

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
VERONICA ROTH

FREE FOUR

TOBIAS TELLS THE
DIVERGENT
KNIFE-THROWING SCENE

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TOBIAS TELLS THE DIVERGENT STORY

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FREE FOUR: AN INTRODUCTION

As part of the lead-up to *Insurgent*'s publication, I agreed to retell a scene from *Divergent* from a different point of view: Four's. Part of what makes Four interesting as a character, to me, is this wall he puts up between himself and other people. Writing from his perspective meant taking down that wall to see what was really behind it, which I thought would be difficult. Strangely, it wasn't. I think I spent a lot more time in Four's head than I realized, though I was always writing from Tris's perspective. I sort of knew how he sounded and what he thought about things. (Obviously it still took a lot of work, but I wasn't *stuck* like I thought I might be.)

The biggest challenge was actually choosing the right scene—one that could give the most interesting insights into his character and his relationships. I really wanted to choose something that would change our (I say "our" because it changed mine, too) perceptions about the story and show how limited Tris's perspective really is, though she is a reliable and observant narrator. I went through the whole book with sticky notes, searching for my best options, and I vacillated between two of them for about a day before landing on the right one. This was really good for me, because it gave me a fuller understanding of Four's character and what he was going through while Tris was an initiate. I'm confident that some things in this scene will surprise you, because they definitely surprised me.

—*Veronica Roth*

FREE FOUR: TOBIAS TELLS THE DIVERGENT STORY

I WOULDN'T HAVE volunteered to train the initiates if not for the smell of the training room—the scent of dust and sweat and sharpened metal. This was the first place I ever felt strong. Every time I breathe this air I feel it again.

At one end of the room is a slab of wood with a target painted on it. Against one wall is a table covered with throwing knives—ugly metal instruments with a hole at one end, perfect for inexperienced initiates. Lined up across from me are the faction transfers, who still bear, in one way or another, the marks of their old factions: the straight-backed Candor, the steady-eyed Erudite, and the Stiff, leaning into her toes so she's ready to move.

“Tomorrow will be the last day of stage one,” Eric says.

He doesn't look at me. I hurt his pride yesterday, and not just during capture the flag—Max pulled me aside at breakfast to ask how the initiates were doing, as if Eric was not the one in charge. Eric was sitting at the table next to mine at the time, scowling into his bran muffin.

“You will resume fighting then,” Eric continues. “Today, you'll be learning how to aim. Everyone picks up three knives, and pay attention while Four demonstrates the correct technique for throwing them.” His eyes fall somewhere north of mine, like he is standing above me. I straighten up. I hate when he treats me like his lackey, like I didn't knock out one of his teeth during our own initiation.

“Now!”

They scramble for knives like factionless kids over a spare piece of bread, too desperate. All except her, with her deliberate movements, her blond head slipping between the shoulders of taller initiates. She doesn't try to look comfortable with the blades balancing on her palms, and that is what I like about her, that she knows these weapons are unnatural yet she finds a way to wield them.

Eric walks toward me, and I back away by instinct. I try not to be afraid of him, but I know how smart he is and that if I'm not careful he'll notice

that I keep staring at her, and that will be my undoing. I turn toward the target, a knife in my right hand.

I requested that the knife-throwing be taken from the training curriculum this year, because it serves no actual purpose other than fueling the Dauntless bravado. No one here will ever use it except to impress someone, the way I will impress them now. Eric would say that dazzling people can be useful, which is why he denied my request, but it's everything I hate about Dauntless.

I hold the knife by its blade so the balance is right. My initiation instructor, Amar, saw that I had a busy mind, so he taught me to tie my movements to my breaths. I inhale, and stare at the target's center. I exhale, and throw. The knife hits the target. I hear a few of the initiates draw breath at the same time.

I find a rhythm in it: inhale and pass the next knife to my right hand, exhale and turn it with my fingertips, inhale and watch the target, exhale and throw. Everything goes dark around the center of that board. The other factions call us brutish, as if we don't use our minds, but that is all I do here.

Eric's voice breaks my daze. "Line up!"

I leave the knives in the board to remind the initiates of what is possible, and stand against the side wall. Amar was also the one who gave me my name, back in the days when the first thing initiates did upon arriving in the Dauntless compound was go through our fear landscapes. He was the sort of person who made a nickname stick, so likable that everyone imitated him.

He's dead now, but sometimes, in this room, I can still hear him scolding me for holding my breath.

She doesn't hold her breath. That's good—one less bad habit to break. But she has a clumsy arm, awkward as a chicken leg.

Knives are flying but, most of the time, not spinning. Even Edward hasn't figured it out, though he's usually the quickest, his eyes alive with that Erudite knowledge-craving.

"I think the Stiff's taken too many hits to the head!" Peter says. "Hey, Stiff! Remember what a *knife* is?"

I don't usually hate people, but I hate Peter. I hate that he tries to shrink people, the same way Eric does.

Tris doesn't answer, just picks up a knife and throws, still with that awkward arm, but it works—I hear metal slam against board, and I smile.

“Hey, Peter,” Tris says. “Remember what a *target* is?”

I watch each of them, trying not to catch Eric's eye as he paces like a caged animal behind them. I have to admit that Christina is good—though I don't like giving credit to Candor smart-mouths—and so is Peter—though I don't like giving credit to future psychopaths. Al, however, is just a walking, talking sledgehammer, all power and no finesse.

It's a shame Eric also notices.

“How slow *are* you, Candor? Do you need glasses? Should I move the target closer to you?” he says, his voice strained.

Al the Sledgehammer has unexpectedly soft insides. The taunting pierces them. When he throws again, the knife sails into a wall.

“What was that, initiate?” Eric says.

“It—it slipped.”

“Well, I think you should go get it.”

The initiates stop throwing.

“Did I tell you to stop?” Eric says, his pierced eyebrows raised.

This is not good.

“Go get it?” says Al. “But everyone's still throwing.”

“And?”

“And I don't want to get hit.”

“I think you can trust your fellow initiates to aim better than you. Go get your knife.”

“No.”

The Sledgehammer strikes again, I think. The response is stubborn but there is no strategy in it. Still, it takes more bravery for Al to say no than for Eric to force him to get a knife to the back of the head, which is something Eric will never understand.

“Why not? Are you afraid?”

“Of getting stabbed by an airborne knife?” says Al. “Yes, I am!”

My body gets heavy as Eric raises his voice. “Everyone stop!”

The first time I met Eric he wore blue and his hair was parted down the side. He was trembling as he approached Amar to receive the injection of fear-landscape serum into his neck. During his fear landscape, he never moved an inch; he just stood still, screaming into clenched teeth, and

somehow maneuvered his heartbeat down to an acceptable level using his breath. I didn't know it was possible to conquer fear in your body before you did it in your mind. That was when I knew I should be wary of him.

"Clear out of the ring," Eric says. Then, to Al: "All except you. Stand in front of the target."

Al, gulping, lumbers over to the target. I pull away from the wall. I know what Eric will do. And it will probably end with a lost eye or a pierced throat; with horror, as every fight I've witnessed has, each one driving me further and further from the faction I chose as a haven.

Without looking at me, Eric says, "Hey, Four. Give me a hand here, huh?"

Part of me feels relief. At least I know that if I am throwing the knives instead of Eric, Al is less likely to get injured. But I also can't be this cruel, and I can't be the one who does Eric's dirty work.

I try to act casual, scratching my eyebrow with a knife point, but I don't feel casual. I feel like someone is pressing me into a mold that does not fit my body, forcing me into the wrong shape.

Eric says, "You're going to stand there as he throws those knives until you learn not to flinch."

My chest feels tight. I want to save Al, but the more I defy Eric, the more determined he will be to put me in my place. I decide to pretend that I am bored by the whole thing.

"Is this really necessary?"

"I have the authority here, remember?" Eric says. "Here, and everywhere else."

I can feel blood creeping into my face as I stare at him, and he stares back at me. Max asked me to be a faction leader and I should have said yes; I would have, if I had known that I would prevent things like this, things like dangling initiates over the chasm and forcing them to beat each other senseless.

I realize that I have been squeezing the knives so tightly that the handles have left impressions in my palms. I have to do what Eric says. My only other choice is leaving the room, and if I leave, Eric will throw the knives himself, which I can't allow. I turn toward Al.

And then she says—I know it's her because her voice is low, for a girl's, and careful—"Stop it."

I don't want Eric to turn on her instead. I glare at her as if that will make her think twice. I know it won't. I'm not stupid.

"Any idiot can stand in front of a target," Tris says. "It doesn't prove anything except that you're bullying him. Which, as I recall, is a sign of cowardice."

Dauntless brutes—bullies, Lower Level children—that is what we are, beneath the tattoos and the piercings and the dark clothing.

Maybe I am stupid. I have to stop thinking of her this way.

"Then it should be easy for you," Eric says, pushing his hair back so it curls around his ear. "If you're willing to take his place."

And then his eyes shift to mine, just for a second. It's like he knows, he *knows* I have a thing for her, so he's going to force me to throw knives at her. For an instant—no, longer than an instant—I think about throwing a knife at him instead. I could hit him in the arm, or the leg, no harm done....

"There goes your pretty face," Peter says, across the room. "Oh, wait. You don't have one."

I barely register the comment. I am too busy watching her.

She stands with her back to the board. The top of her head skims the bottom of the target center. She tips her chin up and looks at me with that Abnegation stubbornness I know so well. She may have left them, but they are what's making her strong.

I can't tell her it will be okay, not with Eric here, but I can try to make her strong.

"If you flinch, Al takes your place. Understand?" I say.

Eric stands a little too close, tapping his foot on the floor. I have to get this right. I can't throw the knife to the edge of the board, because he knows I can hit the center. But a clumsy throw, an inch in either direction, and I could hurt her. *There goes your pretty face.*

But Peter's right, she's not *pretty*, that word is too small. She is not like the girls I used to stare at, all bend and curve and softness. She is small but strong, and her bright eyes demand attention. Looking at her is like waking up.

I throw the knife, keeping my eyes on hers. It sticks in the board near her cheek. My hands shake with relief. Her eyes close, so I know I need to remind her again of her selflessness.

"You about done, Stiff?" I say.

Stiff. That's why you're strong, get it?

She looks angry. "No."

Why on earth would she get it? She can't read minds, for God's sake.

"Eyes open, then," I say, tapping the skin between my eyebrows. I don't really need her eyes to be on mine, but I feel better when they are. I breathe the dust-sweat-metal smell and pass a knife from my left hand to my right. Eric inches closer.

My view of the room narrows around the part in her hair, and I throw with my exhale.

I hear Eric behind me. "Hmm" is all he says.

"Come on, Stiff," I say. "Let someone else stand there and take it."

"Shut up, Four!" she says, and I want to yell back that I'm as frustrated as she is, with an Erudite vulture analyzing my every move, searching for my weak points so he can hit them as hard as he can.

I hear that "hmm" again and I'm not sure if it's Eric or my imagination, but I know I have to convince him that she's just another initiate to me, and I have to do it now. I breathe deep, and make a quick decision, staring at the tip of her ear, the quick-healing cartilage.

The fear does not exist. My beating heart, tight chest, and sweating palms do not exist.

I throw the knife and look away when she winces, too relieved to feel bad for hurting her. I did it.

"I would love to stay and see if the rest of you are as daring as she is, but I think that's enough for today," says Eric. To me, he mutters, "Well. That should scare them, huh."

I think—I hope—that means he's not suspicious of me anymore.

He touches her shoulder, and gives her a metal-framed smile. "I should keep my eye on you."

I watch blood trickle down her ear and onto her neck and feel sick.

The room empties, the door closes, and I wait until the footsteps disappear before starting toward her.

"Is your—" I start to reach for the side of her head.

She glares. "You did that on *purpose!*"

"Yes, I did," I say. "And you should thank me for helping you—" I want to explain about Eric and how badly he wants to hurt me and everyone I

even remotely care for, or about how I know where her strength comes from and wanted to remind her, but she doesn't give me a chance.

"Thank you? You almost stabbed my ear, and you spent the entire time taunting me. Why should I thank you?"

Taunting? I scowl at her.

"You know, I'm getting a little tired of waiting for you to catch on!" I say.

"Catch on? Catch on to what? That you wanted to prove to Eric how tough you are? That you're sadistic, just like he is?"

The accusation makes me feel cold. She thinks I'm like Eric? She thinks I want to *impress* him?

"I am not sadistic." I lean closer to her and suddenly I feel nervous, like something is prickling in my chest. "If I wanted to hurt you, don't you think I would have already?"

She's close enough to touch, but if she thinks I'm like Eric, that will never happen.

Of course she thinks I'm like Eric. I just threw knives at her head. I screwed it all up. Permanently.

I have to get out. I cross the room and, at the last second before I slam the door, shove the point of my knife into the table.

I hear her frustrated scream from around the corner, and I stop, sinking into a crouch with my back to the wall. Before she got here everything had stalled inside me, and every morning I was just moving toward nighttime. I'd thought about leaving—I'd *decided* to leave, to be factionless, after this class of initiates was done. But then she was here and she was just like me, putting aside her gray clothes but not really putting them aside, never really putting them aside because she knows the secret, that they are the strongest armor we can wear.

And now she hates me and I can't even leave Dauntless to join the factionless, like I was going to, because Eric's eye is on her like it was on Amar last year, right before he turned up dead on the pavement near the railroad tracks. All the Divergent end up dead except me, because of my fluke aptitude test result, and if Eric is watching her, she's probably one, too.

My thoughts skip back to the night before, how touching her sent warmth into my hand and through the rest of me, though I was frozen with fear. I

press my hands to my head, press the memory away.

I can't leave now. I like her too much. There, I said it. But I won't say it again.

ONE CHOICE CAN TRANSFORM YOU

DIVE INTO THIS SNEAK PEEK OF

DIVERGENT

THE FIRST BOOK IN THE DIVERGENT TRILOGY

CHAPTER ONE

THERE IS ONE mirror in my house. It is behind a sliding panel in the hallway upstairs. Our faction allows me to stand in front of it on the second day of every third month, the day my mother cuts my hair.

I sit on the stool and my mother stands behind me with the scissors, trimming. The strands fall on the floor in a dull, blond ring.

When she finishes, she pulls my hair away from my face and twists it into a knot. I note how calm she looks and how focused she is. She is well-practiced in the art of losing herself. I can't say the same of myself.

I sneak a look at my reflection when she isn't paying attention—not for the sake of vanity, but out of curiosity. A lot can happen to a person's appearance in three months. In my reflection, I see a narrow face, wide, round eyes, and a long, thin nose—I still look like a little girl, though sometime in the last few months I turned sixteen. The other factions celebrate birthdays, but we don't. It would be self-indulgent.

"There," she says when she pins the knot in place. Her eyes catch mine in the mirror. It is too late to look away, but instead of scolding me, she smiles at our reflection. I frown a little. Why doesn't she reprimand me for staring at myself?

"So today is the day," she says.

"Yes," I reply.

"Are you nervous?"

I stare into my own eyes for a moment. Today is the day of the aptitude test that will show me which of the five factions I belong in. And tomorrow, at the Choosing Ceremony, I will decide on a faction; I will decide the rest of my life; I will decide to stay with my family or abandon them.

"No," I say. "The tests don't have to change our choices."

"Right." She smiles. "Let's go eat breakfast."

"Thank you. For cutting my hair."

She kisses my cheek and slides the panel over the mirror. I think my mother could be beautiful, in a different world. Her body is thin beneath the

gray robe. She has high cheekbones and long eyelashes, and when she lets her hair down at night, it hangs in waves over her shoulders. But she must hide that beauty in Abnegation.

We walk together to the kitchen. On these mornings when my brother makes breakfast, and my father's hand skims my hair as he reads the newspaper, and my mother hums as she clears the table—it is on these mornings that I feel guiltiest for wanting to leave them.

The bus stinks of exhaust. Every time it hits a patch of uneven pavement, it jostles me from side to side, even though I'm gripping the seat to keep myself still.

My older brother, Caleb, stands in the aisle, holding a railing above his head to keep himself steady. We don't look alike. He has my father's dark hair and hooked nose and my mother's green eyes and dimpled cheeks. When he was younger, that collection of features looked strange, but now it suits him. If he wasn't Abnegation, I'm sure the girls at school would stare at him.

He also inherited my mother's talent for selflessness. He gave his seat to a surly Candor man on the bus without a second thought.

The Candor man wears a black suit with a white tie—Candor standard uniform. Their faction values honesty and sees the truth as black and white, so that is what they wear.

The gaps between the buildings narrow and the roads are smoother as we near the heart of the city. The building that was once called the Sears Tower—we call it the Hub—emerges from the fog, a black pillar in the skyline. The bus passes under the elevated tracks. I have never been on a train, though they never stop running and there are tracks everywhere. Only the Dauntless ride them.

Five years ago, volunteer construction workers from Abnegation repaved some of the roads. They started in the middle of the city and worked their way outward until they ran out of materials. The roads where I live are still cracked and patchy, and it's not safe to drive on them. We don't have a car anyway.

Caleb's expression is placid as the bus sways and jolts on the road. The gray robe falls from his arm as he clutches a pole for balance. I can tell by

the constant shift of his eyes that he is watching the people around us—striving to see only them and to forget himself. Candor values honesty, but our faction, Abnegation, values selflessness.

The bus stops in front of the school and I get up, scooting past the Candor man. I grab Caleb’s arm as I stumble over the man’s shoes. My slacks are too long, and I’ve never been that graceful.

The Upper Levels building is the oldest of the three schools in the city: Lower Levels, Mid-Levels, and Upper Levels. Like all the other buildings around it, it is made of glass and steel. In front of it is a large metal sculpture that the Dauntless climb after school, daring each other to go higher and higher. Last year I watched one of them fall and break her leg. I was the one who ran to get the nurse.

“Aptitude tests today,” I say. Caleb is not quite a year older than I am, so we are in the same year at school.

He nods as we pass through the front doors. My muscles tighten the second we walk in. The atmosphere feels hungry, like every sixteen-year-old is trying to devour as much as he can get of this last day. It is likely that we will not walk these halls again after the Choosing Ceremony—once we choose, our new factions will be responsible for finishing our education.

Our classes are cut in half today, so we will attend all of them before the aptitude tests, which take place after lunch. My heart rate is already elevated.

“You aren’t at all worried about what they’ll tell you?” I ask Caleb.

We pause at the split in the hallway where he will go one way, toward Advanced Math, and I will go the other, toward Faction History.

He raises an eyebrow at me. “Are you?”

I could tell him I’ve been worried for weeks about what the aptitude test will tell me—Abnegation, Candor, Erudite, Amity, or Dauntless?

Instead I smile and say, “Not really.”

He smiles back. “Well ... have a good day.”

I walk toward Faction History, chewing on my lower lip. He never answered my question.

The hallways are cramped, though the light coming through the windows creates the illusion of space; they are one of the only places where the factions mix, at our age. Today the crowd has a new kind of energy, a last day mania.

A girl with long curly hair shouts “Hey!” next to my ear, waving at a distant friend. A jacket sleeve smacks me on the cheek. Then an Erudite boy in a blue sweater shoves me. I lose my balance and fall hard on the ground.

“Out of my way, Stiff,” he snaps, and continues down the hallway.

My cheeks warm. I get up and dust myself off. A few people stopped when I fell, but none of them offered to help me. Their eyes follow me to the edge of the hallway. This sort of thing has been happening to others in my faction for months now—the Erudite have been releasing antagonistic reports about Abnegation, and it has begun to affect the way we relate at school. The gray clothes, the plain hairstyle, and the unassuming demeanor of my faction are supposed to make it easier for me to forget myself, and easier for everyone else to forget me too. But now they make me a target.

I pause by a window in the E Wing and wait for the Dauntless to arrive. I do this every morning. At exactly 7:25, the Dauntless prove their bravery by jumping from a moving train.

My father calls the Dauntless “hellions.” They are pierced, tattooed, and black-clothed. Their primary purpose is to guard the fence that surrounds our city. From what, I don’t know.

They should perplex me. I should wonder what courage—which is the virtue they most value—has to do with a metal ring through your nostril. Instead my eyes cling to them wherever they go.

The train whistle blares, the sound resonating in my chest. The light fixed to the front of the train clicks on and off as the train hurtles past the school, squealing on iron rails. And as the last few cars pass, a mass exodus of young men and women in dark clothing hurl themselves from the moving cars, some dropping and rolling, others stumbling a few steps before regaining their balance. One of the boys wraps his arm around a girl’s shoulders, laughing.

Watching them is a foolish practice. I turn away from the window and press through the crowd to the Faction History classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TESTS BEGIN after lunch. We sit at the long tables in the cafeteria, and the test administrators call ten names at a time, one for each testing room. I sit next to Caleb and across from our neighbor Susan.

Susan's father travels throughout the city for his job, so he has a car and drives her to and from school every day. He offered to drive us, too, but as Caleb says, we prefer to leave later and would not want to inconvenience him.

Of course not.

The test administrators are mostly Abnegation volunteers, although there is an Erudite in one of the testing rooms and a Dauntless in another to test those of us from Abnegation, because the rules state that we can't be tested by someone from our own faction. The rules also say that we can't prepare for the test in any way, so I don't know what to expect.

My gaze drifts from Susan to the Dauntless tables across the room. They are laughing and shouting and playing cards. At another set of tables, the Erudite chatter over books and newspapers, in constant pursuit of knowledge.

A group of Amity girls in yellow and red sit in a circle on the cafeteria floor, playing some kind of hand-slapping game involving a rhyming song. Every few minutes I hear a chorus of laughter from them as someone is eliminated and has to sit in the center of the circle. At the table next to them, Candor boys make wide gestures with their hands. They appear to be arguing about something, but it must not be serious, because some of them are still smiling.

At the Abnegation table, we sit quietly and wait. Faction customs dictate even idle behavior and supersede individual preference. I doubt all the Erudite want to study all the time, or that every Candor enjoys a lively debate, but they can't defy the norms of their factions any more than I can.

Caleb's name is called in the next group. He moves confidently toward the exit. I don't need to wish him luck or assure him that he shouldn't be

nervous. He knows where he belongs, and as far as I know, he always has. My earliest memory of him is from when we were four years old. He scolded me for not giving my jump rope to a little girl on the playground who didn't have anything to play with. He doesn't lecture me often anymore, but I have his look of disapproval memorized.

I have tried to explain to him that my instincts are not the same as his—it didn't even enter my mind to give my seat to the Candor man on the bus—but he doesn't understand. "Just do what you're supposed to," he always says. It is that easy for him. It should be that easy for me.

My stomach wrenches. I close my eyes and keep them closed until ten minutes later, when Caleb sits down again.

He is plaster-pale. He pushes his palms along his legs like I do when I wipe off sweat, and when he brings them back, his fingers shake. I open my mouth to ask him something, but the words don't come. I am not allowed to ask him about his results, and he is not allowed to tell me.

An Abnegation volunteer speaks the next round of names. Two from Dauntless, two from Erudite, two from Amity, two from Candor, and then: "From Abnegation: Susan Black and Beatrice Prior."

I get up because I'm supposed to, but if it were up to me, I would stay in my seat for the rest of time. I feel like there is a bubble in my chest that expands more by the second, threatening to break me apart from the inside. I follow Susan to the exit. The people I pass probably can't tell us apart. We wear the same clothes and we wear our blond hair the same way. The only difference is that Susan might not feel like she's going to throw up, and from what I can tell, her hands aren't shaking so hard she has to clutch the hem of her shirt to steady them.

Waiting for us outside the cafeteria is a row of ten rooms. They are used only for the aptitude tests, so I have never been in one before. Unlike the other rooms in the school, they are separated, not by glass, but by mirrors. I watch myself, pale and terrified, walking toward one of the doors. Susan grins nervously at me as she walks into room 5, and I walk into room 6, where a Dauntless woman waits for me.

She is not as severe-looking as the young Dauntless I have seen. She has small, dark, angular eyes and wears a black blazer—like a man's suit—and jeans. It is only when she turns to close the door that I see a tattoo on the back of her neck, a black-and-white hawk with a red eye. If I didn't feel like

my heart had migrated to my throat, I would ask her what it signifies. It must signify something.

Mirrors cover the inner walls of the room. I can see my reflection from all angles: the gray fabric obscuring the shape of my back, my long neck, my knobby-knuckled hands, red with a blood blush. The ceiling glows white with light. In the center of the room is a reclined chair, like a dentist's, with a machine next to it. It looks like a place where terrible things happen.

"Don't worry," the woman says, "it doesn't hurt."

Her hair is black and straight, but in the light I see that it is streaked with gray.

"Have a seat and get comfortable," she says. "My name is Tori."

Clumsily I sit in the chair and recline, putting my head on the headrest. The lights hurt my eyes. Tori busies herself with the machine on my right. I try to focus on her and not on the wires in her hands.

"Why the hawk?" I blurt out as she attaches an electrode to my forehead.

"Never met a curious Abnegation before," she says, raising her eyebrows at me.

I shiver, and goose bumps appear on my arms. My curiosity is a mistake, a betrayal of Abnegation values.

Humming a little, she presses another electrode to my forehead and explains, "In some parts of the ancient world, the hawk symbolized the sun. Back when I got this, I figured if I always had the sun on me, I wouldn't be afraid of the dark."

I try to stop myself from asking another question, but I can't help it. "You're afraid of the dark?"

"I *was* afraid of the dark," she corrects me. She presses the next electrode to her own forehead, and attaches a wire to it. She shrugs. "Now it reminds me of the fear I've overcome."

She stands behind me. I squeeze the armrests so tightly the redness pulls away from my knuckles. She tugs wires toward her, attaching them to me, to her, to the machine behind her. Then she passes me a vial of clear liquid.

"Drink this," she says.

"What is it?" My throat feels swollen. I swallow hard. "What's going to happen?"

"Can't tell you that. Just trust me."

I press air from my lungs and tip the contents of the vial into my mouth. My eyes close.

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

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

"Why?" I ask.

"Choose," she repeats.

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

"Choose!" she yells.

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

"Have it your way," she says.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I blink, and when my eyes open, a child stands across the room wearing a white dress. She stretches out both hands and squeals, "Puppy!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I clear my throat.

“Do you?” he repeats.

I shrug my shoulders.

“Well?”

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

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

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

“I am not.”

“I can see it in your eyes.”

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

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

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

**ONE CHOICE CAN TRANSFORM YOU ...
ONE CHOICE CAN DESTROY YOU**

DIVE INTO THIS SNEAK PEEK OF

INSURGENT

THE SECOND BOOK IN THE DIVERGENT TRILOGY

CHAPTER ONE

I WAKE WITH his name in my mouth.

Will.

Before I open my eyes, I watch him crumple to the pavement again. Dead.

My doing.

Tobias crouches in front of me, his hand on my left shoulder. The train car bumps over the rails, and Marcus, Peter, and Caleb stand by the doorway. I take a deep breath and hold it in an attempt to relieve some of the pressure that is building in my chest.

An hour ago, nothing that happened felt real to me. Now it does.

I breathe out, and the pressure is still there.

“Tris, come on,” Tobias says, his eyes searching mine. “We have to jump.”

It is too dark to see where we are, but if we are getting off, we are probably close to the fence. Tobias helps me to my feet and guides me toward the doorway.

The others jump off one by one: Peter first, then Marcus, then Caleb. I take Tobias’s hand. The wind picks up as we stand at the edge of the car opening, like a hand pushing me back, toward safety.

But we launch ourselves into darkness and land hard on the ground. The impact hurts the bullet wound in my shoulder. I bite my lip to keep from crying out, and search for my brother.

“Okay?” I say when I see him sitting in the grass a few feet away, rubbing his knee.

He nods. I hear him sniff like he’s fending off tears, and I have to turn away.

We landed in the grass near the fence, several yards away from the worn path that the Amity trucks travel to deliver food to the city, and the gate that lets them out—the gate that is currently shut, locking us in. The fence

towers over us, too high and flexible to climb over, too sturdy to knock down.

“There are supposed to be Dauntless guards here,” says Marcus. “Where are they?”

“They were probably under the simulation,” Tobias says, “and are now ...” He pauses. “Who knows where, doing who knows what.”

We stopped the simulation—the weight of the hard drive in my back pocket reminds me—but we didn’t pause to see the aftermath. What happened to our friends, our peers, our leaders, our factions? There is no way to know.

Tobias approaches a small metal box on the right side of the gate and opens it, revealing a keypad.

“Let’s hope the Erudite didn’t think to change this combination,” he says as he types in a series of numbers. He stops at the eighth one, and the gate clicks open.

“How did you know that?” says Caleb. His voice sounds thick with emotion, so thick I am surprised it does not choke him on the way out.

“I worked in the Dauntless control room, monitoring the security system. We only change the codes twice a year,” Tobias says.

“How lucky,” says Caleb. He gives Tobias a wary look.

“Luck has nothing to do with it,” Tobias says. “I only worked there because I wanted to make sure I could get out.”

I shiver. The way he talks about getting out—it’s like he thinks we’re trapped. I never thought about it that way before, and now that seems foolish.

We walk in a small pack, Peter cradling his bloody arm to his chest—the arm that I shot—and Marcus with his hand on Peter’s shoulder, keeping him stable. Caleb wipes his cheeks every few seconds, and I know he’s crying but I don’t know how to comfort him, or why I am not crying myself.

Instead I take the lead, Tobias silent at my side, and though he does not touch me, he steadies me.

Pinpricks of light are the first sign that we are nearing Amity headquarters. Then squares of light that turn into glowing windows. A cluster of wooden and glass buildings.

Before we can reach them, we have to walk through an orchard. My feet sink into the ground, and above me, the branches grow into one another, forming a kind of tunnel. Dark fruit hangs among the leaves, ready to drop. The sharp, sweet smell of rotting apples mixes with the scent of wet earth in my nose.

When we get close, Marcus leaves Peter's side and walks in front. "I know where to go," he says.

He leads us past the first building to the second one on the left. All the buildings except the greenhouses are made of the same dark wood, unpainted, rough. I hear laughter through an open window. The contrast between the laughter and the stone stillness within me is jarring.

Marcus opens one of the doors. I would be shocked by the lack of security if we were not at Amity headquarters. They often straddle the line between trust and stupidity.

In this building the only sound is of our squeaking shoes. I don't hear Caleb crying anymore, but then, he was quiet about it before.

Marcus stops before an open room, where Johanna Reyes, representative of Amity, sits, staring out the window. I recognize her because it is hard to forget Johanna's face, whether you've seen her once or a thousand times. A scar stretches in a thick line from just above her right eyebrow to her lip, rendering her blind in one eye and giving her a lisp when she talks. I have only heard her speak once, but I remember. She would have been a beautiful woman if not for that scar.

"Oh, thank God," she says when she sees Marcus. She walks toward him with her arms open. Instead of embracing him, she just touches his shoulders, like she remembers the Abnegation's distaste for casual physical contact.

"The other members of your party got here a few hours ago, but they weren't sure if you had made it," she says. She is referring to the group of Abnegation who were with my father and Marcus in the safe house. I didn't even think to worry about them.

She looks over Marcus's shoulder, first at Tobias and Caleb, then at me, then at Peter.

"Oh my," she says, her eyes lingering on the blood soaking Peter's shirt. "I'll send for a doctor. I can grant you all permission to stay the night, but tomorrow, our community must decide together. And"—she eyes Tobias

and me—“they will likely not be enthusiastic about a Dauntless presence in our compound. I of course ask you to turn over any weapons you might have.”

I wonder, suddenly, how she knows that I am Dauntless. I am still wearing a gray shirt. My father’s shirt.

At that moment, his smell, which is an even mixture of soap and sweat, wafts upward, and it fills my nose, fills my entire head with him. I clench my hands so hard into fists that my fingernails cut into my skin. *Not here. Not here.*

Tobias hands over his gun, but when I reach behind me to take out my own concealed weapon, he grabs my hand, guiding it away from my back. Then he laces his fingers with mine to cover up what he just did.

I know it’s smart to keep one of our guns. But it would have been a relief to hand it over.

“My name is Johanna Reyes,” she says, extending her hand to me, and then Tobias. A Dauntless greeting. I am impressed by her awareness of the customs of other factions. I always forget how considerate the Amity are until I see it for myself.

“This is T—” Marcus starts, but Tobias interrupts him.

“My name is Four,” he says. “This is Tris, Caleb, and Peter.”

A few days ago, “Tobias” was a name only I knew, among the Dauntless; it was the piece of himself that he gave me. Outside Dauntless headquarters, I remember why he hid that name from the world. It binds him to Marcus.

“Welcome to the Amity compound.” Johanna’s eyes fix on my face, and she smiles crookedly. “Let us take care of you.”

We do let them. An Amity nurse gives me a salve—developed by Erudite to speed healing—to put on my shoulder, and then escorts Peter to the hospital ward to mend his arm. Johanna takes us to the cafeteria, where we find some of the Abnegation who were in the safe house with Caleb and my father. Susan is there, and some of our old neighbors, and rows of wooden tables as long as the room itself. They greet us—especially Marcus—with held-in tears and suppressed smiles.

I cling to Tobias’s arm. I sag under the weight of the members of my parents’ faction, their lives, their tears.

One of the Abnegation puts a cup of steaming liquid under my nose and says, “Drink this. It will help you sleep as it helped some of the others sleep. No dreams.”

The liquid is pink-red, like strawberries. I grab the cup and drink it fast. For a few seconds the heat from the liquid makes me feel like I am full of something again. And as I drain the last drops from the cup, I feel myself relaxing. Someone leads me down the hallway, to a room with a bed in it. That is all.

CHAPTER TWO

I OPEN MY eyes, terrified, my hands clutching at the sheets. But I am not running through the streets of the city or the corridors of Dauntless headquarters. I am in a bed in Amity headquarters, and the smell of sawdust is in the air.

I shift, and wince as something digs into my back. I reach behind me, and my fingers wrap around the gun.

For a moment I see Will standing before me, both our guns between us—*his hand, I could have shot his hand, why didn't I, why?*—and I almost scream his name.

Then he's gone.

I get out of bed and lift the mattress with one hand, propping it up on my knee. Then I shove the gun beneath it and let the mattress bury it. Once it is out of sight and no longer pressed to my skin, my head feels clearer.

Now that the adrenaline rush of yesterday is gone, and whatever made me sleep has worn off, the deep ache and shooting pains of my shoulder are intense. I am wearing the same clothes I wore last night. The corner of the hard drive peeks out from under my pillow, where I shoved it right before I fell asleep. On it is the simulation data that controlled the Dauntless, and the record of what the Erudite did. It feels too important for me to even touch, but I can't leave it here, so I grab it and wedge it between the dresser and the wall. Part of me thinks it would be a good idea to destroy it, but I know it contains the only record of my parents' deaths, so I'll settle for keeping it hidden.

Someone knocks on my door. I sit on the edge of the bed and try to smooth my hair down.

"Come in," I say.

The door opens, and Tobias steps halfway in, the door dividing his body in half. He wears the same jeans as yesterday, but a dark red T-shirt instead of his black one, probably borrowed from one of the Amity. It's a strange

color on him, too bright, but when he leans his head back against the doorframe, I see that it makes the blue in his eyes lighter.

“The Amity are meeting in a half hour.” He quirks his eyebrows and adds, with a touch of melodrama, “*To decide our fate.*”

I shake my head. “Never thought my fate would be in the hands of a bunch of Amity.”

“Me either. Oh, I brought you something.” He unscrews the cap of a small bottle and holds out a dropper filled with clear liquid. “Pain medicine. Take a dropperful every six hours.”

“Thanks.” I squeeze the dropper into the back of my throat. The medicine tastes like old lemon.

He hooks a thumb in one of his belt loops and says, “How are you, Beatrice?”

“Did you just call me *Beatrice*?”

“Thought I would give it a try.” He smiles. “Not good?”

“Maybe on special occasions only. Initiation days, Choosing Days ...” I pause. I was about to rattle off a few more holidays, but only the Abnegation celebrate them. The Dauntless have holidays of their own, I assume, but I don’t know what they are. And anyway, the idea that we would celebrate anything right now is so ludicrous I don’t continue.

“It’s a deal.” His smile fades. “How are you, Tris?”

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

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

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

“I know,” he says. “Sorry. I shouldn’t have asked.”

For a moment all I can think is, *How could you possibly know?* But something about his expression reminds me that he does know something

about loss. He lost his mother when he was young. I don't remember how she died, just that we attended her funeral.

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

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

The women's bathroom is two doors down. The floor is dark brown tile, and each shower stall has wooden walls and a plastic curtain separating it from the central aisle. A sign on the back wall says REMEMBER: TO CONSERVE RESOURCES, SHOWERS RUN FOR ONLY FIVE MINUTES.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, thank you.”

I sit down on a stool in front of the mirror, and she stands behind me, her eyes dutifully trained on the task at hand rather than her reflection. They do not lift, not even for an instant, as she runs a comb through my hair. And she doesn't ask about my shoulder, how I was shot, what happened when I left the Abnegation safe house to stop the simulation. I get the sense that if I were to whittle her down to her core, she would be Abnegation all the way through.

“Have you seen Robert yet?” I say. Her brother, Robert, chose Amity when I chose Dauntless, so he is somewhere in this compound. I wonder if their reunion will be anything like Caleb's and mine.

“Briefly, last night,” she says. “I left him to grieve with his faction as I grieve with mine. It is nice to see him again, though.”

I hear a finality in her tone that tells me the subject is closed.

“It's a shame this happened when it did,” Susan says. “Our leaders were about to do something wonderful.”

“Really? What?”

“I don't know.” Susan blushes. “I just knew that something was happening. I didn't mean to be curious; I just noticed things.”

“I wouldn't blame you for being curious even if you had been.”

She nods and keeps combing. I wonder what the Abnegation leaders—including my father—were doing. And I can't help but marvel at Susan's assumption that whatever they were doing was wonderful. I wish I could believe that of people again.

If I ever did.

“The Dauntless wear their hair down, right?” she says.

“Sometimes,” I say. “Do you know how to braid?”

So her deft fingers tuck pieces of my hair into one braid that tickles the middle of my spine. I stare hard at my reflection until she finishes. I thank her when she's done, and she leaves with a small smile, closing the door behind her.

I keep staring, but I don't see myself. I can still feel her fingers brushing the back of my neck, so much like my mother's fingers, the last morning I spent with her. My eyes wet with tears, I rock back and forth on the stool, trying to push the memory from my mind. I am afraid that if I start to sob, I will never stop until I shrivel up like a raisin.

I see a sewing kit on the dresser. In it are two colors of thread, red and yellow, and a pair of scissors.

I feel calm as I undo the braid in my hair and comb it again. I part my hair down the middle and make sure that it is straight and flat. I close the scissors over the hair by my chin.

How can I look the same, when she's gone and everything is different? I can't.

I cut in as straight a line as I can, using my jaw as a guide. The tricky part is the back, which I can't see very well, so I do the best I can by touch instead of sight. Locks of blond hair surround me on the floor in a semicircle.

I leave the room without looking at my reflection again.

When Tobias and Caleb come to get me later, they stare at me like I am not the person they knew yesterday.

"You cut your hair," says Caleb, his eyebrows high. Grabbing hold of facts in the midst of shock is very Erudite of him. His hair sticks up on one side from where he slept on it, and his eyes are bloodshot.

"Yeah," I say. "It's ... too hot for long hair."

"Fair enough."

We walk down the hallway together. The floorboards creak beneath our feet. I miss the way my footsteps echoed in the Dauntless compound; I miss the cool underground air. But mostly I miss the fears of the past few weeks, rendered small by my fears now.

We exit the building. The outside air presses around me like a pillow meant to suffocate me. It smells green, the way a leaf does when you tear it in half.

"Does everyone know you're Marcus's son?" Caleb says. "The Abnegation, I mean?"

"Not to my knowledge," says Tobias, glancing at Caleb. "And I would appreciate it if you didn't mention it."

"I don't need to mention it. Anyone with eyes can see it for themselves." Caleb frowns at him. "How old are you, anyway?"

"Eighteen."

"And you don't think you're too old to be with my little sister?"

Tobias lets out a short laugh. “She isn’t *your little* anything.”

“Stop it. Both of you,” I say. A crowd of people in yellow walks ahead of us, toward a wide, squat building made entirely of glass. The sunlight reflecting off the panes feels like a pinch to my eyes. I shield my face with my hand and keep walking.

The doors to the building are wide open. Around the edge of the circular greenhouse, plants and trees grow in troughs of water or small pools. Dozens of fans positioned around the room serve only to blow the hot air around, so I am already sweating. But that fades from my mind when the crowd before me thins and I see the rest of the room.

In its center grows a huge tree. Its branches are spread over most of the greenhouse, and its roots bubble up from the ground, forming a dense web of bark. In the spaces between the roots, I see not dirt but water, and metal rods holding the roots in place. I should not be surprised—the Amity spend their lives accomplishing feats of agriculture like this one, with the help of Erudite technology.

Standing on a cluster of roots is Johanna Reyes, her hair falling over the scarred half of her face. I learned in Faction History that the Amity recognize no official leader—they vote on everything, and the result is usually close to unanimous. They are like many parts of a single mind, and Johanna is their mouthpiece.

The Amity sit on the floor, most with their legs crossed, in knots and clusters that vaguely resemble the tree roots to me. The Abnegation sit in tight rows a few yards to my left. My eyes search the crowd for a few seconds before I realize what I’m looking for: my parents.

I swallow hard, and try to forget. Tobias touches the small of my back, guiding me to the edge of the meeting space, behind the Abnegation. Before we sit down, he puts his mouth next to my ear and says, “I like your hair that way.”

I find a small smile to give him, and lean into him when I sit down, my arm against his.

Johanna lifts her hands and bows her head. All conversation in the room ceases before I can draw my next breath. All around me the Amity sit in silence, some with their eyes closed, some with their lips mouthing words I can’t hear, some staring at a point far away.

Every second chafes. By the time Johanna lifts her head I am worn to the bone.

“We have before us today an urgent question,” she says, “which is: How will we conduct ourselves in this time of conflict as people who pursue peace?”

Every Amity in the room turns to the person next to him or her and starts talking.

“How do they get anything done?” I say, as the minutes of chatter wear on.

“They don’t care about efficiency,” Tobias says. “They care about agreement. Watch.”

Two women in yellow dresses a few feet away rise and join a trio of men. A young man shifts so that his small circle becomes a large one with the group next to him. All around the room, the smaller crowds grow and expand, and fewer and fewer voices fill the room, until there are only three or four. I can only hear pieces of what they say: “Peace—Dauntless—Erudite—safe house—involvement—”

“This is bizarre,” I say.

“I think it’s beautiful,” he says.

I give him a look.

“What?” He laughs a little. “They each have an equal role in government; they each feel equally responsible. And it makes them care; it makes them kind. I think that’s beautiful.”

“I think it’s unsustainable,” I say. “Sure, it works for the Amity. But what happens when not everyone wants to strum banjos and grow crops? What happens when someone does something terrible and talking about it can’t solve the problem?”

He shrugs. “I guess we’ll find out.”

Eventually someone from each of the big groups stands and approaches Johanna, picking their way carefully over the roots of the big tree. I expect them to address the rest of us, but instead they stand in a circle with Johanna and the other spokespeople and talk quietly. I begin to get the feeling that I will never know what they’re saying.

“They’re not going to let us argue with them, are they,” I say.

“I doubt it,” he says.

We are done for.

When everyone has said his or her piece, they sit down again, leaving Johanna alone in the center of the room. She angles her body toward us and folds her hands in front of her. Where will we go when they tell us to leave? Back into the city, where nothing is safe?

“Our faction has had a close relationship with Erudite for as long as any of us can remember. We need each other to survive, and we have always cooperated with each other,” says Johanna. “But we have also had a strong relationship with Abnegation in the past, and we do not think it is right to revoke the hand of friendship when it has for so long been extended.”

Her voice is honey-sweet, and moves like honey too, slow and careful. I wipe the sweat from my hairline with the back of my hand.

“We feel that the only way to preserve our relationships with both factions is to remain impartial and uninvolved,” she continues. “Your presence here, though welcome, complicates that.”

Here it comes, I think.

“We have arrived at the conclusion that we will establish our faction headquarters as a safe house for members of all factions,” she says, “under a set of conditions. The first is that no weaponry of any kind is allowed on the compound. The second is that if any serious conflict arises, whether verbal or physical, all involved parties will be asked to leave. The third is that the conflict may not be discussed, even privately, within the confines of this compound. And the fourth is that everyone who stays here must contribute to the welfare of this environment by working. We will report this to Erudite, Candor, and Dauntless as soon as we can.”

Her stare drifts to Tobias and me, and stays there.

“You are welcome to stay here if and only if you can abide by our rules,” she says. “That is our decision.”

I think of the gun I hid under my mattress, and the tension between me and Peter, and Tobias and Marcus, and my mouth feels dry. I am not good at avoiding conflict.

“We won’t be able to stay long,” I say to Tobias under my breath.

A moment ago, he was still faintly smiling. Now the corners of his mouth have disappeared into a frown. “No, we won’t.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Veronica Roth is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Divergent* and *Insurgent*, the first two books in a trilogy that she began writing while still a college student. Now a full-time writer, Ms. Roth and her husband call the Chicago area home. You can visit her online at www.veronicarothbooks.com and on Twitter @VeronicaRoth.

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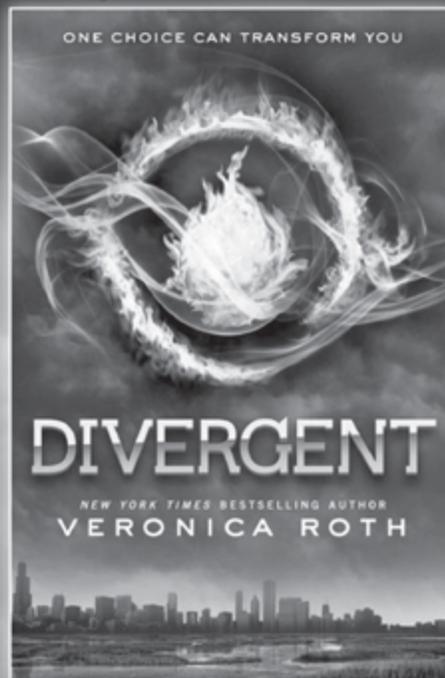
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BACK ADS

“WHAT’S YOUR NAME?”

“UM . . .” I DON’T KNOW WHY I HESITATE. BUT
“BEATRICE” JUST DOESN’T SOUND RIGHT ANYMORE.
A NEW PLACE, A NEW NAME. I CAN BE REMADE HERE.

“TRIS,” I SAY FIRMLY.



DON'T MISS THE STORY—
AND THE CHOICE—THAT STARTED IT ALL.



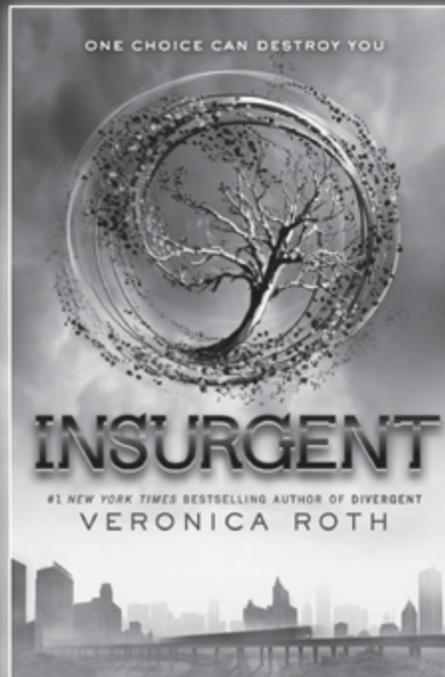
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SOMETIMES IT KEEPS US ALIVE.
SOMETIMES IT THREATENS
TO DESTROY US.”



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