
BOOK EXCERPT

EXCERPT II

Tris watched a 747 on final approach above her, its four engines hanging off of the wings, massive gear assembly down. It probably moved at 160 knots, but it appeared to float toward the runway. The majesty of this enormous jet had awed Tris ever since she was a little girl.

Grandpa Ed had introduced her to flying. On Sundays, he would come over early and have breakfast with Tris and her parents. Her mother would make blueberry pancakes that had a secret ingredient Tris still didn't know.

"Let's go, Princess Patricia. Let's see the miracle of flight," he'd say as he wiped his mouth and drained his cup of black coffee. She'd jump up from the table, kiss her parents goodbye, and run out to Grandpa's truck.

They'd make the two-hour drive from the tiny town of Pittston to the big-city airport. Tris would watch the cornfields roll by, as Grandpa's old pickup bounced along with his hands locked in the ten-and-two position on the steering wheel.

When the terminal doors opened, she would run to the plate glass window looking out over the ramp, pressing her nose up against the glass and trying to rub it against the bulls-eye tip of a 747 parked at the gate. White with a red stripe, the letters "TWA" painted on the side.

"Grandpa, it's so big. How can it fly?"

He'd smile down at his only grandchild. "That's the miracle, princess."

Now, whenever Tris saw a 747 in flight, she could almost feel the calloused warmth of Grandpa's hand on hers. Those days at the airport, with her hand in his while she stood nose-to-nose with the gigantic jet, were the moments she treasured from a childhood that always seemed too short.

Tris's dad died when she was eight. Her mother was adrift after that, sometimes forgetting to cook or clean. From time to time when Tris walked in the door after school, her mother stared at her like she was an unexpected visitor. color picture of how they looked from the air, like a postage stamp glued to the middle of the city.

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Her mouth went dry. She swallowed twice and shimmied her seat to loosen the grip of the shoulder strap that locked against her chest. As she checked the street signs for her next turn, Tris daydreamed about flying the Astral for Tetrax all over the world.

"Look where I am, Grandpa," she'd say from ramps in Europe, Asia, maybe even Africa! Well-paid coverage crews slept in five-star hotels with lengthy sits in high-end vacation destinations at the ready in case the executives they flew changed their plans. And this job promised the most important benefit: the chance to become a captain without having to wait for her seniority number to come up.