" a voice called out, jolting him awake. He looked around frantically, realizing he had ended up in a hospital room. "Tim? Where are we? What's going on?"

Tim looked at him confused for a moment.

"I think we're in a hospital, Jay. I mean, I would hope so considering I just found you bleeding to death in an abandoned room."

"Nice joke, Tim. Now what actually happened?" Jay said, rolling his eyes.

"Do you not remember?" Tim asked, growing worried. It was not good if Jay was starting to get memory loss.

"I... You're not joking?" Jay stared at him for a moment. "Was it when I attacked you with the knife, or - or was it something else? What happened, Tim?"

"I don't know exactly, but It wasn't from you attacking me. I think - I think it was Alex. I think he shot you." Tim looked as Jay's face turned white as a sheet.

"I don't remember that. shouldn't I - Shouldn't I remember that? I mean, that seems like something I should - something I should remember! Tim I - " He was breathing quickly, his eyes wide and frightened. He looked around the room and Tim recognized what was happening. Jay was having a panic attack. "Tim, I can't remember!"

"Jay, you need to take some deep breaths," Tim said as he stood and moved towards the bed Jay was in. He had his hands on his head and was staring at the blanket breathing with short, quick breaths. "In for five, hold it for a few seconds, and breathe out for five, okay? Everything is going to be fine."

"I - I've forgotten stuff before, but that was different! That had an explanation! This is - This is different! This is so much more substantial!" Jay's breath only quickened and a machine began to beep rapidly. "I feel like I've forgotten other things like I'm not just losing new memories but like - but like old ones are missing. Ones that haven't been before."

"Jay, you need to calm down it's -" Tim was interrupted as a nurse walked into the room with a hurried pace.

"Sir, please step away I'm here to handle the situation." She said without so much as looking at him, instantly going into some sort of pre-planned procedure. Tim sat down. He was scared himself. Sure, Jay had forgotten seven months before, but a memory hole had only in their knowledge happened that one time and the Operator had been involved multiple times over those months. He pushed it to the back of his mind. Jay was in shock, and panicking over something normal. Normal to them at least. He wouldn't worry unless it got worse.

"Wait a second," The nurse said as she turned to Tim after getting Jay into a calmer state, "Aren't you those youtube guys? The one with that horror channel?"
The Somnambulists

Chapter Summary

Jay and Tim are recognized. Alex has a discussion. The hooded man has a change of plans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Excuse me?" Tim responded, confused.

"You know, that youtube channel, Marble Hornets I think it's called. If you're not the guy from that then you look awful similar." She replied as she checked the machines now softly beeping. Jay seemed to be calm now and was just as confused as he was. "I watch it on my breaks sometimes. Really cool special effects."

"Those aren't special effects," Jay spoke up for the first time in a while. "It's all real."

"Are you alright, sir?" The nurse asked, clearly not believing him and jumping to the assumption that he was confused or crazy.

"IT'S ALL REAL," Jay shouted angrily, causing her to take a step back.

"Jay, calm down," Tim said, quickly standing up and moving back towards him.

"Every second of footage, every injury, every memory loss, every friend dead, is all real!" Jay held his head in his hands. "It's real. I know it's real."

"Sir, did he experience any potential head trauma that could cause him to confuse things with reality? Does he have any predisposition or family history of any psychological disorders? If so it will need to be presented to the head practitioner." The nurse had assumed a cold exterior after the outburst, but Tim could tell she was freaked out. It was the same way the nurses would act around him when he was younger.

"No, he doesn't have any mental illness that I can think of, and..." He paused for a moment thinking. Right now he had a choice. He could tell her the truth, and maybe she could help them in some way, or contact law enforcement, or help keep them safe in the hospital a little longer. Or she could have them both institutionalized. He took a deep breath. "and all of what he said is true."

Alex was furious. He had everything he needed right in his hands, and he let it slip through his fingers. He punched a tree next to his campsite, splitting the skin on his knuckles. He wiped the warm blood that trickled out onto his already stained jeans.

"At least I got Jay." he said to himself, "Now it's just Tim. Maybe now he'll do the right thing."

Alex knew he had a problem, but to him, it wasn't his vigilante killings. He had been happy, had a girlfriend, and a house, and had distanced himself from everything that happened in college, and then stupid Jay Merrick had wandered back into his life and tore everything to shreds. Now Amy was dead.
"It wasn't Jay's fault." Alex scolded himself. "He wasn't aware he was hurting us. He had no idea what was going on. He just got infected with it. He's a victim, just like we were. It's all Tim's fault. He's patient zero. He's the cause of all of this."

Alex kneeled on the bed of pine needles on the forest floor and used his hands to dig out his natural vault. He pulled out a box of ammunition and his gun. He took it apart, cleaned it as best he could, and made sure it was loaded. This time he wouldn't hesitate. This time the gun wouldn't fail.

"Once Tim is gone everything will be able to fall back into place. I'll be a hero." He smiled to himself as static tugged at the back of his mind, calling him to another place. "I'll get Tim and then take care of myself, and then the plague will be scourged from the earth, and the man will be happy."

The static pulled harder as he put the gun and bullets back in the hole and covered it with brush. He made his way to the fire and put it out with a bucket of stagnant water as the static continued to pull.

"Hold your horses," Alex said as he made sure everything was in place. He went into his tent and laid down on the ratty old sleeping bag he had stolen. "I'm on my way."

And with that he allowed the static to overcome him and put him into a slumber. The hooded man tilted his head to the side as he watched all this occur from his perch above the camp. At best it was concerning. He would have to warn the others that he was unravelling and becoming more dangerous. As he climbed down the tree he heard rustling in the tent, causing him to stop dead in his tracks as he watched Alex leave and wander off underneath him. He saw that his eyes were closed, and let out the breath he held as he realized he was only sleepwalking again. He finished his descent and took off in the opposite direction, not bothering to cover his tracks.

'let him worry.' the hooded man thought to himself. 'Maybe it'll keep him occupied longer, searching the area for me.'

He laughed to himself silently as he made his way to the highway, taking off his mask and attempting to flag down a car. It was going to be a long way to the others. He smiled as a woman dressed in scrubs and driving a small sedan pulled to the shoulder. Already this was easier than he thought.

"Hey there, where are you headed?" She asked, rolling down the window. "Just gonna let you know, anywhere past Birmingham and I'll have to leave you here."

"Oh, don't worry I'm not headed that far. Can you get me to Cottondale? I'm meeting up with a friend at a hotel there." He asked.

"No problem, that's on my way and only about fifteen minutes from here. Hop in." She unlocked the car door and he opened it and sat down, clicking his seatbelt into place.

"Thank you so much. You wouldn't believe the day I've been having." He said to her with a smile.

"Same here. Mind if I tell you about it?" She asked, glancing towards him.

"Not at all." He responded.

"Before I go on a tangent, I just wanted to say you look awfully familiar. Did you go to U of A? I feel like I've seen you before."

"I did go there. was actually looking for a place in the nearby woods where me and my friends
"Ugh, no offence but I've had enough of film students for one day. That's what my story is about, actually. You see, I work at the Tuscaloosa hospital and had to deal with these two guys..."

Tim wanted to hit his head against the wall. That could not have gone more poorly.

"As soon as we get out of this damn hospital we're going to take down the channel. People are watching what's happening and thinking it's some sort of movie. For all we know the footage could spread its influence." Tim said angrily.

"But Tim, if people recognize us from it they might be more willing to help us. Some people know it's real, I've talked to them online, and if they don't believe it we can pretend it isn't real." Jay responded, having now fully calmed down with the belief that his memory loss of earlier that day was fine as he had lost a longer period of time before.

"Jay, it could be spreading through the channel. We need to get rid of it." He replied pinching the bridge of his nose. "Other people are probably out there right now, in the same situation we are because of us."

"You mean because of me." Jay spat. "'Student film you lying piece of shit.' I remember being said at one point. I know you think it would be all my fault if the channel spread it, after all, I'm the one who came into your life and ruined it."

"I don't know why you're acting this way all of a sudden." The mood change was worrying. Just a second ago he had been perfectly fine. Tim jotted it down mentally.

"Maybe it's because I'm tired of running. We should take the fight to Alex and finish this."

"We both know that won't actually fix anything."

"Whatever." Jay huffed and laid back down, facing away from Tim. He sat down and pulled out his phone, sending out a text message.

'Hey, I'm going to be swinging by with a friend later this week. make sure you're packed to leave when I get there. We're heading out to another town and I think it's time to join up again. Alex attacked us.' He put away the phone without seeing if there was a response before closing his eyes and falling asleep.

Chapter End Notes

If you have any comments on this check out my Tumblr, @ghostbunn-y and send them in as an ask! I'm also accepting art requests right now.
Skull and Crossbones

Chapter Summary

Alex falls asleep. Brian wakes up. Tim tells a lie. Jay becomes more restless.

As soon as they were checked out of the hospital they were on the road again.

"Where are we going?" Jay asked as he yawned and looked out the window. He had seemed off ever since the incident with Alex, and Tim was getting even more worried. The previous day Tim had been sitting in the room and out of the blue Jay had turned to him and asked who he was. Before Tim could respond something changed in his expression and he asked how long he had been sitting there, as though he had been asleep for the past half hour.

"We're picking up someone we can trust. They're in a motel in Cottondale. You have to promise you won't freak out when they get here though, ok?" Tim replied as he scanned the horizon. They were about a minute away now.

"Why would I freak out?" Jay asked sitting up properly and turning him. "Is there something your not telling me again? We both promised, no more secrets."

"Yeah, I've been hiding something." Tim sighed as he pulled into the parking lot. The person in question was already waiting there for them. They wore a black hoodie and kept their head down as the car pulled to a stop in front of them. "But I promise it isn't anything bad."

The stranger walked around to the back of the car and put a duffel bag into the trunk. They then came around to the rear door and sat in the middle where they could be seen more quickly. Jay stared at them puzzled. They then removed their hood and he almost choked on his spit.

"Jessica? I thought you were dead." He said as she readjusted her hair so that it was out of her face. She had cut it, likely in an attempt to disguise herself, and it looked like it was a home job. It came to a choppy finish just under her chin. "I thought Alex killed you."

"Well, he didn't. Now, are we going to stay here loitering all day or are we going to get a move on?" She asked as he turned around in his seat to face forward again. Tim turned the car back on and quickly peeled out of the parking lot, paying no mind to the strangers on the sidewalk as he passed by. He didn't notice someone familiar watching from the corner as they left.

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Alex opened his eyes quickly like a switch was suddenly flicked restoring him to waking. His muscles felt sore and he groaned as he sat up. He was in a dark alleyway and didn't remember putting on the clothes he was wearing or bringing the bag slung over his shoulder. He looked around as he came to a careful stand, his legs wobbling.

"I need more time. Give me more time." Alex thought he heard someone say, but as he looked around he found himself completely alone. He shook his head. He had to figure out where he was. He stumbled out of the alley and leaned against a pole. It was dark out, and he could tell it was late as drunk college students stumbled home under the warm yellow glow of the street lights. Alex looked up, a paper on the pole catching his eye. MISSING it read in large black letters. Underneath it was a photo of himself. He ripped it off the pole, crumpling it and throwing it to the ground. He moved onward, shoving past some of the aforementioned drunk students.
"Watch it, dude!" one of them yelled at him. Alex turned to him slowly, the stranger's face going white.

"Jesus Christ..." the girl who was with him exclaimed, staring at his face. "Are you alright?"

"Angela, we should get going." the man said. Alex continued staring at them, confused. He slowly reached up to touch his face. When he drew his hand away it was wet with fresh blood.

"Brad we should call someone!" The girl, Angela said as she took out her phone. As she dialled 911 Alex came out of the trance he had slipped into, and he took off running. "Wait! Sir!"

Alex didn't stop running. He couldn't get caught now because of a stupid cut on his face. He couldn't let anything get in the way of what they had been planning to do to save everyone. He felt the buzzing again, like a beehive in the back of his skull. He ignored it as he made his way around the corner. His body tensed when he heard the police sirens coming towards him. He ducked into an alleyway and hid in the shadows as they drove past. He sighed, turning around to move now that he thought he was safe, only to be face to face with a masked stranger.

"Shhhhh..." They said, putting a finger up to the large, drawn on grin of the mask. Alex felt pain explode in the back of his head. He crumpled to the floor like a wet burlap sack of rocks, out cold. The hooded stranger stood behind him with a small metal pipe. No one else was in the alley but him as he bent down and rummaged through Alex's bag. He took something out and put it onto the face of the knocked out man.

"Time to wake up, brother." He said quietly as the sirens looped back around. The police cruiser stopped outside of the alley, but when the officers entered they found nothing but a random tape laying on the pavement. Someone who was not Alex sat on a fire escape next to the hooded man, the both of them crouched down to hide.

"We need that tape." He hissed. "If they see it they'll know what he did."

"No need to worry." The hooded man said as he pulled a rock from his pocket. He threw it down the alley into a trash can, drawing the officer's attention. He jumped down silently, Not-Alex following suit. "Everything is fine."

He picked up the tape and the two of them ran into the nearby woods. Cottondale was a long way from Alex's camp, and the hooded man hoped he would stay asleep long enough to get there without incident.

By the time they had made it to their destination it had been four and a half hours and had already become dark.

"Tim, where are we going?" Jay asked exasperated for the hundredth time. He had ignored every one of his questions, opting instead to complete the journey in silence. "I know we aren't in Alabama anymore, so just tell me where we actually are."

"We're in Tennesee." It was the first thing he had said for an hour, the last thing before that being 'Shut up before I ram into the next person out of frustration.' When they went through a national park.

"well, where are we going?" It hadn't been the first time he asked, and he wasn't really expecting an answer.
"We're heading to New Jersey, we're going to all get passports, and we'll figure it out from there. For now, we just need to get a few states over where Alex can't find us." Hearing this made Jay angry for some reason he couldn't explain, like something inside of him wanted to oppose this plan no matter what. Like it wanted Alex's blood.

"Why are we running like a bunch of cowards! We can take on Alex, there's more of us then there are of him!" He exclaimed before he realized what exactly he was saying. He blinked and shook his head. "Sorry, I don't know why I said that."

He glanced over at Tim who's gaze quickly snapped way. He was worried about Jay and worried about his mood swings and sudden outbursts and seeming like he was being controlled by something else half the time.

"Getting out of Alabama is a good plan. How do you think we're going to get passports? Aren't we missing persons at this point?" Tim quirked his brow.

"You were there when we dealt with that, Jay. We stopped in at a station about three hours ago." Jay stared at the road. He didn't remember that. In fact, now that he was thinking about it the trip seemed a lot shorter than it should. He shook the thought to the back of his mind and leaned against the window, quickly falling asleep.

He felt like he was underwater, and looking around did nothing to quell the feeling. His limbs pushed slowly against it, and he frantically twisted around looking for the surface. He kicked his legs, continuing to hold his breath as best he could. He soon saw what he believed to be light breaking through the water and made his way towards it, but as he approached it he found it to be a mirror. He continued moving towards it until it was inches from him. He then reached up, touching the surface gently. His reflection blinked back at him as he did, but suddenly erupted into a wide grin and empty eyes he gasped as he recoiled away from the mirror, water being drawn into his lungs as he instinctively breathed back in. His reflection, now completely changed, lunged towards him, wrapping its hands around his neck. It was the figure from the alley with the skeleton-like grin. He began to fight back, tumbling through the water as he choked and spat, and just as he was about to give up and let it consume him he broke through the surface and into consciousness again.

"What are you waiting for? Strike the match and leave him here to find it." Alex realized he held a small matchbook in his hand, and that a few feet to his left stood the hooded man who had tormented him for so long. He thought for a moment and dropped the items from his hand, quickly reaching into his bag and pulling out his gun.

"I don't know what the hell is going on, but I'm going to kill you." He said through gritted teeth as the man laughed. Alex pulled the trigger, the gun clicking notifying him it was empty.

"We take every precaution." He said before tackling Alex into the pine-covered ground. The feeling returned briefly, of being underwater, and he pushed back against it. This was different from the static that usually entered his mind. That was welcoming, that was good. This was evil, like the plague Tim had unleashed upon them all those years ago. Alex managed to get on top of the hooded man, beating him in the face, or at least where Alex believed the face would be considering there was a mask in the way. The man then began to act different, almost frantic, as though something big was about to happen. As Alex grew tired and was about to simply get it over with by using a nearby rock the hooded man's demeanour changed completely. He seemed to look around confused, confusing Alex, and then he began to speak in a voice different to before.

"Alex, what's going on? Where are we?" He seemed scared like he had no idea of everything that had been happening. He then realized this must be some kind of trick.
"Do you think I'm stupid?" He laughed. "You can't fool me."

"Alex what are you talking about," He grasped at his face, ripping the mask off of it and revealing who he truly was. "What am I wearing?"

"Brian?" Alex asked, falling backwards in surprise.

"Alex, why am I here? What's happening?" He pleaded, and for long enough Alex completely forgot his mission of killing all those connected to the production of Marble Hornets.

"Brian it's- it's a long, long story. But I think we both have a lot of time."

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"So are we going to tent it or sleep in the car?" Jessica asked as they drove through the dark Holly Park.

"Sleeping in the car is probably the safest. Also, we don't have a tent anyways, so we'll just have to get used to weird sleeping positions." Tim replied as he pulled off into an empty campsite. "The one thing I'm worried about is being followed. Alex probably will stick in Alabama but we have no idea if the hooded man is following us or not, and his motives are much less clear than Alex."

"So are you saying he's another enemy?" Jay asked.

"I'm just saying we definitely should not count him as a friend just yet. We don't know what he wants out of this." Jay pulled out his laptop as Tim spoke, plugging the camera into it. "What are you doing?"

"Editing the next upload. Why?"

"I thought you said he deleted it, Tim," Jessica said as she leaned backwards in the seat.

"Jay I thought you deleted the channel."

"I can't, it's too important that people know what's going on and that we're not all dead in a ditch someplace." He replied angrily.

"Whatever. We'll deal with it in the morning." Tim huffed flipping so he was looking out the driver's side window. Jay turned his brightness down and fell asleep as he uploaded the video to the channel.

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