



Chapter 1

"Avia! Come on it's getting dark. We need to get home!" I call for my sister.

"Coming!" She calls back. Her voice echoes on the trees.

I hear her footsteps on the dry, dead earth before I see her running out of the forest and towards me. I turn around and face our house. She catches up to me and I start walking. We get to the house and I pull open the front door, Avia walks in a er me.

"SHUT UP YOU STUPID BITCH!" I hear my dad, Jax, yell, before a sharp slapping sound.

"Avia, go to our room." I say, cautiously walking towards the yelling. Avia does as I said, going to our room.

"STOP! GET OFF OF ME! JAX!" My mother screams.

I peak around the corner right as my dad puts his arms around her neck. He starts to squeeze. Hard. My eyes widen in fright. I want to run in there and help, but I hesitate. I take a step forward, but as I do,

I hear a crack, and my moms body stops thrashing, her eyes looking distant, lifeless. I cover my mouth and run to my room.

"Avia! Hide!" I whisper yell to her. She nods and hides under the bed. I

pass the two beds and our wooden desk, paper is littered across it, mine and Avia drawings. I go to our closet and hide under our neatly folded clothes.

I hear the door break against the wall as my dad slams it open. I hold my breath.

"COME OUT YOU STUPID BRATS!" His deep voice cuts through the air, I freeze in fear. I hear him stomp into our room, the wooden floor

creaking and groaning under each stomp. I hear the sound of something heavy moving across the floor.

"NO! AHHHH! GET AWAY FROM ME! IRIS! IRIS, PLEASE HELP I'M

SCARED! GET OFF ME! AAAAHHHHH! PLEASE!" Avia's screams cut through my soul. First I feel terror, then anger. I storm out of my

hiding spot and throw the closet door open. I see my dad cornering Avia, holding her arm with his le hand, a bruise already forming there. I look at his right hand, he's holding a knife. I look around

desperately before grabbing the wooden sword me and my sister play with all the time and bolt at my father.

SMACK

I hit the hand holding avia as hard as I can, and he lets go.

"OW! FUCK!" He shouts in anger. He whips around and looks at me furiously.

"RUN, AVIA!" I turn around to run as well. She catches up to me and then runs out the door. I'm almost out the door when I feel myself get

yanked back. I spin around, eyes wide with fear. As soon as I turn around, my le eye erupts with pain. I see the knife coming this time,

and twist to my side to avoid it. Avia runs back into the room and stands between me and our father.

"Go!" She shouts.

"No! I won't leave you!" I yank my arm from father's grasp. I run out the door a er grabbing Avia by her arm.

"Where should we go?" Avia asks me. I look to our le , the forest. I look right, the dirt road leads down a small hill and into town.

"Let's go to town and get some hel-" I cut myself o , seeing something.

"Huh?" Avia turns to follow my gaze. Two men on horses are coming up the road.

"Pierce?!" I call to my brother.

"Iris, Avia!" He waves. We wave back.

"What happened?!" He asks once he's close enough to see my face, and our bruised arms.

"Dad happe-" I start.

"IRIS!!!" I freeze hearing my fathers voice, the sound of the door slamming follows shortly a er.

"Sir. I am going to have to ask you to calm down and drop the weapon." The male with Pierce gets o his horse. He has dark black

hair, green eyes, and pale, almost gray skin.

"Dad, what did you do?" Pierce asks cautiously.

"Shut up." He says marching over to us. I step in front of Avia, blocking her. Her eyes are shut tight, tears forcing their way out.

Father steps close to me and swings his knife. I close my eyes in fear. Something warm and wet sprays on my face. Blood. I stand in shock,

then try to process what happened. I open my eyes upon not feeling any pain. My dad is standing there, sword in his stomach. I hear his

knife clatter to the ground. My eyes follow the sword to see the man that was with Pierce.

"I k-know you're there Iris... I created y-you... you will follow... my path f-for you eventually" My father says in between coughs and deep

breaths. Then he goes limp.

"Keep your eyes closed." I tell Avia firmly.

"Okay..." She stands there, trembling in fear.

"Hey, it's going to be okay." I put my hand on her shoulder. She flinches.

"Sorry..." I mutter, pulling her into a tight hug.

"Come with us, you'll be safe." The man says. I look at him. He's about 5'8 if I had to guess, and looked to be about 17, like Pierce.

"How old are you two, and what are your names?" He asks.

I open my mouth to answer, but no sound comes out.

"This is Iris, she's 11. And this is Avia, she's 13." Pierce points to me, then Avia.

"Alright. Come with us." The black haired man waves for us to follow. I let go of Avia and follow him. I turn around to see her following me.

"Come on." Pierce waves me to his horse, she's brown with black eyes and white hooves. I li my arms and let Pierce pick me up and put me

on the horse, since he's 5'10, and I'm only 4'2.

Once me and Avia are on the horses, Pierce and the black haired

guy get on. They turn the horses around, and start riding down the dirt road. As we ride, I look around at the dead wasteland. I have to

blink something out of my eyes quite o en, because the wind that is blowing my ginger hair, is also blowing up dirt and ash into my face. I

cough a bit and wipe my teary eyes. I look over at Avia. Who is crying over the events that just took place.

"My name is Milos." The black haired man, Milos, draws my attention.

"Oh, that's a cool name." I respond quietly. I look back at Avia. We are passing the lab when she calls out.

"Wait! That's the lab! There are other kids there. They are experimenting on them! We have to save them!"

"There's no time. We can come back for them." Milos says.

"What if something happens while we are gone? We need to go now!" Avia argues.

"What if something happens to you two before we get you back to base?" He snaps back.

"To base?" I whisper questioningly.

"Fine..." Avia mutters.

The lab, the place me and Avia grew up. I lived at home with our mother until the age of five. Once I was five my father took me to the

lab. There were other kids there, including my other siblings. I actually have 9 siblings. Most of them died at the lab though, just like

most of the other kids there. My father and his sta did experiments on us. We got to visit our home for a week once every other month.

None of the other kids ever le though, they didn't have homes to go back to, or at least not as far as they knew. Most of the kids there got

there at a younger age than 5, some were even born there. We were in unit A1. I know there's A1, A2, and B1. I don't know how many other units there are though.

We keep riding all the way into and then through town. It was a

small town, only about 10 houses. Most of the buildings there were for the military. Our town was basically just a military pit-stop. There

was a pub to our right. Some man was yelling random things at us. Something about the military being a joke. We arrive at a big

building. Milos and Pierce get o their horses and help me and Avia down. We walk inside the building, the room we walk into looks like a

cafeteria, there were benches and a door with a label on the wall next to it that says 'Kitchen'. We walk through the cafeteria and walk

through big doors on the opposite side of the room from the kitchen. The door leads us to a hallway. We pass a couple doors, then go up

some stairs before they stop in front of a door. The label says 'Room 206'.

"This will be your room." Milos points to the door beside him with his thumb. I walk into the room and Avia follows. "Get washed up, we

will be back in about 30 minutes. We will take you to the nurse then." Pierce says then closes the door. I hear his footsteps recede before I

head for the bathroom. The bathroom has all the usual stu a bathroom would have. It's pretty plain.

"Iris?" I hear Avia's voice through the door.

"What?" I ask, Avia opening the door. She hands me clean clothes.

"They were on the bed." She explains.

"Thank you." I say before closing the door. I refold the clothes the way my mother taught me how.

Mother...

I push the thought of her out of my head quickly. I set the neatly folded uniform on the sink before undressing and stepping in the

shower.

Five minutes later, I am getting out of the shower. I put on the uniform Avia gave me. It's a white button up with pants. The casual

uniform. The clothes out of the expensive stu when they are not on a mission. It's made out of expensive stu . Once I'm done putting it on,

I look in the mirror. My hair is still a bit matted, but all the blood I was covered in before is gone. My eye is still bleeding though. It's swollen

and I can't open it. I bend down and look under the sink. There's drawers under it. I open the top one. It has a pink toothbrush, and a

blue one. There's also a tube of toothpaste. The drawer also has moisturizer, hand soap, and toilet paper. I open the second drawer

and find what I'm looking for, a brush. I pull it out and run it through my hair. Once I've gotten all the tangles out, I put it back. I pick up my

blood stained clothes and walk out of the bathroom. I walk by Avia and nod to her. She walks into the bathroom with her change of

clothes. A er throwing my old clothes into a basket I assume is for laundry, I plop down onto my bed.

A er the 30 minutes are up, Pierce comes back to get us like he

said he would. He takes us to a nurse who patches up my eye. She also patches up mine and Avia's arms. A er we're done at the nurse's,

Pierce takes us to a room with another man sitting at a desk. The desk is in the middle of the back wall. There's a door that leads to

what I assume is a bedroom to our right.

"Hello, my name is Aspen. I am the acting commander, taking over until a new one rises." He introduces himself.

"And you will be joining the military."