



The Words We See

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Blackout Poetry

Instructions and Student Examples

INTRODUCTION

CREATIVITY

Guiding students to find seeds of creativity can often be a challenge. Not because they aren't there, but often the creative nature of children gets buried as students progress through school. Math formulas, history facts, rules for essay writing, and science principles take precedence. I have the privilege to work alongside some incredibly innovative teachers who know how to dig deep and ensure that a student doesn't have to be creative *or* intellectual; a student can be both. Personally, I have found that students who are encouraged in bursts of creativity are more relaxed and attentive when we shift gears to the more rigorous aspects of academia.

Blackout Poetry is one activity that can foster creativity in students who struggle to find that gift within. The pressure to create is lifted because they don't have to come up with words; the words are already there. They just have to see them. I certainly did not come up with this idea, I was encouraged to share these examples and instructional steps by Kasie Roden, GPISD Secondary English Language Arts Facilitator, and Karen Seimears, Senior Specialist for Apple Professional Learning. Many thanks to them both for bringing this to life.

The poetry in this book was created by 9th and 10th grade students at Dubiski Career High School in Grand Prairie ISD. Enjoy! And if you embark on a Blackout Poetry adventure in your classroom, please share your results with me. We should find reasons each day to celebrate our students' successes!

Kimberly Soesbee

WHAT IS IT?

In Blackout Poetry, students begin with a page that is already covered in words. They create a poetic statement by visually removing all of the words on the page, until they are left with only the words they want to reader to see.

The poetic statement will not be a poem with rhyme scheme and stanzas, but more of a declaration or assertion that creates a mood.

This is a terrific activity to illustrate how word choice creates mood in literature.

At the back of this book, we have included step-by-step instructions to explain how I implemented this in class.

Materials used included:

- pages from a book
- pencils
- erasers
- markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- list of mood words (optional)

Some teachers choose to do this activity with newspapers or magazines. The poetry in this book was done with pages from Veronica Roth's *Divergent*. I prefer to use the pages from novels because they provide a uniform frame or canvas for all students to work within.

STUDENT WORK



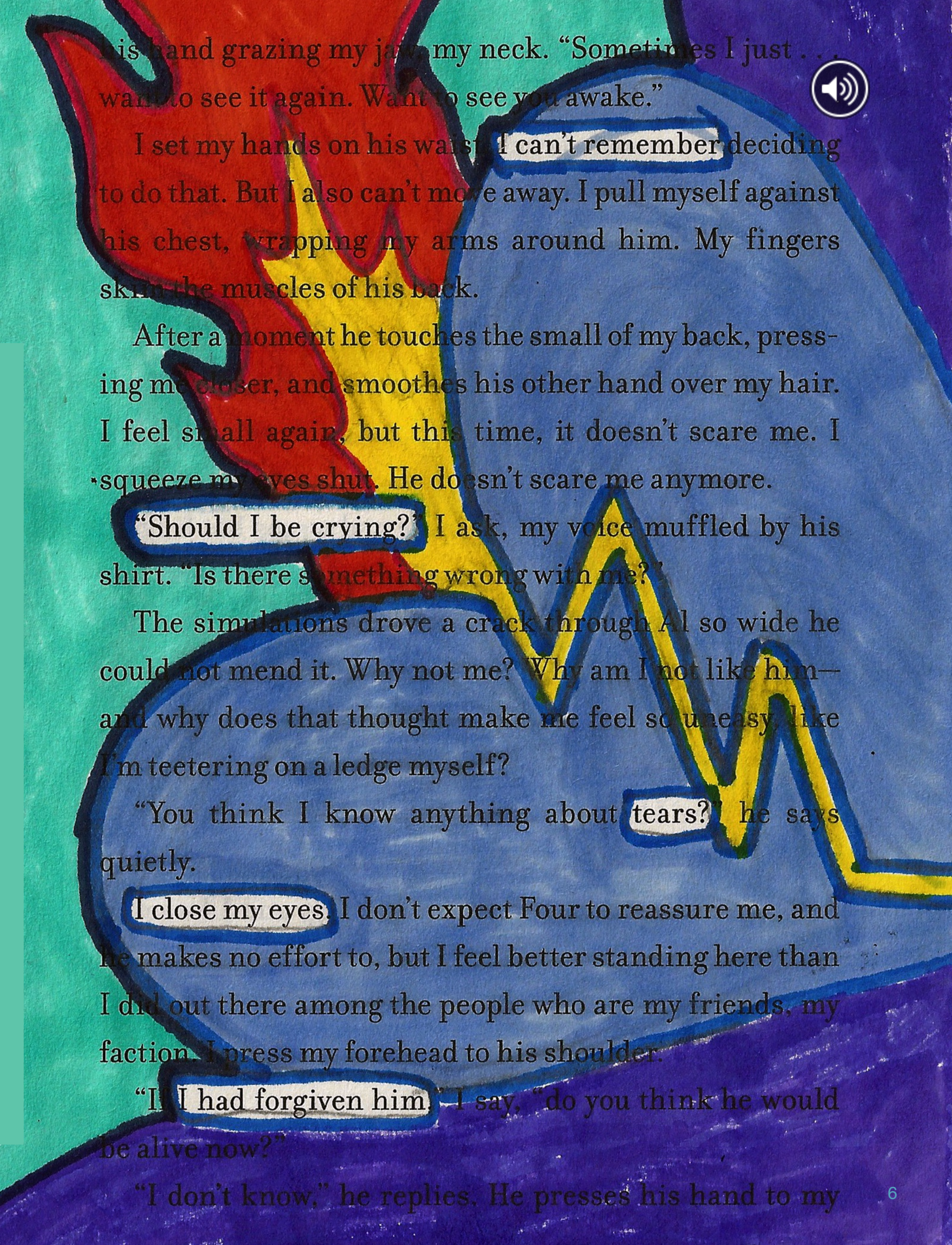
to her long ones. As I run, I realize that only one of us will get to touch the flag, and it won't matter that it was my plan and my information that got us to it if I'm not the one who grabs it. Though I can hardly breathe as it is, I run faster, and I'm on Christina's heels. I pull my gun around my body, holding my finger over the trigger.

We reach the end of the pier, and I clamp my mouth shut to keep my loud breaths in. We slow down so our footsteps aren't as loud, and I look for the blinking light again. Now that I'm on the ground, it's bigger and easier to see. I point, and Christina nods, leading the way toward it.

Then I hear a chorus of yells so loud they make me jump. I hear puffs of air as paintballs go flying and splats as they find their targets. Our team has charged the other team runs to meet us, and the flag is almost unguarded. Uriah takes aim and shoots the last guard in the thigh. The guard, a short girl with purple hair, throws her gun to the ground in a tantrum.

I sprint to catch up to Christina. The flag hangs from a tree branch, high above my head. I reach for it, and so does Christina.

"Come on, Tris," she says. "You're already the hero of the day. And you know you can't reach it anyway."



his hand grazing my jaw, my neck. "Sometimes I just . . . want to see it again. Want to see you awake."

I set my hands on his waist. I can't remember deciding to do that. But I also can't move away. I pull myself against his chest, wrapping my arms around him. My fingers skim the muscles of his back.

After a moment he touches the small of my back, pressing me closer, and smooths his other hand over my hair. I feel small again, but this time, it doesn't scare me. I squeeze my eyes shut. He doesn't scare me anymore.

"Should I be crying?" I ask, my voice muffled by his shirt. "Is there something wrong with me?"

The simulations drove a crack through Al so wide he could not mend it. Why not me? Why am I not like him—and why does that thought make me feel so uneasy, like I'm teetering on a ledge myself?

"You think I know anything about tears?" he says quietly.

I close my eyes. I don't expect Four to reassure me, and he makes no effort to, but I feel better standing here than I did out there among the people who are my friends, my faction. I press my forehead to his shoulder.

"If I had forgiven him," I say, "do you think he would be alive now?"

"I don't know," he replies. He presses his hand to my

our members, but we can be assured that he was one of our bravest!"

A cry rises from the center of the crowd, and a whoop. The Dauntless cheer at varying pitches, high and low, bright and deep. Their roar mimics the roar of the water. Christina takes the flask from Uriah and drinks. Will slides his arm around her shoulders and pulls her to his side. Voices fill my ears.

"We will celebrate him now, and remember him always!" yells Eric. Someone hands him a dark bottle, and he lifts it. "To Albert the Courageous!"

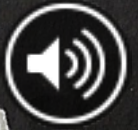
"To Albert!" shouts the crowd. Arms lift all around me, and the Dauntless chant his name. "Albert! Al-bert! Al-bert!" They chant until his name no longer sounds like his name. It sounds like the primal scream of an ancient race.

I turn away from the railing. I cannot stand this any longer.

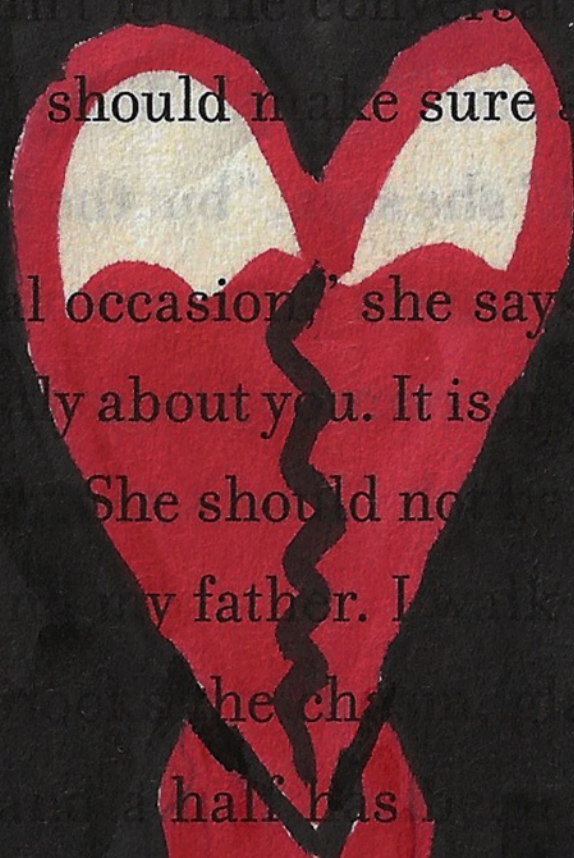
I don't know where I'm going. I suspect that I am not going anywhere at all, just away. I walk down a dark hallway. At the end is the drinking fountain, bathed in the blue glow of the light above it.

I shake my head. Courageous? Courageous would have been admitting weakness and leaving Dauntless, no matter what shame accompanied it. Pride is what killed Al,





put her arm across my shoulders. Tell me how you are.
 first. The old habits are back. I should let her
 stay



should make sure
 occasional," she says
 about you. It is
 She should not
 her father. I
 he ch
 half has affection-

less
 touch
 ever saw my pa
 was hold
 but it was more than this more

Just on
 my pulse in my throat
 "Where's he visiting Caleb?"
 head "Your father

I look down. "You can tell me if he didn't want to come."
 Her eyes travel over my face. "Your father has been
 selfish lately. That doesn't mean he doesn't love you, I
 promise."

I stare at her, stunned. My father selfish More star-
 tling than the label is the fact that she assigned it to him.

I don't care

out I need to



My heart pounds

“You’re welcome to come over any time,” he says.

“Thank you,”

smiles



He and I

flirt

in the tentative way known only to the Abnegation.

Salch’s eyes follow Susan down the hall. I have to

use my arm to startle him from his daze. I take her into the

house and close the door behind us.

He turns to me. His dark, straight eyebrows draw

together so that a crease appears between them. When he

frowns, he looks more like my mother than my father. In

an instant I can see him living the same kind of life my

father did: staying in Abnegation, learning a trade, mar-

rying Susan, and having a family. It will be wonderful.

I may not see it.

“Are you going to tell me the truth now?” he asks softly.





dark skin and gray hair at his temples, and he stands on the ledge like it's a sidewalk. Like someone didn't just fall to her death from it. "Several stories below us is the members' entrance to our compound. If you can't muster the will to jump off, you don't belong here. Our initiates have the privilege of going first."

"You mean to jump off the ledge?" asks an Erudite girl. She is a few inches taller than I am, with mousy brown hair and bangs that she has with her bangs open.

I don't know what she means.

"Yes," Max says, looking amused.

"Is there water at the bottom or something?"

"Who knows?" He raises his eyebrows.

The crowd in front of the initiates splits in half, making a wide path for us to look around. No one looks eager to leap off the building, their eyes are everywhere but on Max. Some of them have minor wounds of brush gravel from their fall. I look at Peter. He is picking at one of his cuticles. Trying to get it to fall off.

I am proud. I will get into the elite someday, but today it makes me brave. I walk toward the ledge and hear snickers behind me.

Max steps aside, leaving a way clear. I walk up to the edge and look down. Wind whips through my clothes, making the fabric snap. The building I'm on forms one

to the last names we may leave behind today. I stand between Caleb and Danielle Pohler, an Amity girl with rosy cheeks and a yellow dress.

Rows of chairs for our families make up the next circle. They are arranged in five sections, according to faction. Not everyone in each faction comes to the Choosing Ceremony, but enough of them come that the crowd looks huge.

The responsibility to conduct the ceremony rotates from faction to faction each year, and this year is Abnegation's. Marcus will give the opening address and read the names in reverse alphabetical order. Caleb will choose before me.

In the last circle are five metal bowls so large they could hold my entire body, if I curled up. Each one contains a substance that represents each faction: gray stones for Abnegation, water for Erudite, earth for Amity, lit coals for Dauntless, and glass for Candor.

When Marcus calls my name, I will walk to the center of the three circles. I will not speak. He will offer me a knife. I will cut into my hand and sprinkle my blood into the bowl of the faction I choose.

My blood on the stones. My blood sizzling on the coals.

Before my parents sit down, they stand in front of Caleb and me. My father kisses my forehead and claps

on the playground. I want to have something to play

He doesn't



of disapproval

explain to him

it didn't even enter

just do what you're supposed to,

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

like I do when I wipe off sweat, and when he brings them

back his face shakes. I open my mouth to

the words don't come.

his results, and he is not allowed to tell me

an Abnegation volunteer breaks the sound of

unites. Two from Candor, two from Erudite, two from

Amity, two from Candor, and then from Abnegation

Susan

I get up because I don't want to, but it's up to me

I would

a bubble in my chest that expands more by the second

break

me apart

inside

don't need a tour of the place."

She smiles and beckons toward the Dauntless initiates. They break away from the group and dissolve into the shadows. I watch the last heel pass out of the light and look at those of us who are left. Most of the initiates were from Dauntless, so only nine people remain. Of those, I am the only Abnegation transfer, and there are no Amity transfers. The rest are from Erudite and, surprisingly, Candor. It must require bravery to be honest all the time, I don't know.

Four looks at us next. "Most of the time I work in the computer room, but for the next few weeks, I am your

assistant," he says. "My name is Four."

Christina asks, "Four? Like the number?"

"Yes," Four says. "Is there a problem?"

"No."

"Good. We're about to go into the Pit, which you will someday learn to love it—"

Christina snickers. "The Pit? Clever name."

Four walks up to Christina and leans his face close to hers. His eyes narrow, and for a second he just stares at her.

"What's your name?" he asks quietly.

"Christina," she squeaks.

"Well, Christina, if I wanted to put up with Candor smart mouth, I would have joined their faction," he hisses. "The first lesson you will learn from me is to keep

me. Judging by his **silence**, he does not intend to negotiate with us; he **will kill us** without question.



I lick my lips, sprint the last few steps, and thrust the heel of my hand up. The blow connects with his nose, and he shouts, bringing both hands up to cover his face. My body jolts with nervous energy and as his eyes squint, I kick him in the groin. He drops to his knees, his gun clattering to the ground. I grab it and press the barrel to the top of his head.

“How are you awake?” I demand.

He lifts his head, and I click the bullet into its chamber, raising an eyebrow at him.

“The Dauntless leaders . . . **they** evaluated my records and removed me from the simulation,” he says.

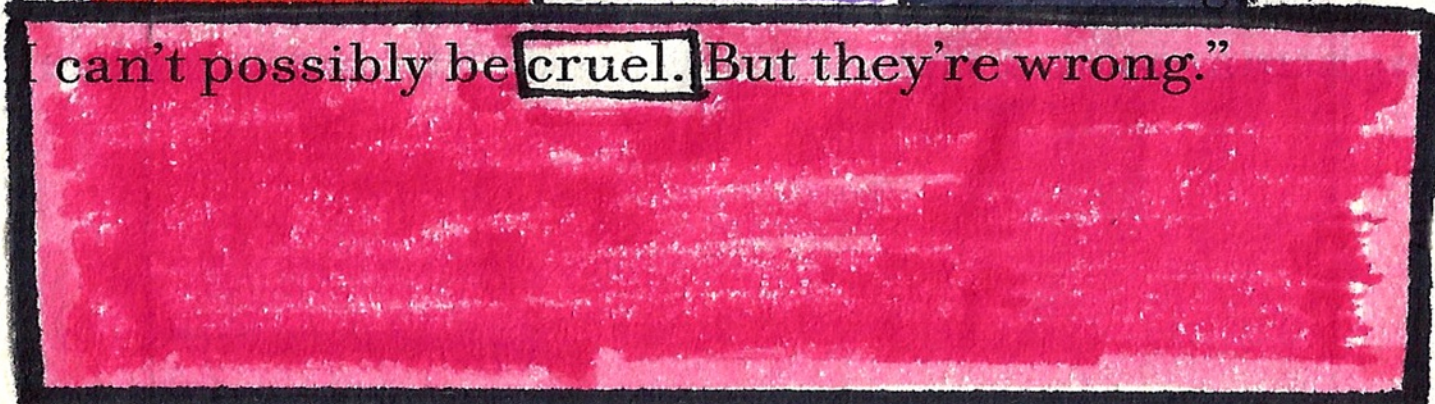
“Because they figured out that you already have murderous tendencies and wouldn't mind killing a few hundred people while conscious,” I say. “Makes sense.”

“I'm not . . . **murderous**”

“I never knew a Candor who was such a liar.” I tap the gun against his skull. “Where are the computers that **control** the simulation, Peter?”

“You won't **s**hoot me.”

“People tend to overestimate my **q**ui-
etly. “They think that because I'm small, or a girl, or a Stiff, I can't possibly be **c**rue**l**. But they're wrong.”



"It's not about Al," I snap. "It's about everyone watching. Everyone who now sees hurling themselves into the chasm as a viable option. I mean, why not do it if everyone calls you a hero afterward? Why not do it if everyone will remember your name. It's... I can't..."

I shake my head. My face burns and my heart pounds, and I try to keep myself under control, but I can't.

"This would never have happened in Abnegation!" I almost shout. "None of it! Never. This place warped him and ruined him, and I don't care if saying that makes me a Stiff, I don't care, I don't care!"

Four's eyes shift to the wall above the drinking fountain.



"Careful, Tris," he says, his eyes still on the wall.

"Is that all you can say?" I demand, scowling at him.

"That I should be careful? That's it?"

"You're as bad as the Candor, you know that?" He grabs my arm and drags me away from the drinking fountain. His hand hurts my arm, but I'm not strong enough to pull away.

His face is so close to mine that I can see a few freckles spotting his nose. "I'm not going to say this again, so listen carefully." He sets his hands on my shoulders, his fingers pressing, squeezing. I feel small. "They are watching you.

You in particular.



Parents clean up after
Caleb help them because
selves tonight instead
we can think about



My f

warning whispers

to keep

mouth

memory

shut

stop

ourselves.

selflessness.

to change our

choices."



of his palm even after he's gone. It's strange but I have to stop and breathe for a few seconds before I can keep practicing again.

When Four dismisses us for dinner, Christina nudges me with her elbow.

"I'm surprised he didn't hurt you," she says.

She wrinkles her nose. "He scares the hell out of me. It's that quiet voice he uses."

"Yeah. He's . . . I look over my shoulder at him. He is quiet and remarkably self-possessed. I wasn't afraid that he would hurt me. . . . definitely intimidating. I

finally say

Al, who was in front of us, turns around once we reach the Pit and announces, "I want to get a tattoo."

From behind us, Will asks, "A tattoo of what?"

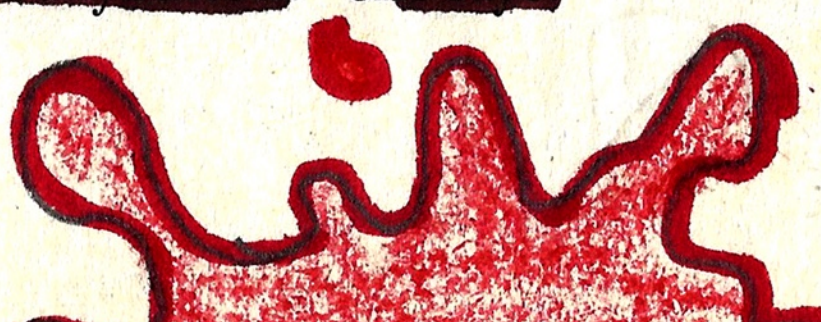
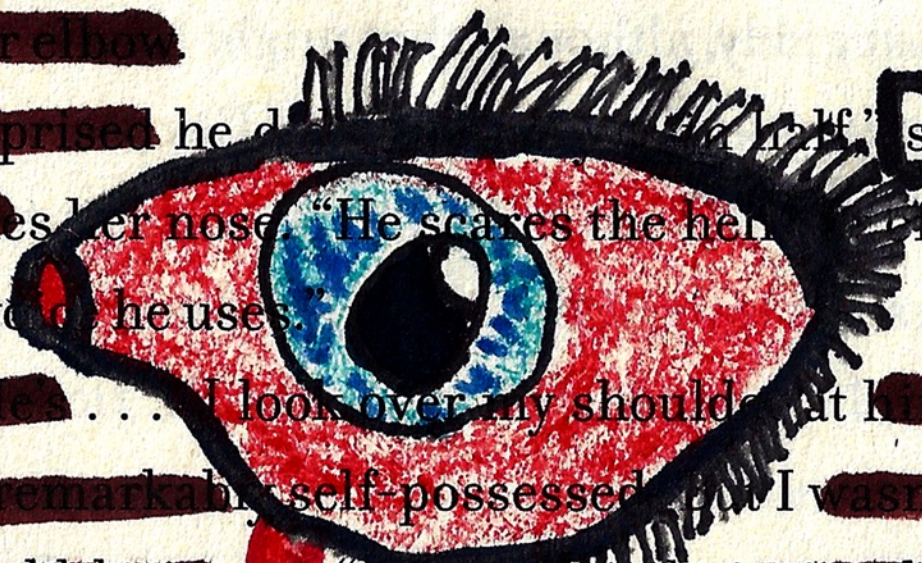
"I don't know," Al laughs. "I just want to feel like I've actually left the old faction. Stop crying about it." When we don't respond, he adds, "I know you've heard me."

"Yeah, learn to quiet down will you?" Christina pokes Al's thick arm. "I think you're right. We're half in, half out right now. If we want all the way in, we should look the part."

She gives me a look

"No. I will not dye my hair," I say, "or dye it a strange color. Or pierce my face."

"How about your belly button?" she says.





One... After you take the first step, the rest is easy. We both sprint on the edge of the building. We fall in two states. Last, the world is gone. It is the ground growing beneath us. Then the scene disappears and I am on my hands and knees on the floor, grinning. I loved that rush the day I chose Dauntless, and I love it now.

Now I am. Four gasps and a press on Dan's chest. I get up and help him to his feet. "What's next?"

"It's—
Something solid. In my stomach, I slam into four, my head hitting his collarbone. We're pinned against each other, my right. The space is so tight now that Dan has to pull his arms into his chest. A ceiling slams onto the walls around us, and the sound of machines is a roaring. The room is not big enough even for the size and number of us."

"Continue."
"He makes a face, crosses his arms, and we pull back enough to look at him. He looks like he's been punched in the face. He says, 'I'm sorry, but I can't help you. You're hurt.'"

"I say, 'It's pain.'"
"Hey," I say. "It's okay. Here."
I guide his arms around my body so he has more space. He clutches at my back and puts his face next to mine, still hunched over. His body is warm, but I feel only his bones.



he can push the word "go," releases the
forget I forget Urish, and family, and all

malfunction and lead to my death. I

feel and so intense

tears into my eyes as I hurtle toward the ground.

without weight.

it hurts

within me

imagine

cracked and patchy

My heart beats

in my body

turns around as I fall into stride next to the car and hold out a hand. I grab his arm, and he pulls me in. Even the muscles in his forearm are taut, defined.

I let go quickly, without looking at him, and sit down on the other side of the car.

Once everyone is in, Four speaks up.

"We'll be dividing into two teams to play capture the flag. Each team will have an even mix of members, Dauntless-born initiates, and transfers. One team will get off first and find a place to hide their flag. Then the second team will get off and do the same." The car sways, and Four grabs the side of the doorway for balance.

"This is a Dauntless tradition, so I suggest you take it seriously."

"What do we get if we win?" someone shouts.

"Sounds like the kind of question someone not from Dauntless would ask," says Four, raising an eyebrow. "You get to win, of course."

"Four and I will be your team captains," says Eric. He looks at Four. "Let's divide up transfers first, shall we?"

I tilt my head back. If they're picking us, I will be chosen last. I can feel it.

"You go first," Four says.

Eric shrugs. "Edward."

Four leans against the door frame and nods. The moonlight makes his eyes bright. He scans the group of transfer

initiates. Next to the tracks is a black pile. I make a cluster of long gun barrels and trigger guards.

“Are we going to shoot something?” Christina hisses in my ear.

Next to the pile are boxes of what looks like ammunition. I inch closer to read one of the boxes. Written on it is “PAINTBALLS.”

I’ve never heard of them before, but the name is self-explanatory. I laugh.

“Everyone grab a gun!” shouts Eric.

We rush toward the pile. I am the closest to it, so I snatch the first gun I can find, which is heavy, but not too heavy for me to lift, and grab a box of paintballs. I shove the box in my pocket and sling the gun across my back so the strap crosses my chest.

“Time estimate?” Eric asks Four.

Four checks his watch. “Any minute now. How long is it going to take you to memorize the train schedule?”

“Why should I, when I have you to remind me of it?” says Eric, shoving Four’s shoulder.

A circle of light appears on my left, far away. It grows larger as it comes closer, shining against the side of Four’s face, creating a shadow in the faint hollow beneath his cheekbone.

He is the first to get on the train, and I run after him, not waiting for Christina or Will or Al to follow me. Four

I can't keep the heat from rushing into my cheeks. I

hope it isn't noticeable. 

Is he just reassuring her because she's my mother, or

does he really believe that I am capable? And what did

that look mean?

She tilts her head. "You look familiar for some reason."

Four

I can't imagine why. The reporter's voice sud-

denly cold. "Don't make a habit of associating with the

Abnegation."

My mother laughs. She has a light laugh, half air and

half sound. "Few people do these days. I don't take it

personally."

He seems to relax a little. "Well, I'll leave you to your

reunion."

My mother and I watch him leave. The roar of the river

fills my ears. Maybe that was one of the Erudite, which

explains why he hates Abnegation. Or maybe he believes

the articles the Erudite release about us—them. I remind

myself. But it was kind of him to tell her that I'm doing

well when I know he doesn't believe it.

"Is he always like that?" she says.

"Worse."

"Have you made friends?" she asks.

"A few," I say. I look over my shoulder at Will and

Will's eyes that wasn't there before. Does he really believe he can win? **One hard shot** to the head and Al will knock him out cold.

That is, if he can actually hit Will. Al tries a punch, and Will ducks, the back of his neck shining with sweat. He dodges another punch, slipping around Al and kicking him hard in the back. Al lurches forward and turns.

When I was younger, I read a book about grizzly bears. There was a picture of one standing on its hind legs with its paws outstretched, roaring. That is how Al looks now. He charges at Will, grabbing his arms. He can't slip away and punches him hard **in the jaw.**

I watch the light leave Will's eyes, which are pale green, like celery. They roll back into his head, and all the tension falls from **his body.** He slips from Al's grasp, dead weight, and **crumples** to the floor. Cold rushes down my back and fills my chest.

Al's eyes widen, and he crouches next to Will, tapping his cheek with one hand. The **room falls silent** as we wait for Will to respond. For a few seconds, he doesn't, just lies on the ground with an arm bent beneath him. Then he blinks, **clearly dazed.**

"Get him up," Eric says. He stares with greedy eyes at Will's fallen body, like the sight is a meal and he hasn't eaten in weeks. The curl of his lip is cruel.



selfless people do, but now I wonder if he was repeating something he had studied; if all his Abnegation tendencies were just Erudite traits in disguise.

“Don’t worry about Peter,” says Will. “He’ll at least get beat up by Edward, who has been studying hand-to-hand combat since we were ten years old. For fun.”

“Good,” says Christina. She checks her watch. “I think we’re missing dinner. Do you want us to stay here, Tris?”

I shake my head. “I’m fine.”

Christina and Will get up, but Al waves them ahead. He has a distinct smell—sweet and fresh like sage and lemongrass. When he tosses and turns at night, I get a whiff of it and I know he’s having a nightmare.

“I just wanted to tell you that you missed Eric’s announcement. We’re going on a field trip tomorrow, to the fence, to learn about Dauntless jobs,” he says. “We have to be at the train by eight fifteen.”

“Good,” I say. “Thanks.”

“And don’t pay attention to Christina. Your face doesn’t look that bad.” He smiles a little. “I mean, it looks good. It always looks good. I mean—you look brave. Dauntless.”

His eyes skirt mine, and he scratches the back of his head. The silence seems to grow between us. It was a nice thing to say, but he acts like it meant more than just the words. I hope I am wrong. I could not be attracted to Al—I

I twist and wrench and fall to the ground, screaming
my head with my arms. The scream against me.



wiggling in the grass, a crow is a few feet away and my
I open my eyes and it is there, its beak hitting me
in the nose. Blood drips from the wound and I sob, hitting
it with my palm, but the crow wedges itself under my other
arm and its claws strike me.

Help. Help. "Help."

And now I am everywhere, my body
burning, there is a searing where, and I can't
breathe, I go for air and my mouth fills with
feathers, I am coughing up my blood
with death.

Help, I sob and scream, insensible. I am
dying. I am dying; I am dying.

My skin is crawling, I can feel it, my quawking
is so loud my ears are ringing, but I am dying, and I
remember that it isn't real, but it feels so real.
Be brave, be brave, cry out to

inhaling

exhaling

I am alone.

You stay in the shadows, you stay down,
his voice continues, and I sob, my face is wet with
tears, and another crow has wedged itself under my arms.



from her nose is **thick** and **dark** and covers her fingers in seconds. She screams and crawls away from Molly. I can tell by the **flashing** of her **teeth** that she is sobbing, but I can barely hear **above** the **sobbing** in my ears.

Please go home.

Molly **knocks** Christina's side, sending her crawling on her back. **As** **my** **hand** **comes** **down** **on** **her** **side**. I clench my **teeth** to **keep** **from** **crying**. I had **no** **empathy** for **Anna** **the** **first** **time** **that** **I** **am** **in** **the** **middle** **of** **Christina** **and** **her** **things**. **She** **is** **the** **one** **to** **stand** **between** **me** **and** **Molly**.

"Stop" wails **as** **Molly** **presses** **her** **foot** **back** **to** **kick** **again**. She **holds** **out** **a** **hand**. "Stop. I'm here." She coughs. "I'm here."

Molly **smiles**, and I **feel** **with** **relief**. **My** **side** **is** **my** **rib** **cage** **lifting** **and** **pressing** **against** **my** **skin**.

Eric **walks** **forward** **to** **center** **where** **the** **movements** **slow**, **and** **he** **is** **over** **Christina** **with** **me** **folded**. He

"What **is** **the** **point** **of** **this**?" **He** **shoves** **his** **hand** **under** **my** **arm**.

"From **the** **ground** **up** **to** **the** **ceiling** **is** **all** **bleeding**. **So** **the** **point** **is** **to** **stop** **the** **bleeding** **now**."

"Get up," **he** **says** **and** **he** **yelled** **might** **not** **have** **felt** **like** **it** **was** **his** **side** **that** **was** **cut** **to** **the** **bone** **or** **the** **spine** **or** **the** **heart** **or** **the** **lungs** **or** **the** **stomach** **or** **the** **intestines** **or** **the** **kidneys** **or** **the** **pancreas** **or** **the** **liver** **or** **the** **spleen** **or** **the** **bladder** **or** **the** **prostate** **or** **the** **testes** **or** **the** **ovaries** **or** **the** **uterus** **or** **the** **vagina** **or** **the** **anus** **or** **the** **rectum** **or** **the** **colon** **or** **the** **small** **intestine** **or** **the** **large** **intestine** **or** **the** **stomach** **or** **the** **pancreas** **or** **the** **liver** **or** **the** **spleen** **or** **the** **bladder** **or** **the** **prostate** **or** **the** **testes** **or** **the** **ovaries** **or** **the** **uterus** **or** **the** **vagina** 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childhood, but part of my foundation

the heart



to watch the tall buildings
The Frudite buildings

I hold the handle and lean out

just as they tend to travel
small of water

My hand
standing, and I run

walk down the middle of the street

toward the marsh. The empty land stretches far

as I can see, a brown plane colliding with the

The Frudite buildings loomed dark

and unfamiliar. How will I find

The Frudite records; it's
must keep records of their

eyes have to find

the building

I may as well start there.

The faction members

Frudite faction

at least one article of clothing

because blue causes

a calm mind



“What’s
going?”

“Really well. I nod
hear.”

[Redacted]

“Please help
it means to be I hesitate. I should not say the word
Divergent”

to do with the

Tori’s demeanor changes.

her arms. Her expr

“Among other thing

aware when they are manipulated. They are
experiencing it. “Someone who can
then manipulate

And also . . .” She looks toward me and looks into my eyes.

“Someone who, like you, is afraid to die.”

A weight settles on my chest. I feel like I’ve been
speaks is picked up and thrown into a fire. I don’t
I can’t start to breathe. I have to cry or
scream.

it’s



like that he **no longer** cares about them?

I pause with my hand on the doorknob and look back at him.

Are you like me? I ask him **silently**. *Are you Divergent?*

Even **thinking** the word feels dangerous. His eyes hold mine, and **as** the silent seconds pass, he looks less and less stern. I hear my heartbeat. **I** have been looking at him too long, but then, he has been looking back, and I feel like we are both **trying** to say something the other can't hear, though I could be imagining it. Too long—and now, even longer, my heart even louder, his tranquil eyes **swallowing** me whole.

I push the door open **and** hurry down the hallway.

I shouldn't be so easily distracted by him. I shouldn't be able to think of anything but initiation. The simulations should disturb me more; they should break my mind, as they have been doing to most of the other initiates. Drew doesn't sleep—he just **stares** at the wall, curled in a ball. Al screams every night from his nightmares and cries **into** his pillow. My **nightmares** and chewed fingernails pale by comparison.

Al's **screams** wake me every time, and I stare at the springs above me and wonder what on earth is wrong with me, that I still feel strong when everyone else is **breaking down**. Is it being Divergent that makes me

knees to my chest and bury my face in them.



A hand touches my shoulder, and I fling a fist out hitting someone.

"It's over," he says. The hand sweeps awkwardly over my hair, a memory of my father stroking my hair when he kissed me goodnight, my mother touching my hair as she trimmed it with the scissors. I run my fingers through my wings, still brushing off feathers though I know it's been a day.

I rock back and forth in the metal chair.

"Tris, are you going back to the dorms today?"

"No!" I snap. I turn my head and glare at him, though I

can't see him through the blur of tears. They come so fast, like a storm.

"You can't do this," he says. He rolls his eyes. "I'll take you out the back door."

I shake my head. My body is trembling and I feel so weak.

I have to get out of here. I'm not the one who needs to be walked back to the dorms. If they don't let me go, they'll find me.

they'll talk about me.

The tears from my eyes wipe my cheeks.

I don't know how, but it sounds right.

"Um . . . okay." He breathes with me again. "This one is from my fantastic childhood. Childhood punishments. The tiny closet upstairs."

I press my lips together. I remember being punished—sent to my room without dinner, deprived of this or that, or scoldings. I was never shut in a closet. The cruelty of it without a teacher for him. I don't know what to say, but I say it as usual.

"I don't remember our winter coats in our closet," I say, gasping. "I don't really want to talk about it."

"I can talk. Ask me anything," he says. "Why is your heart racing?"

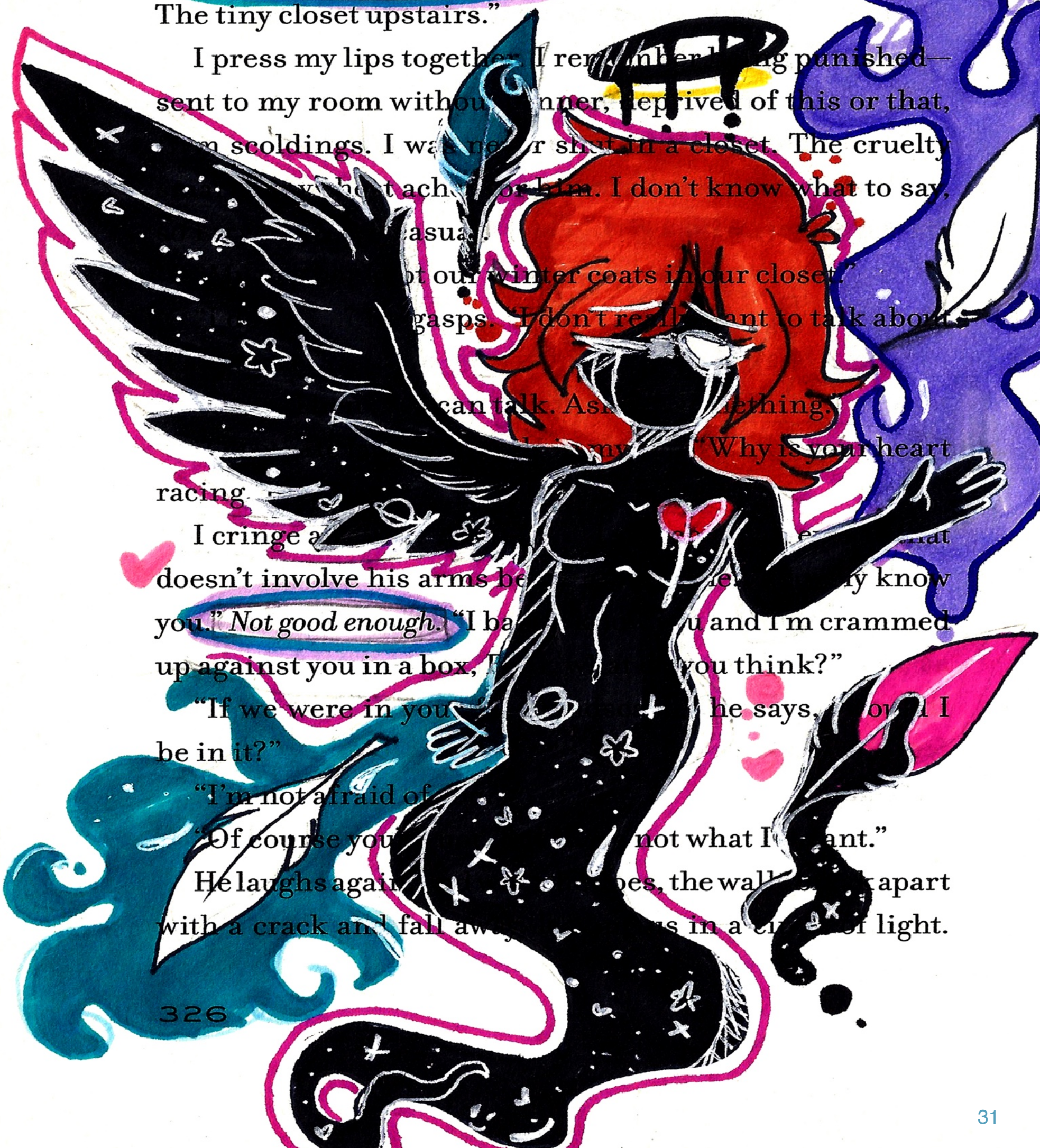
I cringe a little. "I don't know what that doesn't involve his arms being around me. I know you." *Not good enough.* "I became a vampire and I'm crammed up against you in a box, I mean, you think?"

"If we were in your closet, would you be in it?" he says, looking at me.

"I'm not afraid of you."

"Of course you're not," he says. "That's not what I want."

He laughs again. "The walls of the closet crack apart with a crack and fall away, and you're in a circle of light."



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?

"Sunday is the day," she says.

"Yes," I say.

"A day to grieve?"

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



ribs. For a second, I watch them. I feel like I am witnessing the beginning of something, but I'm not sure what it will be.

I jog to the path on the right side of the Pit and start to climb. I try to make my footsteps as quiet as possible. Unlike Christina, I don't find it difficult to lie. I don't intend to talk to Four—at least, not until I find out where he's going, late at night, in the glass building above us.

I run quietly, breathless when I reach the stairs, and stand at one end of the glass room while Four stands at the other. Through the windows I see the city lights, glowing now but petering out even as I look at them. They are supposed to turn off at midnight.

Across the room, Four stands at the door to the fear landscape. He holds a black box in one hand and a syringe in the other.

"Since you're here," he says, without looking over his shoulder, "you might as well go in with me.

I bite my lip. "Into your fear landscape?"

"Yes."

As I walk toward him, I ask, "I can do that?"

"The serum connects you to the program," he says, "but the program determines whose landscape you go through. And right now, it's set to put us through mine."

"You would let me see that?"



his in... pressing to the... elbow. I
 er actions... would give me... recover, but he is
 Dauntless... smiles at me and... toward the car-
 busel, w... bers of... our flag. And I half
 run, ... feel weak, but my mind
 is awake, ... on me.

Christina is... of the horses, h...
 rossee and h... pole holding...
 mal upright... behind her, a glowing
 e dark. Thre... initiates sta...
 other worn a... dirty animals. One of the...
 in a horse... and a scratched hor...
 between... fingers. Sitting on the e...
 ouse... an old... Dauntless, scratching her qu...
 rced... brow... numb.

"Wh... the o...?" asks Four.
 He looks... excited... I feel... his eyes wide with en...
 Did you guys... on the... feel... older gi...
 at the... hell... are you thing...
 just... houted "Here we are!... get...
 her head. "If I lose again... year, the...
 unbearable... Three years in a row?"

The wheel doesn't matter, says...
 are."
 ve?" says Christina, looking... from...
 while the rest of you...
 you...
 you...
 you...



a blue T-shirt and a pair of glasses. Even though he looks different and I'm not allowed to love him anymore, I run at him as fast as I can and throw my arms around his shoulders.

"You have a tattoo," he says, his voice muffled.

"You have glasses," I say. I pull back and narrow my eyes. "Your vision is perfect, Caleb, what are you doing?"

He glances at the tables around us. "Come on, let's go somewhere."

We exit the building and cross the street. I have to jog to keep up with him. Across from Erudite headquarters is what used to be a park. Now we just call it "Millionium," and it is a stretch of bare land and several rusted metal sculptures—like an abstract, plated mammoth, another shaped like a bean that dwarfs me in size.

We stop on the concrete around the metal bean, where the Erudites sit in small groups with newspapers or books. One of them, a girl with glasses, shoves them in his pocket.

He runs a hand through his hair, his eyes skin-deep with nervous sweat. I'm ashamed. I know I should be too, but I can't help it. I lose my breath and we're both silent.

But I'm just not.

"Where are you going here?" he says. "I can't come with you, so you have to do it on your own. I can't do anything for you."

He turns and walks away.

I glance over



and now, now, she asks questions sometimes.

"You could have helped me," she says quietly. "I helped you as much as I could, and now you have to do it alone."

I purse my lips.

She knows I know she does. If she won't give them to me now, I will have to find a way to make her tell me some other way.

The bird sketch

holds my attention. I never intended to get pierced or tattooed when I came here. I thought if I do, it will place another wedge between me and my family that I can never remove. And if my life here continues as it has been, it may soon be the least of the wedges between us.

But I understand now what Tori said about her tattoo representing a fear she overcame—a reminder of where she was, as well as a reminder of where she is now. Maybe that's why she got it for my old life as I embrace my new one.

"Yes," I say. "Three of these flying birds."

I brush my fingers over the lines marking the path of their flight toward my heart. One for each hand, and the



after everyone was asleep." She scratches the back of her neck, her expression suddenly serious. "Nice of him."

She gets up and stands behind the members sitting in the doorway. In a second, her serious expression is gone, but I still feel rattled by what she said, half confused by the idea of Four being "nice" and half wanting to punch her for no apparent reason.

"Here we go!" shouts Shauna. The train doesn't slow down, but she throws herself out of the car. The other members follow her, a stream of black-clothed, pierced people, not much older than I am. I stand in the doorway, Uriah. The train is going much faster than it has every other time. I've jumped, but I can't lose my nerve now, in front of all these members. So I jump, hitting the ground hard and stumbling forward a few steps before I regain my balance.

Uriah and I jog to catch up to the members, along with the other initiates, who barely look in my direction.

I look around as I walk. The sky is behind me, black against the clouds, but the buildings around me are dark and silent. That means we must be north of the bridge, where the city is abandoned.

We turn a corner and spread out as we walk down Michigan Avenue. South of the bridge, Michigan Avenue is a busy street, crawling with people, but here it is bare.



of the others get on first. Will hoists himself into the car with some difficulty landing first on his stomach and then dragging his legs in behind him. Four grabs the handle on the side of the car and pulls himself in smoothly, like he doesn't have more than six feet of body to work with.

I jog next to the car, wincing, then grit my teeth and grab the handle on the side. This is going to hurt.

Al grabs me under each arm and lifts me easily into the car. Pain shoots through my side, but it only lasts for a second. I see Peter behind him and my cheeks get warm. Al was trying to be nice, so I smile at him, but I wish people didn't want to be so nice. As if Peter didn't have enough ammunition already.

"Feeling okay there?" Peter says, giving me a look of mock sympathy—his lips turned down, his arched eyebrows pulled in. "Or are you a little . . . *Stiff*?"

He bursts into laughter at his joke, and Molly and Drew join in. Molly has an ugly laugh, all snorting and shaking shoulders, and Drew's is silent, but all the while he looks like he

pain

speaks





the second. The train is picking up speed. I sit down. It will be easier to keep my balance if I'm low to the ground. She raises an eyebrow at me.

"A fast train means wind," I say. "Wind means falling out. Get down."

Christina sits next to me, inching back to lean against the wall.

"I guess we're going to Dauntless headquarters," I say, "but I don't know where that is."

"Does anyone?" She shakes her head, grinning. "It's like they just popped out of a hole in the ground or something."

Then the wind rushes through the car, and the other faction transfers, hitting bursts of air, fall on top of one another. I watch Christina laugh without managing a smile.

Over my left shoulder, orange light from the setting sun reflects off the glass buildings, and I can faintly see the rows of gray houses that used to be my home.

It's Caleb's turn to make dinner tonight. Who will take his place—my mother or my father? And when they clear out his room, what will they discover? I imagine books jammed between the dresser and the wall, books under his mattress. The Erudite thirst for knowledge filling all the hidden places in his room. Did he always know that he would choose Erudite? And if he did, how did I not notice?



"What?" I ask.

"How did you do that?"

"Do what?"

"Crack the glass."

"I don't know." Four finally offers me his hand. I swing my legs over the side of the chair, and when I stand, I feel steady. Calm.

He sighs and grabs me by the elbow, half-leading and half-dragging me out of the room. We walk quickly down the hallway, and then he stops, pulling my arm back. He stares at me in silence. He won't give me an explanation without prompting.

"What?" I demand.

"You're Divergent," he replies.

I stare at him, feeling like I'm falling through me like electricity. He knows how dangerous I am. I must have slipped up. Said something wrong.

I should act casual. I lean back, spreading my shoulders to the wall, and say, "What's Divergent?"

"Don't play stupid," he says. "I suspected it last time, but this time it's obvious. You manipulated the simulation, you're Divergent. I'll delete the footage, but unless you want to wind up dead at the bottom of the chasm, you'll figure out how to hide it during the simulations! Now, if you'll excuse me."

want to admit it, not even to myself, but I feel calmer when I'm near her. If Peter tries to taunt me, she will defend me.

Silently I scold myself for being such a coward. Peter's insults shouldn't bother me, and I should focus on getting better at combat, not on how badly I did yesterday. And I should be willing, if not able, to defend myself instead of relying on other people to do it for me.

Four leads us toward the gate, which is as wide as a house and opens up to the cracked road that leads to the city. When I came here with my family as a child, we rode in a bus on that road and beyond, to Amity's farms, where we spent the day picking tomatoes and sweating through our shirts.

Another pinch in my stomach.

"If you don't rank in the top five at the end of initiation, you will probably end up here," says Four as he reaches the gate. "Once you are a fence guard, there is some potential for advancement, but not much. You may be able to go on patrols beyond Amity's farms, but—"

"Patrols for what purpose?" asks Will.

Four lifts a shoulder. "I suppose you'll discover that if you find yourself among them. As I was saying, for the most part, those who guard the fence when they are young continue to guard the fence. If it comforts some of them, insist that it isn't as bad as it seems."



you."

are

smiling

but I suspect

you have

a kind face,

too kind for a beautiful.

walk in a way to

stop

who shuffles in behind us.

looks like she is trying not

and, she crumples the muf-

going

unconscious.





giant shoe about to crush me. I roll again, and the bottom of the car skims my shoulder.

I'm safe.

I press my palms to my face. I don't try to get up. If I did, I'm sure I would just fall back down. I hear footsteps, and Four's hands wrap around my wrists. I let him pry my hands from my eyes.

He encloses one of my hands perfectly between two of his. The warmth of his skin overwhelms the ache in my fingers from holding the bars.

"You all right?" he asks, pressing our hands together.

"Yeah."

He starts to laugh.

After a second, I laugh too. With my free hand, I push myself to a sitting position. I am aware of how little space there is between us—six inches at most. That space feels charged with electricity. I feel like it should be smaller.

He stands, pulling me up with him. The wheel is still moving, creating a wind that tosses my hair back.

"You could have told me that the Ferris wheel still worked," I say. I try to sound casual. "We wouldn't have had to climb in the first place."

"I would have, if I had known," he says. "Couldn't just let you hang there, so I took a risk. Come on, time to get their flag."

Four hesitates for a moment and then takes my arm,



I can see

them

like they

minute.

Renovation move slowly through the patchwork of new, clean buildings and old, crumbling ones. Most of the new buildings are next to the old ones which used to be a lake a long time ago. The volunteer agency my mother works for is responsible for most of the renovations.

When we go to the Alton we eat outside this... When... when... to dine... together... without having to be asked,

Caleb help strangers... their groceries, I

with this life all over again. It's only when

If that I have trouble... feels

possibly a different faction m

manently.

the Alton... of the

skeletons and broke

walk through. There

"Let go of me," I say weakly.

His fingers spring apart, and he straightens. Some of the weight on my chest lifts now that he isn't touching me. I fear his shifting moods. They show me something unstable inside of him, and instability is dangerous.

"Are they watching you, too?" I say, so quietly he wouldn't be able to hear me if he wasn't standing so close.

He doesn't answer my question. "I keep trying to help you," he says, "but you refuse to be helped."

"Oh, right. Your help," I say. "Stabbing my ear with a knife and taunting me and yelling at me more than you yell at anyone else, it sure is helpful."

"Taunting you? You mean when I threw the knives? I wasn't taunting you," he snaps. "I was reminding you that if you failed, someone else would have to take your place."

I cup the back of my neck with my hand and think back to the knife incident. Every time he spoke, it was to remind me that if I gave up, Al would have to take my place in front of the target.

"Why?" I say.

"Because you're from Abnegation," he says, "and it's when you're acting selflessly that you are at your bravest."

I understand now. He wasn't persuading me to give up. He was reminding me why I couldn't—because I needed to protect Al. The thought makes me ache now.





our capture the flag team?" I say. "He was leaving with some of the members and he begged them to let me come along. They didn't really want me there. Some girl named Lynn stepped on me."

"They may not have wanted you there then," says Will quietly, "but they seem to like you now."

"Yeah," I say. I can't deny it. "I'm glad to be back, though."

Hopefully they can't tell I'm lying, but I suspect they can. I caught sight of myself in a window on the way into the compound, and my cheeks and eyes were both bright, my hair tangled. I look like I have experienced something powerful.

"Well, you missed Christina almost punching an Erudite," says Al. His voice sounds eager. I can count on Al to try to break the tension. "He was here asking for opinions about the Anagnation leadership, and Christina told him there were more important things for him to be doing."

"Which she was completely right about," adds Will. "And he got testy with her. Big mistake."

"Huge," I say, nodding. If I smile enough, maybe I can make them forget their jealousy, or hurt, or whatever is brewing behind Christina's eyes.

"Yeah," she says. "While you were off having fun, I was doing the dirty work of defending your old faction."

beat her! I beat her in *minutes*, and she's ranked above me?"

"Yeah," says Christina, crossing her arms. She wears a smug smile. "And?"

"If you intend to secure yourself a high rank, I suggest you don't make a habit of losing to low-ranked opponents," says Four, his voice cutting through the mutters and grumbles of the other initiates. He pockets the chalk and walks past me without glancing in my direction. The words sting a little, reminding me that I am the low-ranked opponent he's referring to.

Apparently they remind Molly, too.

"You," she says, focusing her narrowed eyes on me. "You are going to pay for this."

I expect her to lunge at me, or hit me, but she just turns on her heel and stalks out of the dormitory, and that is worse. If she had exploded, her anger would have been spent quickly, after a punch or two. Leaving means she wants to plan something. Leaving means I have to be on my guard.

Peter didn't say anything when the rankings went up, which, given his tendency to complain about anything that doesn't go his way, is surprising. He just walks to his bunk and sits down, untying his shoelaces. That makes me feel even more uneasy. He can't possibly be satisfied with second place. Not Peter.

Will and Christina slap hands, and then Will claps me

“My, don’t you have pretty eyes,” he says. “It’s a shame the rest of you is so plain.”

My heart pounds. I tug my hand back, but his grip tightens. I smell something acrid and unpleasant on his breath.

“You look a young to be walking around yourself, dear,” he says.

I stop tugging, and stand up straighter. I know I look young; I don’t need to be reminded. “I’m older than I look,” I retort. “I’m sixteen.”

His lips spread wide, revealing a gray molar with a dark pit in the side. I can’t tell if he’s smiling or grimacing. “Then isn’t today a special day for you? The day before you choose?”

“Let go of me,” I say. I hear ringing in my ears. My voice sounds clear and stern—not what I expected to hear. I feel like it doesn’t belong to me.

I am ready. I know what to do. I picture myself bringing my elbow back and hitting him. I see the bag of apples flying away from me. I hear my running footsteps. I am prepared to act.

But then he releases my wrist, takes the apples, and says, “Choose wisely, little girl.”



Clumsily I fumble along the side of my head to find the edge of the blindfold. I drag my heavy hand up, taking the blindfold with it and blink. The scene before me is sideways and bobs up and down. I see someone running toward me and someone running away—someone large, Al. I grab the railing next to me and haul myself to my feet.

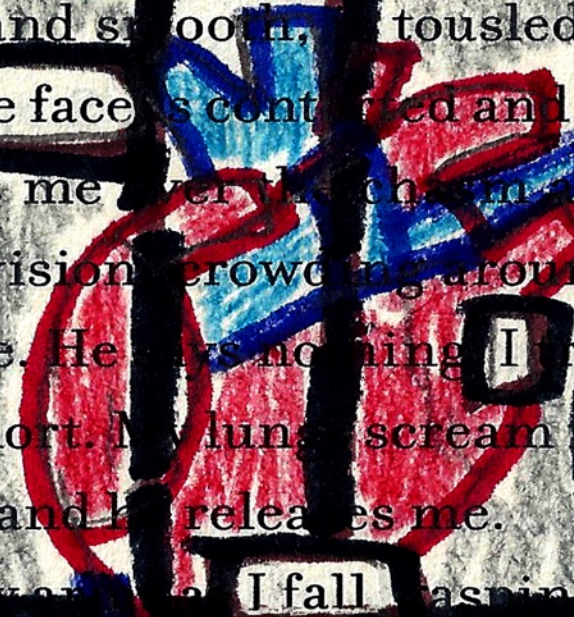
Reaching up, he snatches my throat and lets me up, his thumb wedged under my chin. His hair, which is usually shiny and smooth, is tousled and sticks to his forehead. His pale face is contorted and his teeth are gritted, and he holds me over the chasm as spots appear on the edges of my vision, crowding around his face green and pink and blue. He says nothing. I try to kick him, but my legs are too short. My lungs scream for air.

I hear a shout and he releases me. I stretch out my arms and I fall, gasping and reeling, until I slam into the railing. I look my elbows over it and groan. Mist touches my ankles. The world dips and sways around me and someone is on the Pit floor—Drew—screaming. I hear thumps. Kicks. Groans.

I blink a few times and focus as hard as I can on the only face I can see. It is contorted with anger. His eyes are dark blue.

"Four," I croak.

I close my eyes, and hands wrap around my arms, right





from his eyes. give you a
 miracle e to
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 What make
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entirely
 shameful
 I stand hear in

Dauntless to act
 my way out



estimated he says
 Is
 since I beat Molly
 did
 wrong

Transfers. We're doing something different today," he says. "Follow me."



We stand, and Uriah's forehead wrinkles. "Be careful," he tells me.

"Don't worry," says Will. "We'll protect her."

Four leads us out of the dining hall and along the passageway that surrounds the Pit. Will is on my left, Christina is on my right.

"I never really said I was sorry," Christina says quietly. "For taking the flag when you earned it, I don't know what was wrong with me."

I'm not sure if it's smarter to forgive her or not—to forgive either of them, after what they said to me when the real things went up yesterday. I could tell me that people are flawed and I should be lenient with them. And Four told me to rely on my friends.

I don't know who I should rely on more, because I'm not sure who my true friends are. Uriah and Marlene, who were on my side even when I seemed strong, or Christina and Will, who have always protected me when I seemed weak?

When her wide brown eyes meet mine, I nod. "Let's just forget about it."

I still want to be angry, but I have to let my anger go.



room. They grow brighter as the sunlight dies.

People are everywhere, all dressed in black, all shouting and talking, expressive, gesturing. I don't see any elderly people in the crowd. Are there any old Dauntless? Do they not last that long, or are they just sent away when they can't jump off moving trains anymore?

A group of children run down a narrow path with no railing, so fast my heart pounds, and I want to scream at them to slow down before they get hurt. A memory of the orderly Abnegation streets appears in my mind: a line of people on the right passing a line of people on the left, all smiles and inclined heads and silence. My stomach squeezes. But there is something wonderful about Dauntless chaos.

"If you follow me," says Four, "I'll show you the chasm."

He waves us forward. Four's appearance seems tame from the front, by Dauntless standards, but when he turns around, I see a tattoo peeking out from the collar of his T-shirt. He leads us to the right side of the Pit, which is conspicuously dark. I squint and see that the floor I stand on now ends at an iron barrier. As we approach the railing, I hear a roar—water, fast-moving water, crashing against rocks.

I look over the side. The floor drops off at a sharp angle, and several stories below us is a river. Cushing

you only have four . . .” My voice trails off. Only four. 

“Oh.” I look over my shoulder at him. “That’s why they call you—”

The words leave me when I see his expression. His eyes are wide and seem almost vulnerable under the room’s lights. His lips are parted. If we were not here, I would describe the look at me. But I don’t understand why he would be looking at me in a way.

He wraps his hand around my elbow, his thumb pressing to the soft skin above my forearm, and tugs me toward him. The skin around my wrist still stings, like the belt was real, but it is as pale as the rest of me. His lips slowly move against my cheek, then his arms tighten around my shoulders, and he buries his face in my neck, breathing against my collarbone.

I stand stiffly for a second and then loop my arms around him and sigh.

“Hey,” I say softly. “We got through it.”

He lifts his head and slips his fingers through my hair, tucking it behind my ear. We stare at each other in silence.

His fingers move absently over a lock of my hair.

“You got me through it,” he says finally.

“Well.” My throat is dry. I try to ignore the nervous electricity that pulses through me every second he touches me.

It’s easy to be brave when they le no my fear.”



I place my fingers together and clench. This is the perfect place for him to tell me that he is Divergent, if indeed that's what he is. The roar of the chasm ensures that we won't be overheard. I don't know why the thought makes me so nervous.

My result was as expected, he says. "Abnegation." "Oh." "Something inside just deflates. I am wrong about you."

But I had assumed that if he was not Divergent, he must have gotten a Dauntless result. And technically, I also got an Abnegation result—according to the system. Did the something happen to him? And if that's true, why isn't he telling me the truth?

"But you chose Dauntless anyway?" I say.

"Of course."

"Why did you have to leave?"

His eyes drift away from mine, across the space in front of him, as if searching the air for an answer. He doesn't need to give one. I suddenly feel the ghost of a stinging belt on my wrist.

"You had to get away from your dad," I say. "Is that why you don't want to be a Dauntless leader? Because if you were, you might have to see him again?"

He lifts a shoulder. "That, and I've always felt that I don't quite belong among the Dauntless. Not the way they are now, anyway."

"For God's sake, Staff," he says.



"You don't have to follow me," I say, staring at the maze of bars above me. I shove my feet onto the place where two bars cross and push myself up, grabbing another bar in the process. I sway for a second, my heart beating so hard I can't feel anything else. Every thought I have condenses into that heartbeat, moving at the same rhythm.

"Yes, I do," he says.

This is crazy, and I know it. A fraction of an inch of mistake, half a second of hesitation, and my life is over. Heat tears through my chest, and I smile as I grab the next bar. I pull myself up, my arms shaking, and force my leg under me so I'm standing on another bar. When I feel steady, I look down at Four. But instead of seeing him, I see straight to the ground.

I can't breathe.

I imagine my body plummeting, smacking into the bars as it falls down, and my limbs at broken angles on the pavement, just like Rita's sister when she didn't make it onto the roof. Four grabs a bar with each hand and pulls himself up, easy, like he's sitting up in bed. But he is not comfortable or natural here—every muscle in his arm stands out. It is a stupid thing for me to think when I am one hundred feet off the ground.

I grab another bar, find another place to wedge my foot.



Edward says, "I am heavy and awkward. I am afraid of the nights that no one can help him. I am afraid I can't help him, but I would not be okay without him. I want to help him. I am powerless to do so."

"I . . .," I start to say, meaning to apologize, but for what? For being more Dauntless than he is? For not knowing what to say?

"I just . . ." The tears that have been gathering in his eyes spill over, wetting his cheeks. I want to say more.

I nod and turn away from him. Leaving him is not a good idea, but I can't stop myself. The door swings into place behind me, and I keep walking.

I walk past the drinking fountain and through the tunnels that seemed endless the day I got here but now barely register in my mind. This is not the first time I have failed my family since I got here, but for some reason, it feels that way. Every other time I failed, I knew what to do but chose not to do it. This time, I did not know what to do.

Have I lost the ability to see what people need? Have I lost part of myself?

I keep walking.

+++

I somehow find the hallway I sat in the day Edward left. I don't want to be alone, but I don't feel like I have much of a

rants began, but now **hate** as.



Beneath ~~is a large plaque that reads KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO PROSPERITY.~~

Prosperity, ~~to me, a word has a negative connotation. Abnegation uses it to describe self-indulgence.~~

~~How could Caleb have chosen to be one of these people? The things they do, the things they want, it's all wrong. But he probably **thinks the same of the Dauntless**~~

I walk up to the ~~deck just beneath Jeanine's portrait. The young man sitting behind it doesn't look up as he says, "How **can I help you?**"~~

"I am looking for ~~him.~~" I say. "His name is Caleb. ~~Do you know where I can find him?"~~

"**a** ~~not permitted to give a~~ **person** ~~information,"~~ he replies blandly, as he jabs at the screen in front of him.

"~~He's my brother.~~"

"~~I am not permit~~"

~~I slam my palm on the deck in front of him, and he jerks out of his seat, **staring** at me over his spectacles. Heads ~~turn~~ **in my direction**~~

"~~I said!~~" My voice is terse. "~~I am~~ **looking for** ~~someone.~~ He's an initiate. Can you at least tell me where I can find ~~them?~~"

"~~Dauntless?~~" **a voice** ~~behind me says.~~

~~I turn, and Caleb stands **behind me** a book in hand. His hair has grown out so it flips at his ears, and he wears~~



choke. I close my eyes and pay attention to the cold air beneath me and breathe the misty underground air.

Just as the call from the end of the hallway, Uriah says, "I see them. Behind them are Lynn and Marlene. Lynn is holding a muffin."

"Thought I could find you here." He crouches near my feet. "I was looking for you first."

"You just wanted to congratulate me?" I smirk.

"Someone else," he says. "And I figured your friends would want to congratulate you since their ranks aren't as high as yours. Hoping a little. I'm going to shoot a muffin off Marlene's head."

"The idea is so ridiculous I can't stop myself from laughing. I get up and follow Uriah to the end of the hallway where Marlene and Lynn are waiting. Lynn narrows her eyes at me, but Marlene grins.

"Why aren't you out celebrating?" she asks. "You're practically guaranteed a top ten spot if you keep it up."

"She's too Dauntless for the other transfers," Uriah says.

"And too Abnegation to 'celebrate,'" remarks Lynn.

I ignore her. "Why are you shooting a muffin off Marlene's head?"

"She bet me I couldn't aim well enough to hit a small object from one hundred feet," Uriah explains. "I bet her

surprise me, but now they chide me. Why was I so focused on myself that I didn't notice his deep frown and his sagging posture?

"I had a difficult day at work," he says. "Well, really, it was Marcus who had the difficult day. I shouldn't lay claim to it."

Marcus is my father's coworker; they are both political leaders. The city is ruled by a council of fifty people, composed entirely of representatives from Abnegation, because our faction is regarded as incorruptible, due to our commitment to selflessness. Our leaders are selected by their peers for their impeccable character, moral fortitude, and leadership skills. Representatives from each of the other factions can speak in the meetings on behalf of a particular issue, but ultimately, the decision is the council's. And while the council technically makes decisions together, Marcus is particularly influential.

It has been this way since the beginning of the great peace, when the factions were formed. I think the system persists because we're afraid of what might happen if it didn't: war.

"Is this about that report Jeanine Matthews released?" my mother says. Jeanine Matthews is Erudite's sole representative, selected based on her IQ score. My father



INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS

I recommend modeling the steps to complete Blackout Poetry for students. Otherwise, students will begin circling and blacking out words before they've thought it through, and you will get requests such as, "Can I have another page? I messed up!" Modeling helps prevent this.

1. Hand out book pages and a pencil to all students.
2. Tell students to **scan** the page (not read it word-for-word) and lightly circle any words that jump out at them as interesting.
3. From the circled words, students should choose an anchor word. The anchor word is the word around which they will create the rest of the statement. It usually sets the mood for the statement.
4. Students look for other words, before and after the anchor word, that will create the statement. I encourage students not to circle complete sentences, but to create their own sentences if possible. They can use parts of words or individual letters in words to make new words that they want to use.
5. Once they have pencil-circled their statement, have them show it to you. Read it aloud to make sure it is what they wanted to express. Erase any other pencil marks.
6. Use a fine tip marker to box the words of the statement. Remember, markers bleed on book paper, so students should leave some space around the letters of the words they want to keep.

7. Once the words are boxed in marker, students can design the background image to accompany the mood of the statement. (Do this in pencil first!)
8. Finally, students can color their backgrounds, “blacking out” the other words on the page to leave only their poetic statements showing.

To accompany this assignment, I had my students write their statement on notebook paper. They wrote a short paragraph that included:

- their anchor word
- the mood created by their statement
- explanation *how* the statement created the mood

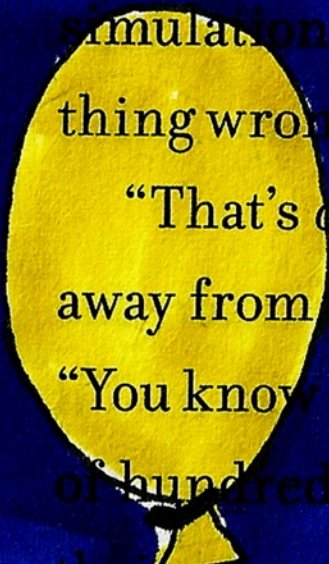
You can give students a mood word list to help expand their mood word knowledge. There is one for you on the next page.

Following are also three more examples. The “balloon” example was created by my daughter Kacey, a GPISD student at Jackson Middle School. The other two were created by me in class as I modeled the steps.



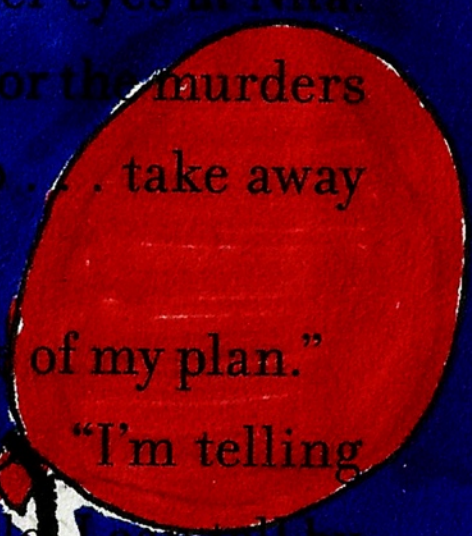
"Destroy it," Nita says, even-keeled.

I feel strange, empty like a deflated balloon. I don't know what I had in mind when Nita talked about her plan, but it wasn't this—this feels so small, so passive as an act of retaliation against the people responsible for the attack simulation, the people who told me that there was something wrong with me at my very core, in my genetic code.



"That's all you intend to do," Tris says, finally looking away from the microscope. She narrows her eyes at Nita. "You know that the Bureau is responsible for the murders of hundreds of people, and your plan is to . . . take away their memory serum?"

"I don't remember inviting your critique of my plan."



"I'm not critiquing your plan," Tris says. "I'm telling you I don't believe you. You hate these people. I can tell by the way you talk about them. Whatever you intend to do, I think it's far worse than stealing some serum."

"The memory serum is what they use to keep the experiments running. It's their greatest source of power over your city, and I want to take it away. I'd say that's a hard enough blow for now." Nita sounds gentle, like she's explaining something to a child. "I never said this was all I was ever going to do. It's not always wise to strike as hard as you can at the first opportunity. This is a long race, not a sprint."

Tris just shakes her head.

as we come and the zip line.

Still, there is a part of me that groans. *How much terror* *seventy miles?* It is a strange blend of terror and eagerness, unfamiliar until now.

The next member, a young-looking boy with hair down to his shoulders jumps into the sling on his back instead of his stomach. He stretches his arms wide as Zeke shove him off the steel cable.

None of the members seem at all afraid. They act like they have done this a thousand times before. They may be new here. But when I look over my shoulder, I see that most of the inmates look pale or worried even as they talk excitedly to one another. What happens between initiation and membership that transforms panic into delight? Or do people just get better at hiding their fear?

Three people go out of me. Another sling member gets on feet first and crosses her arms over her chest. Two people. A tall, thick boy jumps up and down like a child before climbing into the sling and lets out a high screech as he disappears, making the rest in front of me laugh.

One person.

She hops into the sling feet first and keeps her hands in front of her as Zeke tightens her straps. And then it's my turn.

I shudder as Zeke hands my sling from the cable and my



able to look at the sculpture I saw yesterday.

Whoever built this place must have loved light. There is glass in the curve of each hallway ceiling and along each lower wall. Even now, when it is barely morning, there is plenty of light to see by.

I stick my back pocket for the badge Zoe handed to me at dinner last night and pass the security checkpoint with it in hand. Then I see the sculpture a few hundred yards away from the doors we entered through yesterday, gloomy and massive and mysterious, like a living entity.

It is a huge slab of dark stone, square and rough, like the rocks at the bottom of the chasm. A large crack runs through the middle of it, and there are streaks of lighter rock near the edges. Suspended above the slab is a glass tank of the same dimensions, and a light placed above the center of the tank shines through the water, reflecting as it ripples. I hear a faint noise, a drop of water hitting the stone. It comes from a small tube running through the center of the tank. At first I think the tank is just leaking, but another drop falls, then a third, and a fourth, at the same interval. A few drops collect, and then disappear down a narrow channel in the stone. They must be intentional.

“Hello.” Zoe stands on the other side of the sculpture. “I’m sorry, I was about to go to the dormitory for you, then”

Mood Words

POSITIVE MOOD WORDS

blissful

joyful

loving

dreamy

peaceful

cheerful

silly

calm

independent

gentle

mellow

energetic

hopeful

electric

humorous

delighted

grateful

confident

inspirational

encouraging

victorious

courageous

optimistic

ecstatic

relaxed

expectant

determined

NEGATIVE MOOD WORDS

lazy

furious

lonely

brokenhearted

terror

indifferent

melancholy

selfish

frustrated

angry

forlorn

hopeless

forgotten

stressed

cranky

morose

hateful

disappointed

dejected

sad

unloved

guilty

worried

gloomy

crabby

weird

annoyed



THANK YOU FOR
READING!

COVER DRAWING BY ALONDRA JIMENEZ