

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**T**ODAY IS THE day before Visiting Day. I think of Visiting Day like I think of the world ending: Nothing after it matters. Everything I do builds up to it. I might see my parents again. I might not. Which is worse? I don't know.

I try to pull a pant leg over my thigh and it sticks just above my knee. Frowning, I stare at my leg. A bulge of muscle is stopping the fabric. I let the pant leg fall and look over my shoulder at the back of my thigh. Another muscle stands out there.

I step to the side so I stand in front of the mirror. I see muscles that I couldn't see before in my arms, legs, and stomach. I pinch my side, where a layer of fat used to hint at curves to come. Nothing. Dauntless initiation has stolen whatever softness my body had. Is that good, or bad?

At least I am stronger than I was. I wrap my towel around me again and leave the girls' bathroom. I hope no one is in the dormitory to see me walking in my towel, but I can't wear those pants.

When I open the dormitory door, a weight drops into my stomach. Peter, Molly, Drew, and some of the other initiates stand in the back corner, laughing. They look up when I walk in and start snickering. Molly's snort-laugh is louder than everyone else's.

I walk to my bunk, trying to pretend like they aren't there, and fumble in the drawer under my bed for the dress Christina made me get. One hand clamped around the towel and one holding the dress, I stand up, and right behind me is Peter.

I jump back, almost hitting my head on Christina's bunk. I try to slip past him, but he slams his hand against Christina's bed frame, blocking my path. I should have known he wouldn't let me get away that easily.

"Didn't realize you were so skinny, Stiff."

"Get away from me." My voice is somehow steady.

"This isn't the Hub, you know. No one has to follow a Stiff's orders here." His eyes travel down my body, not in the greedy way that a man looks at a woman, but cruelly, scrutinizing every flaw. I hear my heartbeat in my ears as the others inch closer, forming a pack behind Peter.

This will be bad.

I have to get out of here.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see a clear path to the door. If I can duck under Peter's arm and sprint toward it, I might be able to make it.

"Look at her," says Molly, crossing her arms. She smirks at me. "She's practically a child."

"Oh, I don't know," says Drew. "She could be hiding something under that towel. Why don't we look and see?"

*Now.* I duck under Peter's arm and dart toward the door. Something pinches and pulls at my towel as I walk away and then yanks sharply—Peter's hand, gathering the fabric into his

fist. The towel slips from my hand and the air is cold on my naked body, making the hair on the back of my neck stand on end.

Laughter erupts, and I run as fast as I can toward the door, holding the dress against my body to 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.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**V**ISITING DAY. The second I open my eyes, I remember. My heart leaps and then plummets when I see Molly hobble across the dormitory, her nose purple between strips of medical tape. Once I see her leave, I check for Peter and Drew. Neither of them is in the dormitory, so I change quickly. As long as they aren't here, I don't care who sees me in my underwear, not anymore.

Everyone else dresses in silence. Not even Christina smiles. We all know that we might go to the Pit floor and search every face and never find one that belongs to us.

I make my bed with the tight corners like my father taught me. As I pinch a stray hair from my pillow, Eric walks in.

"Attention!" he announces, flicking a lock of dark hair from his eyes. "I want to give you some advice about today. If by some miracle your families do come to visit you..." He scans our faces and smirks. "...which I doubt, it is best not to seem too attached. That will make it easier for you, and easier for them. We also take the phrase 'faction before blood' very seriously here. Attachment to your family suggests you aren't entirely pleased with your faction, which would be *shameful*. Understand?"

I understand. I hear the threat in Eric's sharp voice. The only part of that speech that Eric meant was the last part: We are Dauntless, and we need to act accordingly.

On my way out of the dormitory, Eric stops me.

"I may have underestimated you, Stiff," he says. "You did well yesterday."

I stare up at him. For the first time since I beat Molly, guilt pinches my gut.

If Eric thinks I did something right, I must have done it wrong.

"Thank you," I say. I slip out of the dormitory.

Once my eyes adjust to the dim hallway light, I see Christina and Will ahead of me, Will laughing, probably at a joke Christina made. I don't try to catch up. For some reason, I feel like it would be a mistake to interrupt them.

Al is missing. I didn't see him in the dormitory, and he's not walking toward the Pit now. Maybe he's already there.

I run my fingers through my hair and smooth it into a bun. I check my clothes—am I covered up? My pants are tight and my collarbone is showing. They won't approve.

Who cares if they approve? I set my jaw. This is my faction now. These are the clothes my faction wears. I stop just before the hallway ends.

Clusters of families stand on the Pit floor, most of them Dauntless families with Dauntless initiates. They still look strange to me—a mother with a pierced eyebrow, a father with a tattooed arm, an initiate with purple hair, a wholesome family unit. I spot Drew and Molly standing alone at one end of the room and suppress a smile. At least their families didn't come.

But Peter's did. He stands next to a tall man with bushy eyebrows and a short, meek-looking woman with red hair. Neither of his parents looks like him. They both wear black

pants and white shirts, typical Candor outfits, and his father speaks so loudly I can almost hear him from where I stand. Do they know what kind of person their son is?

Then again...what kind of person am I?

Across the room, Will stands with a woman in a blue dress. She doesn't look old enough to be his mother, but she has the same crease between her eyebrows as he does, and the same golden hair. He talked about having a sister once; maybe that's her.

Next to him, Christina hugs a dark-skinned woman in Candor black and white. Standing behind Christina is a young girl, also a Candor. Her younger sister.

Should I even bother scanning the crowd for my parents? I could turn around and go back to the dormitory.

Then I see her. My mother stands alone near the railing with her hands clasped in front of her. She has never looked more out of place, with her gray slacks and gray jacket buttoned at the throat, her hair in its simple twist and her face placid. I start toward her, tears jumping into my eyes. She came. She came for me.

I walk faster. She sees me, and for a second her expression is blank, like she doesn't know who I am. Then her eyes light up, and she opens her arms. She smells like soap and laundry detergent.

"Beatrice," she whispers. She runs her hand over my hair.

*Don't cry*, I tell myself. I hold her until I can blink the moisture from my eyes, and then pull back to look at her again. I smile with closed lips, just like she does. She touches my cheek.

"Well, look at you," she says. "You've filled out." She puts her arm across my shoulders. "Tell me how you are."

"You first." The old habits are back. I should let her speak first. I shouldn't let the conversation stay focused on me for too long. I should make sure she doesn't need anything.

"Today is a special occasion," she says. "I came to see you, so let's talk mostly about you. It is my gift to you."

My selfless mother. She should not be giving me gifts, not after I left her and my father. I walk with her toward the railing that overlooks the chasm, glad to be close to her. The last week and a half has been more affectionless than I realized. At home we did not touch each other often, and the most I ever saw my parents do was hold hands at the dinner table, but it was more than this, more than here.

"Just one question." I feel my pulse in my throat. "Where's Dad? Is he visiting Caleb?"

"Ah." She shakes her head. "Your father had to be at work."

I look down. "You can tell me if he didn't want to come."

Her eyes travel over my face. "Your father has been selfish lately. That doesn't mean he doesn't love you, I promise."

I stare at her, stunned. My father—selfish? More startling than the label is the fact that she assigned it to him. I can't tell by looking at her if she's angry. I don't expect to be able to. But she must be; if she calls him *selfish*, she must be angry.

"What about Caleb?" I say. "Will you visit him later?"

"I wish I could," she says, "but the Erudite have prohibited Abnegation visitors from

entering their compound. If I tried, I would be removed from the premises.”

“What?” I demand. “That’s terrible. Why would they do that?”

“Tensions between our factions are higher than ever,” she says. “I wish it wasn’t that way, but there is little I can do about it.”

I think of Caleb standing among the Erudite initiates, scanning the crowd for our mother, and feel a pang in my stomach. Part of me is still angry with him for keeping so many secrets from me, but I don’t want him to hurt.

“That’s terrible,” I repeat. I look toward the chasm.

Standing alone at the railing is Four. Though he’s not an initiate anymore, most of the Dauntless use this day to come together with their families. Either his family doesn’t like to come together, or he wasn’t originally Dauntless. Which faction could he have come from?

“There’s one of my instructors.” I lean closer to her and say, “He’s kind of intimidating.”

“He’s *handsome*,” she says.

I find myself nodding without thinking. She laughs and lifts her arm from my shoulders. I want to steer her away from him, but just as I’m about to suggest that we go somewhere else, he looks over his shoulder.

His eyes widen at the sight of my mother. She offers him her hand.

“Hello. My name is Natalie,” she says. “I’m Beatrice’s mother.”

I have never seen my mother shake hands with someone. Four eases his hand into hers, looking stiff, and shakes it twice. The gesture looks unnatural for both of them. No, Four was not originally Dauntless if he doesn’t shake hands easily.

“Four,” he says. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Four,” my mother repeats, smiling. “Is that a nickname?”

“Yes.” He doesn’t elaborate. What *is* his real name? “Your daughter is doing well here. I’ve been overseeing her training.”

Since when does “overseeing” include throwing knives at me and scolding me at every opportunity?

“That’s good to hear,” she says. “I know a few things about Dauntless initiation, and I was worried about her.”

He looks at me, and his eyes move down my face, from nose to mouth to chin. Then he says, “You shouldn’t worry.”

I can’t keep the heat from rushing into my cheeks. I hope it isn’t noticeable.

Is he just reassuring her because she’s my mother, or does he really believe that I am capable? And what did that look mean?

She tilts her head. “You look familiar for some reason, Four.”

“I can’t imagine why,” he replies, his voice suddenly cold. “I don’t make a habit of associating with the Abnegation.”

My mother laughs. She has a light laugh, half air and half sound. “Few people do, these days. I don’t take it personally.”

He seems to relax a little. “Well, I’ll leave you to your reunion.”

My mother and I watch him leave. The roar of the river fills my ears. Maybe Four was one of the Erudite, which explains why he hates Abnegation. Or maybe he believes the articles the Erudite release about us—*them*, I remind myself. But it was kind of him to tell her that I'm doing well when I know he doesn't believe it.

"Is he always like that?" she says.

"Worse."

"Have you made friends?" she asks.

"A few," I say. I look over my shoulder at Will and Christina and their families. When Christina catches my eye, she beckons to me, smiling, so my mother and I cross the Pit floor.

Before we can get to Will and Christina, though, a short, round woman with a black-and-white-striped shirt touches my arm. I twitch, resisting the urge to smack her hand away.

"Excuse me," she says. "Do you know my son? Albert?"

"Albert?" I repeat. "Oh—you mean Al? Yes, I know him."

"Do you know where we can find him?" she says, gesturing to a man behind her. He is tall and as thick as a boulder. Al's father, obviously.

"I'm sorry, I didn't see him this morning. Maybe you should look for him up there?" I point at the glass ceiling above us.

"Oh my," Al's mother says, fanning her face with her hand. "I would rather not attempt that climb again. I almost had a panic attack on the way down here. Why aren't there any railings along those paths? Are you all insane?"

I smile a little. A few weeks ago I might have found that question offensive, but now I spend too much time with Candor transfers to be surprised by tactlessness.

"Insane, no," I say. "Dauntless, yes. If I see him, I'll tell him you're looking for him."

My mother, I see, wears the same smile I do. She isn't reacting the way some of the other transfers' parents are—her neck bent, looking around at the Pit walls, at the Pit ceiling, at the chasm. Of course she isn't curious—she's Abnegation. Curiosity is foreign to her.

I introduce my mother to Will and Christina, and Christina introduces me to her mother and her sister. But when Will introduces me to Cara, his older sister, she gives me the kind of look that would wither a plant and does not extend her hand for me to shake. She glares at my mother.

"I can't believe that you associate with one of *them*, Will," she says.

My mother purses her lips, but of course, doesn't say anything.

"Cara," says Will, frowning, "there's no need to be *rude*."

"Oh, certainly not. Do you know what she is?" She points at my mother. "She's a council member's *wife* is what she is. She runs the 'volunteer agency' that supposedly helps the factionless. You think I don't know that you're just hoarding goods to distribute to your own faction while *we* don't get fresh food for a month, huh? Food for the factionless, my eye."

"I'm sorry," my mother says gently. "I believe you are mistaken."

"Mistaken. Ha," Cara snaps. "I'm sure you're exactly what you seem. A faction of happy-go-lucky do-gooders without a selfish bone in their bodies. Right."

"Don't speak to my mother that way," I say, my face hot. I clench my hands into fists.



“Don’t say another word to her or I swear I will break your nose.”

“Back off, Tris,” Will says. “You’re not going to punch my sister.”

“Oh?” I say, raising both eyebrows. “You think so?”

“No, you’re not.” My mother touches my shoulder. “Come on, Beatrice. We wouldn’t want to bother your friend’s sister.”

She sounds gentle, but her hand squeezes my arm so hard I almost cry out from the pain as she drags me away. She walks with me, fast, toward the dining hall. Just before she reaches it, though, she takes a sharp left turn and walks down one of the dark hallways I haven’t explored yet.

“Mom,” I say. “Mom, how do you know where you’re going?”

She stops next to a locked door and stands on her tiptoes, peering at the base of the blue lamp hanging from the ceiling. A few seconds later she nods and turns to me again.

“I said no questions about me. And I meant it. How are you really doing, Beatrice? How have the fights been? How are you ranked?”

“Ranked?” I say. “You know that I’ve been fighting? You know that I’m ranked?”

“It isn’t top-secret information, how the Dauntless initiation process works.”

I don’t know how easy it is to find out what another faction does during initiation, but I suspect it’s not *that* easy. Slowly, I say, “I’m close to the bottom, Mom.”

“Good.” She nods. “No one looks too closely at the bottom. Now, this is very important, Beatrice: What were your aptitude test results?”

Tori’s warning pulses in my head. *Don’t tell anyone*. I should tell her that my result was Abnegation, because that’s what Tori recorded in the system.

I look into my mother’s eyes, which are pale green and framed by a dark smudge of eyelashes. She has lines around her mouth, but other than that, she doesn’t look her age. Those lines get deeper when she hums. She used to hum as she washed the dishes.

This is my mother.

I can trust her.

“They were inconclusive,” I say softly.

“I thought as much.” She sighs. “Many children who are raised Abnegation receive that kind of result. We don’t know why. But you have to be very careful during the next stage of initiation, Beatrice. Stay in the middle of the pack, no matter what you do. Don’t draw attention to yourself. Do you understand?”

“Mom, what’s going on?”

“I don’t care what faction you chose,” she says, touching her hands to my cheeks. “I am your mother and I want to keep you safe.”

“Is this because I’m a—” I start to say, but she presses her hand to my mouth.

“Don’t say that word,” she hisses. “Ever.”

So Tori was right. Divergent is a dangerous thing to be. I just don’t know why, or even what it really means, still.

“Why?”

She shakes her head. "I can't say."

She looks over her shoulder, where the light from the Pit floor is barely visible. I hear shouts and conversations, laughter and shuffling footsteps. The smell from the dining hall floats over my nose, sweet and yeasty: baking bread. When she turns toward me, her jaw is set.

"There's something I want you to do," she says. "I can't go visit your brother, but you can, when initiation is over. So I want you to go find him and tell him to research the simulation serum. Okay? Can you do that for me?"

"Not unless you *explain* some of this to me, Mom!" I cross my arms. "You want me to go hang out at the Erudite compound for the day, you had better give me a reason!"

"I can't. I'm sorry." She kisses my cheek and brushes a lock of hair that fell from my bun behind my ear. "I should leave. It will make you look better if you and I don't seem attached to each other."

"I don't care how I look to them," I say.

"You should," she says. "I suspect they are already monitoring you."

She walks away, and I am too stunned to follow her. At the end of the hallway she turns and says, "Have a piece of cake for me, all right? The chocolate. It's delicious." She smiles a strange, twisted smile, and adds, "I love you, you know."

And then she's gone.

I stand alone in the blue light coming from the lamp above me, and I understand:

She has been to the compound before. She remembered this hallway. She knows about the initiation process.

My mother was Dauntless.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

**T**HAT AFTERNOON, I go back to the dormitory while everyone else spends time with their families and find Al sitting on his bed, staring at the space on the wall where the chalkboard usually is. Four took it down yesterday so he could calculate our stage one rankings.

“There you are!” I say. “Your parents were looking for you. Did they find you?”

He shakes his head.

I sit down next to him on the bed. My leg is barely half the width of his, even now that it’s more muscular than it was. He wears black shorts. His knee is purple-blue with a bruise and crossed with a scar.

“You didn’t want to see them?” I say.

“Didn’t want them to ask how I was doing,” he says. “I’d have to tell them, and they would know if I was lying.”

“Well...” I struggle to come up with something to say. “What’s wrong with how you’re doing?”

Al laughs harshly. “I’ve lost every fight since the one with Will. I’m not doing well.”

“By choice, though. Couldn’t you tell them that, too?”

He shakes his head. “Dad always wanted me to come here. I mean, they said they wanted me to stay in Candor, but that’s only because that’s what they’re supposed to say. They’ve always admired the Dauntless, both of them. They wouldn’t understand if I tried to explain it to them.”

“Oh.” I tap my fingers against my knee. Then I look at him. “Is that why you chose Dauntless? Because of your parents?”

Al shakes his head. “No. I guess it was because...I think it’s important to protect people. To stand up for people. Like you did for me.” He smiles at me. “That’s what the Dauntless are supposed to do, right? That’s what courage is. Not...hurting people for no reason.”

I remember what Four told me, that teamwork used to be a Dauntless priority. What were the Dauntless like when it was? What would I have learned if I had been here when my mother was Dauntless? Maybe I wouldn’t have broken Molly’s nose. Or threatened Will’s sister.

I feel a pang of guilt. “Maybe it will be better once initiation is over.”

“Too bad I might come in last,” Al says. “I guess we’ll see tonight.”

We sit side-by-side for a while. It’s better to be here, in silence, than in the Pit, watching everyone laugh with their families.

My father used to say that sometimes, the best way to help someone is just to be near them. I feel good when I do something I know he would be proud of, like it makes up for all the things I’ve done that he wouldn’t be proud of.

“I feel braver when I’m around you, you know,” he says. “Like I could actually fit in here, the same way you do.”

I am about to respond when he slides his arm across my shoulders. Suddenly I freeze, my cheeks hot.

I didn't want to be right about Al's feelings for me. But I was.

I do not lean into him. Instead I sit forward so his arm falls away. Then I squeeze my hands together in my lap.

"Tris, I...", he says. His voice sounds strained. I glance at him. His face is as red as mine feels, but he's not crying—he just looks embarrassed.

"Um...sorry," he says. "I wasn't trying to...um. Sorry."

I wish I could tell him not to take it personally. I could tell him that my parents rarely held hands even in our own home, so I have trained myself to pull away from all gestures of affection, because they raised me to take them seriously. Maybe if I told him that, there wouldn't be a layer of hurt beneath his flush of embarrassment.

But of course, it *is* personal. He is my friend—and that is all. What is more personal than that?

I breathe in, and when I breathe out, I make myself smile. "Sorry about what?" I ask, trying to sound casual. I brush off my jeans, though there isn't anything on them, and stand up.

"I should go," I say.

He nods and doesn't look at me.

"You going to be okay?" I say. "I mean...because of your parents. Not because..." I let my voice trail off. I don't know what I would say if I didn't.

"Oh. Yeah." He nods again, a little too vigorously. "I'll see you later, Tris."

I try not to walk out of the room too fast. When the dormitory door closes behind me, I touch a hand to my forehead and grin a little. Awkwardness aside, it is nice to be liked.

Discussing our family visits would be too painful, so our final rankings for stage one are all anyone can talk about that night. Every time someone near me brings it up, I stare at some point across the room and ignore them.

My rank can't be as bad as it used to be, especially after I beat Molly, but it might not be good enough to get me in the top ten at the end of initiation, especially when the Dauntless-born initiates are factored in.

At dinner I sit with Christina, Will, and Al at a table in the corner. We are uncomfortably close to Peter, Drew, and Molly, who are at the next table over. When conversation at our table reaches a lull, I hear every word they say. They are speculating about the ranks. What a surprise.

"You weren't allowed to have *pets*?" Christina demands, smacking the table with her palm. "Why not?"

"Because they're illogical," Will says matter-of-factly. "What is the point in providing food and shelter for an animal that just soils your furniture, makes your home smell bad, and ultimately dies?"

Al and I meet eyes, like we usually do when Will and Christina start to fight. But this time, the second our eyes meet, we both look away. I hope this awkwardness between us doesn't

last long. I want my friend back.

“The *point* is...” Christina’s voice trails off, and she tilts her head. “Well, they’re fun to have. I had a bulldog named Chunker. One time we left a whole roasted chicken on the counter to cool, and while my mother went to the bathroom, he pulled it down off the counter and ate it, bones and skin and all. We laughed so hard.”

“Yes, that certainly changes my mind. Of course I want to live with an animal that eats all my food and destroys my kitchen.” Will shakes his head. “Why don’t you just get a dog after initiation if you’re feeling that nostalgic?”

“Because.” Christina’s smile falls, and she pokes at her potato with her fork. “Dogs are sort of ruined for me. After...you know, after the aptitude test.”

We exchange looks. We all know that we aren’t supposed to talk about the test, not even now that we have chosen, but for them that rule must not be as serious as it is for me. My heart jumps unsteadily in my chest. For me that rule is protection. It keeps me from having to lie to my friends about my results. Every time I think the word “Divergent,” I hear Tori’s warning—and now my mother’s warning too. *Don’t tell anyone. Dangerous.*

“You mean...killing the dog, right?” asks Will.

I almost forgot. Those with an aptitude for Dauntless picked up the knife in the simulation and stabbed the dog when it attacked. No wonder Christina doesn’t want a pet dog anymore. I tug my sleeves over my wrists and twist my fingers together.

“Yeah,” she says. “I mean, you guys all had to do that too, right?”

She looks first at Al, and then at me. Her dark eyes narrow, and she says, “*You* didn’t.”

“Hmm?”

“You’re hiding something,” she says. “You’re fidgeting.”

“What?”

“In Candor,” says Al, nudging me with his shoulder. There. That feels normal. “We learn to read body language so we know when someone is lying or keeping something from us.”

“Oh.” I scratch the back of my neck. “Well...”

“See, there it is again!” she says, pointing at my hand.

I feel like I’m swallowing my heartbeat. How can I lie about my results if they can tell when I’m lying? I’ll have to control my body language. I drop my hand and clasp my hands in my lap. Is that what an honest person does?

I don’t have to lie about the dog, at least. “No, I didn’t kill the dog.”

“How did you get Dauntless without using the knife?” says Will, narrowing his eyes at me.

I look him in the eye and say evenly, “I didn’t. I got Abnegation.”

It is half-true. Tori reported my result as Abnegation, so that is what is in the system. Anyone who has access to the scores would be able to see it. I keep my eyes on his for a few seconds. Shifting them away might be suspicious. Then I shrug and stab a piece of meat with my fork. I hope they believe me. They have to believe me.

“But you chose Dauntless anyway?” Christina says. “Why?”

“I told you,” I say, smirking. “It was the food.”

She laughs. “Did you guys know that Tris had never seen a hamburger before she came here?”

She launches into the story of our first day, and my body relaxes, but I still feel heavy. I should not lie to my friends. It creates barriers between us, and we already have more than I want. Christina taking the flag. Me rejecting Al.

After dinner we go back to the dormitory, and it’s hard for me not to sprint, knowing that the rankings will be up when I get there. I want to get it over with. At the door to the dormitory, Drew shoves me into the wall to get past me. My shoulder scrapes on the stone, but I keep walking.

I’m too short to see over the crowd of initiates standing near the back of the room, but when I find a space between heads to look through, I see that the blackboard is on the ground, leaning against Four’s legs, facing away from us. He stands with a piece of chalk in one hand.

“For those of you who just came in, I’m explaining how the ranks are determined,” he says. “After the first round of fights, we ranked you according to your skill level. The number of points you earn depends on your skill level and the skill level of the person you beat. You earn more points for improving and more points for beating someone of a high skill level. I don’t reward preying on the weak. That is cowardice.”

I think his eyes linger on Peter at that last line, but they move on quickly enough that I’m not sure.

“If you have a high rank, you lose points for losing to a low-ranked opponent.”

Molly lets out an unpleasant noise, like a snort or a grumble.

“Stage two of training is weighted more heavily than stage one, because it is more closely tied to overcoming cowardice,” he says. “That said, it is extremely difficult to rank high at the end of initiation if you rank low in stage one.”

I shift from one foot to the other, trying to get a good look at him. When I finally do, I look away. His eyes are already on me, probably drawn by my nervous movement.

“We will announce the cuts tomorrow,” Four says. “The fact that you are transfers and the Dauntless-born initiates are not will not be taken into consideration. Four of you could be factionless and none of them. Or four of them could be factionless and none of you. Or any combination thereof. That said, here are your ranks.”

He hangs the board on the hook and steps back so we can see the rankings:

1. Edward
2. Peter
3. Will
4. Christina
5. Molly
6. Tris

Sixth? I can’t be sixth. Beating Molly must have boosted my rank more than I thought it would. And losing to me seems to have lowered hers. I skip to the bottom of the list.

7. Drew
8. Al
9. Myra

Al isn't dead last, but unless the Dauntless-born initiates completely failed their version of stage one of initiation, he is factionless.

I glance at Christina. She tilts her head and frowns at the board. She isn't the only one. The quiet in 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 them to change their allegiance from family to faction—to embrace the principle "faction before blood."

I bury my face in the pillow. She asked me to tell Caleb to research the simulation serum—why? Does it have something to do with me being Divergent, with me being in danger, or is it something else? I sigh. I have a thousand questions, and she left before I could ask any of them. Now they swirl in my head, and I doubt I'll be able to sleep until I can answer them.

I hear a scuffle across the room and lift my head from the pillow. My eyes aren't adjusted to the dark, so I stare into pure black, like the backs of my eyelids. I hear shuffling and the squeak of a shoe. A heavy thud.

And then a wail that curdles my blood and makes my hair stand on end. I throw the blankets back and stand on the stone floor with bare feet. I still can't see well enough to find the source of the scream, but I see a dark lump on the floor a few bunks down. Another scream pierces my ears.

"Turn on the lights!" someone shouts.

I walk toward the sound, slowly so I don't trip over anything. I feel like I'm in a trance. I don't want to see where the screaming is coming from. A scream like that can only mean blood and bone and pain; that scream that comes from the pit of the stomach and extends to every inch of the body.

The lights come on.

Edward lies on the floor next to his bed, clutching at his face. Surrounding his head is a halo of blood, and jutting between his clawing fingers is a silver knife handle. My heart thumping in my ears, I recognize it as a butter knife from the dining hall. The blade is stuck in Edward's eye.

Myra, who stands at Edward's feet, screams. Someone else screams too, and someone yells for help, and Edward is still on the floor, writhing and wailing. I crouch by his head, my knees pressing to the pool of blood, and put my hands on his shoulders.

"Lie still," I say. I feel calm, though I can't hear anything, like my head is submerged in water. Edward thrashes again and I say it louder, sterner. "I said, lie *still*. Breathe."

"My eye!" he screams.

I smell something foul. Someone vomited.

"Take it out!" he yells. "Get it out, get it out of me, get it out!"

I shake my head and then realize that he can't see me. A laugh bubbles in my stomach. Hysterical. I have to suppress hysteria if I'm going to help him. I have to forget myself.



“No,” I say. “You have to let the doctor take it out. Hear me? Let the doctor take it out. And breathe.”

“It hurts,” he sobs.

“I know it does.” Instead of my voice I hear my mother’s voice. I see her crouching before me on the sidewalk in front of our house, brushing tears from my face after I scraped my knee. I was five at the time.

“It will be all right.” I try to sound firm, like I’m not idly reassuring him, but I am. I don’t know if it will be all right. I suspect that it won’t.

When the nurse arrives, she tells me to step back, and I do. My hands and knees are soaked with blood. When I look around, I see that only two faces are missing.

Drew.

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.

I say, more seriously, “The most ridiculous part is, in any other faction it would be brave of us to tell someone what happened. But here...in *Dauntless*...bravery won’t do us any good.”

“Have you ever read the faction manifestos?” says Will.

The faction manifestos were written after the factions formed. We learned about them in school, but I never read them.

“You have?” I frown at him. Then I remember that Will once memorized a map of the city for fun, and I say, “Oh. Of course *you* have. Never mind.”

“One of the lines I remember from the Dauntless manifesto is, ‘We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another.’”

Will sighs.

He doesn’t need to say anything else. I know what he means. Maybe Dauntless was formed with good intentions, with the right ideals and the right goals. But it has strayed far from them. And the same is true of Erudite, I realize. A long time ago, Erudite pursued knowledge and ingenuity for the sake of doing good. Now they pursue knowledge and ingenuity with greedy hearts. I wonder if the other factions suffer from the same problem. I have not thought about it before.

Despite the depravity I see in Dauntless, though, I could not leave it. It isn’t only because the thought of living factionless, in complete isolation, sounds like a fate worse than death. It is because, in the brief moments that I have loved it here, I saw a faction worth saving. Maybe we can become brave and honorable again.

“Let’s go to the cafeteria,” Will says, “and eat cake.”

“Okay.” I smile.

As we walk toward the Pit, I repeat the line Will quoted to myself so I don’t forget it.

*I believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another.*

It is a beautiful thought.

Later, when I return to the dormitory, Edward’s bunk is stripped clean and his drawers are

open, empty. Across the room, Myra's bunk looks the same way.

When I ask Christina where they went, she says, "They quit."

"Even Myra?"

"She said she didn't want to be here without him. She was going to get cut anyway." She shrugs, like she can't think of anything else to do. If that's true, I know how she feels. "At least they didn't cut Al."

Al was supposed to get cut, but Edward's departure saved him. The Dauntless decided to spare him until the next stage.

"Who else got cut?" I say.

Christina shrugs again. "Two of the Dauntless-born. I don't remember their names."

I nod and look at the blackboard. Someone drew a line through Edward and Myra's names, and changed the numbers next to everyone else's names. Now Peter is first. Will is second. I am fifth. We started stage one with nine initiates.

Now we have seven.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

**I**T'S NOON. LUNCHTIME.

I sit in a hallway I don't recognize. I walked here because I needed to get away from the dormitory. Maybe if I bring my bedding here, I will never have to go to the dormitory again. It may be my imagination, but it still smells like blood in there, even though I scrubbed the floor until my hands were sore, and someone poured bleach on it this morning.

I pinch the bridge of my nose. Scrubbing the floor when no one else wanted to was something that my mother would have done. If I can't be with her, the least I can do is act like her sometimes.

I hear people approaching, their footsteps echoing on the stone floor, and I look down at my shoes. I switched from gray sneakers to black sneakers a week ago, but the gray shoes are buried in one of my drawers. I can't bear to throw them away, even though I know it's foolish to be attached to sneakers, like they can bring me home.

"Tris?"

I look up. Uriah stops in front of me. He waves along the Dauntless-born initiates he walks with. They exchange looks but keep moving.

"You okay?" he says.

"I had a difficult night."

"Yeah, I heard about that guy Edward." Uriah looks down the hallway. The Dauntless-born initiates disappear around a corner. Then he grins a little. "Want to get out of here?"

"What?" I ask. "Where are you going?"

"To a little initiation ritual," he says. "Come on. We have to hurry."

I briefly consider my options. I can sit here. Or I can leave the Dauntless compound.

I push myself to my feet and jog next to Uriah to catch up to the Dauntless-born initiates.

"The only initiates they usually let come are ones with older siblings in Dauntless," he says. "But they might not even notice. Just act like you belong."

"What exactly are we doing?"

"Something dangerous," he says. A look I can only describe as Dauntless mania enters his eyes, but rather than recoil from it, as I might have a few weeks ago, I catch it, like it's contagious. Excitement replaces the leaden feeling inside me. We slow when we reach the Dauntless-born initiates.

"What's the *Stiff* doing here?" asks a boy with a metal ring between his nostrils.

"She just saw that guy get stabbed in the eye, Gabe," says Uriah. "Give her a break, okay?"

Gabe shrugs and turns away. No one else says anything, though a few of them give me sidelong glances like they're sizing me up. The Dauntless-born initiates are like a pack of dogs. If I act the wrong way, they won't let me run with them. But for now, I am safe.

We turn another corner, and a group of members stands at the end of the next hallway. There are too many of them to all be related to a Dauntless-born initiate, but I see some

similarities among the faces.

“Let’s go,” one of the members says. He turns and plunges through a dark doorway. The other 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 “nice” and half wanting to punch her for no apparent reason.

“Here we go!” shouts Shauna. The train doesn’t slow down, but she throws herself out of the car. The other members follow her, a stream of black-clothed, pierced people not much older than I am. I stand in the doorway next to Uriah. The train is going much faster than it has every other time I’ve jumped, but I can’t lose my nerve now, in front of all these members. So I jump, hitting the ground hard and stumbling forward a few steps before I regain my balance.

Uriah and I jog to catch up to the members, along with the other initiates, who barely look in my direction.

I look around as I walk. The Hub is behind us, black against the clouds, but the buildings around me are dark and silent. That means we must be north of the bridge, where the city is abandoned.

We turn a corner and spread out as we walk down Michigan Avenue. South of the bridge, Michigan Avenue is a busy street, crawling with people, but here it is bare.

As soon as I lift my eyes to scan the buildings, I know where we’re going: the empty Hancock building, a black pillar with crisscrossed girders, the tallest building north of the bridge.

But what are we going to do? Climb it?

As we get closer, the members start to run, and Uriah and I sprint to catch them. Jostling one another with their elbows, they push through a set of doors at the building’s base. The glass in one of them is broken, so it is just a frame. I step through it instead of opening it and follow the members through an eerie, dark entryway, crunching broken glass beneath my feet.

I expect us to go up the stairs, but we stop at the elevator bank.

“Do the elevators work?” I ask Uriah, as quietly as I can.

“Sure they do,” says Zeke, rolling his eyes. “You think I’m stupid enough not to come here early and turn on the emergency generator?”

“Yeah,” says Uriah. “I kinda do.”

Zeke glares at his brother, then puts him in a headlock and rubs his knuckles into Uriah’s skull. Zeke may be smaller than Uriah, but he must be stronger. Or at least faster. Uriah smacks him in the side, and he lets go.

I grin at the sight of Uriah’s disheveled hair, and the elevator doors open. We pile in, members in one and initiates in the other. A girl with a shaved head stomps on my toes on the way in and doesn’t apologize. I grab my foot, wincing, and consider kicking her in the shins. Uriah stares at his reflection in the elevator doors and pats his hair down.

“What floor?” the girl with the shaved head says.

“One hundred,” I say.

“How would *you* know that?”

“Lynn, come on,” says Uriah. “Be nice.”

“We’re in a one-hundred-story abandoned building with some Dauntless,” I retort. “Why

don't you know that?"

She doesn't respond. She just jams her thumb into the right button.

The elevator zooms upward so fast my stomach sinks and my ears pop. I grab a railing at the side of the elevator, watching the numbers climb. We pass twenty, and thirty, and Uriah's hair is finally smooth. Fifty, sixty, and my toes are done throbbing. Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, and the elevator comes to a stop at one hundred. I'm glad we didn't take the stairs.

"I wonder how we'll get to the roof from..." Uriah's voice trails off.

A strong wind hits me, pushing my hair across my face. There is a gaping hole in the ceiling of the hundredth floor. Zeke props an aluminum ladder against its edge and starts to climb. The ladder creaks and sways beneath his feet, but he keeps climbing, whistling as he does. When he reaches the roof, he turns around and holds the top of the ladder for the next person.

Part of me wonders if this is a suicide mission disguised as a game.

It isn't the first time I've wondered that since the Choosing Ceremony.

I climb the ladder after Uriah. It reminds me of climbing the rungs on the Ferris wheel with Four close at my heels. I remember his fingers on my hip again, how they kept me from falling, and I almost miss a step on the ladder. *Stupid.*

Biting my lip, I make it to the top and stand on the roof of the Hancock building.

The wind is so powerful I hear and feel nothing else. I have to lean against Uriah to keep from falling over. At first, all I see is the marsh, wide and brown and everywhere, touching the horizon, devoid of life. In the other direction is the city, and in many ways it is the same, lifeless and with limits I do not know.

Uriah points to something. Attached to one of the poles on top of the tower is a steel cable as thick as my wrist. On the ground is a pile of black slings made of tough fabric, large enough to hold a human being. Zeke grabs one and attaches it to a pulley that hangs from the steel cable.

I follow the cable down, over the cluster of buildings and along Lake Shore Drive. I don't know where it ends. One thing is clear, though: If I go through with this, I'll find out.

We're going to slide down a steel cable in a black sling from one thousand feet up.

"Oh my God," says Uriah.

All I can do is nod.

Shauna is the first person to get in the sling. She wriggles forward on her stomach until most of her body is supported by black fabric. Then Zeke pulls a strap across her shoulders, the small of her back, and the top of her thighs. He pulls her, in the sling, to the edge of the building and counts down from five. Shauna gives a thumbs-up as he shoves her forward, into nothingness.

Lynn gasps as Shauna hurtles toward the ground at a steep incline, headfirst. I push past her to see better. Shauna stays secure in the sling for as long as I can see her, and then she's too far away, just a black speck over Lake Shore Drive.

The members whoop and pump their fists and form a line, sometimes shoving one another out of the way to get a better place. Somehow I am the first initiate in line, right in front of

Uriah. Only seven people stand between me and the zip line.

Still, there is a part of me that groans, *I have to wait for seven people?* It is a strange blend of terror and eagerness, unfamiliar until now.

The next member, a young-looking boy with hair down to his shoulders, jumps into the sling on his back instead of his stomach. He stretches his arms wide as Zeke shoves him down the steel cable.

None of the members seem at all afraid. They act like they have done this a thousand times before, and maybe they have. But when I look over my shoulder, I see that most of the initiates look pale or worried, even if they talk excitedly to one another. What happens between initiation and membership that transforms panic into delight? Or do people just get better at hiding their fear?

Three people in front of me. Another sling; a member gets in feet-first and crosses her arms over her chest. Two people. A tall, thick boy jumps up and down like a child before climbing into the sling and lets out a high screech as he disappears, making the girl in front of me laugh. One person.

She hops into the sling face-first and keeps her hands in front of her as Zeke tightens her straps. And then it's my turn.

I shudder as Zeke hangs my sling from the cable. I try to climb in, but I have trouble; my hands are shaking too badly.

"Don't worry," Zeke says right next to my ear. He takes my arm and helps me get in, facedown.

The straps tighten around my midsection, and Zeke slides me forward, to the edge of the roof. I stare down the building's steel girders and black windows, all the way to the cracked sidewalk. I am a fool for doing this. And a fool for enjoying the feeling of my heart slamming against my sternum and sweat gathering in the lines of my palms.

"Ready, Stiff?" Zeke smirks down at me. "I have to say, I'm impressed that you aren't screaming and crying right now."

"I told you," Uriah says. "She's Dauntless through and through. Now get on with it."

"Careful, brother, or I might not tighten your straps enough," Zeke says. He smacks his knee. "And then, *splat!*"

"Yeah, yeah," Uriah says. "And then our mother would boil you alive."

Hearing him talk about his mother, about his intact family, makes my chest hurt for a second, like someone pierced it with a needle.

"Only if she found out." Zeke tugs on the pulley attached to the steel cable. It holds, which is fortunate, because if it breaks, my death will be swift and certain. He looks down at me and says, "Ready, set, g—"

Before he can finish the word "go," he releases the sling and I forget him, I forget Uriah, and family, and all the things that could malfunction and lead to my death. I hear metal sliding against metal and feel wind so intense it forces tears into my eyes as I hurtle toward the ground.

I feel like I am without substance, without weight. Ahead of me the marsh looks huge, its



patches of brown spreading farther than I can see, even up this high. The air is so cold and so fast that it hurts my face. I pick up speed and a shout of exhilaration rises within me, stopped only by the wind that fills my mouth the second my lips part.

Held secure by the straps, I throw my arms out to the side and imagine that I am flying. I plunge toward the street, which is cracked and patchy and follows perfectly the curve of the marsh. I can imagine, up here, how the marsh looked when it was full of water, like liquid steel as it reflected the color of the sky.

My heart beats so hard it hurts, and I can't scream and I can't breathe, but I also feel everything, every vein and every fiber, every bone and every nerve, all awake and buzzing in my body as if charged with electricity. I am pure adrenaline.

The ground grows and bulges beneath me, and I can see the tiny people standing on the pavement below. I should scream, like any rational human being would, but when I open my mouth again, I just caw with joy. I yell louder, and the figures on the ground pump their fists and yell back, but they are so far away I can barely hear them.

I look down and the ground smears beneath me, all gray and white and black, glass and pavement 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?”

“Uriah...you know, the Dauntless-born who was on our capture the flag team?” I say. “He was leaving with some of the members and he begged them to let me come along. They didn’t really want me there. Some girl named Lynn stepped on me.”

“They may not have wanted you there then,” says Will quietly, “but they seem to like you now.”

“Yeah,” I say. I can’t deny it. “I’m glad to be back, though.”

Hopefully they can’t tell I’m lying, but I suspect they can. I caught sight of myself in a window on the way into the compound, and my cheeks and eyes were both bright, my hair tangled. I look like I have experienced something powerful.

“Well, you missed Christina almost punching an Erudite,” says Al. His voice sounds eager. I can count on Al to try to break the tension. “He was here asking for opinions about the Abnegation leadership, and Christina told him there were more important things for him to be doing.”

“Which she was completely right about,” adds Will. “And he got testy with her. Big mistake.”

“Huge,” I say, nodding. If I smile enough, maybe I can make them forget their jealousy, or hurt, or whatever is brewing behind Christina’s eyes.

“Yeah,” she says. “While you were off having fun, I was doing the dirty work of defending your old faction, eliminating interfaction conflict...”

“Come on, you know you enjoyed it,” says Will, nudging her with his elbow. “If you’re not

going to tell the whole story, I will. He was standing...”

Will launches into his story, and I nod along like I’m listening, but all I can think about is staring down the side of the Hancock building, and the image I got of the marsh full of water, restored to its former glory. I look over Will’s shoulder at the members, who are now flicking bits of food at one another with their forks.

It’s the first time I have been really eager to be one of them.

Which means I have to survive the next stage of initiation.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AS FAR AS I can tell, the second stage of initiation involves sitting in a dark hallway with the other initiates, wondering what's going to happen behind a closed door.

Uriah sits across from me, with Marlene on his left and Lynn on his right. The Dauntless-born initiates and the transfers were separated during stage one, but we will be training together from now on. That's what Four told us before he disappeared behind the door.

"So," says Lynn, scuffing the floor with her shoe. "Which one of you is ranked first, huh?"

Her question is met with silence at first, and then Peter clears his throat.

"Me," he says.

"Bet I could take you." She says it casually, turning the ring in her eyebrow with her fingertips. "I'm second, but I bet any of us could take you, transfer."

I almost laugh. If I was still Abnegation, her comment would be rude and out of place, but among the Dauntless, challenges like that seem common. I am almost starting to expect them.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that, if I were you," Peter says, his eyes glittering. "Who's first?"

"Uriah," she says. "And I am sure. You know how many years we've spent preparing for this?"

If she intends to intimidate us, it works. I already feel colder.

Before Peter can respond, Four opens the door and says, "Lynn." He beckons to her, and she walks down the hallway, the blue light at the end making her bare head glow.

"So you're first," Will says to Uriah.

Uriah shrugs. "Yeah. And?"

"And you don't think it's a little unfair that you've spent your entire life getting ready for this, and we're expected to learn it all in a few weeks?" Will says, his eyes narrowing.

"Not really. Stage one was about skill, sure, but no one can prepare for stage two," he says. "At least, so I'm told."

No one responds to that. We sit in silence for twenty minutes. I count each minute on my watch. Then the door opens again, and Four calls another name.

"Peter," he says.

Each minute wears into me like a scrape of sandpaper. Gradually, our numbers begin to dwindle, and it's just me and Uriah and Drew. Drew's leg bounces, and Uriah's fingers tap against his knee, and I try to sit perfectly still. I hear only muttering from the room at the end of the hallway, and I suspect this is another part of the game they like to play with us. Terrifying us at every opportunity.

The door opens, and Four beckons to me. "Come on, Tris."

I stand, my back sore from leaning against the wall for so long, and walk past the other initiates. Drew sticks out his leg to trip me, but I hop over it at the last second.

Four touches my shoulder to guide me into the room and closes the door behind me.

When I see what's inside, I recoil immediately, my shoulders hitting his chest.

In the room is a reclining metal chair, similar to the one I sat in during the aptitude test. Beside it is a familiar machine. This room has no mirrors and barely any light. There is a computer screen on a 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.

I stand in a field of dry grass that comes up to my waist. The air smells like smoke and burns my nostrils. Above me the sky is bile-colored, and the sight of it fills me with anxiety, my body cringing away from it.

I hear fluttering, like the pages of a book blown by the wind, but there is no wind. The air is still and soundless apart from the flapping, neither hot nor cold—not like air at all, but I can still breathe. A shadow swoops overhead.

Something lands on my shoulder. I feel its weight and the prick of talons and fling my arm forward to shake it off, my hand batting at it. I feel something smooth and fragile. A feather. I bite my lip and look to the side. A black bird the size of my forearm turns its head and focuses one beady eye on me.

I grit my teeth and hit the crow again with my hand. It digs in its talons and doesn't move. I cry out, more frustrated than pained, and hit the crow with both hands, but it stays in place, resolute, one eye on me, feathers gleaming in the yellow light. Thunder rumbles and I hear the patter of rain on the ground, but no rain falls.

The sky darkens, like a cloud is passing over the sun. Still cringing away from the crow, I look up. A flock of crows storms toward me, an advancing army of outstretched talons and open beaks, each one squawking, filling the air with noise. The crows descend in a single mass, diving toward the earth, hundreds of beady black eyes shining.

I try to run, but my feet are firmly planted and refuse to move, like the crow on my shoulder. I scream as they surround me, feathers flapping in my ears, beaks pecking at my shoulders, talons clinging to my clothes. I scream until tears come from my eyes, my arms flailing. My hands hit solid bodies but do nothing; there are too many. I am alone. They nip at my fingertips and press against my body, wings sliding across the back of my neck, feet tearing at my hair.

I twist and wrench and fall to the ground, covering my head with my arms. They scream against me. I feel a wiggling in the grass, a crow forcing its way under my arm. I open my eyes and it pecks at my face, its beak hitting me in the nose. Blood drips onto the grass and I sob, hitting it with my palm, but another crow wedges under my other arm and its claws stick to the front of my shirt.

I am screaming; I am sobbing.

“Help!” I wail. “Help!”

And the crows flap harder, a roar in my ears. My body burns, and they are everywhere, and I can't think, I can't breathe. I gasp for air and my mouth fills with feathers, feathers down my throat, in my lungs, replacing my blood with dead weight.

“Help,” I sob and scream, insensible, illogical. I am dying; I am dying; I am dying.

My skin sears and I am bleeding, and the squawking is so loud my ears are ringing, but I am *not* dying, and I remember that it isn't real, but it feels real, it feels so real. *Be brave*. Four's voice screams in my memory. I cry out to him, inhaling feathers and exhaling “Help!” But

there will be no help; I am alone.

*You stay in the hallucination until you can calm down*, his voice continues, and I cough, and my face is wet with tears, and another crow has wriggled under my arms, and I feel the edge of its sharp beak against my mouth. Its beak wedges past my lips and scrapes my teeth. The crow pushes its head into my mouth and I bite hard, tasting something foul. I spit and clench my teeth to form a barrier, but now a fourth crow is pushing at my feet, and a fifth crow is pecking at my ribs.

*Calm down.* I can't, I can't. My head throbs.

*Breathe.* I keep my mouth closed and suck air into my nose. It has been hours since I was alone in the field; it has been days. I push air out of my nose. My heart pounds hard in my chest. I have to slow it down. I breathe again, my face wet with tears.

I sob again, and force myself forward, stretching out on the grass, which prickles against my skin. I extend my arms and breathe. Crows push and prod at my sides, worming their way beneath me, and I let them. I let the flapping of wings and the squawking and the pecking and the prodding continue, relaxing one muscle at a time, resigning myself to becoming a pecked carcass.

The pain overwhelms me.

I open my eyes, and I am sitting in the metal chair.

I scream and hit my arms and head and legs to get the birds off me, but they are gone, though I can still feel the feathers brushing the back of my neck and the talons in my shoulder and my burning skin. I moan and pull my knees to my chest, burying my face in them.

A hand touches my shoulder, and I fling a fist out, hitting something solid but soft. "Don't touch me!" I sob.

"It's over," Four says. The hand shifts awkwardly over my hair, and I remember my father stroking my hair when he kissed me goodnight, my mother touching my hair when she trimmed it with the scissors. I run my palms along my arms, still brushing off feathers, though I know there aren't any.

"Tris."

I rock back and forth in the metal chair.

"Tris, I'm going to take you back to the dorms, okay?"

"No!" I snap. I lift my head and glare at him, though I can't see him through the blur of tears. "They can't see me...not like this..."

"Oh, calm down," he says. He rolls his eyes. "I'll take you out the back door."

"I don't need you to..." I shake my head. My body is trembling and I feel so weak I'm not sure I can stand, but I have to try. I can't be the only one who needs to be walked back to the dorms. Even if they don't see me, they'll find out, they'll talk about me—

"Nonsense."

He grabs my arm and hauls me out of the chair. I blink the tears from my eyes, wipe my cheeks with the heel of my hand, and let him steer me toward the door behind the computer screen.

We walk down the hallway in silence. When we're a few hundred yards away from the

room, I yank my arm away and stop.

“Why did you do that to me?” I say. “What was the point of that, huh? I wasn’t aware that when I chose Dauntless, I was signing up for weeks of torture!”

“Did you think overcoming cowardice would be easy?” he says calmly.

“That isn’t overcoming cowardice! Cowardice is how you decide to be in real life, and in real life, I am not getting pecked to death by crows, Four!” I press my palms to my face and sob into them.

He doesn’t say anything, just stands there as I cry. It only takes me a few seconds to stop and wipe my face again. “I want to go home,” I say weakly.

But home is not an option anymore. My choices are here or the factionless slums.

He doesn’t look at me with sympathy. He just looks at me. His eyes look black in the dim corridor, and his mouth is set in a hard line.

“Learning how to think in the midst of fear,” he says, “is a lesson that everyone, even your Stiff family, needs to learn. That’s what we’re trying to teach you. If you can’t learn it, you’ll need to get the hell out of here, because we won’t want you.”

“I’m *trying*.” My lower lip trembles. “But I failed. I’m failing.”

He sighs. “How long do you think you spent in that hallucination, Tris?”

“I don’t know.” I shake my head. “A half hour?”

“Three minutes,” he replies. “You got out three times faster than the other initiates. Whatever you are, you’re not a failure.”

Three minutes?

He smiles a little. “Tomorrow you’ll be better at this. You’ll see.”

“Tomorrow?”

He touches my back and guides me toward the dormitory. I feel his fingertips through my shirt. Their gentle pressure makes me forget the birds for a moment.

“What was your first hallucination?” I say, glancing at him.

“It wasn’t a ‘what’ so much as a ‘who.’” He shrugs. “It’s not important.”

“And are you over that fear now?”

“Not yet.” We reach the door to the dormitory, and he leans against the wall, sliding his hands into his pockets. “I may never be.”

“So they don’t go away?”

“Sometimes they do. And sometimes new fears replace them.” His thumbs hook around his belt loops. “But becoming fearless isn’t the point. That’s impossible. It’s learning how to control your fear, and how to be free from it, *that’s* the point.”

I nod. I used to think the Dauntless were fearless. That is how they seemed, anyway. But maybe what I saw as fearless was actually fear under control.

“Anyway, your fears are rarely what they appear to be in the simulation,” he adds.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, are you really afraid of crows?” he says, half smiling at me. The expression warms his eyes enough that I forget he’s my instructor. He’s just a boy, talking casually, walking me



to my door. “When you see one, do you run away screaming?”

“No. I guess not.” I think about stepping closer to him, not for any practical reason, but just because I want to see what it would be like to stand that close to him; just because I want to.

*Foolish*, a voice in my head says.

I step closer and lean against the wall too, tilting my head sideways to look at him. As I did on the Ferris wheel, I know exactly how much space there is between us. Six inches. I lean. Less than six inches. I feel warmer, like he’s giving off some kind of energy that I am only now close enough to feel.

“So what am I really afraid of?” I say.

“I don’t know,” he says. “Only you can know.”

I nod slowly. There are a dozen things it could be, but I’m not sure which one is right, or if there’s even one right one.

“I didn’t know becoming Dauntless would be this difficult,” I say, and a second later, I am surprised that I said it; surprised that I admitted to it. I bite the inside of my cheek and watch Four carefully. Was it a mistake to tell him that?

“It wasn’t always like this, I’m told,” he says, lifting a shoulder. My admission doesn’t appear to bother him. “Being Dauntless, I mean.”

“What changed?”

“The leadership,” he says. “The person who controls training sets the standard of Dauntless behavior. Six years ago Max and the other leaders changed the training methods to make them more competitive and more brutal, said it was supposed to test people’s strength. And that changed the priorities of Dauntless as a whole. Bet you can’t guess who the leaders’ new protégé is.”

The answer is obvious: Eric. They trained him to be vicious, and now he will train the rest of us to be vicious too.

I look at Four. Their training didn’t work on him.

“So if you were ranked first in your initiate class,” I say, “what was Eric’s rank?”

“Second.”

“So he was their second choice for leadership.” I nod slowly. “And you were their first.”

“What makes you say that?”

“The way Eric was acting at dinner the first night. Jealous, even though he has what he wants.”

Four doesn’t contradict me. I must be right. I want to ask why he didn’t take the position the leaders offered him; why he is so resistant to leadership when he seems to be a natural leader. But I know how Four feels about personal questions.

I sniff, wipe my face one more time, and smooth down my hair.

“Do I look like I’ve been crying?” I say.

“Hmm.” He leans in close, narrowing his eyes like he’s inspecting my face. A smile tugs at the corner of his mouth. Even closer, so we would be breathing the same air—if I could remember to breathe.

“No, Tris,” he says. A more serious look replaces his smile as he adds, “You look tough as nails.”

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

WHEN I WALK IN, most of the other initiates—Dauntless-born and transfer alike—are crowded between the rows of bunk beds with Peter at their center. He holds a piece of paper in both hands.

*“The mass exodus of the children of Abnegation leaders cannot be ignored or attributed to coincidence,”* he reads. *“The recent transfer of Beatrice and Caleb Prior, the children of Andrew Prior, calls into question the soundness of Abnegation’s values and teachings.”*

Cold creeps up my spine. Christina, standing on the edge of the crowd, looks over her shoulder and spots me. She gives me a worried look. I can’t move. My father. Now the Erudite are attacking my father.

*“Why else would the children of such an important man decide that the lifestyle he has set out for them is not an admirable one?”* Peter continues. *“Molly Atwood, a fellow Dauntless transfer, suggests a disturbed and abusive upbringing might be to blame. ‘I heard her talking in her sleep once,’ Molly says. ‘She was telling her father to stop doing something. I don’t know what it was, but it gave her nightmares.’”*

So this is Molly’s revenge. She must have talked to the Erudite reporter that Christina yelled at.

She smiles. Her teeth are crooked. If I knocked them out, I might be doing her a favor.

“What?” I demand. Or I try to demand, but my voice comes out strangled and scratchy, and I have to clear my throat and say it again. *“What?”*

Peter stops reading, and a few people turn around. Some, like Christina, look at me in a pitying way, their eyebrows drawn in, their mouths turned down at the corners. But most give me little smirks and eye one another suggestively. Peter turns last, with a wide smile.

“Give me that,” I say, holding out my hand. My face burns.

“But I’m not done reading,” he replies, laughter in his voice. His eyes scan the paper again. *“However, perhaps the answer lies not in a morally bereft man, but in the corrupted ideals of an entire faction. Perhaps the answer is that we have entrusted our city to a group of proselytizing tyrants who do not know how to lead us out of poverty and into prosperity.”*

I storm up to him and try to snatch the paper from his hands, but he holds it up, high above my head so I can’t reach it unless I jump, and I won’t jump. Instead, I lift my heel and stomp as hard as I can where the bones in his foot connect to his toes. He grits his teeth to stifle a groan.

Then I throw myself at Molly, hoping the force of the impact will surprise her and knock her down, but before I can do any damage, cold hands close around my waist.

“That’s my *father!*” I scream. “My father, you coward!”

Will pulls me away from her, lifting me off the ground. My breaths come fast, and I struggle to grab the paper before anyone can read another word of it. I have to burn it; I have to destroy it; I have to.

Will drags me out of the room and into the hallway, his fingernails digging into my skin. Once the door shuts behind him, he lets go, and I shove him as hard as I can.

“What? Did you think I couldn’t defend myself against that piece of Candor trash?”

“No,” says Will. He stands in front of the door. “I figured I’d stop you from starting a brawl in the dormitory. Calm down.”

I laugh a little. “Calm down? Calm *down*? That’s my *family* they’re talking about, that’s my *faction*!”

“No, it’s not.” There are dark circles under his eyes; he looks exhausted. “It’s your old faction, and there’s nothing you can do about what they say, so you might as well just ignore it.”

“Were you even listening?” The heat in my cheeks is gone, and my breaths are more even now. “Your stupid ex-faction isn’t just insulting Abnegation anymore. They’re calling for an overthrow of the entire government.”

Will laughs. “No, they’re not. They’re arrogant and dull, and that’s why I left them, but they aren’t revolutionaries. They just want more say, that’s all, and they resent Abnegation for refusing to listen to them.”

“They don’t want people to listen, they want people to agree,” I reply. “And you shouldn’t bully people into agreeing with you.” I touch my palms to my cheeks. “I can’t believe my brother joined them.”

“Hey. They’re not all bad,” he says sharply.

I nod, but I don’t believe him. I can’t imagine anyone emerging from the Erudite unscathed, though Will seems all right.

The door opens again, and Christina and Al walk out.

“It’s my turn to get tattooed,” she says. “Want to come with us?”

I smooth my hair. I can’t go back into the dormitory. Even if Will let me, I am outnumbered there. My only choice is to go with them and try to forget what’s happening outside the Dauntless compound. I have enough to worry about without anxiety about my family.

Ahead of me, Al gives Christina a piggyback ride. She shrieks as he charges through the crowd. People give him a wide berth, when they can.

My shoulder still burns. Christina persuaded me to join her in getting a tattoo of the Dauntless seal. It is a circle with a flame inside it. My mother didn’t even react to the one on my collarbone, so I don’t have as many reservations about getting tattoos. They are a part of life here, just as integral to my initiation as learning to fight.

Christina also persuaded me to purchase a shirt that exposes my shoulders and collarbone, and to line my eyes with black pencil again. I don’t bother objecting to her makeover attempts anymore. Especially since I find myself enjoying them.

Will and I walk behind Christina and Al.

“I can’t believe you got another tattoo,” he says, shaking his head.

“Why?” I say. “Because I’m a Stiff?”

“No. Because you’re...sensible.” He smiles. His teeth are white and straight. “So, what was

your fear today, Tris?"

"Too many crows," I reply. "You?"

He laughs. "Too much acid."

I don't ask what that means.

"It's really fascinating how it all works," he says. "It's basically a struggle between your thalamus, which is producing the fear, and your frontal lobe, which makes decisions. But the simulation is all in your head, so even though you feel like someone is doing it to you, it's just you, doing it to yourself and..." He trails off. "Sorry. I sound like an Erudite. Just a habit."

I shrug. "It's interesting."

Al almost drops Christina, and she slaps her hands around the first thing she can grab, which just happens to be his face. He cringes and adjusts his grip on her legs. At a glance, Al seems happy, but there is something heavy about even his smiles. I am worried about him.

I see Four standing by the chasm, a group of people around him. He laughs so hard he has to grab the railing for balance. Judging by the bottle in his hand and the brightness of his face, he's intoxicated, or on his way there. I had begun to think of Four as rigid, like a soldier, and forgot that he's also eighteen.

"Uh-oh," says Will. "Instructor alert."

"At least it's not Eric," I say. "He'd probably make us play chicken or something."

"Sure, but Four is scary. Remember when he put the gun up to Peter's head? I think Peter wet himself."

"Peter deserved it," I say firmly.

Will doesn't argue with me. He might have, a few weeks ago, but now we've all seen what Peter is capable of.

"Tris!" Four calls out. Will and I exchange a look, half surprise and half apprehension. Four pulls away from the railing and walks up to me. Ahead of us, Al and Christina stop running, and Christina slides to the ground. I don't blame them for staring. There are four of us, and Four is only talking to me.

"You look different." His words, normally crisp, are now sluggish.

"So do you," I say. And he does—he looks more relaxed, younger. "What are you doing?"

"Flirting with death," he replies with a laugh. "Drinking near the chasm. Probably not a good idea."

"No, it isn't." I'm not sure I like Four this way. There's something unsettling about it.

"Didn't know you had a tattoo," he says, looking at my collarbone.

He sips the bottle. His breath smells thick and sharp. Like the factionless man's breath.

"Right. The *crows*," he says. He glances over his shoulder at his friends, who are carrying on without him, unlike mine. He adds, "I'd ask you to hang out with us, but you're not supposed to see me this way."

I am tempted to ask him why he wants me to hang out with him, but I suspect the answer has something to do with the bottle in his hand.

"What way?" I ask. "Drunk?"

“Yeah...well, no.” His voice softens. “Real, I guess.”

“I’ll pretend I didn’t.”

“Nice of you.” He puts his lips next to my ear and says, “You look good, Tris.”

His words surprise me, and my heart leaps. I wish it didn’t, because judging by the way his eyes slide over mine, he has no idea what he’s saying. I laugh. “Do me a favor and stay away from the chasm, okay?”

“Of course.” He winks at me.

I can’t help it. I smile. Will clears his throat, but I don’t want to turn away from Four, even when he walks back to his friends.

Then Al rushes at me like a rolling boulder and throws me over his shoulder. I shriek, my face hot.

“Come on, little girl,” he says, “I’m taking you to dinner.”

I rest my elbows on Al’s back and wave at Four as he carries me away.

“I thought I would rescue you,” Al says as we walk away. He sets me down. “What was *that* all about?”

He is trying to sound lighthearted, but he asks the question almost sadly. He still cares too much about me.

“Yeah, I think we’d all like to know the answer to *that* question,” says Christina in a singsong voice. “What did he say to you?”

“Nothing.” I shake my head. “He was drunk. He didn’t even know what he was saying.” I clear my throat. “That’s why I was grinning. It’s...funny to see him that way.”

“Right,” says Will. “Couldn’t possibly be because—”

I elbow Will hard in the ribs before he can finish his sentence. He was close enough to hear what Four said to me about looking good. I don’t need him telling everyone about it, especially not Al. I don’t want to make him feel worse.

At home I used to spend calm, pleasant nights with my family. My mother knit scarves for the neighborhood kids. My father helped Caleb with his homework. There was a fire in the fireplace and peace in my heart, as I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing, and everything was quiet.

I have never been carried around by a large boy, or laughed until my stomach hurt at the dinner table, or listened to the clamor of a hundred people all talking at once. Peace is restrained; this is free.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

**I** BREATHE THROUGH my nose. In, out. In.

“It’s just a simulation, Tris,” Four says quietly.

He’s wrong. The last simulation bled into my life, waking and sleeping. Nightmares, not just featuring the crows but the feelings I had in the simulation—terror and helplessness, which I suspect is what I am really afraid of. Sudden fits of terror in the shower, at breakfast, on the way here. Nails bitten down so far my nail beds ache. And I am not the only one who feels this way; I can tell.

Still I nod and close my eyes.

I am in darkness. The last thing I remember is the metal chair and the needle in my arm. This time there is no field; there are no crows. My heart pounds in anticipation. What monsters will creep from the darkness and steal my rationality? How long will I have to wait for them?

A blue orb lights up a few feet ahead of me, and then another one, filling the room with light. I am on the Pit floor, next to the chasm, and the initiates stand around me, their arms folded and their faces blank. I search for Christina and find her standing among them. None of them move. Their stillness makes my throat feel tight.

I see something in front of me—my own faint reflection. I touch it, and my fingers find glass, cool and smooth. I look up. There is a pane above me; I am in a glass box. I press above my head to see if I can force the box open. It doesn’t budge. I am sealed in.

My heart beats faster. I don’t want to be trapped. Someone taps on the wall in front of me. Four. He points at my feet, smirking.

A few seconds ago, my feet were dry, but now I stand in half an inch of water, and my socks are soggy. I crouch to see where the water is coming from, but it seems to be coming from nowhere, rising up from the box’s glass bottom. I look up at Four, and he shrugs. He joins the crowd of initiates.

The water rises fast. It now covers my ankles. I pound against the glass with my fist.

“Hey!” I say. “Let me out of here!”

The water slides up my bare calves as it rises, cool and soft. I hit the glass harder.

“Get me out of here!”

I stare at Christina. She leans over to Peter, who stands beside her, and whispers something in his ear. They both laugh.

The water covers my thighs. I pound both fists against the glass. I’m not trying to get their attention anymore; I’m trying to break out. Frantic, I bang against the glass as hard as I can. I step back and throw my shoulder into the wall, once, twice, three times, four times. I hit the wall until my shoulder aches, screaming for help, watching the water rise to my waist, my rib cage, my chest.

“Help!” I scream. “Please! Please help!”

I slap the glass. I will die in this tank. I drag my shaking hands through my hair.

I see Will standing among the initiates, and something tickles at the back of my mind. Something he said. *Come on, think.* I stop trying to break the glass. It's hard to breathe, but I have to try. I'll need as much air as I can get in a few seconds.

My body rises, weightless in the water. I float closer to the ceiling and tilt my head back as the water covers my chin. Gasping, I press my face to the glass above me, sucking in as much air as I can. Then the water covers me, sealing me into the box.

*Don't panic.* It's no use—my heart pounds and my thoughts scatter. I thrash in the water, smacking the walls. I kick the glass as hard as I can, but the water slows down my foot. *The simulation is all in your head.*

I scream, and water fills my mouth. If it's in my head, I control it. The water burns my eyes. The initiates' passive faces stare back at me. They don't care.

I scream again and shove the wall with my palm. I hear something. A cracking sound. When I pull my hand away, there is a line in the glass. I slam my other hand next to the first and drive another crack through the glass, this one spreading outward from my palm in long, crooked fingers. My chest burns like I just swallowed fire. I kick the wall. My toes ache from the impact, and I hear a long, low groan.

The pane shatters, and the force of the water against my back throws me forward. There is air again.

I gasp and sit up. I'm in the chair. I gulp and shake out my hands. Four stands to my right, but instead of helping me up, he just looks at me.

"What?" I ask.

"How did you do that?"

"Do what?"

"Crack the glass."

"I don't know." Four finally offers me his hand. I swing my legs over the side of the chair, and when I stand, I feel steady. Calm.

He sighs and grabs me by the elbow, half leading and half dragging me out of the room. We walk quickly down the hallway, and then I stop, pulling my arm back. He stares at me in silence. He won't give me information without prompting.

"What?" I demand.

"You're Divergent," he replies.

I stare at him, fear pulsing through me like electricity. He knows. How does he know? I must have slipped up. Said something wrong.

I should act casual. I lean back, pressing my shoulders to the wall, and say, "What's Divergent?"

"Don't play stupid," he says. "I suspected it last time, but this time it's obvious. You manipulated the simulation; you're Divergent. I'll delete the footage, but unless you want to wind up *dead* at the bottom of the chasm, you'll figure out how to hide it during the simulations! Now, if you'll excuse me."

He walks back to the simulation room and slams the door behind him. I feel my heartbeat in



my throat. I manipulated the simulation; I broke the glass. I didn't know that was an act of Divergence.

How did he?

I push myself away from the wall and start down the hallway. I need answers, and I know who has them.

I walk straight to the tattoo place where I last saw Tori.

There aren't many people out, because it's midafter-noon and most of them are at work or at school. There are three people in the tattoo place: the other tattoo artist, who is drawing a lion on another man's arm, and Tori, who is sorting through a stack of paper on the counter. She looks up when I walk in.

"Hello, Tris," she says. She glances at the other tattoo artist, who is too focused on what he's doing to notice us. "Let's go in the back."

I follow her behind the curtain that separates the two rooms. The next room contains a few chairs, spare tattoo needles, ink, pads of paper, and framed artwork. Tori draws the curtain shut and sits in one of the chairs. I sit next to her, tapping my feet to give myself something to do.

"What's going on?" she says. "How are the simulations going?"

"Really well." I nod a few times. "A little too well, I hear."

"Ah."

"Please help me understand," I say quietly. "What does it mean to be..." I hesitate. I should not say the word "Divergent" here. "What the hell am I? What does it have to do with the simulations?"

Tori's demeanor changes. She leans back and crosses her arms. Her expression becomes guarded.

"Among other things, you...you are someone who is aware, when they are in a simulation, that what they are experiencing is not real," she says. "Someone who can then manipulate the simulation or even shut it down. And also..." She leans forward and looks into my eyes. "Someone who, because you are also Dauntless...tends to die."

A weight settles on my chest, like each sentence she speaks is piling there. Tension builds inside me until I can't stand to hold it in anymore—I have to cry, or scream, or...

I let out a harsh little laugh that dies almost as soon as it's born and say, "So I'm going to die, then?"

"Not necessarily," she says. "The Dauntless leaders don't know about you yet. I deleted your aptitude results from the system immediately and manually logged your result as Abnegation. But make no mistake—if they discover what you are, they *will* kill you."

I stare at her in silence. She doesn't look crazy. She sounds steady, if a little urgent, and I've never suspected her of being unbalanced, but she must be. There hasn't been a murder in our city as long as I've been alive. Even if individuals are capable of it, the leaders of a faction can't possibly be.

"You're paranoid," I say. "The leaders of the Dauntless wouldn't kill me. People don't do

that. Not anymore. That's the point of all this...all the factions."

"Oh, you think so?" She plants her hands on her knees and stares right at me, her features taut with sudden ferocity. "They got my brother, why not you, huh? What makes you special?"

"Your brother?" I say, narrowing my eyes.

"Yeah. My brother. He and I both transferred from Erudite, only his aptitude test was inconclusive. On the last day of simulations, they found his body in the chasm. Said it was a suicide. Only my brother was doing well in training, he was dating another initiate, he was *happy*." She shakes her head. "You have a brother, right? Don't you think you would know if he was suicidal?"

I try to imagine Caleb killing himself. Even the thought sounds ridiculous to me. Even if Caleb was miserable, it would not be an option.

Her sleeves are rolled up, so I can see a tattoo of a river on her right arm. Did she get it after her brother died? Was the river another fear she overcame?

She lowers her voice. "In the second stage of training, Georgie got really good, really fast. He said the simulations weren't even scary to him...they were like a game. So the instructors took a special interest in him. Piled into the room when he went under, instead of just letting the instructor report his results. Whispered about him all the time. The last day of simulations, one of the Dauntless leaders came in to see it himself. And the next day, Georgie was gone."

I could be good at the simulations, if I mastered whatever force helped me break the glass. I could be so good that all the instructors took notice. I could, but will I?

"Is that all it is?" I say. "Just changing the simulations?"

"I doubt it," she says, "but that's all I know."

"How many people know about this?" I say, thinking of Four. "About manipulating the simulations?"

"Two kinds of people," she says. "People who want you dead. Or people who have experienced it themselves. Firsthand. Or secondhand, like me."

Four told me he would delete the recording of me breaking the glass. He doesn't want me dead. Is he Divergent? Was a family member? A friend? A girlfriend?

I push the thought aside. I can't let him distract me.

"I don't understand," I say slowly, "why the Dauntless leaders care that I can manipulate the simulation."

"If I had it figured out, I would have told you by now." She presses her lips together. "The only thing I've come up with is that changing the simulation isn't what they care about; it's just a symptom of something else. Something they do care about."

Tori takes my hand and presses it between her palms.

"Think about this," she says. "These people taught you how to use a gun. They taught you how to fight. You think they're above hurting you? Above killing you?"

She releases my hand and stands.

"I have to go or Bud will ask questions. Be careful, Tris."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

**T**HE DOOR TO the Pit closes behind me, and I am alone. I have not walked this tunnel since the day of the Choosing Ceremony. I remember how I walked it then, my footsteps unsteady, searching for light. I walk it surefooted now. I don't need light anymore.

It has been four days since I spoke to Tori. Since then, Erudite has released two articles about Abnegation. The first article accuses Abnegation of withholding luxuries like cars and fresh fruit from the other factions in order to force their belief in self-denial on everyone else. When I read it, I thought of Will's sister, Cara, accusing my mother of hoarding goods.

The second article discusses the failings of choosing government officials based on their faction, asking why only people who define themselves as selfless should be in government. It promotes a return to the democratically elected political systems of the past. It makes a lot of sense, which makes me suspect it is a call for revolution wrapped in the clothing of rationality.

I reach the end of the tunnel. The net stretches across the gaping hole, just as it did when I last saw it. I climb the stairs to the wooden platform where Four pulled me to solid ground and grab the bar that the net is attached to. I would not have been able to lift my body up with just my arms when I first got here, but now I do it almost without thinking and roll into the center of the net.

Above me are the empty buildings that stand at the edge of the hole, and the sky. It is dark blue and starless. There is no moon.

The articles troubled me, but I had friends to cheer me up, and that is something. When the first one was released, Christina charmed one of the cooks in the Dauntless kitchens, and he let us try some cake batter. After the second article, Uriah and Marlene taught me a card game, and we played for two hours in the dining hall.

Tonight, though, I want to be alone. More than that, I want to remember why I came here, and why I was so determined to stay here that I would jump off a building for it, even before I knew what being Dauntless was. I work my fingers through the holes in the net beneath me.

I wanted to be like the Dauntless I saw at school. I wanted to be loud and daring and free like them. But they were not members yet; they were just playing at being Dauntless. And so was I, when I jumped off that roof. I didn't know what fear was.

In the past four days, I faced four fears. In one I was tied to a stake and Peter set a fire beneath my feet. In another I was drowning again, this time in the middle of an ocean as the water raged around me. In the third, I watched as my family slowly bled to death. And in the fourth, I was held at gunpoint and forced to shoot them. I know what fear is now.

Wind rushes over the lip of the hole and washes over me, and I close my eyes. In my mind I stand at the edge of the roof again. I undo the buttons of my gray Abnegation shirt, exposing my arms, revealing more of my body than anyone else has ever seen. I ball the shirt up and hurl it at Peter's chest.

I open my eyes. No, I was wrong; I didn't jump off the roof because I wanted to be like the Dauntless. I jumped off because I already was like them, and I wanted to show myself to

them. I wanted to acknowledge a part of myself that Abnegation demanded that I hide.

I stretch my hands over my head and hook them in the net again. I reach with my toes as far as I can, taking up as much of the net as possible. The night sky is empty and silent, and for the first time in four days, so is my mind.

I hold my head in my hands and breathe deeply. Today the simulation was the same as yesterday: Someone held me at gunpoint and ordered me to shoot my family. When I lift my head, I see that Four is watching me.

“I know the simulation isn’t real,” I say.

“You don’t have to explain it to me,” he replies. “You love your family. You don’t want to shoot them. Not the most unreasonable thing in the world.”

“In the simulation is the only time I get to see them,” I say. Even though he says I don’t, I feel like I have to explain why this fear is so difficult for me to face. I twist my fingers together and pull them apart. My nail beds are bitten raw—I have been chewing them as I sleep. I wake to bloody hands every morning. “I miss them. You ever just...miss your family?”

Four looks down. “No,” he says eventually. “I don’t. But that’s unusual.”

It is unusual, so unusual it distracts me from the memory of holding a gun to Caleb’s chest. What was his family like that he no longer cares about them?

I pause with my hand on the doorknob and look back at him.

*Are you like me?* I ask him silently. *Are you Divergent?*

Even thinking the word feels dangerous. His eyes hold mine, and as the silent seconds pass, he looks less and less stern. I hear my heartbeat. I have been looking at him too long, but then, he has been looking back, and I feel like we are both trying to say something the other can’t hear, though I could be imagining it. Too long—and now, even longer, my heart even louder, his tranquil eyes swallowing me whole.

I push the door open and hurry down the hallway.

I shouldn’t be so easily distracted by him. I shouldn’t be able to think of anything but initiation. The simulations should disturb me more; they should break my mind, as they have been doing to most of the other initiates. Drew doesn’t sleep—he just stares at the wall, curled in a ball. Al screams every night from his nightmares and cries into his pillow. My nightmares and chewed fingernails pale by comparison.

Al’s screams wake me every time, and I stare at the springs above me and wonder what on earth is wrong with me, that I still feel strong when everyone else is breaking down. Is it being Divergent that makes me steady, or is it something else?

When I get back to the dormitory, I expect to find the same thing I found the day before: a few initiates lying on beds or staring at nothing. Instead they stand in a group on the other end of the room. Eric is in front of them with a chalkboard in his hands, which is facing the other way, so I can’t see what’s written on it. I stand next to Will.

“What’s going on?” I whisper. I hope it isn’t another article, because I’m not sure I can handle any more hostility directed at me.

“Rankings for stage two,” he says.

“I thought there weren’t any cuts after stage two,” I hiss.

“There aren’t. It’s just a progress report, sort of.”

I nod.

The sight of the board makes me feel uneasy, like something is swimming in my stomach. Eric lifts the board above his head and hangs it on the nail. When he steps aside, the room falls silent, and I crane my neck to see what it says.

My name is in the first slot.

Heads turn in my direction. I follow the list down. Christina and Will are seventh and ninth, respectively. Peter is second, but when I look at the time listed by his name, I realize that the margin between us is conspicuously wide.

Peter’s average simulation time is eight minutes. Mine is two minutes, forty-five seconds.

“Nice job, Tris,” Will says quietly.

I nod, still staring at the board. I should be pleased that I am ranked first, but I know what that means. If Peter and his friends hated me before, they will despise me now. Now I am Edward. It could be my eye next. Or worse.

I search for Al’s name and find it in the last slot. The crowd of initiates breaks up slowly, leaving just me, Peter, Will, and Al standing there. I want to console Al. To tell him that the only reason that I’m doing well is that there’s something different about my brain.

Peter turns slowly, every limb infused with tension. A glare would have been less threatening than the look he gives me—a look of pure hatred. He walks toward his bunk, but at the last second, he whips around and shoves me against a wall, a hand on each of my shoulders.

“I will not be outranked by a Stiff,” he hisses, his face so close to mine I can smell his stale breath. “How did you do it, huh? How the hell did you do it?”

He pulls me forward a few inches and then slams me against the wall again. I clench my teeth to keep from crying out, though pain from the impact went all the way down my spine. Will grabs Peter by his shirt collar and drags him away from me.

“Leave her alone,” he says. “Only a coward bullies a little girl.”

“A little girl?” scoffs Peter, throwing off Will’s hand. “Are you blind, or just stupid? She’s going to edge you out of the rankings and out of *Dauntless*, and you’re going to get *nothing*, all because she knows how to manipulate people and you don’t. So when you realize that she’s out to ruin us all, you let me know.”

Peter storms out of the dormitory. Molly and Drew follow him, looks of disgust on their faces.

“Thanks,” I say, nodding to Will.

“Is he right?” Will asks quietly. “Are you trying to manipulate us?”

“How on earth would I do that?” I scowl at him. “I’m just doing the best I can, like anyone else.”

“I don’t know.” He shrugs a little. “By acting weak so we pity you? And then acting tough to psyche us out?”

“Psyche you out?” I repeat. “I’m your *friend*. I wouldn’t do that.”

He doesn't say anything. I can tell he doesn't believe me—not quite.

“Don't be an idiot, Will,” says Christina, hopping down from her bunk. She looks at me without sympathy and adds, “She's not acting.”

Christina turns and leaves, without banging the door shut. Will follows. I am alone in the room with Al. The first and the last.

Al has never looked small before, but he does now, with his shoulders slumped and his body collapsing on itself like crumpled paper. He sits down on the edge of his bed.

“Are you all right?” I ask.

“Sure,” he says.

His face is bright red. I look away. Asking him was just a formality. Anyone with eyes could see that Al is not all right.

“It's not over,” I say. “You can improve your rank if you...”

My voice trails off when he looks up at me. I don't even know what I would say to him if I finished my sentence. There is no strategy for stage two. It reaches deep into the heart of who we are and tests whatever courage is there.

“See?” he says. “It's not that simple.”

“I know it's not.”

“I don't think you do,” he says, shaking his head. His chin wobbles. “For you it's easy. All of this is easy.”

“That's not true.”

“Yeah, it is.” He closes his eyes. “You aren't helping me by pretending it isn't. I don't—I'm not sure you can help me at all.”

I feel like I just walked into a downpour, and all my clothes are heavy with water; like I am heavy and awkward and useless. I don't know if he means that no one can help him, or if I, specifically, can't help him, but I would not be okay with either interpretation. I want to help him. I am powerless to do so.

“I...,” I start to say, meaning to apologize, but for what? For being more Dauntless than he is? For not knowing what to say?

“I just...” The tears that have been gathering in his eyes spill over, wetting his cheeks. “... want to be alone.”

I nod and turn away from him. Leaving him is not a good idea, but I can't stop myself. The door clicks into place behind me, and I keep walking.

I walk past the drinking fountain and through the tunnels that seemed endless the day I got here but now barely register in my mind. This is not the first time I have failed my family since I got here, but for some reason, it feels that way. Every other time I failed, I knew what to do but chose not to do it. This time, I did not know what to do. Have I lost the ability to see what people need? Have I lost part of myself?

I keep walking.

I somehow find the hallway I sat in the day Edward left. I don't want to be alone, but I don't

feel like I have much of a choice. I close my eyes and pay attention to the cold stone beneath me and breathe the musty underground air.

“Tris!” someone calls from the end of the hallway. Uriah jogs toward me. Behind him are Lynn and Marlene. Lynn is holding a muffin.

“Thought I would find you here.” He crouches near my feet. “I heard you got ranked first.”

“So you just wanted to congratulate me?” I smirk. “Well, thanks.”

“*Someone* should,” he says. “And I figured your friends might not be so congratulatory, since their ranks aren’t as high. So quit moping and come with us. I’m going to shoot a muffin off Marlene’s head.”

The idea is so ridiculous I can’t stop myself from laughing. I get up and follow Uriah to the end of the hallway, where Marlene and Lynn are waiting. Lynn narrows her eyes at me, but Marlene grins.

“Why aren’t you out celebrating?” she asks. “You’re practically guaranteed a top ten spot if you keep it up.”

“She’s too Dauntless for the other transfers,” Uriah says.

“And too Abnegation to ‘celebrate,’” remarks Lynn.

I ignore her. “Why are you shooting a muffin off Marlene’s head?”

“She bet me I couldn’t aim well enough to hit a small object from one hundred feet,” Uriah explains. “I bet her she didn’t have the guts to stand there as I tried. It works out well, really.”

The training room where I first fired a gun is not far from my hidden hallway. We get there in under a minute, and Uriah flips on a light switch. It looks the same as the last time I was there: targets on one end of the room, a table with guns on the other.

“They just keep these lying around?” I ask.

“Yeah, but they aren’t loaded.” Uriah pulls up his shirt. There is a gun stuck under the waistband of his pants, right under a tattoo. I stare at the tattoo, trying to figure out what it is, but then he lets his shirt fall. “Okay,” he says. “Go stand in front of a target.”

Marlene walks away, a skip in her step.

“You aren’t seriously going to shoot at her, are you?” I ask Uriah.

“It’s not a real gun,” says Lynn quietly. “It’s got plastic pellets in it. The worst it’ll do is sting her face, maybe give her a welt. What do you think we are, stupid?”

Marlene stands in front of one of the targets and sets the muffin on her head. Uriah squints one eye as he aims the gun.

“Wait!” calls out Marlene. She breaks off a piece of the muffin and pops it into her mouth. “Mmkay!” she shouts, the word garbled by food. She gives Uriah a thumbs-up.

“I take it your ranks were good,” I say to Lynn.

She nods. “Uriah’s second. I’m first. Marlene’s fourth.”

“You’re only first by a *hair*,” says Uriah as he aims. He squeezes the trigger. The muffin falls off Marlene’s head. She didn’t even blink.

“We both win!” she shouts.

“You miss your old faction?” Lynn asks me.

“Sometimes,” I say. “It was calmer. Not as exhausting.”

Marlene picks up the muffin from the ground and bites into it. Uriah shouts, “Gross!”

“Initiation’s supposed to wear us down to who we really are. That’s what Eric says, anyway,” Lynn says. She arches an eyebrow.

“Four says it’s to prepare us.”

“Well, they don’t agree on much.”

I nod. Four told me that Eric’s vision for Dauntless is not what it’s supposed to be, but I wish he would tell me exactly what he thinks the right vision is. I get glimpses of it every so often—the Dauntless cheering when I jumped off the building, the net of arms that caught me after zip lining—but they are not enough. Has he read the Dauntless manifesto? Is that what he believes in—in ordinary acts of bravery?

The door to the training room opens. Shauna, Zeke, and Four walk in just as Uriah fires at another target. The plastic pellet bounces off the center of the target and rolls along the ground.

“I thought I heard something in here,” says Four.

“Turns out it’s my idiot brother,” says Zeke. “You’re not supposed to be in here after hours. Careful, or Four will tell Eric, and then you’ll be as good as scalped.”

Uriah wrinkles his nose at his brother and puts the pellet gun away. Marlene crosses the room, taking bites of her muffin, and Four steps away from the door to let us file out.

“You wouldn’t tell Eric,” says Lynn, eyeing Four suspiciously.

“No, I wouldn’t,” he says. As I pass him, he rests his hand on the top of my back to usher me out, his palm pressing between my shoulder blades. I shiver. I hope he can’t tell.

The others walk down the hallway, Zeke and Uriah shoving each other, Marlene splitting her muffin with Shauna, Lynn marching in front. I start to follow them.

“Wait a second,” Four says. I turn toward him, wondering which version of Four I’ll see now—the one who scolds me, or the one who climbs Ferris wheels with me. He smiles a little, but the smile doesn’t spread to his eyes, which look tense and worried.

“You belong here, you know that?” he says. “You belong with us. It’ll be over soon, so just hold on, okay?”

He scratches behind his ear and looks away, like he’s embarrassed by what he said.

I stare at him. I feel my heartbeat everywhere, even in my toes. I feel like doing something bold, but I could just as easily walk away. I am not sure which option is smarter, or better. I am not sure that I care.

I reach out and take his hand. His fingers slide between mine. I can’t breathe.

I stare up at him, and he stares down at me. For a long moment, we stay that way. Then I pull my hand away and run after Uriah and Lynn and Marlene. Maybe now he thinks I’m stupid, or strange. Maybe it was worth it.

I get back to the dormitory before anyone else does, and when they start to trickle in, I get into bed and pretend to be asleep. I don’t need any of them, not if they’re going to react this way when I do well. If I can make it through initiation, I will be Dauntless, and I won’t have to see



them anymore.

I don't need them—but do I want them? Every tattoo I got with them is a mark of their friendship, and almost every time I have laughed in this dark place was because of them. I don't want to lose them. But I feel like I have already.

After at least a half hour of racing thoughts, I roll onto my back and open my eyes. The dormitory is dark now—everyone has gone to bed. *Probably exhausted from resenting me so much*, I think with a wry smile. As if coming from the most hated faction wasn't enough, now I'm showing them up, too.

I get out of bed to get a drink of water. I'm not thirsty, but I need to do something. My bare feet make sticky sounds on the floor as I walk, my hand skimming the wall to keep my path straight. A bulb glows blue above the drinking fountain.

I tug my hair over one shoulder and bend over. As soon as the water touches my lips, I hear voices at the end of the hallway. I creep closer to them, trusting the dark to keep me hidden.

“So far there haven't been any signs of it.” Eric's voice. Signs of what?

“Well, you wouldn't have seen much of it yet,” someone replies. A female voice; cold and familiar, but familiar like a dream, not a real person. “Combat training shows you nothing. The simulations, however, reveal who the Divergent rebels are, if there are any, so we will have to examine the footage several times to be sure.”

The word “Divergent” makes me go cold. I lean forward, my back pressed to the stone, to see who the familiar voice belongs to.

“Don't forget the reason I had Max appoint you,” the voice says. “Your first priority is always finding them. Always.”

“I won't forget.”

I shift a few inches forward, hoping I am still hidden. Whoever that voice belongs to, she is pulling the strings; she is responsible for Eric's leadership position; she is the one who wants me dead. I tilt my head forward, straining to see them before they turn the corner.

Then someone grabs me from behind.

I start to scream, but a hand claps over my mouth. It smells like soap and it's big enough to cover the lower half of my face. I thrash, but the arms holding me are too strong, and I bite down on one of the fingers.

“Ow!” a rough voice cries.

“Shut up and keep her mouth covered.” That voice is higher than the average male's and clearer. Peter.

A strip of dark cloth covers my eyes, and a new pair of hands ties it at the back of my head. I struggle to breathe. There are at least two hands on my arms, dragging me forward, and one on my back, shoving me in the same direction, and one on my mouth, keeping my screams in. Three people. My chest hurts. I can't resist three people on my own.

“Wonder what it sounds like when a Stiff begs for mercy,” Peter says with a chuckle. “Hurry up.”

I try to focus on the hand on my mouth. There must be something distinct about it that will make him easier to identify. His identity is a problem I can solve. I need to solve a problem

right now, or I will panic.

The palm is sweaty and soft. I clench my teeth and breathe through my nose. The soap smell is familiar. Lemongrass and sage. The same smell surrounds Al's bunk. A weight drops into my stomach.

I hear the crash of water against rocks. We are near the chasm—we must be above it, given the volume of the sound. I press my lips together to keep from screaming. If we are above the chasm, I know what they intend to do to me.

“Lift her up, c'mon.”

I thrash, and their rough skin grates against mine, but I know it's useless. I scream too, knowing that no one can hear me here.

I will survive until tomorrow. I will.

The hands push me around and up and slam my spine into something hard and cold. Judging by its width and curvature, it is a metal railing. It is *the* metal railing, the one that overlooks the chasm. My breaths wheeze and mist touches the back of my neck. The hands force my back to arch over the railing. My feet leave the ground, and my attackers are the only thing keeping me from falling into the water.

A heavy hand gropes along my chest. “You sure you're sixteen, Stiff? Doesn't feel like you're more than twelve.” The other boys laugh.

Bile rises in my throat and I swallow the bitter taste.

“Wait, I think I found something!” His hand squeezes me. I bite my tongue to keep from screaming. More laughter.

Al's hand slips from my mouth. “Stop that,” he snaps. I recognize his low, distinct voice.

When Al lets go of me, I thrash again and slip down to the ground. This time, I bite down as hard as I can on the first arm I find. I hear a scream and clench my jaw harder, tasting blood. Something hard strikes my face. White heat races through my head. It would have been pain if adrenaline wasn't coursing through me like acid.

The boy wrenches his trapped arm away from me and throws me to the ground. I bang my elbow against stone and bring my hands up to my head to remove the blindfold. A foot drives into my side, forcing the air from my lungs. I gasp and cough and claw at the back of my head. Someone grabs a handful of my hair and slams my head against something hard. A scream of pain bursts from my mouth, and I feel dizzy.

Clumsily, I fumble along the side of my head to find the edge of the blindfold. I drag my heavy hand up, taking the blindfold with it, and blink. The scene before me is sideways and bobs up and down. I see someone running toward us and someone running away—someone large, Al. I grab the railing next to me and haul myself to my feet.

Peter wraps a hand around my throat and lifts me up, his thumb wedged under my chin. His hair, which is usually shiny and smooth, is tousled and sticks to his forehead. His pale face is contorted and his teeth are gritted, and he holds me over the chasm as spots appear on the edges of my vision, crowding around his face, green and pink and blue. He says nothing. I try to kick him, but my legs are too short. My lungs scream for air.

I hear a shout, and he releases me.

I stretch out my arms as I fall, gasping, and my armpits slam into the railing. I hook my elbows over it and groan. Mist touches my ankles. The world dips and sways around me, and someone is on the Pit floor—Drew—screaming. I hear thumps. Kicks. Groans.

I blink a few times and focus as hard as I can on the only face I can see. It is contorted with anger. His eyes are dark blue.

“Four,” I croak.

I close my eyes, and hands wrap around my arms, right where they join with the shoulder. He pulls me over the railing and against his chest, gathering me into his arms, easing an arm under my knees. I press my face into his shoulder, and there is a sudden, hollow silence.

## 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 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.

“No,” I reply. “I don’t want them to think I’m scared.”

He nods. He moves his thumb absently over my cheekbone, back and forth. “I figured you would say that.”

“You think it would be a bad idea if I sat up?”

“I’ll help you.”

Four grips my shoulder with one hand and holds my head steady with the other as I push myself up. Pain rushes through my body in sharp bursts, but I try to ignore it, stifling a groan.

He hands me the ice pack. “You can let yourself be in pain,” he says. “It’s just me here.”

I bite down on my lip. There are tears on my face, but neither of us mentions or even acknowledges them.

“I suggest you rely on your transfer friends to protect you from now on,” he says.

“I thought I was,” I say. I feel Al’s hand against my mouth again, and a sob jolts my body forward. I press my hand to my forehead and rock slowly back and forth. “But Al...”

“He wanted you to be the small, quiet girl from Abnegation,” Four says softly. “He hurt you because your strength made him feel weak. No other reason.”

I nod and try to believe him.

“The others won’t be as jealous if you show some vulnerability. Even if it isn’t real.”

“You think I have to *pretend* to be vulnerable?” I ask, raising an eyebrow.

“Yes, I do.” He takes the ice pack from me, his fingers brushing mine, and holds it against my head himself. I put my hand down, too eager to relax my arm to object. Four stands up. I stare at the hem of his T-shirt.

Sometimes I see him as just another person, and sometimes I feel the sight of him in my gut, like a deep ache.

“You’re going to want to march into breakfast tomorrow and show your attackers they had no effect on you,” he adds, “but you should let that bruise on your cheek show, and keep your head down.”

The idea nauseates me.

“I don’t think I can do that,” I say hollowly. I lift my eyes to his.

“You have to.”

“I don’t think you *get* it.” Heat rises into my face. “They touched me.”

His entire body tightens at my words, his hand clenching around the ice pack. “Touched you,” he repeats, his dark eyes cold.

“Not...in the way you’re thinking.” I clear my throat. I didn’t realize when I said it how awkward it would be to talk about. “But...almost.”

I look away.

He is silent and still for so long that eventually, I have to say something.

“What is it?”

“I don’t want to say this,” he says, “but I feel like I have to. It is more important for you to

be safe than right, for the time being. Understand?”

His straight eyebrows are drawn low over his eyes. My stomach writhes, partly because I know he makes a good point but I don't want to admit it, and partly because I want something I don't know how to express; I want to press against the space between us until it disappears.

I nod.

“But please, when you see an opportunity...” He presses his hand to my cheek, cold and strong, and tilts my head up so I have to look at him. His eyes glint. They look almost predatory. “Ruin them.”

I laugh shakily. “You're a little scary, Four.”

“Do me a favor,” he says, “and don't call me that.”

“What should I call you, then?”

“Nothing.” He takes his hand from my face. “Yet.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

I DON'T GO back to the dorms that night. Sleeping in the same room as the people who attacked me just to look brave would be stupid. Four sleeps on the floor and I sleep on his bed, on top of the quilt, breathing in the scent of his pillowcase. It smells like detergent and something heavy, sweet, and distinctly male.

The rhythm of his breaths slows, and I prop myself up to see if he is asleep. He lies on his stomach with one arm around his head. His eyes are closed, his lips parted. For the first time, he looks as young as he is, and I wonder who he really is. Who is he when he isn't Dauntless, isn't an instructor, isn't Four, isn't anything in particular?

Whoever he is, I like him. It's easier for me to admit that to myself now, in the dark, after all that just happened. He is not sweet or gentle or particularly kind. But he is smart and brave, and even though he saved me, he treated me like I was strong. That is all I need to know.

I watch the muscles in his back expand and contract until I fall asleep.

I wake to aches and pains. I cringe as I sit up, holding my ribs, and walk up to the small mirror on the opposite wall. I am almost too short to see myself in it, but when I stand on my tiptoes, I can see my face. As expected, there is a dark blue bruise on my cheek. I hate the idea of slumping into the dining hall like this, but Four's instructions have stayed with me. I have to mend my friendships. I need the protection of seeming weak.

I tie my hair in a knot at the back of my head. The door opens and Four walks in, a towel in hand and his hair glistening with shower water. I feel a thrill in my stomach when I see the line of skin that shows above his belt as he lifts his hand to dry his hair and force my eyes up to his face.

"Hi," I say. My voice sounds tight. I wish it didn't.

He touches my bruised cheek with just his fingertips. "Not bad," he says. "How's your head?"

"Fine," I say. I'm lying—my head is throbbing. I brush my fingers over the bump, and pain prickles over my scalp. It could be worse. I could be floating in the river.

Every muscle in my body tightens as his hand drops to my side, where I got kicked. He does it casually, but I can't move.

"And your side?" he asks, his voice low.

"Only hurts when I breathe."

He smiles. "Not much you can do about that."

"Peter would probably throw a party if I stopped breathing."

"Well," he says, "I would only go if there was cake."

I laugh, and then wince, covering his hand to steady my rib cage. He slides his hand back slowly, his fingertips grazing my side. When his fingers lift, I feel an ache in my chest. Once this moment ends, I have to remember what happened last night. And I want to stay here with him.

He nods a little and leads the way out.

“I’ll go in first,” he says when we stand outside the dining hall. “See you soon, Tris.”

He walks through the doors and I am alone. Yesterday he told me he thought I would have to pretend to be weak, but he was wrong. I am weak already. I brace myself against the wall and press my forehead to my hands. It’s difficult to take deep breaths, so I take short, shallow ones. I can’t let this happen. They attacked me to make me feel weak. I can pretend they succeeded to protect myself, but I can’t let it become true.

I pull away from the wall and walk into the dining hall without another thought. A few steps in, I remember I’m supposed to look like I’m cowering, so I slow my pace and hug the wall, keeping my head down. Uriah, at the table next to Will and Christina’s, lifts his hand to wave at me. And then puts it down.

I sit next to Will.

Al isn’t there—he isn’t anywhere.

Uriah slides into the seat next to me, leaving his half-eaten muffin and half-finished glass of water on the other table. For a second, all three of them just stare at me.

“What happened?” Will asks, lowering his voice.

I look over his shoulder at the table behind ours. Peter sits there, eating a piece of toast and whispering something to Molly. My hand clenches around the edge of the table. I want him to hurt. But now isn’t the time.

Drew is missing, which means he’s still in the infirmary. Vicious pleasure courses through me at the thought.

“Peter, Drew...,” I say quietly. I hold my side as I reach across the table for a piece of toast. It hurts to stretch out my hand, so I let myself wince and hunch over. “And...” I swallow. “And Al.”

“Oh God,” says Christina, her eyes wide.

“Are you all right?” Uriah asks.

Peter’s eyes find mine across the dining hall, and I have to force myself to look away. It brings a bitter taste to my mouth to show him that he scares me, but I have to. Four was right. I have to do everything I can to make sure I don’t get attacked again.

“Not really,” I say.

My eyes burn, and it’s not artifice, unlike the wincing. I shrug. I believe Tori’s warning now. Peter, Drew, and Al were ready to throw me into the chasm out of jealousy—what is so unbelievable about the Dauntless leaders committing murder?

I feel uncomfortable, like I’m wearing someone else’s skin. If I’m not careful, I could die. I can’t even trust the leaders of my faction. My new family.

“But you’re just...” Uriah purses his lips. “It isn’t fair. Three against one?”

“Yeah, and Peter is all about what’s fair. That’s why he grabbed Edward in his sleep and stabbed him in the eye.” Christina snorts and shakes her head. “Al, though? Are you sure, Tris?”

I stare at my plate. I’m the next Edward. But unlike him, I’m not going to leave.

“Yeah,” I say. “I’m sure.”



“It has to be desperation,” says Will. “He’s been acting...I don’t know. Like a different person. Ever since stage two started.”

Then Drew shuffles into the dining hall. I drop my toast, and my mouth drifts open.

Calling him “bruised” would be an understatement. His face is swollen and purple. He has a split lip and a cut running through his eyebrow. He keeps his eyes down on the way to his table, not even lifting them to look at me. I glance across the room at Four. He wears the satisfied smile I wish I had on.

“Did *you* do that?” hisses Will.

I shake my head. “No. Someone—I never saw who—found me right before...” I gulp. Saying it out loud makes it worse, makes it real. “...I got tossed into the chasm.”

“They were going to *kill* you?” says Christina in a low voice.

“Maybe. They might have been planning on dangling me over it just to scare me.” I lift a shoulder. “It worked.”

Christina gives me a sad look. Will just glares at the table.

“We have to do something about this,” Uriah says in a low voice.

“What, like beat them up?” Christina grins. “Looks like that’s been taken care of already.”

“No. That’s pain they can get over,” replies Uriah. “We have to edge them out of the rankings. That will damage their futures. Permanently.”

Four gets up and stands between the tables. Conversation abruptly ceases.

“Transfers. We’re doing something different today,” he says. “Follow me.”

We stand, and Uriah’s forehead wrinkles. “Be careful,” he tells me.

“Don’t worry,” says Will. “We’ll protect her.”

Four leads us out of the dining hall and along the paths that surround the Pit. Will is on my left, Christina is on my right.

“I never really said I was sorry,” Christina says quietly. “For taking the flag when you earned it. I don’t know what was wrong with me.”

I’m not sure if it’s smart to forgive her or not—to forgive either of them, after what they said to me when the rankings went up yesterday. But my mother would tell me that people are flawed and I should be lenient with them. And Four told me to rely on my friends.

I don’t know who I should rely on more, because I’m not sure who my true friends are. Uriah and Marlene, who were on my side even when I seemed strong, or Christina and Will, who have always protected me when I seemed weak?

When her wide brown eyes meet mine, I nod. “Let’s just forget about it.”

I still want to be angry, but I have to let my anger go.

We climb higher than I’ve gone before, until Will’s face goes white whenever he looks down. Most of the time I like heights, so I grab Will’s arm like I need his support—but really, I’m lending him mine. He smiles gratefully at me.

Four turns around and walks backward a few steps—backward, on a narrow path with no railing. How well does he know this place?

He eyes Drew, who trudges at the back of the group, and says, “Pick up the pace, Drew!”

It’s a cruel joke, but it’s hard for me to fight off a smile. That is, until Four’s eyes shift to my arm around Will’s, and all the humor drains from them. His expression sends a chill through me. Is he...jealous?

We get closer and closer to the glass ceiling, and for the first time in days, I see the sun. Four walks up a flight of metal stairs leading through a hole in the ceiling. They creak under my feet, and I look down to see the Pit and the chasm below us.

We walk across the glass, which is now a floor rather than a ceiling, through a cylindrical room with glass walls. The surrounding buildings are half-collapsed and appear to be abandoned, which is probably why I never noticed the Dauntless compound before. The Abnegation sector is also far away.

The Dauntless mill around the glass room, talking in clusters. At the edge of the room, two Dauntless fight with sticks, laughing when one of them misses and hits only air. Above me, two ropes stretch across the room, one a few feet higher than the other. They probably have something to do with the daredevil stunts the Dauntless are famous for.

Four leads us through another door. Beyond it is a huge, dank space with graffitied walls and exposed pipes. The room is lit by a series of old-fashioned fluorescent tubes with plastic covers—they must be ancient.

“This,” says Four, his eyes bright in pale light, “is a different kind of simulation known as the fear landscape. It has been disabled for our purposes, so this isn’t what it will be like the next time you see it.”

Behind him, the word “Dauntless” is spray-painted in red artistic lettering on a concrete wall.

“Through your simulations, we have stored data about your worst fears. The fear landscape accesses that data and presents you with a series of virtual obstacles. Some of the obstacles will be fears you previously faced in your simulations. Some may be new fears. The difference is that you are aware, in the fear landscape, that it is a simulation, so you will have all your wits about you as you go through it.”

That means that everyone will be like Divergent in the fear landscape. I don’t know if that’s a relief, because I can’t be detected, or a problem, because I won’t have the advantage.

Four continues, “The number of fears you have in your landscape varies according to how many you have.”

How many fears will I have? I think of facing the crows again and shiver, though the air is warm.

“I told you before that the third stage of initiation focuses on mental preparation,” he says. I remember when he said that. On the first day. Right before he put a gun to Peter’s head. I wish he had pulled the trigger.

“That is because it requires you to control both your emotions and your body—to combine the physical abilities you learned in stage one with the emotional mastery you learned in stage two. To keep a level head.” One of the fluorescent tubes above Four’s head twitches and flickers. Four stops scanning the crowd of initiates and focuses his stare on me.

“Next week you will go through your fear landscape as quickly as possible in front of a panel of Dauntless leaders. That will be your final test, which determines your ranking for stage three. Just as stage two of initiation is weighted more heavily than stage one, stage three is weighted heaviest of all. Understood?”

We all nod. Even Drew, who makes it look painful.

If I do well in my final test, I have a good chance of making it into the top ten and a good chance of becoming a member. Becoming Dauntless. The thought makes me almost giddy with relief.

“You can get past each obstacle in one of two ways. Either you find a way to calm down enough that the simulation registers a normal, steady heartbeat, or you find a way to face your fear, which can force the simulation to move on. One way to face a fear of drowning is to swim deeper, for example.” Four shrugs. “So I suggest that you take the next week to consider your fears and develop strategies to face them.”

“That doesn’t sound fair,” says Peter. “What if one person only has seven fears and someone else has twenty? That’s not their fault.”

Four stares at him for a few seconds and then laughs. “Do you really want to talk to me about what’s fair?”

The crowd of initiates parts to make way for him as he walks toward Peter, folds his arms, and says, in a deadly voice, “I understand why you’re worried, Peter. The events of last night certainly proved that you are a miserable coward.”

Peter stares back, expressionless.

“So now we all know,” says Four, quietly, “that you are afraid of a short, skinny girl from Abnegation.” His mouth curls in a smile.

Will puts his arm around me. Christina’s shoulders shake with suppressed laughter. And somewhere within me, I find a smile too.

When we get back to the dorm that afternoon, Al is there.

Will stands behind me and holds my shoulders—lightly, as if to remind me that he’s there. Christina edges closer to me.

Al’s eyes have shadows beneath them, and his face is swollen from crying. Pain stabs my stomach when I see him. I can’t move. The scent of lemongrass and sage, once pleasant, turns sour in my nose.

“Tris,” says Al, his voice breaking. “Can I talk to you?”

“Are you kidding?” Will squeezes my shoulders. “You don’t get to come near her ever again.”

“I won’t hurt you. I never wanted to...” Al covers his face with both hands. “I just want to say that I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, I don’t...I don’t know what’s wrong with me, I...please forgive me, *please*....”

He reaches for me like he’s going to touch my shoulder, or my hand, his face wet with tears.

Somewhere inside me is a merciful, forgiving person. Somewhere there is a girl who tries to

understand what people are going through, who accepts that people do evil things and that desperation leads them to darker places than they ever imagined. I swear she exists, and she hurts for the repentant boy I see in front of me.

But if I saw her, I wouldn't recognize her.

"Stay away from me," I say quietly. My body feels rigid and cold, and I am not angry, I am not hurt, I am nothing. I say, my voice low, "Never come near me again."

Our eyes meet. His are dark and glassy. I am nothing.

"If you do, I swear to God I will kill you," I say. "You coward."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

“**T**<sub>RIS.</sub>”

In my dream, my mother says my name. She beckons to me, and I cross the kitchen to stand beside her. She points to the pot on the stove, and I lift the lid to peek inside. The beady eye of a crow stares back at me, its wing feathers pressed to the side of the pot, its fat body covered with boiling water.

“Dinner,” she says.

“Tris!” I hear again. I open my eyes. Christina stands next to my bed, her cheeks streaked with mascara-tinted tears.

“It’s Al,” she says. “Come on.”

Some of the other initiates are awake, and some aren’t. Christina grabs my hand and pulls me out of the dormitory. I run barefoot over the stone floor, blinking clouds from my eyes, my limbs still heavy with sleep. Something terrible has happened. I feel it with every thump of my heart. *It’s Al.*

We run across the Pit floor, and then Christina stops. A crowd has gathered around the ledge, but everyone stands a few feet from one another, so there is enough space for me to maneuver past Christina and around a tall, middle-aged man to the front.

Two men stand next to the ledge, hoisting something up with ropes. They both grunt from the effort, heaving their weight back so the ropes slide over the railing, and then reaching forward to grab again. A huge, dark shape appears above the ledge, and a few Dauntless rush forward to help the two men haul it over.

The shape falls with a thud on the Pit floor. A pale arm, swollen with water, flops onto the stone. A body. Christina pulls herself tight to my side, clinging to my arm. She turns her head into my shoulder and sobs, but I can’t look away. A few of the men turn the body over, and the head flops to the side.

The eyes are open and empty. Dark. Doll’s eyes. And the nose has a high arch, a narrow bridge, a round tip. The lips are blue. The face itself is something other than human, half corpse and half creature. My lungs burn; my next breath rattles on the way in. *Al.*

“One of the initiates,” says someone behind me. “What happened?”

“Same thing that happens every year,” someone else replies. “He pitched himself over the ledge.”

“Don’t be so morbid. Could have been an accident.”

“They found him in the middle of the chasm. You think he tripped over his shoelace and... whoopsies, just *stumbled* fifteen feet forward?”

Christina’s hands get tighter and tighter around my arm. I should tell her to let go of me; it’s starting to hurt. Someone kneels next to Al’s face and pushes his eyelids shut. Trying to make it look like he’s sleeping, maybe. Stupid. Why do people want to pretend that death is sleep? It isn’t. It isn’t.

Something inside me collapses. My chest is so tight, suffocating, can't breathe. I sink to the ground, dragging Christina down with me. The stone is rough under my knees. I hear something, a memory of sound. Al's sobs; his screams at night. Should have known. Still can't breathe. I press both palms to my chest and rock back and forth to free the tension in my chest.

When I blink, I see the top of Al's head as he carries me on his back to the dining hall. I feel the bounce of his footsteps. He is big and warm and clumsy. No, *was*. That is death—shifting from “is” to “was.”

I wheeze. Someone has brought a large black bag to put the body in. I can tell that it will be too small. A laugh rises in my throat and flops from my mouth, strained and gurgling. Al's too big for the body bag; what a tragedy. Halfway through the laugh, I clamp my mouth shut, and it sounds more like a groan. I pull my arm free and stand, leaving Christina on the ground. I run.

“Here you go,” Tori says. She hands me a steaming mug that smells like peppermint. I hold it with both hands, my fingers prickling with warmth.

She sits down across from me. When it comes to funerals, the Dauntless don't waste any time. Tori said they want to acknowledge death as soon as it happens. There are no people in the front room of the tattoo parlor, but the Pit is crawling with people, most of them drunk. I don't know why that surprises me.

At home, a funeral is a somber occasion. Everyone gathers to support the deceased's family, and no one has idle hands, but there is no laughter, or shouting, or joking. And the Abnegation don't drink alcohol, so everyone is sober. It makes sense that funerals would be the opposite here.

“Drink it,” she says. “It will make you feel better, I promise.”

“I don't think tea is the solution,” I say slowly. But I sip it anyway. It warms my mouth and my throat and trickles into my stomach. I didn't realize how deeply cold I was until I wasn't anymore.

“‘Better’ is the word I used. Not ‘good.’” She smiles at me, but the corners of her eyes don't crinkle like they usually do. “I don't think ‘good’ will happen for a while.”

I bite my lip. “How long...” I struggle for the right words. “How long did it take for you to be okay again, after your brother...”

“Don't know.” She shakes her head. “Some days I feel like I'm still not okay. Some days I feel fine. Happy, even. It took me a few years to stop plotting revenge, though.”

“Why did you stop?” I ask.

Her eyes go vacant as she stares at the wall behind me. She taps her fingers against her leg for a few seconds and then says, “I don't think of it as stopping. More like I'm...waiting for my opportunity.”

She comes out of her daze and checks her watch.

“Time to go,” she says.

I pour the rest of my tea down the sink. When I lift my hand from the mug, I realize that I'm

shaking. Not good. My hands usually shake before I start to cry, and I can't cry in front of everyone.

I follow Tori out of the tattoo place and down the path to the Pit floor. All the people that were milling around earlier are gathered by the ledge now, and the air smells potently of alcohol. The woman in front of me lurches to the right, losing her balance, and then erupts into giggles as she falls against the man next to her. Tori grabs my arm and steers me away.

I find Uriah, Will, and Christina standing among the other initiates. Christina's eyes are swollen. Uriah is holding a silver flask. He offers it to me. I shake my head.

"Surprise, surprise," says Molly from behind me. She nudges Peter with her elbow. "Once a Stiff, always a Stiff."

I should ignore her. Her opinions shouldn't matter to me.

"I read an interesting article today," she says, leaning closer to my ear. "Something about your dad, and the *real* reason you left your old faction."

Defending myself isn't the most important thing on my mind. But it is the easiest one to address.

I twist, and my fist connects with her jaw. My knuckles sting from the impact. I don't remember deciding to punch her. I don't remember forming a fist.

She lunges at me, her hands outstretched, but she doesn't get far. Will grabs her collar and pulls her back. He looks from her to me and says, "Quit it. Both of you."

Part of me wishes that he hadn't stopped her. A fight would be a welcome distraction, especially now that Eric is climbing onto a box next to the railing. I face him, crossing my arms to keep myself steady. I wonder what he'll say.

In Abnegation no one has committed suicide in recent memory, but the faction's stance on it is clear: Suicide, to them, is an act of selfishness. Someone who is truly selfless does not think of himself often enough to desire death. No one would say that aloud, if it happened, but everyone would think it.

"Quiet down, everyone!" shouts Eric. Someone hits what sounds like a gong, and the shouts gradually stop, though the mutters don't. Eric says, "Thank you. As you know, we're here because Albert, an initiate, jumped into the chasm last night."

The mutters stop too, leaving just the rush of water in the chasm.

"We do not know why," says Eric, "and it would be easy to mourn the loss of him tonight. But we did not choose a life of ease when we became Dauntless. And the truth of it is..." Eric smiles. If I didn't know him, I would think that smile is genuine. But I do know him. "The truth is, Albert is now exploring an unknown, uncertain place. He leaped into vicious waters to get there. Who among us is brave enough to venture into that darkness without knowing what lies beyond it? Albert was not yet one of our members, but we can be assured that he was one of our *bravest!*"

A cry rises from the center of the crowd, and a whoop. The Dauntless cheer at varying pitches, high and low, bright and deep. Their roar mimics the roar of the water. Christina takes the flask from Uriah and drinks. Will slides his arm around her shoulders and pulls her to his side. Voices fill my ears.

“We will celebrate him now, and remember him always!” yells Eric. Someone hands him a dark bottle, and he lifts it. “To Albert the Courageous!”

“To Albert!” shouts the crowd. Arms lift all around me, and the Dauntless chant his name. “Albert! Al-bert! Al-bert!” They chant until his name no longer sounds like his name. It sounds like the primal scream of an ancient race.

I turn away from the railing. I cannot stand this any longer.

I don’t know where I’m going. I suspect that I am not going anywhere at all, just away. I walk down a dark hallway. At the end is the drinking fountain, bathed in the blue glow of the light above it.

I shake my head. Courageous? Courageous would have been admitting weakness and leaving Dauntless, no matter what shame accompanied it. Pride is what killed Al, and it is the flaw in every Dauntless heart. It is in mine.

“Tris.”

A jolt goes through me, and I turn around. Four stands behind me, just inside the blue circle of light. It gives him an eerie look, shading his eye sockets and casting shadows under his cheekbones.

“What are you doing here?” I ask. “Shouldn’t you be paying your respects?”

I say it like it tastes bad and I have to spit it out.

“Shouldn’t you?” he says. He steps toward me, and I see his eyes again. They look black in this light.

“Can’t pay respect when you don’t have any,” I reply. I feel a twinge of guilt and shake my head. “I didn’t mean that.”

“Ah.” Judging by the look he gives me, he doesn’t believe me. I don’t blame him.

“This is ridiculous,” I say, heat rushing into my cheeks. “He throws himself off a ledge and Eric’s calling it brave? Eric, who tried to have you throw knives at Al’s head?” I taste bile. Eric’s false smiles, his artificial words, his twisted ideals—they make me want to be sick. “He wasn’t brave! He was depressed and a coward and he almost killed me! Is that the kind of thing we respect here?”

“What do you want them to do?” he says. “Condemn him? Al’s already dead. He can’t hear it and it’s too late.”

“It’s not *about* Al,” I snap. “It’s about everyone watching! Everyone who now sees hurling themselves into the chasm as a viable option. I mean, why not do it if everyone calls you a hero afterward? Why not do it if everyone will remember your name? It’s...I can’t...”

I shake my head. My face burns and my heart pounds, and I try to keep myself under control, but I can’t.

“This would *never* have happened in Abnegation!” I almost shout. “None of it! Never. This place warped him and ruined him, and I don’t care if saying that makes me a Stiff, I don’t care, I don’t *care!*”

Four’s eyes shift to the wall above the drinking fountain.

“Careful, Tris,” he says, his eyes still on the wall.

“Is that all you can say?” I demand, scowling at him. “That I should be *careful*? That’s *it?*”



“You’re as bad as the Candor, you know that?” He grabs my arm and drags me away from the drinking fountain. His hand hurts my arm, but I’m not strong enough to pull away.

His face is so close to mine that I can see a few freckles spotting his nose. “I’m not going to say this again, so listen carefully.” He sets his hands on my shoulders, his fingers pressing, squeezing. I feel small. “They are watching you. *You*, in particular.”

“Let go of me,” I say weakly.

His fingers spring apart, and he straightens. Some of the weight on my chest lifts now that he isn’t touching me. I fear his shifting moods. They show me something unstable inside of him, and instability is dangerous.

“Are they watching you, too?” I say, so quietly he wouldn’t be able to hear me if he wasn’t standing so close.

He doesn’t answer my question. “I keep trying to help you,” he says, “but you refuse to be helped.”

“Oh, right. Your *help*,” I say. “Stabbing my ear with a knife and taunting me and yelling at me more than you yell at anyone else, it sure is helpful.”

“Taunting you? You mean when I threw the knives? I wasn’t taunting you,” he snaps. “I was reminding you that if you failed, someone else would have to take your place.”

I cup the back of my neck with my hand and think back to the knife incident. Every time he spoke, it 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.”

I set my hands on his waist. I can’t remember deciding to do that. But I also can’t move away. I pull myself against his chest, wrapping my arms around him. My fingers skim the muscles of his back.

After a moment he touches the small of my back, pressing me closer, and smooths his other hand over my hair. I feel small again, but this time, it doesn’t scare me. I squeeze my eyes shut. He doesn’t scare me anymore.

“Should I be crying?” I ask, my voice muffled by his shirt. “Is there something wrong with me?”

The simulations drove a crack through AI so wide he could not mend it. Why not me? Why am I not like him—and why does that thought make me feel so uneasy, like I’m teetering on a ledge myself?

“You think I know anything about tears?” he says quietly.

I close my eyes. I don’t expect Four to reassure me, and he makes no effort to, but I feel better standing here than I did out there among the people who are my friends, my faction. I press my forehead to his shoulder.

“If I had forgiven him,” I say, “do you think he would be alive now?”

“I don’t know,” he replies. He presses his hand to my cheek, and I turn my face into it, keeping my eyes closed.

“I feel like it’s my fault.”

“It isn’t your fault,” he says, touching his forehead to mine.

“But I should have. I should have forgiven him.”

“Maybe. Maybe there’s more we all could have done,” he says, “but we just have to let the guilt remind us to do better next time.”

I frown and pull back. That is a lesson that members of Abnegation learn—guilt as a tool, rather than a weapon against the self. It is a line straight from one of my father’s lectures at our weekly meetings.

“What faction did you come from, Four?”

“It doesn’t matter,” he replies, his eyes lowered. “This is where I am now. Something you would do well to remember for yourself.”

He gives me a conflicted look and touches his lips to my forehead, right between my eyebrows. I close my eyes. I don’t understand this, whatever it is. But I don’t want to ruin it, so I say nothing. He doesn’t move; he just stays there with his mouth pressed to my skin, and I stay there with my hands on his waist, for a long time.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

I STAND WITH Will and Christina at the railing overlooking the chasm, late at night after most of the Dauntless have gone to sleep. Both my shoulders sting from the tattoo needle. We all got new tattoos a half hour ago.

Tori was the only one in the tattoo place, so I felt safe getting the symbol of Abnegation—a pair of hands, palms up as if to help someone stand, bounded by a circle—on my right shoulder. I know it was a risk, especially after all that’s happened. But that symbol is a part of my identity, and it felt important to me that I wear it on my skin.

I step up on one of the barrier’s crossbars, pressing my hips to the railing to keep my balance. This is where Al stood. I look down into the chasm, at the black water, at the jagged rocks. Water hits the wall and sprays up, misting my face. Was he afraid when he stood here? Or was he so determined to jump that it was easy?

Christina hands me a stack of paper. I got a copy of every report the Erudite have released in the last six months. Throwing them into the chasm won’t get rid of them forever, but it might make me feel better.

I stare at the first one. On it is a picture of Jeanine, the Erudite representative. Her sharp-but-attractive eyes stare back at me.

“Have you ever met her?” I ask Will. Christina crumples the first report into a ball and hurls it into the water.

“Jeanine? Once,” he replies. He takes the next report and tears it to shreds. The pieces float into the river. He does it without Christina’s malice. I get the feeling that the only reason he’s participating is to prove to me that he doesn’t agree with his former faction’s tactics. Whether he believes what they’re saying or not is unclear, and I am afraid to ask.

“Before she was a leader, she worked with my sister. They were trying to develop a longer-lasting serum for the simulations,” he says. “Jeanine’s so smart you can see it even before she says anything. Like...a walking, talking computer.”

“What...” I fling one of the pages over the railing, pressing my lips together. I should just ask. “What do you think of what she has to say?”

He shrugs. “I don’t know. Maybe it’s a good idea to have more than one faction in control of the government. And maybe it would be nice if we had more cars and...fresh fruit and...”

“You do realize there’s no secret warehouse where all that stuff is kept, right?” I ask, my face getting hot.

“Yes, I do,” he says. “I just think that comfort and prosperity are not a priority for Abnegation, and maybe they would be if the other factions were involved in our decision making.”

“Because giving an Erudite boy a car is more important than giving food to the factionless,” I snap.

“Hey now,” says Christina, brushing Will’s shoulder with her fingers. “This is supposed to be a lighthearted session of symbolic document destruction, not a political debate.”

I bite back what I was about to say and stare at the stack of paper in my hands. Will and Christina share a lot of idle touches lately. I've noticed it. Have they?

"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 tousling 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’ve never done this before,” I say as I take it out of the box. I don’t want to hurt him.

“Right here,” he says, touching a spot on his neck with his fingernail. I stand on my tiptoes and push the needle in, my hand shaking a little. He doesn’t even flinch.

He keeps his eyes on me the whole time, and when I’m done, puts both syringes in the box and sets it by the door. He knew that I would follow him up here. Knew, or hoped. Either way is fine with me.

He offers me his hand, and I slide mine into it. His fingers are cold and brittle. I feel like there is something I should say, but I am too stunned and can’t come up with any words. He opens the door with his free hand, and I follow him into the dark. I am now used to entering unknown places without hesitation. I keep my breaths even and hold firmly to Four’s hand.

“See if you can figure out why they call me Four,” he says.

The door clicks shut behind us, taking all the light with it. The air is cold in the hallway; I feel each particle enter my lungs. I inch closer to him so my arm is against his and my chin is near his shoulder.

“What’s your real name?” I ask.

“See if you can figure that out too.”

The simulation takes us. The ground I stand on is no longer made of cement. It creaks like metal. Light pours in from all angles, and the city unfolds around us, glass buildings and the arc of train tracks, and we are high above it. I haven’t seen a blue sky in a long time, so when it spreads out above me, I feel the breath catch in my lungs and the effect is dizzying.

Then the wind starts. It blows so hard I have to lean against Four to stay on my feet. He removes his hand from mine and wraps his arm around my shoulders instead. At first I think it’s to protect me—but no, he’s having trouble breathing and he needs me to steady him. He forces breath in and out through an open mouth and his teeth are clenched.

The height is beautiful to me, but if it’s here, it is one of his worst nightmares.

“We have to jump off, right?” I shout over the wind.

He nods.

“On three, okay?”

Another nod.

“One...two...*three!*” I pull him with me as I burst into a run. After we take the first step, the rest is easy. We both sprint off the edge of the building. We fall like two stones, fast, the air pushing back at us, the ground growing beneath us. Then the scene disappears, and I am on my hands and knees on the floor, grinning. I loved that rush the day I chose Dauntless, and I love it now.

Next to me, Four gasps and presses a hand to his chest.

I get up and help him to his feet. “What’s next?”

“It’s—”

Something solid hits my spine. I slam into Four, my head hitting his collarbone. Walls appear on my left and my right. The space is so narrow that Four has to pull his arms into his chest to fit. A ceiling slams onto the walls around us with a crack, and Four hunches over, groaning. The room is just big enough to accommodate his size, and no bigger.

“Confinement,” I say.

He makes a guttural noise. I tilt my head and pull back enough to look at him. I can barely see his face, it’s so dark, and the air is close; we share breaths. He grimaces like he’s in pain.

“Hey,” I say. “It’s okay. Here—”

I guide his arms around my body so he has more space. He clutches at my back and puts his face next to mine, still hunched over. His body is warm, but I feel only his bones and the muscle that wraps around them; nothing yields beneath me. My cheeks get hot. Can he tell that I’m still built like a child?

“This is the first time I’m happy I’m so small.” I laugh. If I joke, maybe I can calm him down. And distract myself.

“Mmhmm,” he says. His voice sounds strained.

“We can’t break out of here,” I say. “It’s easier to face the fear head on, right?” I don’t wait for a response. “So what you need to do is make the space smaller. Make it worse so it gets better. Right?”

“Yes.” It is a tight, tense little word.

“Okay. We’ll have to crouch, then. Ready?”

I squeeze his waist to pull him down with me. I feel the hard line of his rib against my hand and hear the screech of one wood plank against another as the ceiling inches down with us. I realize that we won’t fit with all this space between us, so I turn and curl into a ball, my spine against his chest. One of his knees is bent next to my head and the other is curled beneath me so I’m sitting on his ankle. We are a jumble of limbs. I feel a harsh breath against my ear.

“Ah,” he says, his voice raspy. “This is worse. This is definitely...”

“Shh,” I say. “Arms around me.”

Obediently, he slips both arms around my waist. I smile at the wall. I am not enjoying this. I am not, not even a little bit, no.

“The simulation measures your fear response,” I say softly. I’m just repeating what he told us, but reminding him might help him. “So if you can calm your heartbeat down, it will move on to the next one. Remember? So try to forget that we’re here.”

“Yeah?” I feel his lips move against my ear as he speaks, and heat courses through me. “That easy, huh?”

“You know, most boys would enjoy being trapped in close quarters with a girl.” I roll my eyes.

“Not claustrophobic people, Tris!” He sounds desperate now.

“Okay, okay.” I set my hand on top of his and guide it to my chest, so it’s right over my heart. “Feel my heartbeat. Can you feel it?”

“Yes.”

“Feel how steady it is?”

“It’s fast.”

“Yes, well, that has nothing to do with the box.” I wince as soon as I’m done speaking. I just admitted to something. Hopefully he doesn’t realize that. “Every time you feel me breathe, you breathe. Focus on that.”

“Okay.”

I breathe deeply, and his chest rises and falls with mine. After a few seconds of this, I say calmly, “Why don’t you tell me where this fear comes from. Maybe talking about it will help us...somehow.”

I don’t know how, but it sounds right.

“Um...okay.” He breathes with me again. “This one is from my fantastic childhood. Childhood punishments. The tiny closet upstairs.”

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.

As he exhales, he fires, and the woman's head whips back. I see a flash of red and look away. I hear her crumple to the floor.

Four's gun drops with a thump. We stare at her fallen body. What he said is true—it does feel real. *Don't be ridiculous*. I grab his arm.

"C'mon," I say. "Let's go. Keep moving."

After another tug, he comes out of his daze and follows me. As we pass the table, the woman's body disappears, except in my memory and his. What would it be like to kill someone every time I went through my landscape? Maybe I'll find out.

But something puzzles me: These are supposed to be Four's worst fears. And though he panicked in the box and on the roof, he killed the woman without much difficulty. It seems like the simulation is grasping at any fears it can find within him, and it hasn't found much.

"Here we go," he whispers.

A dark figure moves ahead of us, creeping along the edge of the circle of light, waiting for us to take another step. Who is it? Who frequents Four's nightmares?

The man who emerges is tall and slim, with hair cut close to his scalp. He holds his hands behind his back. And he wears the gray clothes of the Abnegation.

"Marcus," I whisper.

"Here's the part," Four says, his voice shaking, "where you figure out my name."

"Is he..." I look from Marcus, who walks slowly toward us, to Four, who inches slowly back, and everything comes together. Marcus had a son who joined Dauntless. His name was... "Tobias."

Marcus shows us his hands. A belt is curled around one of his fists. Slowly he unwinds it from his fingers.

"This is for your own good," he says, and his voice echoes a dozen times.

A dozen Marcuses press into the circle of light, all holding the same belt, with the same

blank expression. When the Marcuses blink again, their eyes turn into empty, black pits. The belts slither along the floor, which is now white tile. A shiver crawls up my spine. The Erudite accused Marcus of cruelty. For once the Erudite were right.

I look at Four—Tobias—and he seems frozen. His posture sags. He looks years older; he looks years younger. The first Marcus yanks his arm back, the belt sailing over his shoulder as he prepares to strike. Tobias shrinks back, throwing his arms up to protect his face.

I dart in front of him and the belt cracks against my wrist, wrapping around it. A hot pain races up my arm to my elbow. I grit my teeth and pull as hard as I can. Marcus loses his grip, so I unwrap the belt and grab it by the buckle.

I swing my arm as fast as I can, my shoulder socket burning from the sudden motion, and the belt strikes Marcus's shoulder. He yells and lunges at me with outstretched hands, with fingernails that look like claws. Tobias pushes me behind him so he stands between me and Marcus. He looks angry, not afraid.

All the Marcuses vanish. The lights come on, revealing a long, narrow room with busted brick walls and a cement floor.

“That’s it?” I say. “Those were your worst fears? Why do you only have four...” My voice trails off. Only four fears.

“Oh.” I look over my shoulder at him. “That’s why they call you—”

The words leave me when I see his expression. His eyes are wide and seem almost vulnerable under the room’s lights. His lips are parted. If we were not here, I would describe the look as awe. But I don’t understand why he would be looking at me in awe.

He wraps his hand around my elbow, his thumb pressing to the soft skin above my forearm, and tugs me toward him. The skin around my wrist still stings, like the belt was real, but it is as pale as the rest of me. His lips slowly move against my cheek, then his arms tighten around my shoulders, and he buries his face in my neck, breathing against my collarbone.

I stand stiffly for a second and then loop my arms around him and sigh.

“Hey,” I say softly. “We got through it.”

He lifts his head and slips his fingers through my hair, tucking it behind my ear. We stare at each other in silence. His fingers move absently over a lock of my hair.

“You got me through it,” he says finally.

“Well.” My throat is dry. I try to ignore the nervous electricity that pulses through me every second he touches me. “It’s easy to be brave when they’re not my fears.”

I let my hands drop and casually wipe them on my jeans, hoping he doesn’t notice.

If he does, he doesn’t say so. He laces his fingers with mine.

“Come on,” he says. “I have something else to show you.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

**H**AND IN HAND, we walk toward the Pit. I monitor the pressure of my hand carefully. One minute, I feel like I'm not gripping hard enough, and the next, I'm squeezing too hard. I never used to understand why people bothered to hold hands as they walked, but then he runs one of his fingertips down my palm, and I shiver and understand it completely.

"So..." I latch on to the last logical thought I remember. "Four fears."

"Four fears then; four fears now," he says, nodding. "They haven't changed, so I keep going in there, but...I still haven't made any progress."

"You can't be fearless, remember?" I say. "Because you still care about things. About your life."

"I know."

We walk along the edge of the Pit on a narrow path that leads to the rocks at the bottom of the chasm. I've never noticed it before—it blended in with the rock wall. But Tobias seems to know it well.

I don't want to ruin the moment, but I have to know about his aptitude test. I have to know if he's Divergent.

"You were going to tell me about your aptitude test results," I say.

"Ah." He scratches the back of his neck with his free hand. "Does it matter?"

"Yes. I want to know."

"How demanding you are." He smiles.

We reach the end of the path and stand at the bottom of the chasm, where the rocks form unsteady ground, rising up at harsh angles from the rushing water. He leads me up and down, across small gaps and over angular ridges. My shoes cling to the rough rock. The soles of my shoes mark each rock with a wet footprint.

He finds a relatively flat rock near the side, where the current isn't strong, and sits down, his feet dangling over the edge. I sit beside him. He seems comfortable here, inches above the hazardous water.

He releases my hand. I look at the jagged edge of the rock.

"These are things I don't tell people, you know. Not even my friends," he says.

I lace my fingers together and clench. This is the perfect place for him to tell me that he is Divergent, if indeed that's what he is. The roar of the chasm ensures that we won't be overheard. I don't know why the thought makes me so nervous.

"My result was as expected," he says. "Abnegation."

"Oh." Something inside me deflates. I am wrong about him.

But—I had assumed that if he was not Divergent, he must have gotten a Dauntless result. And technically, I also got an Abnegation result—according to the system. Did the same thing happen to him? And if that's true, why isn't he telling me the truth?

"But you chose Dauntless anyway?" I say.

“Out of necessity.”

“Why did you have to leave?”

His eyes dart away from mine, across the space in front of him, as if searching the air for an answer. He doesn't need to give one. I still feel the ghost of a stinging belt on my wrist.

“You had to get away from your dad,” I say. “Is that why you don't want to be a Dauntless leader? Because if you were, you might have to see him again?”

He lifts a shoulder. “That, and I've always felt that I don't quite belong among the Dauntless. Not the way they are now, anyway.”

“But you're...incredible,” I say. I pause and clear my throat. “I mean, by Dauntless standards. Four fears is unheard of. How could you not belong here?”

He shrugs. He doesn't seem to care about his talent, or his status among the Dauntless, and that is what I would expect from the Abnegation. I am not sure what to make of that.

He says, “I have a theory that selflessness and bravery aren't all that different. All your life you've been training to forget yourself, so when you're in danger, it becomes your first instinct. I could belong in Abnegation just as easily.”

Suddenly I feel heavy. A lifetime of training wasn't enough for me. My first instinct is still self-preservation.

“Yeah, well,” I say, “I left Abnegation because I wasn't selfless enough, no matter how hard I tried to be.”

“That's not entirely true.” He smiles at me. “That girl who let someone throw knives at her to spare a friend, who hit my dad with a belt to protect me—that selfless girl, that's not you?”

He's figured out more about me than I have. And even though it seems impossible that he could feel something for me, given all that I'm not...maybe it isn't. I frown at him. “You've been paying close attention, haven't you?”

“I like to observe people.”

“Maybe you were cut out for Candor, Four, because you're a terrible liar.”

He puts his hand on the rock next to him, his fingers lining up with mine. I look down at our hands. He has long, narrow fingers. Hands made for fine, deft movements. Not Dauntless hands, which should be thick and tough and ready to break things.

“Fine.” He leans his face closer to mine, his eyes focusing on my chin, and my lips, and my nose. “I watched you because I like you.” He says it plainly, boldly, and his eyes flick up to mine. “And don't call me ‘Four,’ okay? It's nice to hear my name again.”

Just like that, he has finally declared himself, and I don't know how to respond. My cheeks warm, and all I can think to say is, “But you're older than I am...*Tobias*.”

He smiles at me. “Yes, that whopping two-year gap really is *insurmountable*, isn't it?”

“I'm not trying to be self-deprecating,” I say, “I just don't get it. I'm younger. I'm not pretty. I—”

He laughs, a deep laugh that sounds like it came from deep inside him, and touches his lips to my temple.

“Don't pretend,” I say breathily. “You know I'm not. I'm not ugly, but I am certainly not pretty.”

“Fine. You’re not pretty. So?” He kisses my cheek. “I like how you look. You’re deadly smart. You’re brave. And even though you found out about Marcus...” His voice softens. “You aren’t giving me that look. Like I’m a kicked puppy or something.”

“Well,” I say. “You’re not.”

For a second his dark eyes are on mine, and he’s quiet. Then he touches my face and leans in close, brushing my lips with his. The river roars and I feel its spray on my ankles. He grins and presses his mouth to mine.

I tense up at first, unsure of myself, so when he pulls away, I’m sure I did something wrong, or badly. But he takes my face in his hands, his fingers strong against my skin, and kisses me again, firmer this time, more certain. I wrap an arm around him, sliding my hand up his neck and into his short hair.

For a few minutes we kiss, deep in the chasm, with the roar of water all around us. And when we rise, hand in hand, I realize that if we had both chosen differently, we might have ended up doing the same thing, in a safer place, in gray clothes instead of black ones.