

## Chapter 13

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Ready?

Gwen screamed, and as a reflex, began running towards Jess.

"Gwen stop!" Nicholas called after her.

She made it to Jess, just in time to realize her mistake as she too sunk into the ground.

"I mean, might as well, right?" Xander suggested.

"Are you crazy?!" Robyn yelled, "We could die! They could already be dead!"

"You only live once!" Xander smirked, and began running into the field. He was followed by Nicole, Sadie, and Nicholas, leaving only Campbell and Robyn behind.

"Soooooooo." Campbell started. "I'm probably just gonna go for it. I-" Robyn was one step ahead of him sprinting to catch up with the others. Campbell, mildly frustrated that he of all people, was the one left behind. He walked at a brisk pace, careful not to dirty his fancy attire, as the others sank into the ground.

"Hurry up Campbell! It's not like we can make whatever this is wait for you!" Nicole yelled at him. He glared at her, not that she could see it, and began jogging towards the now sunken field. He made it just in time and felt the odd sensation of sinking into the ground. Gwen stood shaking as a grassy cover slid over their heads.

"Um guys." She whispered, "What's going on?"

"Well I don't know about you," Xander started, "But I'm pretty sure we have just sunken into the ground, and are now on our way to a secret underground lair!"

This comment was met with a swat on the shoulder from Sadie, as Gwen looked even more terrified than before. Nicholas spoke up,

"It'll be fine. We're a well equipped group. Nothing bad is going to happen to you, or any of us. Well maybe Xander but-"

"Hey!" Xander said, laughing. "That's not fair!"

"Oh it most definitely is," Nicholas retorted, chuckling to himself. Gwen even looked better at this comment, her face had lightened, and she was no longer shaking. But this happy feeling didn't last long.

The odd room they were in stopped going down as it hit the ground with a thud. One side of the wall parted to show a huge black warehouse. The only light came from a giant blue beam in the center of the floor. The group made their way out of the box and into the echo-y room, stopping only to look back where they had come from. It looked like it was an elevator, but there was nothing holding it up, or pulling it down. They gathered around the blue light, looking around for any sign of life, to find none. Suddenly a figure appeared in the blue light. It was a woman. A huge, blue tinted woman that towered over them. A

hologram. They stared at her eyes bulging, mouths wide open in shock.

"Welcome" she said passively. "Are you ready to start the game?"

## Chapter 14

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Set.

"I'll give you a moment to discuss among yourselves. Oh, and. This will be your only time that you may leave. Choose wisely." The woman disappeared, leaving the room silent, before it burst full of noise.

"What the heck is going on and who the heck was that?" Campbell asked.

"I have absolutely no idea." Sadie responded, frustrated. They all went quiet for a second, waiting for the woman to reappear.

"Well it doesn't look like she's going to show up until we make a choice." Nicholas suggested, "I say that we play the game."

"But, what if we get hurt, what if we DIE?!" Gwen asked.

"We won't," Nicholas told her, "this is probably just some sort of prank or something." He paused before raising his hand. "All in favor of playing the game, put up your hand." One by one every person's hand went up, including Gwen's. "Alright then, let's tell her then." Nicholas cleared his throat, waiting for the woman to appear. To his, and everyone else's, surprise, she did.

"I'm glad you've made a decision," she said passively. "Now for some instructions." As she said this, a list appeared to her right, displaying the words as she said them. "Number one, you have precisely four strikes. If any of you happen to lose even one more than three, the instructions will change, and one of you will end up stuck here. Forever. These strikes are displayed as lines on your neck and they're permanent. Do not try to wash them off. Please. Number two, you are unable to leave. If you do try to leave, you will fail, and gain a strike."

"What?!" Xander exclaimed. The woman shushed him.

"Ah ah ah! Please hold your comments til the end. Number three, if at any point you have a question, all you have to do is summon me. That's all. Good luck!" The woman disappeared.

"Wait, how do we summon you? I have so many questions! Come back!" Robyn called after her. His shoulders sank and he walked away.

"Robyn!" Nicole said, shocked.

"Yes?" Robyn looked at her.

"Your neck, it's...she was telling the truth!" Robyn reached for his neck. He could feel four small lines, streaking across the left side going up to his hairline. Soon everyone was checking their own neck, finding the four strike lines that lay there as warnings.

"The Game begins in five..." a loud overhead voice proclaimed, "four, three, two, one. Go!"

## Chapter 15

### The Warehouse

Go!

The room blacked out, and the lights rose again, showing the group that they were in a garage.

"I don't know about you guys, but I'm pretty sure that we weren't in a garage earlier." Xander said matter-of-factly.

"Wow really? I had no idea Einstein!" Jess snapped back at him.

Suddenly, a giant car appeared in the middle of the garage. It was the exact same model as the one they had all received, with eight empty spots. The same over head voice suddenly spoke again.

"You have one minute to complete this task. If you do not complete it in the given time, you will all be eliminated. The timer starts now."

"Okay everyone I know what to do. Just get in the same spot as the figure in your invitation is in. For example," Robyn instructed, "I'm sitting in the passenger seat, and Nicole is in the driver seat."

"Bossy much?" Jess mumbled under her breath. Robyn glared at her, and despite the comment, everyone slowly made their way to their spot.

"Twenty seconds left!" The voice reminded them from above. It was okay, all of them were in the car. Except Jess. Her dress had gotten caught on the floor, and she couldn't move.

"Guys! Don't just stand there! Help me!" She shrieked. Nicholas rolled his eyes and jumped out of the car. "And don't you dare lecture me about what I said earlier. I swear it was not my choice to wear this dress!" She argued. Xander soon unfastened her dress from the floor, and Jess ran over to the car, leaping over the side. Xander ran after her and jumped in. The second he made it in the voice rang out again.

"Time up! Congrats. All of you have made it in time, which means that all of you will continue to play the game."

The car started up and drove out of the garage. The second the door closed, the car disappeared, leaving them sitting on benches in a large wooden cabin.

"Your clothes are in your separate rooms, you may be returning to this room occasionally, so you may leave all personal belongings. Now go!" The hologram appeared quickly before shooping them off. They changed quickly and came out of their rooms. They all wore matching black suits, and they each had a small pin over their hearts. The woman reappeared for a second saying,

"These suits are built for every situation, water proof, fireproof, etc. The pin over your heart will be monitoring your heart rate. If at any point your heart rate exceeds a certain limit, you will receive a strike.

Good luck!" The group looked at each other, each person suffering a tsunami of different emotions. And none of them were prepared for what was coming.

