



AI BOOK MAKER

Night Shift Protocol

Do Not Trust the Quiet Floor

by

Emily Rhodes

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Night Shift Protocol: Do Not Trust the Quiet Floor

Written by Emily Rhodes

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CHAPTER ONE

The Thing Left Unsaid



Elena Ruiz arrived in Newhaven just before dawn, carrying less luggage than a person should carry when they intend to stay. The air had the particular smell of a place that remembers you even when you have practiced forgetting it. Emily Rhodes would later write that the story began not with a crime or a confession, but with a small wrongness: a staff badge with the wrong date waiting where it had no honest reason to wait.

St. Aurelia Hospital held the kind of quiet that is not peace. A kettle clicked. A floorboard answered a footstep one second too late. Elena Ruiz set a staff badge with the wrong date on the table and refused to look away from it, as if attention itself could keep the truth from slipping. Detective Cole Brennan spoke first, voice low, the way people speak when they have decided not to be overheard.

"If you keep asking," Detective Cole Brennan said, "someone will answer. They will not answer kindly."

"I am not asking for kindness," Elena Ruiz said. "I am asking for the version that does not require me to lie to myself."

Outside, Newhaven performed its daily competence: buses, shutters, the ordinary bravery of people going to work. Inside the story, a different economy was running. Director Halpern had already begun to apply pressure in polite forms: a delayed permit, a missing file, a warning dressed as concern. Elena Ruiz recognized the technique. Power rarely shouts at the beginning. It rearranges the furniture until you trip.

They walked the long way to St. Aurelia Hospital, not because it was safer, but because the direct route felt observed. Elena Ruiz catalogued details the way a careful person does when memory may later be disputed: the stain on the brick, the clock that was three minutes fast, the woman who looked at a staff badge with the wrong date and then looked through it. The city was full of people practicing not-seeing. That, too, was a kind of skill.

Elena Ruiz remembered a smaller version of this fear from years ago: a classroom, a kitchen, a hallway where an adult had said, "Don't make trouble." The advice had sounded like love. It had functioned like a lock. In Newhaven, the same sentence still traveled well.

At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next

action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

Detective Cole Brennan waited by the window. "We can still leave it," Detective Cole Brennan said. "Plenty of people do."

"And then what?" Elena Ruiz asked. "We become one more quiet room in Newhaven?"

There was a moment, almost comic, when a staff badge with the wrong date looked ordinary. That is how dangerous things survive. They borrow the appearance of paperwork, of family, of routine. Elena Ruiz had to keep looking until the ordinary surface thinned.

Director Halpern entered the scene without needing to hurry. That was the tell. People who are innocent of a system still show surprise. Director Halpern showed management. "You are making this larger than it is," Director Halpern said, as if scale could be negotiated. "There is a responsible way to handle delicate matters."

"There is a responsible way to hide them," Elena Ruiz answered. "I have seen both. They use the same vocabulary."

The writing stays close to the body: the heat in the palms, the taste of metal in the mouth, the way a room changes temperature when a secret is spoken. Dialogue is allowed to be incomplete. People in Newhaven rarely finish the dangerous sentence. They let the listener assemble it, which is how a community shares guilt without ever signing it.

Rain found the streets and made them honest. Reflections doubled every light. Elena Ruiz walked through Newhaven as if the city were an argument that could still be won by paying attention. St. Aurelia Hospital waited at the end of that argument, neither sanctuary nor trap until someone chose. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "The Thing Left Unsaid", the plot has moved. arrival and the first wrong detail is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

CHAPTER TWO

A Door That Should Stay Closed



By chapter 2 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke late morning with the beat of the day already in motion: the object reveals a second meaning. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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Sleep, when it came, did not repair anything. It only paused the inventory. Elena Ruiz dreamed of names written in water and woke with the conviction that forgetting is never neutral. Someone always benefits from the blank space. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

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People Who Remember Differently



By chapter 3 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke a rain-heavy afternoon with the beat of the day already in motion: an ally confirms the crack in the official story. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

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A stranger in a doorway asked for the time, and Elena Ruiz almost answered with the whole story. That is the temptation of isolation: to dump the

truth on the first unguarded face. Instead Elena Ruiz said the hour and kept walking, protecting the investigation and the stranger both. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "People Who Remember Differently", the plot has moved. an ally confirms the crack in the official story is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Price of Looking Closer



By chapter 4 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke the blue hour after sunset with the beat of the day already in motion: the antagonist notices the investigation. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

Detective Cole Brennan waited by the window. "We can still leave it," Detective Cole Brennan said. "Plenty of people do."

"And then what?" Elena Ruiz asked. "We become one more quiet room in Newhaven?"

A stranger in a doorway asked for the time, and Elena Ruiz almost answered with the whole story. That is the temptation of isolation: to dump the truth on the first unguarded face. Instead Elena Ruiz said the hour and kept walking, protecting the investigation and the stranger both.

Director Halpern entered the scene without needing to hurry. That was the tell. People who are innocent of a system still show surprise. Director Halpern showed management. "You are making this larger than it is," Director Halpern said, as if scale could be negotiated. "There is a responsible way to handle delicate matters."

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Elena Ruiz remembered a smaller version of this fear from years ago: a classroom, a kitchen, a hallway where an adult had said, "Don't make trouble." The advice had sounded like love. It had functioned like a lock. In Newhaven, the same sentence still traveled well. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "The Price of Looking Closer", the plot has moved. the antagonist notices the investigation is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

A Map With One False Line



By chapter 5 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke well after midnight with the beat of the day already in motion: the lead chooses a risk that cannot be undone. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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A stranger in a doorway asked for the time, and Elena Ruiz almost answered with the whole story. That is the temptation of isolation: to dump the truth on the first unguarded face. Instead Elena Ruiz said the hour and kept walking, protecting the investigation and the stranger both.

At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

Detective Cole Brennan waited by the window. "We can still leave it," Detective Cole Brennan said. "Plenty of people do."

"And then what?" Elena Ruiz asked. "We become one more quiet room in Newhaven?"

Elena Ruiz remembered a smaller version of this fear from years ago: a classroom, a kitchen, a hallway where an adult had said, "Don't make trouble." The advice had sounded like love. It had functioned like a lock. In Newhaven, the same sentence still traveled well.

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The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "A Map With One False Line", the plot has moved. the lead chooses a risk that cannot be undone is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

What the Records Will Not Hold



By chapter 6 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke just before dawn with the beat of the day already in motion: evidence is altered or stolen. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

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By the end of "What the Records Will Not Hold", the plot has moved. evidence is altered or stolen is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

The Hour Nobody Claims



By chapter 7 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke late morning with the beat of the day already in motion: a confrontation in St. Aurelia Hospital. The previous hours had left a residue, a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

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The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "The Hour Nobody Claims", the plot has moved. a confrontation in St. Aurelia Hospital is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

Names That Do Not Stay Buried



By chapter 8 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke a rain-heavy afternoon with the beat of the day already in motion: the secret is spoken out loud. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

St. Aurelia Hospital held the kind of quiet that is not peace. A kettle clicked. A floorboard answered a footstep one second too late. Elena Ruiz set a staff badge with the wrong date on the table and refused to look away from it, as if attention itself could keep the truth from slipping. Detective Cole Brennan spoke first, voice low, the way people speak when they have decided not to be overheard.

"If you keep asking," Detective Cole Brennan said, "someone will answer. They will not answer kindly."

"I am not asking for kindness," Elena Ruiz said. "I am asking for the version that does not require me to lie to myself."

Outside, Newhaven performed its daily competence: buses, shutters, the ordinary bravery of people going to work. Inside the story, a

different economy was running. Director Halpern had already begun to apply pressure in polite forms: a delayed permit, a missing file, a warning dressed as concern. Elena Ruiz recognized the technique. Power rarely shouts at the beginning. It rearranges the furniture until you trip.

They walked the long way to St. Aurelia Hospital, not because it was safer, but because the direct route felt observed. Elena Ruiz catalogued details the way a careful person does when memory may later be disputed: the stain on the brick, the clock that was three minutes fast, the woman who looked at a staff badge with the wrong date and then looked through it. The city was full of people practicing not-seeing. That, too, was a kind of skill.

Rain found the streets and made them honest. Reflections doubled every light. Elena Ruiz walked through Newhaven as if the city were an argument that could still be won by paying attention. St. Aurelia Hospital waited at the end of that argument, neither sanctuary nor trap until someone chose.

At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

Detective Cole Brennan waited by the window. "We can still leave it," Detective Cole Brennan said. "Plenty of people do."

"And then what?" Elena Ruiz asked. "We become one more quiet room in Newhaven?"

Sleep, when it came, did not repair anything. It only paused the inventory. Elena Ruiz dreamed of names written in water and woke with the conviction that forgetting is never neutral. Someone always benefits from the blank space.

Director Halpern entered the scene without needing to hurry. That was the tell. People who are innocent of a system still show surprise. Director Halpern showed management. "You are making this larger than it is," Director Halpern said, as if scale could be negotiated. "There is a responsible way to handle delicate matters."

"There is a responsible way to hide them," Elena Ruiz answered. "I have seen both. They use the same vocabulary."

The writing stays close to the body: the heat in the palms, the taste of metal in the mouth, the way a room changes temperature when a secret is spoken. Dialogue is allowed to be incomplete. People in Newhaven rarely finish the dangerous sentence. They let the listener assemble it, which is how a community shares guilt without ever signing it.

A stranger in a doorway asked for the time, and Elena Ruiz almost answered with the whole story. That is the temptation of isolation: to dump the

truth on the first unguarded face. Instead Elena Ruiz said the hour and kept walking, protecting the investigation and the stranger both. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

The chapter closed on motion, not arrival. Elena Ruiz left St. Aurelia Hospital with a staff badge with the wrong date and a clearer map of the danger. Director Halpern would not forget this hour. Neither would Newhaven. Tomorrow would ask for a more expensive kind of courage, and Night Shift Protocol would have to earn its next page the hard way: one decision that could not be taken back.

By the end of "Names That Do Not Stay Buried", the plot has moved. the secret is spoken out loud is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

After the Last Light



By chapter 9 of Night Shift Protocol, Newhaven had stopped pretending to be ordinary. Elena Ruiz woke the blue hour after sunset with the beat of the day already in motion: the lead pays the cost and keeps the truth. The previous hours had left a residue. a staff badge with the wrong date was no longer a curiosity. It was evidence that the official version of events had been edited.

St. Aurelia Hospital held the kind of quiet that is not peace. A kettle clicked. A floorboard answered a footstep one second too late. Elena Ruiz set a staff badge with the wrong date on the table and refused to look away from it, as if attention itself could keep the truth from slipping. Detective Cole Brennan spoke first, voice low, the way people speak when they have decided not to be overheard.

"If you keep asking," Detective Cole Brennan said, "someone will answer. They will not answer kindly."

"I am not asking for kindness," Elena Ruiz said. "I am asking for the version that does not require me to lie to myself."

Outside, Newhaven performed its daily competence: buses, shutters, the ordinary bravery of people going to work. Inside the story, a

different economy was running. Director Halpern had already begun to apply pressure in polite forms: a delayed permit, a missing file, a warning dressed as concern. Elena Ruiz recognized the technique. Power rarely shouts at the beginning. It rearranges the furniture until you trip.

They walked the long way to St. Aurelia Hospital, not because it was safer, but because the direct route felt observed. Elena Ruiz catalogued details the way a careful person does when memory may later be disputed: the stain on the brick, the clock that was three minutes fast, the woman who looked at a staff badge with the wrong date and then looked through it. The city was full of people practicing not-seeing. That, too, was a kind of skill.

Sleep, when it came, did not repair anything. It only paused the inventory. Elena Ruiz dreamed of names written in water and woke with the conviction that forgetting is never neutral. Someone always benefits from the blank space.

At St. Aurelia Hospital, the confrontation did not arrive as a speech. It arrived as a choice. A drawer that should have been locked was open. A name had been written, then written over. Elena Ruiz understood, with a clarity that hurt, that the night ward is being used to hide a patient who should not exist. Knowing it did not make the next action simple. Knowing it only removed the comfort of ignorance.

Detective Cole Brennan waited by the window. "We can still leave it," Detective Cole Brennan said. "Plenty of people do."

"And then what?" Elena Ruiz asked. "We become one more quiet room in Newhaven?"

A stranger in a doorway asked for the time, and Elena Ruiz almost answered with the whole story. That is the temptation of isolation: to dump the truth on the first unguarded face. Instead Elena Ruiz said the hour and kept walking, protecting the investigation and the stranger both.

Director Halpern entered the scene without needing to hurry. That was the tell. People who are innocent of a system still show surprise. Director Halpern showed management. "You are making this larger than it is," Director Halpern said, as if scale could be negotiated. "There is a responsible way to handle delicate matters."

"There is a responsible way to hide them," Elena Ruiz answered. "I have seen both. They use the same vocabulary."

The writing stays close to the body: the heat in the palms, the taste of metal in the mouth, the way a room changes temperature when a secret is spoken. Dialogue is allowed to be incomplete. People in Newhaven rarely finish the dangerous sentence. They let the listener assemble it, which is how a community shares guilt without ever signing it.

Elena Ruiz remembered a smaller version of this fear from years ago: a classroom, a kitchen, a hallway where an adult had said, "Don't make trouble." The advice had sounded like love. It had functioned like a lock. In Newhaven, the same sentence still traveled well. The chapter uses this pause the way a good novel does: not as filler, but as the place where Elena Ruiz decides what kind of person to be when the next door opens. There are 9 movements in this book, and this is the one that cannot be skipped.

The last movement of the chapter did not erase the cost. Elena Ruiz kept the truth and lost the easier life that had depended on not naming it. Newhaven did not become gentle. St. Aurelia Hospital did not become holy. What changed was narrower and more durable: Elena Ruiz would no longer help the lie travel. Detective Cole Brennan stayed. That, in this book, counts as a kind of ending that can be lived in.

By the end of "After the Last Light", the plot has moved. the lead pays the cost and keeps the truth is no longer a rumor. It is a fact with consequences. Elena Ruiz understands more than at the start of the chapter and is therefore less safe. That is the contract of this book: every gain in knowledge extracts a price, and the reader is asked to stay with Elena Ruiz while the bill comes due.

FINISH

The End



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Emily Rhodes

Emily Rhodes is a thriller writer obsessed with night shifts, missing records, and institutions that look helpful until you need them to tell the truth. Tension is her favorite punctuation.

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