

My hand slides over the area where my skin was cut and is now shriveled. "I had the scar when they found me." I school my face when he turns sharply toward me. "I don't have memories of my past." I glance away, afraid of showing any emotion. "They think I was in a boat accident."

"You don't know?"

"I don't remember." Every time I admit the truth, it rips something inside me. Years of my life are lost inside my brain, refusing me the truth of who I am. "They say I have amnesia."

"You're an orphan."

It is in my file, so I refuse to answer. Instead, I focus on the students who are lining up at the door. Relief is scrawled across their faces. Around me, others are finishing up. Otis rolls off his gloves and tosses them in the trash.

"You're free to go," he says.

My heart slows and then speeds up. I can find the truth of who I am. A joy I have never felt before flows through me. With a jerk of my head, I thank him. Off the table, I rush toward the door and freedom.

"Alexia?" Otis calls out.

His call freezes me. Five more steps, and I am at the door. Sure he has learned the truth, I ignore him and quicken my pace. Focused on the door, I tell myself I just need to reach it.

"Alexia," he says, louder.

His hand grasps my bare arm. Tense, I am about to turn to beg for my freedom when a red haze covers my eyes and pain radiates from my skull. His glove-free hand pulls me back. I stumble, gasping for air. With the momentum, his hand falls off. Through my dimming haze, I see my jacket and shoes in his hand.

"What happened just now?" His narrowed eyes search mine.

"My illness." I push the final remnants of the pain away. At the same time, I search for an answer he will accept. "I was dizzy."

Without making contact, I grab my jacket and slip it on

to cover my arms. Anxious to get to the door, I start toward it, when a little girl in a yellow dress runs toward us. A bright smile lights up her face. Two braids fall over her shoulders. She stops at Otis's feet and wraps an arm around his leg.

"Hi. My name is Bryn." Her eyes on mine, she says each

word perfectly. A finger pointed toward Otis, she announces, "He's my daddy." Before I can respond, she adds, "Yellow is my favorite color."

"Hi. I'm Alexia." I force a smile. If I walk away without

saying hello to his daughter, then it could make him angry. I try to keep my attention off the growing line at the door. "She's beautiful." He gives me an odd look, so I motion toward her. "Your daughter? Bryn?"

Otis glances at his leg then back at me. His gaze slowly fills with fury. "What are you talking about?"

A deafening roar starts in my ear and then slowly slides

inward until it takes over my body. Every sense muffled, I watch as Bryn slips her hand into Otis's. Their fingers don't intertwine.

"What game are you playing?" With narrowed eyes, he takes a threatening step closer until we are inches apart. His breath ruffles my hair. "My daughter died ten years ago."

My scar starts to throb. His words swirl around me, pulling me in. I search helplessly for an explanation as more students take their place in the line. Yearning to be with them, I shift my gaze to his leg. Bryn's gone as if she had never been there.

"I'm sorry." Scared, I hunt for a reason he will believe. "Someone mentioned your daughter. I was stupid to say anything."

I take a step toward the door, determined to escape. But it is too late. I can only watch with dread as he reaches for a button next to the computer.

"Please don't." The words barely get past the fear in my throat.

Angry, his gaze locks on me while pressing the button.

Seconds later my arms are yanked back by an officer while another stands alongside in support. With an instinct born from deep within my subconscious, I kick my leg out, striking the first officer in the stomach. Surprised, he stumbles back. At an advantage, I pivot and hit the second officer in the neck with an open palm.

In my peripheral vision, I see Kyle rise off his bed. Shocked, he stares at me. Another tech starts to pull his hands behind him to slap handcuffs on. His face drops, but not before I see his fear lined with regret.

"Fight!" I scream at him. "You have to fight!"

A second of indecision, and then Kyle turns and throws a punch at the tech, dropping him. The first officer who tried to handcuff me rushes Kyle. The second one grips my shoulders. Using a maneuver I cannot remember learning, I drive an uppercut to his mouth. Blood spurts over his face and onto my fingers. He stumbles back.

Overhead, an alarm sounds, reverberating through the walls and floor. Kyle struggles with the officer as three others rush toward us. Legs apart with fists raised, I ready for a battle. Kyle gets the officer into a headlock. Another one pulls out his weapon. Before Kyle can react, the officer pulls the trigger, dropping Kyle with one shot.

"No!" My scream echoes inside my head. I'm staggering toward his still body when the officer turns his weapon toward me.

“She’s a code red!” Otis yells. “Don’t shoot!”

The officer turns toward him, his face filled with confusion. Another one grabs my head and pulls it to the side. I start to struggle. Then Otis sticks a needle into my neck, shooting a warm liquid through my veins.

I take another step toward Kyle’s still body. Then my eyes go fuzzy and my brain starts to shut down. I try to throw an arm out but it falls to my side. Through the fog, I yell to Kyle to get up, but no words come. Grief rips through me. I push forward one last time, but my legs buckle.

Seconds later everything goes black.