

When they open, an instant has passed, but I am somewhere else. I stand in the school cafeteria again, but all the long tables are empty, and I see through the glass walls that it's snowing. On the table in front of me are two baskets. In one is a hunk of cheese, and in the other, a knife the length of my forearm.

Behind me, a woman's voice says, "Choose."

"Why?" I ask.

"Choose," she repeats.

I look over my shoulder, but no one is there. I turn back to the baskets. "What will I do with them?"

"Choose!" she yells.

When she screams at me, my fear disappears and stubbornness replaces it. I scowl and cross my arms.

"Have it your way," she says.

The baskets disappear. I hear a door squeak and turn to see who it is. I see not a "who" but a "what": A dog with a pointed nose stands a few yards away from me. It crouches low and creeps toward me, its lips peeling back from its white teeth. A growl gurgles from deep in its throat, and I see why the cheese would have come in handy. Or the knife. But it's too late now.

I think about running, but the dog will be faster than me. I can't wrestle it to the ground. My head pounds. I have to make a decision. If I can jump over one of the tables and use it as a shield—no, I am too short to jump over the tables, and not strong enough to tip one over.

The dog snarls, and I can almost feel the sound vibrating in my skull.

My biology textbook said that dogs can smell fear because of a chemical secreted by human glands in a state of duress, the same chemical a dog's prey secretes. Smelling fear leads them to attack. The dog inches toward me, its snout scraping the floor.

I can't run. I can't fight. Instead I breathe in the smell of the dog's foul breath and try not to think about what it just ate. There are no whites in its eyes, just a black gleam.

What else do I know about dogs? I shouldn't look it in the eye. That's a sign of aggression. I remember asking my father for a pet dog when I was young, and now, staring at the ground in front of the dog's paws, I can't remember why. It comes closer, still growling. If staring into its eyes is a sign of aggression, what's a sign of submission?

My breaths are loud but steady. I sink to my knees. The last thing I want to do is lie down on the ground in front of the dog—making its teeth level with my face—but it's the best option I have. I stretch my legs out behind me and lean on my elbows. The dog creeps closer, and closer, until I feel its warm breath on my face. My arms are shaking.

It barks in my ear, and I clench my teeth to keep from screaming.

Something rough and wet touches my cheek. The dog's growling stops, and when I lift my head to look at it again, it is panting. It licked my face. I frown and sit on my heels. The dog props its paws up on my knees and licks my chin. I cringe, wiping the drool from my skin, and laugh.

"You're not such a vicious beast, huh?"

I get up slowly so I don't startle it, but it seems like a different animal than the one that faced me a few seconds ago. I stretch out a hand, carefully, so I can draw it back if I need to. The dog nudges my hand with its head. I am suddenly glad I didn't pick up the knife.

I blink, and when my eyes open, a child stands across the room wearing a white dress. She

stretches out both hands and squeals, “Puppy!”

As she runs toward the dog at my side, I open my mouth to warn her, but I am too late. The dog turns. Instead of growling, it barks and snarls and snaps, and its muscles bunch up like coiled wire. About to pounce. I don’t think, I just jump; I hurl my body on top of the dog, wrapping my arms around its thick neck.

My head hits the ground. The dog is gone, and so is the little girl. Instead I am alone—in the testing room, now empty. I turn in a slow circle and can’t see myself in any of the mirrors. I push the door open and walk into the hallway, but it isn’t a hallway; it’s a bus, and all the seats are taken.

I stand in the aisle and hold on to a pole. Sitting near me is a man with a newspaper. I can’t see his face over the top of the paper, but I can see his hands. They are scarred, like he was burned, and they clench around the paper like he wants to crumple it.

“Do you know this guy?” he asks. He taps the picture on the front page of the newspaper. The headline reads: “Brutal Murderer Finally Apprehended!” I stare at the word “murderer.” It has been a long time since I last read that word, but even its shape fills me with dread.

In the picture beneath the headline is a young man with a plain face and a beard. I feel like I do know him, though I don’t remember how. And at the same time, I feel like it would be a bad idea to tell the man that.

“Well?” I hear anger in his voice. “Do you?”

A bad idea—no, a very bad idea. My heart pounds and I clutch the pole to keep my hands from shaking, from giving me away. If I tell him I know the man from the article, something awful will happen to me. But I can convince him that I don’t. I can clear my throat and shrug my shoulders—but that would be a lie.

I clear my throat.

“Do you?” he repeats.

I shrug my shoulders.

“Well?”

A shudder goes through me. My fear is irrational; this is just a test, it isn’t real. “Nope,” I say, my voice casual. “No idea who he is.”

He stands, and finally I see his face. He wears dark sunglasses and his mouth is bent into a snarl. His cheek is rippled with scars, like his hands. He leans close to my face. His breath smells like cigarettes. *Not real*, I remind myself. *Not real*.

“You’re lying,” he says. “You’re *lying*!”

“I am not.”

“I can see it in your eyes.”

I pull myself up straighter. “You can’t.”

“If you know him,” he says in a low voice, “you could save me. You could *save* me!”

I narrow my eyes. “Well,” I say. I set my jaw. “I don’t.”

is religious, but my father says we should try not to see those differences because they will only divide us. I am not sure what to make of that.

“So,” my mother says to my father. “Tell me.”

She takes my father’s hand and moves her thumb in a small circle over his knuckles. I stare at their joined hands. My parents love each other, but they rarely show affection like this in front of us. They taught us that physical contact is powerful, so I have been wary of it since I was young.

“Tell me what’s bothering you,” she adds.

I stare at my plate. My mother’s acute senses sometimes surprise me, but now they chide me. Why was I so focused on myself that I didn’t notice his deep frown and his sagging posture?

“I had a difficult day at work,” he says. “Well, really, it was Marcus who had the difficult day. I shouldn’t lay claim to it.”

Marcus is my father’s coworker; they are both political leaders. The city is ruled by a council of fifty people, composed entirely of representatives from Abnegation, because our faction is regarded as incorruptible, due to our commitment to selflessness. Our leaders are selected by their peers for their impeccable character, moral fortitude, and leadership skills. Representatives from each of the other factions can speak in the meetings on behalf of a particular issue, but ultimately, the decision is the council’s. And while the council technically makes decisions together, Marcus is particularly influential.

It has been this way since the beginning of the great peace, when the factions were formed. I think the system persists because we’re afraid of what might happen if it didn’t: war.

“Is this about that report Jeanine Matthews released?” my mother says. Jeanine Matthews is Erudite’s sole representative, selected based on her IQ score. My father complains about her often.

I look up. “A report?”

Caleb gives me a warning look. We aren’t supposed to speak at the dinner table unless our parents ask us a direct question, and they usually don’t. Our listening ears are a gift to them, my father says. They give us their listening ears after dinner, in the family room.

“Yes,” my father says. His eyes narrow. “Those arrogant, self-righteous—” He stops and clears his throat. “Sorry. But she released a report attacking Marcus’s character.”

I raise my eyebrows.

“What did it say?” I ask.

“Beatrice,” Caleb says quietly.

I duck my head, turning my fork over and over and over until the warmth leaves my cheeks. I don’t like to be chastised. Especially by my brother.

“It said,” my father says, “that Marcus’s violence and cruelty toward his son is the reason his son chose Dauntless instead of Abnegation.”

Few people who are born into Abnegation choose to leave it. When they do, we remember. Two years ago, Marcus’s son, Tobias, left us for the Dauntless, and Marcus was devastated. Tobias was his only child—and his only family, since his wife died giving birth to their second child. The infant died minutes later.

I never met Tobias. He rarely attended community events and never joined his father at our house for dinner. My father often remarked that it was strange, but now it doesn’t matter.

“Cruel? Marcus?” My mother shakes her head. “That poor man. As if he needs to be reminded of

in his palm, and his lip snags on his teeth.

He breathes out. And then in. And then he holds his hand over the Erudite bowl, and his blood drips into the water, turning it a deeper shade of red.

I hear mutters that lift into outraged cries. I can barely think straight. My brother, my selfless brother, a faction transfer? My brother, born for Abnegation, *Erudite*?

When I close my eyes, I see the stack of books on Caleb's desk, and his shaking hands sliding along his legs after the aptitude test. Why didn't I realize that when he told me to think of myself yesterday, he was also giving that advice to himself?

I scan the crowd of the Erudite—they wear smug smiles and nudge each other. The Abnegation, normally so placid, speak to one another in tense whispers and glare across the room at the faction that has become our enemy.

"Excuse me," says Marcus, but the crowd doesn't hear him. He shouts, "Quiet, please!"

The room goes silent. Except for a ringing sound.

I hear my name and a shudder propels me forward. Halfway to the bowls, I am sure that I will choose Abnegation. I can see it now. I watch myself grow into a woman in Abnegation robes, marrying Susan's brother, Robert, volunteering on the weekends, the peace of routine, the quiet nights spent in front of the fireplace, the certainty that I will be safe, and if not good enough, better than I am now.

The ringing, I realize, is in my ears.

I look at Caleb, who now stands behind the Erudite. He stares back at me and nods a little, like he knows what I'm thinking, and agrees. My footsteps falter. If Caleb wasn't fit for Abnegation, how can I be? But what choice do I have, now that he left us and I'm the only one who remains? He left me no other option.

I set my jaw. I will be the child that stays; I have to do this for my parents. I have to.

Marcus offers me my knife. I look into his eyes—they are dark blue, a strange color—and take it. He nods, and I turn toward the bowls. Dauntless fire and Abnegation stones are both on my left, one in front of my shoulder and one behind. I hold the knife in my right hand and touch the blade to my palm. Gritting my teeth, I drag the blade down. It stings, but I barely notice. I hold both hands to my chest, and my next breath shudders on the way out.

I open my eyes and thrust my arm out. My blood drips onto the carpet between the two bowls. Then, with a gasp I can't contain, I shift my hand forward, and my blood sizzles on the coals.

I am selfish. I am brave.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHEN ALL THE initiates stand on solid ground again, Lauren and Four lead us down a narrow tunnel. The walls are made of stone, and the ceiling slopes, so I feel like I am descending deep into the heart of the earth. The tunnel is lit at long intervals, so in the dark space between each dim lamp, I fear that I am lost until a shoulder bumps mine. In the circles of light I am safe again.

The Erudite boy in front of me stops abruptly, and I smack into him, hitting my nose on his shoulder. I stumble back and rub my nose as I recover my senses. The whole crowd has stopped, and our three leaders stand in front of us, arms folded.

“This is where we divide,” Lauren says. “The Dauntless-born initiates are with me. I assume *you* don’t need a tour of the place.”

She smiles and beckons toward the Dauntless-born initiates. They break away from the group and dissolve into the shadows. I watch the last heel pass out of the light and look at those of us who are left. Most of the initiates were from Dauntless, so only nine people remain. Of those, I am the only Abnegation transfer, and there are no Amity transfers. The rest are from Erudite and, surprisingly, Candor. It must require bravery to be honest all the time. I wouldn’t know.

Four addresses us next. “Most of the time I work in the control room, but for the next few weeks, I am your instructor,” he says. “My name is Four.”

Christina asks, “Four? Like the number?”

“Yes,” Four says. “Is there a problem?”

“No.”

“Good. We’re about to go into the Pit, which you will someday learn to love. It—”

Christina snickers. “The Pit? Clever name.”

Four walks up to Christina and leans his face close to hers. His eyes narrow, and for a second he just stares at her.

“What’s your name?” he asks quietly.

“Christina,” she squeaks.

“Well, Christina, if I wanted to put up with Candor smart-mouths, I would have joined their faction,” he hisses. “The first lesson you will learn from me is to keep your mouth shut. Got that?”

She nods.

Four starts toward the shadow at the end of the tunnel. The crowd of initiates moves on in silence.

“What a jerk,” she mumbles.

“I guess he doesn’t like to be laughed at,” I reply.

It would probably be wise to be careful around Four, I realize. He seemed placid to me on the platform, but something about that stillness makes me wary now.

Four pushes a set of double doors open, and we walk into the place he called “the Pit.”

“Oh,” whispers Christina. “I get it.”

“Pit” is the best word for it. It is an underground cavern so huge I can’t see the other end of it from where I stand, at the bottom. Uneven rock walls rise several stories above my head. Built into the

crease between his eyebrows.

“Is that so,” I say without inflection.

“Yeah,” he says. “I think you’re actually defying nature.”

I grit my teeth and turn toward the target, resolving to at least stand still. If I can’t master the first task they give us, how will I ever make it through stage one?

I squeeze the trigger, hard, and this time I’m ready for the recoil. It makes my hands jump back, but my feet stay planted. A bullet hole appears at the edge of the target, and I raise an eyebrow at Will.

“So you see, I’m right. The stats don’t lie,” he says.

I smile a little.

It takes me five rounds to hit the middle of the target, and when I do, a rush of energy goes through me. I am awake, my eyes wide open, my hands warm. I lower the gun. There is power in controlling something that can do so much damage—in controlling something, period.

Maybe I do belong here.

By the time we break for lunch, my arms throb from holding up the gun and my fingers are hard to straighten. I massage them on my way to the dining hall. Christina invites Al to sit with us. Every time I look at him, I hear his sobs again, so I try not to look at him.

I move my peas around with my fork, and my thoughts drift back to the aptitude tests. When Tori warned me that being Divergent was dangerous, I felt like it was branded on my face, and if I so much as turned the wrong way, someone would see it. So far it hasn’t been a problem, but that doesn’t make me feel safe. What if I let my guard down and something terrible happens?

“Oh, come on. You don’t remember me?” Christina asks Al as she makes a sandwich. “We were in Math together just a few *days* ago. And I am *not* a quiet person.”

“I slept through Math most of the time,” Al replies. “It was first hour!”

What if the danger doesn’t come soon—what if it strikes years from now and I never see it coming?

“Tris,” says Christina. She snaps her fingers in front of my face. “You in there?”

“What? What is it?”

“I asked if you remember ever taking a class with me,” she says. “I mean, no offense, but I probably wouldn’t remember if you did. All the Abnegation looked the same to me. I mean, they still do, but now you’re not one of them.”

I stare at her. As if I need her to remind me.

“Sorry, am I being rude?” she asks. “I’m used to just saying whatever is on my mind. Mom used to say that politeness is deception in pretty packaging.”

“I think that’s why our factions don’t usually associate with each other,” I say, with a short laugh. Candor and Abnegation don’t hate each other the way Erudite and Abnegation do, but they avoid each other. Candor’s real problem is with Amity. Those who seek peace above all else, they say, will always deceive to keep the water calm.

“Can I sit here?” says Will, tapping the table with his finger.

“What, you don’t want to hang out with your Erudite buddies?” says Christina.

“They aren’t my buddies,” says Will, setting his plate down. “Just because we were in the same

faction doesn't mean we get along. Plus, Edward and Myra are dating, and I would rather not be the third wheel."

Edward and Myra, the other Erudite transfers, sit two tables away, so close they bump elbows as they cut their food. Myra pauses to kiss Edward. I watch them carefully. I've only seen a few kisses in my life.

Edward turns his head and presses his lips to Myra's. Air hisses between my teeth, and I look away. Part of me waits for them to be scolded. Another part wonders, with a touch of desperation, what it would feel like to have someone's lips against mine.

"Do they have to be so *public*?" I say.

"She just kissed him." Al frowns at me. When he frowns, his thick eyebrows touch his eyelashes. "It's not like they're stripping naked."

"A kiss is not something you do in public."

Al, Will, and Christina all give me the same knowing smile.

"What?" I say.

"Your Abnegation is showing," says Christina. "The rest of us are all right with a little affection in public."

"Oh." I shrug. "Well...I guess I'll have to get over it, then."

"Or you can stay frigid," says Will, his green eyes glinting with mischief. "You know. If you want." Christina throws a roll at him. He catches it and bites it.

"Don't be mean to her," she says. "Frigidity is in her nature. Sort of like being a know-it-all is in yours."

"I am not *frigid*!" I exclaim.

"Don't worry about it," says Will. "It's self-clearing. Look, you're all red."

The comment only makes my face hotter. Everyone else chuckles. I force a laugh and, after a few seconds, it comes naturally.

It feels good to laugh again.

After lunch, Four leads us to a new room. It's huge, with a wood floor that is cracked and creaky and has a large circle painted in the middle. On the left wall is a green board—a chalkboard. My Lower Levels teacher used one, but I haven't seen one since then. Maybe it has something to do with Dauntless priorities: training comes first, technology comes second.

Our names are written on the board in alphabetical order. Hanging at three-foot intervals along one end of the room are faded black punching bags.

We line up behind them and Four stands in the middle, where we can all see him.

"As I said this morning," says Four, "next you will learn how to fight. The purpose of this is to prepare you to act; to prepare your body to respond to threats and challenges—which you will need, if you intend to survive life as a Dauntless."

I can't even think of life as a Dauntless. All I can think about is making it through initiation.

"We will go over technique today, and tomorrow you will start to fight each other," says Four. "So I recommend that you pay attention. Those who don't learn fast will get hurt."

Four names a few different punches, demonstrating each one as he does, first against the air and then against the punching bag.

I catch on as we practice. Like with the gun, I need a few tries to figure out how to hold myself and how to move my body to make it look like his. The kicks are more difficult, though he only teaches us the basics. The punching bag stings my hands and feet, turning my skin red, and barely moves no matter how hard I hit it. All around me is the sound of skin hitting tough fabric.

Four wanders through the crowd of initiates, watching us as we go through the movements again. When he stops in front of me, my insides twist like someone's stirring them with a fork. He stares at me, his eyes following my body from my head to my feet, not lingering anywhere—a practical, scientific gaze.

"You don't have much muscle," he says, "which means you're better off using your knees and elbows. You can put more power behind them."

Suddenly he presses a hand to my stomach. His fingers are so long that, though the heel of his hand touches one side of my rib cage, his fingertips still touch the other side. My heart pounds so hard my chest hurts, and I stare at him, wide-eyed.

"Never forget to keep tension here," he says in a quiet voice.

Four lifts his hand and keeps walking. I feel the pressure of his palm even after he's gone. It's strange, but I have to stop and breathe for a few seconds before I can keep practicing again.

When Four dismisses us for dinner, Christina nudges me with her elbow.

"I'm surprised he didn't break you in half," she says. She wrinkles her nose. "He scares the hell out of me. It's that quiet voice he uses."

"Yeah. He's..." I look over my shoulder at him. He is quiet, and remarkably self-possessed. But I wasn't afraid that he would hurt me. "...definitely intimidating," I finally say.

Al, who was in front of us, turns around once we reach the Pit and announces, "I want to get a tattoo."

From behind us, Will asks, "A tattoo of what?"

"I don't know." Al laughs. "I just want to feel like I've actually left the old faction. Stop crying about it." When we don't respond, he adds, "I know you've heard me."

"Yeah, learn to quiet down, will you?" Christina pokes Al's thick arm. "I think you're right. We're half in, half out right now. If we want all the way in, we should look the part."

She gives me a look.

"No. I will not cut my hair," I say, "or dye it a strange color. Or pierce my face."

"How about your bellybutton?" she says.

"Or your nipple?" Will says with a snort.

I groan.

Now that training is done for the day, we can do whatever we want until it's time to sleep. The idea makes me feel almost giddy, although that might be from fatigue.

The Pit is swarming with people. Christina announces that she and I will meet Al and Will at the tattoo parlor and drags me toward the clothing place. We stumble up the path, climbing higher above the Pit floor, scattering stones with our shoes.

"What is wrong with my clothes?" I say. "I'm not wearing gray anymore."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE NEXT MORNING, I don't hear the alarm, shuffling feet, or conversations as the other initiates get ready. I wake to Christina shaking my shoulder with one hand and tapping my cheek with the other. She already wears a black jacket zipped up to her throat. If she has bruises from yesterday's fight, her dark skin makes them difficult to see.

"Come on," she says. "Up and at 'em."

I dreamt that Peter tied me to a chair and asked me if I was Divergent. I answered no, and he punched me until I said yes. I woke up with wet cheeks.

I mean to say something, but all I can do is groan. My body aches so badly it hurts to breathe. It doesn't help that last night's bout of crying made my eyes swell. Christina offers me her hand.

The clock reads eight. We're supposed to be at the tracks by eight fifteen.

"I'll run and get us some breakfast. You just...get ready. Looks like it might take you a while," she says.

I grunt. Trying not to bend at the waist, I fumble in the drawer under my bed for a clean shirt. Luckily Peter isn't here to see me struggle. Once Christina leaves, the dormitory is empty.

I unbutton my shirt and stare at my bare side, which is patoled with bruises. For a second the colors mesmerize me, bright green and deep blue and brown. I change as fast as I can and let my hair hang loose because I can't lift my arms to tie it back.

I look at my reflection in the small mirror on the back wall and see a stranger. She is blond like me, with a narrow face like mine, but that's where the similarities stop. *I* do not have a black eye, and a split lip, and a bruised jaw. *I* am not as pale as a sheet. She can't possibly be me, though she moves when I move.

By the time Christina comes back, a muffin in each hand, I'm sitting on the edge of my bed, staring at my untied shoes. I will have to bend over to tie them. It will hurt when I bend over.

But Christina just passes me a muffin and crouches in front of me to tie my shoes. Gratitude surges in my chest, warm and a little like an ache. Maybe there is some Abnegation in everyone, even if they don't know it.

Well, in everyone but Peter.

"Thank you," I say.

"Well, we would never get there on time if you had to tie them yourself," she says. "Come on. You can eat and walk at the same time, right?"

We walk fast toward the Pit. The muffin is banana-flavored, with walnuts. My mother baked bread like this once to give to the factionless, but I never got to try it. I was too old for coddling at that point. I ignore the pinch in my stomach that comes every time I think of my mother and half walk, half jog after Christina, who forgets that her legs are longer than mine.

We climb the steps from the Pit to the glass building above it and run to the exit. Every thump of my feet sends pain through my ribs, but I ignore it. We make it to the tracks just as the train arrives, its horn blaring.

“Why do you say that?” I ask, a little too sharply. I don’t want to be associated too closely with the factionless.

“Because you had to pass the factionless sector to get to school, right?”

“What did you do, memorize a map of the city for fun?” says Christina.

“Yes,” says Will, looking puzzled. “Didn’t you?”

The train’s brakes squeal, and we all lurch forward as the car slows. I am grateful for the movement; it makes standing easier. The dilapidated buildings are gone, replaced by yellow fields and train tracks. The train stops under an awning. I lower myself to the grass, holding the handle to keep me steady.

In front of me is a chain-link fence with barbed wire strung along the top. When I walk forward, I notice that it continues farther than I can see, perpendicular to the horizon. Past the fence is a cluster of trees, most of them dead, some green. Milling around on the other side of the fence are Dauntless guards carrying guns.

“Follow me,” says Four. I stay close to Christina. I don’t want to admit it, not even to myself, but I feel calmer when I’m near her. If Peter tries to taunt me, she will defend me.

Silently I scold myself for being such a coward. Peter’s insults shouldn’t bother me, and I should focus on getting better at combat, not on how badly I did yesterday. And I should be willing, if not able, to defend myself instead of relying on other people to do it for me.

Four leads us toward the gate, which is as wide as a house and opens up to the cracked road that leads to the city. When I came here with my family as a child, we rode in a bus on that road and beyond, to Amity’s farms, where we spent the day picking tomatoes and sweating through our shirts.

Another pinch in my stomach.

“If you don’t rank in the top five at the end of initiation, you will probably end up here,” says Four as he reaches the gate. “Once you’re a fence guard, there is some potential for advancement, but not much. You may be able to go on patrols beyond Amity’s farms, but—”

“Patrols for what purpose?” asks Will.

Four lifts a shoulder. “I suppose you’ll discover that if you find yourself among them. As I was saying. For the most part, those who guard the fence when they are young continue to guard the fence. If it comforts you, some of them insist that it isn’t as bad as it seems.”

“Yeah. At least we won’t be driving buses or cleaning up other people’s messes like the factionless,” Christina whispers in my ear.

“What rank were you?” Peter asks Four.

I don’t expect Four to answer, but he looks levelly at Peter and says, “I was first.”

“And you chose to do *this*?” Peter’s eyes are wide and round and dark green. They would look innocent to me if I didn’t know what a terrible person he is. “Why didn’t you get a government job?”

“I didn’t want one,” Four says flatly. I remember what he said on the first day, about working in the control room, where the Dauntless monitor the city’s security. It is difficult for me to imagine him there, surrounded by computers. To me he belongs in the training room.

We learned about faction jobs in school. The Dauntless have limited options. We can guard the fence or work for the security of our city. We can work in the Dauntless compound, drawing tattoos or making weapons or even fighting each other for entertainment. Or we can work for the Dauntless leaders. That sounds like my best option.

“Why should I, when I have you to remind me of it?” says Eric, shoving Four’s shoulder.

A circle of light appears on my left, far away. It grows larger as it comes closer, shining against the side of Four’s face, creating a shadow in the faint hollow beneath his cheekbone.

He is the first to get on the train, and I run after him, not waiting for Christina or Will or Al to follow me. Four turns around as I fall into stride next to the car and holds out a hand. I grab his arm, and he pulls me in. Even the muscles in his forearm are taut, defined.

I let go quickly, without looking at him, and sit down on the other side of the car.

Once everyone is in, Four speaks up.

“We’ll be dividing into two teams to play capture the flag. Each team will have an even mix of members, Dauntless-born initiates, and transfers. One team will get off first and find a place to hide their flag. Then the second team will get off and do the same.” The car sways, and Four grabs the side of the doorway for balance. “This is a Dauntless tradition, so I suggest you take it seriously.”

“What do we get if we win?” someone shouts.

“Sounds like the kind of question someone not from Dauntless would ask,” says Four, raising an eyebrow. “You get to win, of course.”

“Four and I will be your team captains,” says Eric. He looks at Four. “Let’s divide up transfers first, shall we?”

I tilt my head back. If they’re picking us, I will be chosen last; I can feel it.

“You go first,” Four says.

Eric shrugs. “Edward.”

Four leans against the door frame and nods. The moonlight makes his eyes bright. He scans the group of transfer initiates briefly, without calculation, and says, “I want the Stiff.”

A faint undercurrent of laughter fills the car. Heat rushes into my cheeks. I don’t know whether to be angry at the people laughing at me or flattered by the fact that he chose me first.

“Got something to prove?” asks Eric, with his trademark smirk. “Or are you just picking the weak ones so that if you lose, you’ll have someone to blame it on?”

Four shrugs. “Something like that.”

Angry. I should definitely be angry. I scowl at my hands. Whatever Four’s strategy is, it’s based on the idea that I am weaker than the other initiates. And it gives me a bitter taste in my mouth. I have to prove him wrong—I *have* to.

“Your turn,” says Four.

“Peter.”

“Christina.”

That throws a wrench in his strategy. Christina is not one of the weak ones. What exactly is he doing?

“Molly.”

“Will,” says Four, biting his thumbnail.

“Al.”

“Drew.”

“Last one left is Myra. So she’s with me,” says Eric. “Dauntless-born initiates next.”

I stop listening once they’re finished with us. If Four isn’t trying to prove something by choosing

“What?” he says quietly.

“Nothing.”

I look away from him and toward the city. I have to focus. I climbed up here for a reason.

The city is pitch-black, but even if it wasn't, I wouldn't be able to see very far. A building stands in my way.

“We're not high enough,” I say. I look up. Above me is a tangle of white bars, the wheel's scaffolding. If I climb carefully, I can wedge my feet between the supports and the crossbars and stay secure. Or as secure as possible.

“I'm going to climb,” I say, standing up. I grab one of the bars above my head and pull myself up. Shooting pains go through my bruised sides, but I ignore them.

“For God's sake, Stiff,” he says.

“You don't have to follow me,” I say, staring at the maze of bars above me. I shove my foot onto the place where two bars cross and push myself up, grabbing another bar in the process. I sway for a second, my heart beating so hard I can't feel anything else. Every thought I have condenses into that heartbeat, moving at the same rhythm.

“Yes, I do,” he says.

This is crazy, and I know it. A fraction of an inch of mistake, half a second of hesitation, and my life is over. Heat tears through my chest, and I smile as I grab the next bar. I pull myself up, my arms shaking, and force my leg under me so I'm standing on another bar. When I feel steady, I look down at Four. But instead of seeing him, I see straight to the ground.

I can't breathe.

I imagine my body plummeting, snacking into the bars as it falls down, and my limbs at broken angles on the pavement, just like Rita's sister when she didn't make it onto the roof. Four grabs a bar with each hand and pulls himself up, easy, like he's sitting up in bed. But he is not comfortable or natural here—every muscle in his arm stands out. It is a stupid thing for me to think when I am one hundred feet off the ground.

I grab another bar, find another place to wedge my foot. When I look at the city again, the building isn't in my way. I'm high enough to see the skyline. Most of the buildings are black against a navy sky, but the red lights at the top of the Hub are lit up. They blink half as fast as my heartbeat.

Beneath the buildings, the streets look like tunnels. For a few seconds I see only a dark blanket over the land in front of me, just faint differences between building and sky and street and ground. Then I see a tiny pulsing light on the ground.

“See that?” I say, pointing.

Four stops climbing when he's right behind me and looks over my shoulder, his chin next to my head. His breaths flutter against my ear, and I feel shaky again, like I did when I was climbing the ladder.

“Yeah,” he says. A smile spreads over his face.

“It's coming from the park at the end of the pier,” he says. “Figures. It's surrounded by open space, but the trees provide some camouflage. Obviously not enough.”

“Okay,” I say. I look over my shoulder at him. We are so close I forget where I am; instead I notice that the corners of his mouth turn down naturally, just like mine, and that he has a scar on his chin.

“Um,” I say. I clear my throat. “Start climbing down. I’ll follow you.”

Four nods and steps down. His leg is so long that he finds a place for his foot easily and guides his body between the bars. Even in darkness, I see that his hands are bright red and shaking.

I step down with one foot, pressing my weight into one of the crossbars. The bar creaks beneath me and comes loose, clattering against half a dozen bars on the way down and bouncing on the pavement. I’m dangling from the scaffolding with my toes swinging in midair. A strangled gasp escapes me.

“Four!”

I try to find another place to put my foot, but the nearest foothold is a few feet away, farther than I can stretch. My hands are sweaty. I remember wiping them on my slacks before the Choosing Ceremony, before the aptitude test, before every important moment, and suppress a scream. I will slip. I will slip.

“Hold on!” he shouts. “Just hold on, I have an idea.”

He keeps climbing down. He’s moving in the wrong direction; he should be coming toward me, not going away from me. I stare at my hands, which are wrapped around the narrow bar so tightly my knuckles are white. My fingers are dark red, almost purple. They won’t last long.

I won’t last long.

I squeeze my eyes shut. Better not to look. Better to pretend that none of this exists. I hear Four’s sneakers squeak against metal and rapid footsteps on ladder rungs.

“Four!” I yell. Maybe he left. Maybe he abandoned me. Maybe this is a test of my strength, of my bravery. I breathe in my nose and out my mouth. I count my breaths to calm down. One, two. In, out. *Come on, Four* is all I can think. *Come on, do something.*

Then I hear something wheeze and creak. The bar I’m holding shudders, and I scream through my clenched teeth as I fight to keep my grip.

The wheel is moving.

Air wraps around my ankles and wrists as the wind gushes up, like a geyser. I open my eyes. I’m moving—toward the ground. I laugh, giddy with hysteria as the ground comes closer and closer. But I’m picking up speed. If I don’t drop at the right time, the moving cars and metal scaffolding will drag at my body and carry me with them, and then I will really die.

Every muscle in my body tenses as I hurtle toward the ground. When I can see the cracks in the sidewalk, I drop, and my body slams into the ground, feet first. My legs collapse beneath me and I pull my arms in, rolling as fast as I can to the side. The cement scrapes my face, and I turn just in time to see a car bearing down on me, like a giant shoe about to crush me. I roll again, and the bottom of the car skims my shoulder.

I’m safe.

I press my palms to my face. I don’t try to get up. If I did, I’m sure I would just fall back down. I hear footsteps, and Four’s hands wrap around my wrists. I let him pry my hands from my eyes.

He encloses one of my hands perfectly between two of his. The warmth of his skin overwhelms the ache in my fingers from holding the bars.

“You all right?” he asks, pressing our hands together.

“Yeah.”

He starts to laugh.

one of us will get to touch the flag, and it won't matter that it was my plan and my information that got us to it if I'm not the one who grabs it. Though I can hardly breathe as it is, I run faster, and I'm on Christina's heels. I pull my gun around my body, holding my finger over the trigger.

We reach the end of the pier, and I clamp my mouth shut to keep my loud breaths in. We slow down so our footsteps aren't as loud, and I look for the blinking light again. Now that I'm on the ground, it's bigger and easier to see. I point, and Christina nods, leading the way toward it.

Then I hear a chorus of yells, so loud they make me jump. I hear puffs of air as paintballs go flying and splats as they find their targets. Our team has charged, the other team runs to meet us, and the flag is almost unguarded. Uriah takes aim and shoots the last guard in the thigh. The guard, a short girl with purple hair, throws her gun to the ground in a tantrum.

I sprint to catch up to Christina. The flag hangs from a tree branch, high above my head. I reach for it, and so does Christina.

"Come on, Tris," she says. "You're already the hero of the day. And you know you can't reach it anyway."

She gives me a patronizing look, the way people sometimes look at children when they act too adult, and snatches the flag from the branch. Without looking at me, she turns and gives a whoop of victory. Uriah's voice joins hers and then I hear a chorus of yells in the distance.

Uriah claps my shoulder, and I try to forget about the look Christina gave me. Maybe she's right; I've already proved myself today. I do not want to be greedy; I do not want to be like Eric, terrified of other people's strength.

The shouts of triumph become infectious, and I lift my voice to join in, running toward my teammates. Christina holds the flag too high, and everyone clusters around her, grabbing her arm to lift the flag even higher. I can't reach her, so I stand off to the side, grinning.

A hand touches my shoulder.

"Well done," Four says quietly.

"I can't believe I missed it!" Will says again, shaking his head. Wind coming through the doorway of the train car blows his hair in every direction.

"You were performing the very important job of staying out of our way," says Christina, beaming.

Al groans. "Why did I have to be on the other team?"

"Because life's not fair, Albert. And the world is conspiring against you," says Will. "Hey, can I see the flag again?"

Peter, Molly, and Drew sit across from the members in the corner. Their chests and backs are splattered with blue and pink paint, and they look dejected. They speak quietly, sneaking looks at the rest of us, especially Christina. That is the benefit of not holding the flag right now—I am no one's target. Or at least, no more than usual.

"So you climbed the Ferris wheel, huh," says Uriah. He stumbles across the car and sits next to me. Marlene, the girl with the flirty smile, follows him.

"Yes," I say.

"Pretty smart of you. Like...Erudite smart," Marlene says. "I'm Marlene."

hide it. I sprint down the hallway and into the bathroom and lean against the door, breathing hard. I close my eyes.

It doesn't matter. I don't care.

A sob bursts from my mouth, and I slap my hand over my lips to contain it. It doesn't matter what they saw. I shake my head like the motion is supposed to make it true.

With shaking hands, I get dressed. The dress is plain black, with a V-neck that shows the tattoos on my collarbone, and goes down to my knees.

Once I'm dressed and the urge to cry is gone, I feel something hot and violent writhing in my stomach. I want to hurt them.

I stare at my eyes in the mirror. I want to, so I will.

I can't fight in a dress, so I get myself some new clothes from the Pit before I walk to the training room for my last fight. I hope it's with Peter.

"Hey, where were you this morning?" Christina asks when I walk in. I squint to see the blackboard across the room. The space next to my name is blank—I haven't gotten an opponent yet.

"I got held up," I say.

Four stands in front of the board and writes a name next to mine. *Please let it be Peter, please, please....*

"You okay, Tris? You look a little...," says Al.

"A little what?"

Four moves away from the board. The name written next to mine is Molly. Not Peter, but good enough.

"On edge," says Al.

My fight is last on the list, which means I have to wait through three matches before I face her. Edward and Peter fight second to last—good. Edward is the only one who can beat Peter. Christina will fight Al, which means that Al will lose quickly, like he's been doing all week.

"Go easy on me, okay?" Al asks Christina.

"I make no promises," she replies.

The first pair—Will and Myra—stand across from each other in the arena. For a second they both shuffle back and forth, one jerking an arm forward and then retracting it, the other kicking and missing. Across the room, Four leans against the wall and yawns.

I stare at the board and try to predict the outcome of each match. It doesn't take long. Then I bite my fingernails and think about Molly. Christina lost to her, which means she's good. She has a powerful punch, but she doesn't move her feet. If she can't hit me, she can't hurt me.

As expected, the next fight between Christina and Al is quick and painless. Al falls after a few hard hits to the face and doesn't get back up, which makes Eric shake his head.

Edward and Peter take longer. Though they are the two best fighters, the disparity between them is noticeable. Edward's fist slams into Peter's jaw, and I remember what Will said about him—that he has been studying combat since he was ten. It's obvious. He is faster and smarter than even Peter.

By the time the three matches are done, my nails are bitten to the beds and I'm hungry for lunch. I

walk to the arena without looking at anyone or anything but the center of the room. Some of my anger has faded, but it isn't hard to call back. All I have to do is think about how cold the air was and how loud the laughter was. *Look at her. She's a child.*

Molly stands across from me.

"Was that a birthmark I saw on your left butt cheek?" she says, smirking. "God, you're pale, Stiff." She'll make the first move. She always does.

Molly starts toward me and throws her weight into a punch. As her body shifts forward, I duck and drive my fist into her stomach, right over her bellybutton. Before she can get her hands on me, I slip past her, my hands up, ready for her next attempt.

She's not smirking anymore. She runs at me like she's about to tackle me, and I dart out of the way. I hear Four's voice in my head, telling me that the most powerful weapon at my disposal is my elbow. I just have to find a way to use it.

I block her next punch with my forearm. The blow stings, but I barely notice it. She grits her teeth and lets out a frustrated groan, more animal-sounding than human. She tries a sloppy kick at my side, which I dodge, and while her balance is off, I rush forward and force my elbow up at her face. She pulls her head back just in time, and my elbow grazes her chin.

She punches me in the ribs and I stumble to the side, recovering my breath. There's something she's not protecting, I know it. I want to hit her face, but maybe that's not a smart move. I watch her for a few seconds. Her hands are too high; they guard her nose and cheeks, leaving her stomach and ribs exposed. Molly and I have the same flaw in combat.

Our eyes meet for just a second.

I aim an uppercut low, below her bellybutton. My fist sinks into her flesh, forcing a heavy breath from her mouth that I feel against my ear. As she gasps, I sweep-kick her legs out from under her, and she falls hard on the ground, sending dust into the air. I pull my foot back and kick as hard as I can at her ribs.

My mother and father would not approve of my kicking someone when she's down.

I don't care.

She curls into a ball to protect her side, and I kick again, this time hitting her in the stomach. *Like a child.* I kick again, this time hitting her in the face. Blood springs from her nose and spreads over her face. *Look at her.* Another kick hits her in the chest.

I pull my foot back again, but Four's hands clamp around my arms, and he pulls me away from her with irresistible force. I breathe through gritted teeth, staring at Molly's blood-covered face, the color deep and rich and beautiful, in a way.

She groans, and I hear a gurgling in her throat, watch blood trickle from her lips.

"You won," Four mutters. "Stop."

I wipe the sweat from my forehead. He stares at me. His eyes are too wide; they look alarmed.

"I think you should leave," he says. "Take a walk."

"I'm fine," I say. "I'm fine now," I say again, this time for myself.

I wish I could say I felt guilty for what I did.

I don't.

the room is uneasy, like it is rocking back and forth on a ledge.

Then it falls.

“What?” demands Molly. She points at Christina. “I beat her! I beat her in *minutes*, and she’s ranked *above* me?”

“Yeah,” says Christina, crossing her arms. She wears a smug smile. “And?”

“If you intend to secure yourself a high rank, I suggest you don’t make a habit of losing to low-ranked opponents,” says Four, his voice cutting through the mutters and grumbles of the other initiates. He pockets the chalk and walks past me without glancing in my direction. The words sting a little, reminding me that I am the low-ranked opponent he’s referring to.

Apparently they remind Molly, too.

“You,” she says, focusing her narrowed eyes on me. “*You* are going to pay for this.”

I expect her to lunge at me, or hit me, but she just turns on her heel and stalks out of the dormitory, and that is worse. If she had exploded, her anger would have been spent quickly, after a punch or two. Leaving means she wants to plan something. Leaving means I have to be on my guard.

Peter didn’t say anything when the rankings went up, which, given his tendency to complain about anything that doesn’t go his way, is surprising. He just walks to his bunk and sits down, untying his shoelaces. That makes me feel even more uneasy. He can’t possibly be satisfied with second place. Not Peter.

Will and Christina slap hands, and then Will claps me on the back with a hand bigger than my shoulder blade.

“Look at you. Number six,” he says, grinning.

“Still might not have been good enough,” I remind him.

“It will be, don’t worry,” he says. “We should celebrate.”

“Well, let’s go, then,” says Christina, grabbing my arm with one hand and Al’s arm with the other. “Come on, Al. You don’t know how the Dauntless-borns did. You don’t know anything for sure.”

“I’m just going to go to bed,” he mumbles, pulling his arm free.

In the hallway, it is easy to forget about Al and Molly’s revenge and Peter’s suspicious calm, and easy to pretend that what separates us as friends does not exist. But lingering at the back of my mind is the fact that Christina and Will are my competitors. If I want to fight my way to the top ten, I will have to beat them first.

I just hope I don’t have to betray them in the process.

That night I have trouble falling asleep. The dormitory used to seem loud to me, with all the breathing, but now it is too quiet. When it’s quiet, I think about my family. Thank God the Dauntless compound is usually loud.

If my mother was Dauntless, why did she choose Abnegation? Did she love its peace, its routine, its goodness—all the things I miss, when I let myself think about it?

I wonder if someone here knew her when she was young and could tell me what she was like then. Even if they did, they probably wouldn’t want to discuss her. Faction transfers are not really supposed to discuss their old factions once they become members. It’s supposed to make it easier for

And Peter.

After they take Edward away, I carry a change of clothes into the bathroom and wash my hands. Christina comes with me and stands by the door, but she doesn't say anything, and I'm glad. There isn't much to say.

I scrub at the lines in my palms and run one fingernail under my other fingernails to get the blood out. I change into the pants I brought and throw the soiled ones in the trash. I get as many paper towels as I can hold. Someone needs to clean up the mess in the dormitory, and since I doubt I'll ever be able to sleep again, it might as well be me.

As I reach for the door handle, Christina says, "You know who did that, right?"

"Yeah."

"Should we tell someone?"

"You really think the Dauntless will do anything?" I say. "After they hung you over the chasm? After they made us beat each other unconscious?"

She doesn't say anything.

For a half hour after that, I kneel alone on the floor in the dormitory and scrub at Edward's blood. Christina throws away the dirty paper towels and gets me new ones. Myra is gone; she probably followed Edward to the hospital.

No one sleeps much that night.

"This is going to sound weird," Will says, "but I wish we didn't have a day off today."

I nod. I know what he means. Having something to do would distract me, and I could use a distraction right now.

I have not spent much time alone with Will, but Christina and Al are taking naps in the dormitory, and neither of us wanted to be in that room longer than we had to. Will didn't tell me that; I just know.

I slide one fingernail under another. I washed my hands thoroughly after cleaning up Edward's blood, but I still feel like it's on my hands. Will and I walk with no sense of purpose. There is nowhere to go.

"We could visit him," suggests Will. "But what would we say? 'I didn't know you that well, but I'm sorry you got stabbed in the eye'?"

It isn't funny. I know that as soon as he says it, but a laugh rises in my throat anyway, and I let it out because it's harder to keep it in. Will stares at me for a second, and then he laughs too. Sometimes crying or laughing are the only options left, and laughing feels better right now.

"Sorry," I say. "It's just so ridiculous."

I don't want to cry for Edward—at least not in the deep, personal way that you cry for a friend or loved one. I want to cry because something terrible happened, and I saw it, and I could not see a way to mend it. No one who would want to punish Peter has the authority to, and no one who has the authority to punish him would want to. The Dauntless have rules against attacking someone like that, but with people like Eric in charge, I suspect those rules go unenforced.

members follow him, and we follow them. I stay close behind Uriah as I pass into darkness and my toe hits a step. I catch myself before falling forward and start to climb.

“Back staircase,” Uriah says, almost mumbling. “Usually locked.”

I nod, though he can't see me, and climb until all the steps are gone. By then, a door at the top of the staircase is open, letting in daylight. We emerge from the ground a few hundred yards from the glass building above the Pit, close to the train tracks.

I feel like I have done this a thousand times before. I hear the train horn. I feel the vibrations in the ground. I see the light attached to the head car. I crack my knuckles and bounce once on my toes.

We jog in a single pack next to the car, and in waves, members and initiates alike pile into the car. Uriah gets in before me, and people press behind me. I can't make any mistakes; I throw myself sideways, grabbing the handle on the side of the car, and hoist myself into the car. Uriah grabs my arm to steady me.

The train picks up its speed. Uriah and I sit against one of the walls.

I shout over the wind, “Where are we going?”

Uriah shrugs. “Zeke never told me.”

“Zeke?”

“My older brother,” he says. He points across the room at a boy sitting in the doorway with his legs dangling out of the car. He is slight and short and looks nothing like Uriah, apart from his coloring.

“You don't get to know. That ruins the surprise!” the girl on my left shouts. She extends her hand. “I'm Shauna.”

I shake her hand, but I don't grip hard enough and I let go too quickly. I doubt I will ever improve my handshake. It feels unnatural to grasp hands with strangers.

“I'm—” I start to say.

“I know who you are,” she says. “You're the Stiff. Four told me about you.”

I pray the heat in my cheeks is not visible. “Oh? What did he say?”

She smirks at me. “He said you were a Stiff. Why do you ask?”

“If my instructor is talking about me,” I say, as firmly as I can, “I want to know what he's saying.” I hope I tell a convincing lie. “He isn't coming, is he?”

“No. He never comes to this,” she says. “It's probably lost its appeal. Not much scares him, you know.”

He isn't coming. Something in me deflates like an untied balloon. I ignore it and nod. I do know that Four is not a coward. But I also know that at least one thing does scare him: heights. Whatever we're doing, it must involve being high up for him to avoid it. She must not know that if she speaks of him with such reverence in her voice.

“Do you know him well?” I ask. I am too curious; I always have been.

“Everyone knows Four,” she says. “We were initiates together. I was bad at fighting, so he taught me every night after everyone was asleep.” She scratches the back of her neck, her expression suddenly serious. “Nice of him.”

She gets up and stands behind the members sitting in the doorway. In a second, her serious expression is gone, but I still feel rattled by what she said, half confused by the idea of Four being

and steel. Tendrils of wind, soft as hair, wrap around my fingers and push my arms back. I try to pull my arms to my chest again, but I am not strong enough. The ground grows bigger and bigger.

I don't slow down for another minute at least but sail parallel to the ground, like a bird.

When I slow down, I run my fingers over my hair. The wind teased it into knots. I hang about twenty feet above the ground, but that height seems like nothing now. I reach behind me and work to undo the straps holding me in. My fingers shake, but I still manage to loosen them. A crowd of members stands below. They grasp one another's arms, forming a net of limbs beneath me.

In order to get down, I have to trust them to catch me. I have to accept that these people are mine, and I am theirs. It is a braver act than sliding down the zip line.

I wriggle forward and fall. I hit their arms hard. Wrist bones and forearms press into my back, and then palms wrap around my arms and pull me to my feet. I don't know which hands hold me and which hands don't; I see grins and hear laughter.

"What'd you think?" Shauna says, clapping me on the shoulder.

"Um..." All the members stare at me. They look as windblown as I feel, the frenzy of adrenaline in their eyes and their hair askew. I know why my father said the Dauntless were a pack of madmen. He didn't—couldn't—understand the kind of camaraderie that forms only after you've all risked your lives together.

"When can I go again?" I say. My smile stretches wide enough to show teeth, and when they laugh, I laugh. I think of climbing the stairs with the Abnegation, our feet finding the same rhythm, all of us the same. This isn't like that. We are not the same. But we are, somehow, one.

I look toward the Hancock building, which is so far from where I stand that I can't see the people on its roof.

"Look! There he is!" someone says, pointing over my shoulder. I follow the pointed finger toward a small dark shape sliding down the steel wire. A few seconds later I hear a bloodcurdling scream.

"I bet he'll cry."

"Zeke's brother, cry? No way. He would get punched so hard."

"His arms are flailing!"

"He sounds like a strangled cat," I say. Everyone laughs again. I feel a twinge of guilt for teasing Uriah when he can't hear me, but I would have said the same thing if he were standing here. I hope.

When Uriah finally comes to a stop, I follow the members to meet him. We line up beneath him and thrust our arms into the space between us. Shauna clamps a hand around my elbow. I grab another arm—I'm not sure who it belongs to, there are too many tangled hands—and look up at her.

"Pretty sure we can't call you 'Stiff' anymore," Shauna says. She nods. "Tris."

I still smell like wind when I walk into the cafeteria that evening. For the second after I walk in, I stand among a crowd of Dauntless, and I feel like one of them. Then Shauna waves to me and the crowd breaks apart, and I walk toward the table where Christina, Al, and Will sit, gaping at me.

I didn't think about them when I accepted Uriah's invitation. In a way, it is satisfying to see stunned looks on their faces. But I don't want them to be upset with me either.

"Where were you?" asks Christina. "What were you doing with them?"

desk in the corner.

“Sit,” Four says. He squeezes my arms and pushes me forward.

“What’s the simulation?” I say, trying to keep my voice from shaking. I don’t succeed.

“Ever hear the phrase ‘face your fears’?” he says. “We’re taking that literally. The simulation will teach you to control your emotions in the midst of a frightening situation.”

I touch a wavering hand to my forehead. Simulations aren’t real; they pose no real threat to me, so logically, I shouldn’t be afraid of them, but my reaction is visceral. It takes all the willpower I have for me to steer myself toward the chair and sit down in it again, pressing my skull into the headrest. The cold from the metal seeps through my clothes.

“Do you ever administer the aptitude tests?” I say. He seems qualified.

“No,” he replies. “I avoid Stiffs as much as possible.”

I don’t know why someone would avoid the Abnegation. The Dauntless or the Candor, maybe, because bravery and honesty make people do strange things, but the Abnegation?

“Why?”

“Do you ask me that because you think I’ll actually answer?”

“Why do you say vague things if you don’t want to be asked about them?”

His fingers brush my neck. My body tenses. A tender gesture? No—he has to move my hair to the side. He taps something, and I tilt my head back to see what it is. Four holds a syringe with a long needle in one hand, his thumb against the plunger. The liquid in the syringe is tinted orange.

“An injection?” My mouth goes dry. I don’t usually mind needles, but this one is huge.

“We use a more advanced version of the simulation here,” he says, “a different serum, no wires or electrodes for you.”

“How does it work without wires?”

“Well, *I* have wires, so I can see what’s going on,” he says. “But for you, there’s a tiny transmitter in the serum that sends data to the computer.”

He turns my arm over and eases the tip of the needle into the tender skin on the side of my neck. A deep ache spreads through my throat. I wince and try to focus on his calm face.

“The serum will go into effect in sixty seconds. This simulation is different from the aptitude test,” he says. “In addition to containing the transmitter, the serum stimulates the amygdala, which is the part of the brain involved in processing negative emotions—like fear—and then induces a hallucination. The brain’s electrical activity is then transmitted to our computer, which then translates your hallucination into a simulated image that I can see and monitor. I will then forward the recording to Dauntless administrators. You stay in the hallucination until you calm down—that is, lower your heart rate and control your breathing.”

I try to follow his words, but my thoughts are going haywire. I feel the trademark symptoms of fear: sweaty palms, racing heart, tightness in my chest, dry mouth, a lump in my throat, difficulty breathing. He plants his hands on either side of my head and leans over me.

“Be brave, Tris,” he whispers. “The first time is always the hardest.”

His eyes are the last thing I see.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

I OPEN MY eyes to the words “Fear God Alone” painted on a plain white wall. I hear the sound of running water again, but this time it’s from a faucet and not from the chasm. Seconds go by before I see definite edges in my surroundings, the lines of door frame and countertop and ceiling.

The pain is a constant throb in my head and cheek and ribs. I shouldn’t move; it will make everything worse. I see a blue patchwork quilt under my head and wince as I tilt my head to see where the water sound is coming from.

Four stands in the bathroom with his hands in the sink. Blood from his knuckles turns the sink water pink. He has a cut at the corner of his mouth, but he seems otherwise unharmed. His expression is placid as he examines his cuts, turns off the water, and dries his hands with a towel.

I have only one memory of getting here, and even that is just a single image: black ink curling around the side of a neck, the corner of a tattoo, and the gentle sway that could only mean he was carrying me.

He turns off the bathroom light and gets an ice pack from the refrigerator in the corner of the room. As he walks toward me, I consider closing my eyes and pretending to be asleep, but then our eyes meet and it’s too late.

“Your hands,” I croak.

“My hands are none of your concern,” he replies. He rests his knee on the mattress and leans over me, slipping the ice pack under my head. Before he pulls it away, I reach out to touch the cut on the side of his lip but stop when I realize what I am about to do, my hand hovering.

What do you have to lose? I ask myself. I touch my fingertips lightly to his mouth.

“Tris,” he says, speaking against my fingers, “I’m all right.”

“Why were you there?” I ask, letting my hand drop.

“I was coming back from the control room. I heard a scream.”

“What did you do to them?” I say.

“I deposited Drew at the infirmary a half hour ago,” he says. “Peter and Al ran. Drew claimed they were just trying to scare you. At least, I think that’s what he was trying to say.”

“He’s in bad shape?”

“He’ll live,” he replies. He adds bitterly, “In what condition, I can’t say.”

It isn’t right to wish pain on other people just because they hurt me first. But white-hot triumph races through me at the thought of Drew in the infirmary, and I squeeze Four’s arm.

“Good,” I say. My voice sounds tight and fierce. Anger builds inside me, replacing my blood with bitter water and filling me, consuming me. I want to break something, or hit something, but I am afraid to move, so I start crying instead.

Four crouches by the side of the bed, and watches me. I see no sympathy in his eyes. I would have been disappointed if I had. He pulls his wrist free and, to my surprise, rests his hand on the side of my face, his thumb skimming my cheekbone. His fingers are careful.

“I could report this,” he says.

was to remind me that if I gave up, Al would have to take my place in front of the target.

“Why?” I say.

“Because you’re from Abnegation,” he says, “and it’s when you’re acting selflessly that you are at your bravest.”

I understand now. He wasn’t persuading me to give up. He was reminding me why I couldn’t—because I needed to protect Al. The thought makes me ache now. Protect Al. My friend. My attacker.

I can’t hate Al as much as I want to.

I can’t forgive him either.

“If I were you, I would do a better job of pretending that selfless impulse is going away,” he says, “because if the wrong people discover it...well, it won’t be good for you.”

“Why? Why do they care about my intentions?”

“Intentions are the *only* thing they care about. They try to make you think they care about what you do, but they don’t. They don’t want you to act a certain way. They want you to *think* a certain way. So you’re easy to understand. So you won’t pose a threat to them.” He presses a hand to the wall next to my head and leans into it. His shirt is just tight enough that I can see his collarbone and the faint depression between his shoulder muscle and his bicep.

I wish I was taller. If I was tall, my narrow build would be described as “willowy” instead of “childish,” and he might not see me as a little sister he needs to protect.

I don’t want him to see me as his sister.

“I don’t understand,” I say, “why they care what I think, as long as I’m acting how they want me to.”

“You’re acting how they want you to now,” he says, “but what happens when your Abnegation-wired brain tells you to do something else, something they don’t want?”

I don’t have an answer to that, and I don’t even know if he’s right about me. Am I wired like the Abnegation, or the Dauntless?

Maybe the answer is neither. Maybe I am wired like the Divergent.

“I might not need you to help me. Ever think about that?” I say. “I’m not weak, you know. I can do this on my own.”

He shakes his head. “You think my first instinct is to protect you. Because you’re small, or a girl, or a Stiff. But you’re wrong.”

He leans his face close to mine and wraps his fingers around my chin. His hand smells like metal. When was the last time he held a gun, or a knife? My skin tingles at the point of contact, like he’s transmitting electricity through his skin.

“My *first* instinct is to push you until you break, just to see how hard I have to press,” he says, his fingers squeezing at the word “break.” My body tenses at the edge in his voice, so I am coiled as tight as a spring, and I forget to breathe.

His dark eyes lifting to mine, he adds, “But I resist it.”

“Why...” I swallow hard. “Why is that your first instinct?”

“Fear doesn’t shut you down; it wakes you up. I’ve seen it. It’s fascinating.” He releases me but doesn’t pull away, his hand grazing my jaw, my neck. “Sometimes I just...want to see it again. Want to see you awake.”

“All that stuff she said about your dad, though,” he says, “makes me kind of hate her. I can’t imagine what good can come of saying such terrible things.”

I can. If Jeanine can make people believe that my father and all the other Abnegation leaders are corrupt and awful, she has support for whatever revolution she wants to start, if that’s really her plan. But I don’t want to argue again, so I just nod and throw the remaining sheets into the chasm. They drift back and forth, back and forth until they find the water. They will be filtered out at the chasm wall and discarded.

“It’s bedtime,” Christina says, smiling. “Ready to go back? I think I want to put Peter’s hand in a bowl of warm water to make him pee tonight.”

I turn away from the chasm and see movement on the right side of the Pit. A figure climbs toward the glass ceiling, and judging by the smooth way he walks, like his feet barely leave the ground, I know it is Four.

“That sounds great, but I have to talk to Four about something,” I say, pointing toward the shadow ascending the path. Her eyes follow my hand.

“Are you sure you should be running around here alone at night?” she asks.

“I won’t be alone. I’ll be with Four.” I bite my lip.

Christina is looking at Will, and he is looking back at her. Neither of them is really listening to me.

“All right,” Christina says distantly. “Well, I’ll see you later, then.”

Christina and Will walk toward the dormitories, Christina touching Will’s hair and Will jabbing her in the ribs. For a second, I watch them. I feel like I am witnessing the beginning of something, but I’m not sure what it will be.

I jog to the path on the right side of the Pit and start to climb. I try to make my footsteps as quiet as possible. Unlike Christina, I don’t find it difficult to lie. I don’t intend to talk to Four—at least, not until I find out where he’s going, late at night, in the glass building above us.

I run quietly, breathless when I reach the stairs, and stand at one end of the glass room while Four stands at the other. Through the windows I see the city lights, glowing now but petering out even as I look at them. They are supposed to turn off at midnight.

Across the room, Four stands at the door to the fear landscape. He holds a black box in one hand and a syringe in the other.

“Since you’re here,” he says, without looking over his shoulder, “you might as well go in with me.”

I bite my lip. “Into your fear landscape?”

“Yes.”

As I walk toward him, I ask, “I can do that?”

“The serum connects you to the program,” he says, “but the program determines whose landscape you go through. And right now, it’s set to put us through mine.”

“You would let me see that?”

“Why else do you think I’m going in?” he asks quietly. He doesn’t lift his eyes. “There are some things I want to show you.”

He holds up the syringe, and I tilt my head to better expose my neck. I feel sharp pain when the needle goes in, but I am used to it now. When he’s done, he offers me the black box. In it is another syringe.

I press my lips together. I remember being punished—sent to my room without dinner, deprived of this or that, firm scoldings. I was never shut in a closet. The cruelty smarts; my chest aches for him. I don't know what to say, so I try to keep it casual.

"My mother kept our winter coats in our closet."

"I don't..." He gasps. "I don't really want to talk about it anymore."

"Okay. Then...I can talk. Ask me something."

"Okay." He laughs shakily in my ear. "Why is your heart racing, Tris?"

I cringe and say, "Well, I..." I search for an excuse that doesn't involve his arms being around me. "I barely know you." *Not good enough.* "I barely know you and I'm crammed up against you in a box, Four, what do you think?"

"If we were in your fear landscape," he says, "would I be in it?"

"I'm not afraid of you."

"Of course you're not. But that's not what I meant."

He laughs again, and when he does, the walls break apart with a crack and fall away, leaving us in a circle of light. Four sighs and lifts his arms from my body. I scramble to my feet and brush myself off, though I haven't accumulated any dirt that I'm aware of. I wipe my palms on my jeans. My back feels cold from the sudden absence of him.

He stands in front of me. He's grinning, and I'm not sure I like the look in his eyes.

"Maybe you were cut out for Candor," he says, "because you're a terrible liar."

"I think my aptitude test ruled that one out pretty well."

He shakes his head. "The aptitude test tells you nothing."

I narrow my eyes. "What are you trying to tell me? Your test isn't the reason you ended up Dauntless?"

Excitement runs through me like the blood in my veins, propelled by the hope that he might confirm that he is Divergent, that he is like me, that we can figure out what it means together.

"Not exactly, no," he says. "I..."

He looks over his shoulder and his voice trails off. A woman stands a few yards away, pointing a gun at us. She is completely still, her features plain—if we walked away right now, I would not remember her. To my right, a table appears. On it is a gun and a single bullet. Why isn't she shooting us?

Oh, I think. The fear is unrelated to the threat to his life. It has to do with the gun on the table.

"You have to kill her," I say softly.

"Every single time."

"She isn't real."

"She looks real." He bites his lip. "It feels real."

"If she was real, she would have killed you already."

"It's okay." He nods. "I'll just...do it. This one's not...not so bad. Not as much panic involved."

Not as much panic, but far more dread. I can see it in his eyes as he picks up the gun and opens the chamber like he's done it a thousand times—and maybe he has. He clicks the bullet into the chamber and holds the gun out in front of him, both hands around it. He squeezes one eye shut and breathes slowly in.

release calming chemicals, and “a calm mind is a clear mind.” The color has also come to signify their faction. It seems impossibly bright to me now. I have grown used to dim lighting and dark clothing.

I expect to weave through the crowd, dodging elbows and muttering “excuse me” the way I always do, but there is no need. Becoming Dauntless has made me noticeable. The crowd parts for me, and their eyes cling to me as I pass. I pull the rubber band from my hair and shake it from its knot before I walk through the front doors.

I stand just inside the entrance and tilt my head back. The room is huge, silent, and smells like dust-covered pages. The wood-paneled floor creaks beneath my feet. Bookcases line the walls on either side of me, but they seem to be decorative more than anything, because computers occupy the tables in the center of the room, and no one is reading. They stare at screens with tense eyes, focused.

I should have known that the main Erudite building would be a library. A portrait on the opposite wall catches my attention. It is twice my height and four times my width and depicts an attractive woman with watery gray eyes and spectacles—Jeanine. Heat licks my throat at the sight of her. Because she is Erudite’s representative, she is the one who released that report about my father. I have disliked her since my father’s dinner-table rants began, but now I hate her.

Beneath her is a large plaque that reads KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO PROSPERITY.

Prosperity. To me the word has a negative connotation. Abnegation uses it to describe self-indulgence.

How could Caleb have chosen to be one of these people? The things they do, the things they want, it’s all wrong. But he probably thinks the same of the Dauntless.

I walk up to the desk just beneath Jeanine’s portrait. The young man sitting behind it doesn’t look up as he says, “How can I help you?”

“I am looking for someone,” I say. “His name is Caleb. Do you know where I can find him?”

“I am not permitted to give out personal information,” he replies blandly, as he jabs at the screen in front of him.

“He’s my brother.”

“I am not permi—”

I slam my palm on the desk in front of him, and he jerks out of his daze, staring at me over his spectacles. Heads turn in my direction.

“I said.” My voice is terse. “I am looking for someone. He’s an initiate. Can you at least tell me where I can find them?”

“Beatrice?” a voice behind me says.

I turn, and Caleb stands behind me, a book in hand. His hair has grown out so it flips at his ears, and he wears a blue T-shirt and a pair of rectangular glasses. Even though he looks different and I’m not allowed to love him anymore, I run at him as fast as I can and throw my arms around his shoulders.

“You have a tattoo,” he says, his voice muffled.

“You have glasses,” I say. I pull back and narrow my eyes. “Your vision is perfect, Caleb, what are you doing?”

“Um...” He glances at the tables around us. “Come on. Let’s get out of here.”

We exit the building and cross the street. I have to jog to keep up with him. Across from Erudite

I open my mouth to object, but I can't. A few smart remarks come to mind, but I dismiss them. He's right. My cheeks warm, and I cool them with my hands.

"You didn't have to insult me to prove something to them," I say finally.

"And you didn't have to run off to your brother just because I hurt you," he says. He rubs at the back of his neck. "Besides—it worked, didn't it?"

"At my expense."

"I didn't think it would affect you this way." Then he looks down and shrugs. "Sometimes I forget that I can hurt you. That you are capable of being hurt."

I slide my hands into my pockets and rock back on my heels. A strange feeling goes through me—a sweet, aching weakness. He did what he did because he believed in my strength.

At home it was Caleb who was strong, because he could forget himself, because all the characteristics my parents valued came naturally to him. No one has ever been so convinced of my strength.

I stand on my tiptoes, lift my head, and kiss him. Only our lips touch.

"You're brilliant, you know that?" I shake my head. "You always know exactly what to do."

"Only because I've been thinking about this for a long time," he says, kissing me briefly. "How I would handle it, if you and I..." He pulls back and smiles. "Did I hear you call me your boyfriend, Tris?"

"Not exactly." I shrug. "Why? Do you want me to?"

He slips his hands over my neck and presses his thumbs under my chin, tilting my head back so his forehead meets mine. For a moment he stands there, his eyes closed, breathing my air. I feel the pulse in his fingertips. I feel the quickness of his breath. He seems nervous.

"Yes," he finally says. Then his smile fades. "You think we convinced him you're just a silly girl?"

"I hope so," I say. "Sometimes it helps to be small. I'm not sure I convinced the Erudite, though."

The corners of his mouth tug down, and he gives me a grave look. "There's something I need to tell you."

"What is it?"

"Not now." He glances around. "Meet me back here at eleven thirty. Don't tell anyone where you're going."

I nod, and he turns away, leaving just as quickly as he came.

"Where have you *been* all day?" Christina asks when I walk back into the dormitory. The room is empty; everyone else must be at dinner. "I looked for you outside, but I couldn't find you. Is everything okay? Did you get in trouble for hitting Four?"

I shake my head. The thought of telling her the truth about where I was makes me feel exhausted. How can I explain the impulse to hop on a train and visit my brother? Or the eerie calm in Eric's voice as he questioned me? Or the reason that I exploded and hit Tobias to begin with?

"I just had to get away. I walked around for a long time," I say. "And no, I'm not in trouble. He yelled at me, I apologized...that's it."

As I speak, I'm careful to keep my eyes steady on hers and my hands still at my sides.

left.

I hear a cheer and stop to look at the screens. The screen on the left shows a black-clothed girl in the fear landscape room—Marlene. I watch her move, her eyes wide, but I can't tell what obstacle she's facing. Thank God no one out here will see my fears either—just my reactions to them.

The middle screen shows her heart rate. It picks up for a second and then decreases. When it reaches a normal rate, the screen flashes green and the Dauntless cheer. The screen on the right shows her time.

I tear my eyes from the screen and jog to catch up to Christina and Will. Tobias stands just inside a door on the left side of the room that I barely noticed the last time I was here. It is next to the fear landscape room. I walk past him without looking at him.

The room is large and contains another screen, similar to the one outside. A line of people sit in chairs in front of it. Eric is one of them, and so is Max. The others are also older. Judging by the wires connected to their heads, and their blank eyes, they are observing the simulation.

Behind them is another line of chairs, all occupied now. I am the last to enter, so I don't get one.

"Hey, Tris!" Uriah calls out from across the room. He sits with the other Dauntless-born initiates. Only four of them are left; the rest have gone through their fear landscapes already. He pats his leg. "You can sit on my lap, if you want."

"Tempting," I call back, grinning. "It's fine. I like to stand."

I also don't want Tobias to see me sitting on someone else's lap.

The lights lift in the fear landscape room, revealing Marlene in a crouch, her face streaked with tears. Max, Eric, and a few others shake off the simulation and walk out. A few seconds later I see them on the screen, congratulating her for finishing.

"Transfers, the order in which you go through the final test was taken from your rankings as they now stand," Tobias says. "So Drew will go first, and Tris will go last."

That means five people will go before I do.

I stand in the back of the room, a few feet away from Tobias. He and I exchange glances when Eric sticks Drew with the needle and sends him into the fear landscape room. By the time it's my turn, I will know how well the others did, and how well I will have to do to beat them.

The fear landscapes are not interesting to watch from the outside. I can see that Drew is moving, but I don't know what he is reacting to. After a few minutes, I close my eyes instead of watching and try to think of nothing. Speculating about which fears I will have to face, and how many there will be, is useless at this point. I just have to remember that I have the power to manipulate the simulations, and that I have practiced it before.

Molly goes next. It takes her half as long as it takes Drew, but even Molly has trouble. She spends too much time breathing heavily, trying to control her panic. At one point she even screams at the top of her lungs.

It amazes me how easy it is to tune out everything else—thoughts of war on Abnegation, Tobias, Caleb, my parents, my friends, my new faction fade away. All I can do now is get past this obstacle.

Christina is next. Then Will. Then Peter. I don't watch them. I know only how much time it takes them: twelve minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes. And then my name.

"Tris."

I open my eyes and walk to the front of the observation room, where Eric stands with a syringe full

CHAPTER THIRTY

I AM READY. I step into the room, armed not with a gun or a knife, but with the plan I made the night before. Tobias said that stage three is about mental preparation—coming up with strategies to overcome my fears.

I wish I knew what order the fears will come in. I bounce on the balls of my feet as I wait for the first fear to appear. I am already short of breath.

The ground beneath me changes. Grass rises from the concrete and sways in a wind I cannot feel. A green sky replaces the exposed pipes above me. I listen for the birds and feel my fear as a distant thing, a hammering heart and a squeezed chest, but not something that exists in my mind. Tobias told me to figure out what this simulation means. He was right; it isn't about the birds. It's about control.

Wings flap next to my ear, and the crow's talons dig into my shoulder.

This time, I do not hit the bird as hard as I can. I crouch, listening to the thunder of wings behind me, and run my hand through the grass, just above the ground. What combats powerlessness? Power. And the first time I felt powerful in the Dauntless compound was when I was holding a gun.

A lump forms in my throat and I want the talons *off*. The bird squawks and my stomach clenches, but then I feel something hard and metal in the grass. My gun.

I point the gun at the bird on my shoulder, and it detaches from my shirt in an explosion of blood and feathers. I spin on my heel, aiming the gun at the sky, and see the cloud of dark feathers descending. I squeeze the trigger, firing again and again into the sea of birds above me, watching their dark bodies drop to the grass.

As I aim and shoot, I feel the same rush of power I felt the first time I held a gun. My heart stops racing and the field, gun, and birds fade away. I stand in the dark again.

I shift my weight, and something squeaks beneath my foot. I crouch down and slide my hand along a cold, smooth panel—glass. I press my hands to glass on either side of my body. The tank again. I am not afraid of drowning. This is not about the water; it is about my inability to escape the tank. It is about weakness. I just have to convince myself that I am strong enough to break the glass.

The blue lights come on, and water slips over the floor, but I don't let the simulation get that far. I slam my palm against the wall in front of me, expecting the pane to break.

My hand bounces off, causing no damage.

My heartbeat speeds up. What if what worked in the first simulation doesn't work here? What if I can't break the glass unless I'm under duress? The water laps over my ankles, flowing faster by the second. I have to calm down. Calm down and focus. I lean against the wall behind me and kick as hard as I can. And again. My toes throb, but nothing happens.

I have another option. I can wait for water to fill the tank—and it's already at my knees—and try to calm down as I drown. I brace myself against the wall, shaking my head. No. I can't let myself drown. I can't.

I ball my hands up into fists and pound on the wall. I am stronger than the glass. The glass is as thin as newly frozen ice. My mind will make it so. I close my eyes. The glass is ice. The glass is ice. The glass is—

I shake my head. “Not now.” I meant to say *not here*. Not with Will and Christina standing a foot away from me—staring with open mouths, probably because I just kissed Tobias—and the clamor of the Dauntless surrounding us. But he has to know how important it is.

“Later,” I say. “Okay?”

He nods. I don’t even know how I’ll explain it later. I don’t even know how to think straight.

But I do know how Erudite will get us to fight.

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“Why bother?” She and the Dauntless leaders had no problem killing the Divergent in the past. Why would it be any different now?

She smirks at me.

“I have had a question since I began the Dauntless project, and it is this.” She sidesteps her desk, skimming the surface with her finger. “Why are most of the Divergent weak-willed, God-fearing nobodies from *Abnegation*, of all factions?”

I didn’t know that most of the Divergent came from Abnegation, and I don’t know why that would be. And I probably won’t live long enough to figure it out.

“Weak-willed,” Tobias scoffs. “It requires a *strong* will to manipulate a simulation, last time I checked. Weak-willed is mind-controlling an army because it’s too hard for you to train one yourself.”

“I am not a fool,” says Jeanine. “A faction of intellectuals is no army. We are tired of being dominated by a bunch of self-righteous idiots who reject wealth and advancement, but we couldn’t do this on our own. And your Dauntless leaders were all too happy to oblige me if I guaranteed them a place in our new, improved government.”

“Improved,” Tobias says, snorting.

“Yes, improved,” Jeanine says. “Improved, and working toward a world in which people will live in wealth, comfort, and prosperity.”

“At whose expense?” I ask, my voice thick and sluggish. “All that wealth...doesn’t come from nowhere.”

“Currently, the factionless are a drain on our resources,” Jeanine replies. “As is Abnegation. I am sure that once the remains of your old faction are absorbed into the Dauntless army, Candor will cooperate and we will finally be able to get on with things.”

Absorbed into the Dauntless army, I know what that means—she wants to control them, too. She wants everyone to be pliable and easy to control.

“Get on with things,” Tobias repeats bitterly. He raises his voice. “Make no mistake. You will be dead before the day is out, you—”

“Perhaps if you could control your temper,” Jeanine says, her words cutting cleanly across Tobias’s, “you would not be in this situation to begin with, Tobias.”

“I’m in this situation because you put me here,” he snaps. “The second you orchestrated an attack against innocent people.”

“Innocent people.” Jeanine laughs. “I find that a little funny, coming from you. I would expect Marcus’s son to understand that not all those people are innocent.” She perches on the edge of the desk, her skirt pulling away from her knees, which are crossed with stretch marks. “Can you tell me honestly that you wouldn’t be happy to discover that your father was killed in the attack?”

“No,” says Tobias through gritted teeth. “But at least his evil didn’t involve the widespread manipulation of an entire faction and the systematic murder of every political leader we have.”

They stare at each other for a few seconds, long enough to make me feel tense to my core, and then Jeanine clears her throat.

“What I was going to say,” she says, “is that soon, dozens of the Abnegation and their young children will be my responsibility to keep in order, and it does not bode well for me that a large number of them may be Divergent like yourselves, incapable of being controlled by the simulations.”

Still breathing heavily, she carries it toward Tobias. Tobias grits his teeth and elbows one of the guards in the face. The guard slams the heel of his gun into the side of Tobias's head, and Jeanine sticks the needle into Tobias's neck. He goes limp.

A sound escapes my mouth, not a sob or a scream, but a croaking, scraping moan that sounds detached, like it is coming from someone else.

"Let him up," says Jeanine, her voice scratchy.

The guard gets up, and so does Tobias. He does not look like the sleepwalking Dauntless soldiers; his eyes are alert. He looks around for a few seconds as if confused by what he sees.

"Tobias," I say. "Tobias!"

"He doesn't know you," says Jeanine.

Tobias looks over his shoulder. His eyes narrow and he starts toward me, fast. Before the guards can stop him, he closes a hand around my throat, squeezing my trachea with his fingertips. I choke, my face hot with blood.

"The simulation manipulates him," says Jeanine. I can barely hear her over the pounding in my ears. "By altering what he sees—making him confuse enemy with friend."

One of the guards pulls Tobias off me. I gasp, drawing a rattling breath into my lungs.

He is gone. Controlled by the simulation, he will now murder the people he called innocent not three minutes ago. Jeanine killing him would have hurt less than this.

"The advantage to this version of the simulation," she says, her eyes alight, "is that he can act independently, and is therefore far more effective than a mindless soldier." She looks at the guards who hold Tobias back. He struggles against them, his muscles taut, his eyes focused on me, but not seeing me, not seeing me the way they used to. "Send him to the control room. We'll want a sentient being there to monitor things and, as I understand it, he used to work there."

Jeanine presses her palms together in front of her. "And take *her* to room B13," she says. She flaps her hand to dismiss me. That flapping hand commands my execution, but to her it is just crossing off an item from a list of tasks, the only logical progression of the particular path that she is on. She surveys me without feeling as two Dauntless soldiers pull me out of the room.

They drag me down the hallway. I feel numb inside, but outside I am a screaming, thrashing force of will. I bite a hand that belongs to the Dauntless man on my right and smile as I taste blood. Then he hits me, and there is nothing.

I let my hands float up to the top of the tank. I let the water fold me in its silken arms.

When I was young, my father used to hold me over his head and run with me so I felt like I was flying. I remember how the air felt, gliding over my body, and I am not afraid. I open my eyes.

A dark figure stands in front of me. I must be close to death if I'm seeing things. Pain stabs my lungs. Suffocating is painful. A palm presses to the glass in front of my face, and for a moment as I stare through the water, I think I see my mother's blurry face.

I hear a bang, and the glass cracks. Water sprays out a hole near the top of the tank, and the pane cracks in half. I turn away as the glass shatters, and the force of the water throws my body at the ground. I gasp, swallowing water as well as air, and cough, and gasp again, and hands close around my arms, and I hear her voice.

"Beatrice," she says. "Beatrice, we have to run."

She pulls my arm across her shoulders and hauls me to my feet. She is dressed like my mother and she looks like my mother, but she is holding a gun, and the determined look in her eyes is unfamiliar to me. I stumble beside her over broken glass and through water and out an open doorway. Dauntless guards lie dead next to the door.

My feet slip and slide on the tile as we walk down the hallway, as fast as my weak legs can muster. When we turn the corner, she fires at the two guards standing by the door at the end. The bullets hit them both in the head, and they slump to the floor. She pushes me against the wall and takes off her gray jacket.

She wears a sleeveless shirt. When she lifts her arm, I see the corner of a tattoo under her armpit. No wonder she never changed clothes in front of me.

"Mom," I say, my voice strained. "You were Dauntless."

"Yes," she says, smiling. She makes her jacket into a sling for my arm, tying the sleeves around my neck. "And it has served me well today. Your father and Caleb and some others are hiding in a basement at the intersection of North and Fairfield. We have to go get them."

I stare at her. I sat next to her at the kitchen table, twice a day, for sixteen years, and never once did I consider the possibility that she could have been anything but Abnegation-born. How well did I actually know my mother?

"There will be time for questions," she says. She lifts her shirt and slips a gun from under the waistband of her pants, offering it to me. Then she touches my cheek. "Now we must go."

She runs to the end of the hallway, and I run after her.

We are in the basement of Abnegation headquarters. My mother has worked there for as long as I can remember, so I'm not surprised when she leads me down a few dark hallways, up a dank staircase, and into daylight again without interference. How many Dauntless guards did she shoot before she found me?

"How did you know to find me?" I say.

"I've been watching the trains since the attacks started," she replies, glancing over her shoulder at me. "I didn't know what I would do when I found you. But it was always my intention to save you."

My throat feels tight. "But I betrayed you. I left you."

"You're my daughter. I don't care about the factions." She shakes her head. "Look where they got us. Human beings as a whole cannot be good for long before the bad creeps back in and poisons us again."

It's not a strange question, after what we've been through, but I tense up when he asks it, worried that he'll somehow see into my mind. I haven't told him about Will yet. I want to, but I don't know how. Just the thought of saying the words out loud makes me feel so heavy I could break through the floorboards.

"I'm . . ." I shake my head a few times. "I don't know, Four. I'm awake. I . . ." I am still shaking my head. He slides his hand over my cheek, one finger anchored behind my ear. Then he tilts his head down and kisses me, sending a warm ache through my body. I wrap my hands around his arm, holding him there as long as I can. When he touches me, the hollowed-out feeling in my chest and stomach is not as noticeable.

I don't have to tell him. I can just try to forget—he can help me forget.

"I know," he says. "Sorry. I shouldn't have asked."

For a moment all I can think is, *How could you possibly know?* But something about his expression reminds me that he does know something about loss. He lost his mother when he was young. I don't remember how she died, just that we attended her funeral.

Suddenly I remember him clutching the curtains in his living room, about nine years old, wearing gray, his dark eyes shut. The image is fleeting, and it could be my imagination, not a memory.

He releases me. "I'll let you get ready."

The women's bathroom is two doors down. The floor is dark brown tile, and each shower stall has wooden walls and a plastic curtain separating it from the central aisle. A sign on the back wall says remember: to conserve resources showers run for only five minutes.

The stream of water is cold, so I wouldn't want the extra minutes even if I could have them. I wash quickly with my left hand, leaving my right hand hanging at my side. The pain medicine Tobias gave me worked fast—the pain in my shoulder has already faded to a dull throb.

When I get out of the shower, a stack of clothes waits on my bed. It contains some yellow and red, from the Amity, and some gray, from the Abnegation, colors I rarely see side by side. If I had to guess, I would say that one of the Abnegation put the stack there for me. It's something they would think to do.

I pull on a pair of dark red pants made of denim—so long I have to roll them up three times—and a gray Abnegation shirt that is too big for me. The sleeves come down to my fingertips, and I roll them up too. It hurts to move my right hand, so I keep the movements small and slow.

Someone knocks on the door. "Beatrice?" The soft voice is Susan's.

I open the door for her. She carries a tray of food, which she sets down on the bed. I search her face for a sign of what she has lost—her father, an Abnegation leader, didn't survive the attack—but I see only the placid determination characteristic of my old faction.

"I'm sorry the clothes don't fit," she says. "I'm sure we can find some better ones for you if the Amity allow us to stay."

"They're fine," I say. "Thank you."

"I heard you were shot. Do you need my help with your hair? Or your shoes?"

I am about to refuse, but I really do need help.

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