
Day One

The Zero Trilogy

Book #2

A Short Collapse Series Companion Adventure

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Praise for The Collapse Series Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) and Zero Trilogy

“Author Summer Lane of Reedley is giving the word ‘prolific’ a run for its money.”

- The Reedley Exponent

“The [Reedley] resident is a prolific writer.”

- Fresno Bee

“Summer is fantastic with writing action, character interaction, and intensity when it comes to scenes.”

- Ruth Silver, Bestselling Author *Dead Girl Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) Walking*

“If you haven't read any, start with the first and go all the way through to the end. You will not be disappointed.”

- Andrew Carlson, Author of the *Seu Series*

“The author has a real knack for writing dialogue as well as action Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) scenes, and I'd say her newest book is her most polished yet.”

- Ellisa Barr, Bestselling Author of *Outage*

“Great plot, great cast of characters, fast-paced, and full of twists! An awesomesauce read you should get your hands on right now!”

- Juliana Haygert, author of *The Everlast Trilogy*

For anyone who has survived

You are a fighter

CONTENTS

[Prologue](#)

[Part One: The Hunt](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Part Two: The Slavers](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[About Summer Lane](#)

Prologue

Elle slipped through the door of the apartment building. It had been raining for hours. Her backpack had rubbed red, raw marks on her shoulders. She could hear the echoes of the Klan's cries against the buildings, carrying all the way down Santa Monica Boulevard.

She looked at the Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) gun stuffed into her belt.

Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2)

She couldn't believe she'd found it. Hidden in someone's abandoned apartment, in nearly perfect condition. It was a 1911, a Smith and Wesson. Heavy for a girl her size, but better than nothing. It was something Uncle would have liked to shoot. Something classic. Something that packed a punch.

She moved toward the dark staircase in the building. Her backpack clanked. She had filled it with boxes of ammunition. She'd found no food Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) today, but she'd found plenty of ammo.

Elle climbed the staircase, feeling her way down the hall. The Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) building was silent. The quiet was terrifying, stifling. Something in the building creaked. She spun around, taking the gun out of her belt. It was so big—so heavy. But it gave her a sense of security to grip it.

The darkness was comforting, too. In the beginning, when the lights went out and the electricity had died, she was afraid of the dark. Now she embraced it. She could hide in the dark. She could get away from people who wanted to hurt her.

"I know you're in here."

The voice was raspy, broken. Slurred.

Elle felt for the safety on the gun, made sure it was off. She held it in front of her, taking a few steps backward, further down the hall. The stairs groaned under the footsteps of the man coming up the steps.

"Come on, girly. Stop playing games. Let's just get this over with."

Elle's gun was loaded. There were five bullets in the magazine. But it was dark, and she could miss five times. That was the worst-case scenario. And the gunshots would bring more of the Klan. She would be surrounded. Dead.

Her hands shook.

"You're close, I can smell it," he said.

Elle stifled a gasp. He couldn't be more than ten feet away.

"Ah," he said. "There you are."

Boom, boom, boom.

His footsteps were heavy, coming closer. Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) Elle kicked open the apartment door to her right. It swung open, flooding the hallway with gray, rainy light. She saw his face – weathered, grizzled and beaten. His eyes were bloodshot, a crazed smile on his face. Elle pulled the trigger. The gunshot was deafening in the Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) silent confines of the apartment building.

The gun kicked back, jerking Elle's hands into the air, making her stumble. But the shot was straight and true. The man toppled to the ground, collapsing in a misshapen heap on the ground. He didn't scream, didn't moan. He was just quiet.

Elle lowered the gun, standing near the doorway of the open Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) room, trembling like a leaf. Several minutes passed. She crept closer to the man and tapped his shoulder with her shoe. Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) Nothing. She pushed him on his side. The gunshot had hit him right in the forehead. He'd died with his eyes wide open, glassy and bloody. Shocked.

Elle jumped backward, looking at his dead body.

She let out a strangled sob.

She had killed for the first time, and she knew it wouldn't be the last.

Part One: The Hunt

Chapter One

California Interstate 5 and Highway 99 Merge – Tehachapi Mountains

It was cold. Fog hung freezing and heavy in the air, pressing down on Elle's chest. She knelt on the ground and traced her finger along the edge of a tire track. It was Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) clearly imprinted in the mud. She looked around.

Walls of Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) fog were on every side, closing in.

Eating her up.

She kept her eyes on the ground, barely able to follow the tracks without losing all sense of direction. It was eerily Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) silent. There was no noise, no thrum of distant traffic or passenger jets flying overhead.

All was silent.

All was dead.

Elle's shoes were caked Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) in mud. Her lips were cracked. She was running low on water. For three days she had been following the tracks, hoping that they would end at some point. But no. They had veered off the Interstate 5 highway and into the countryside, zigzagging through country roads and back into the dirt again.

Elle stopped. She put her hands on her knees and coughed, licking her lips. She sat on the ground, hanging her head. Her chest heaved and her eyes closed. She loosened the leather strap across her chest, the one holding the sheath that reached across her back. It kept her

katana – her sword – safe and easily accessible.

She was exhausted.

She popped open the water canteen and swallowed the last bit of liquid.

She tucked the canteen back into her jacket and adjusted the straps on her backpack. She had no idea where she was, no idea what time it was. It could be early morning – it could be late afternoon. Halfway delirious, she'd lost track of time.

It wasn't Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) like her to lose track.

But starvation did that to you.

She forced herself forward, following the tracks. She stumbled and fell on Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) her palms, drawing blood. She stayed there on all fours, tears in Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) her eyes.

She was tired. So tired.

Tired of fighting, tired of tracking.

Tired of surviving.

She remained staring at the ground. Everything Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) seemed to melt together. She was tired. Did she have to Day One (The Zero Trilogy Book 2) keep going? She could curl up into a ball and sleep forever, shutting her eyes to the hollow mess this world had become.

No, I have to get up. For Jay, and Georgia...and Flash.

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