

Torn

By

Rebecca Ben-David

INT. HARVESTING CAMP - DAY

PENCIL SKETCHES/DRAWINGS:

SHAY is dragged by MASKED GUARDS through a stark, grungy hall lined with doors.

At the end of the hall is a sign with a left-pointing arrow reading: HOLDING CELLS.

As the group advances, INTERCUT haunting images of the capture, sedation, torture, and lobotomization of WOMEN.

SHAY (V.O.)

If we are silent, does that somehow make us golden, able to taste light, a sunset or a halo hanging in our mouths, dripping, fierce, glorious? When rendered speechless, do we become lost or merely closer to what is pure? Does something holy lie on the tip of our tongues, or are we just tasting the lie itself, laid bare, sharp, bitter, gleaming?

INT. HOLDING CELL

TALI lies fetal on the floor of a dark room. The door screeches open. A body drops beside her.

Shay stares back at her. Her fingers stray over Tali's.

SHAY (V.O.)

If we take away language, do we approach oblivion as a paradise or a void? To which do we cling? Reason or rapture? Which would you choose - roots or wings, the forests or the fields?

OUTSIDE - LATER

A procession of WOMEN led by a GUARD walk single-file against a wall, their hands bound before them.

Tali pinches the hem of Shay's shirt. Shay stops.

Tali looks off towards the forest on the edge of the harvesting camp's perimeter, eyes bright with tears.

(CONTINUED)

SHAY (V.O.)

What would you do if you wanted both, but someone told you you could have neither? What would you do if they said you couldn't be golden, only silent, that the light in your mouth couldn't possibly exist, that such a thing was unheard of? Perhaps it's just that they hadn't heard of a thing like you before - but maybe that's because they keep telling you to be quiet.

WATERCOLOR/WATER-BASED PAINT:

The forest is deep, punctured by pools of light. Brightness. A field of wildflowers ending in cliff side. Beyond it, mountains.

Over the cliff, another harvesting facility lies buried between the mountains.

PHOTOREALISM:

Tali screws up her face in anger and grief.

SHAY (V.O.)

So again, the question comes, begging: which do you choose - the forest or the fields? How do you plead?

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY:

Tali breaks free from her restraints. Shay's eyes widen.

Tali pushes Shay in front of her, making a run for the trees.

Sirens wail over pounding footsteps as Shay and Tali sprint, faster and faster.

Tali looks over her shoulder at Shay, smiling in spite of everything.

Her smile fades as Shay turns away, looking back towards the camp, her face shining with tears. Tali reaches out to her...

MOVING FOOTAGE:

Tali grabs Shay's hand and urges her onward.

The forest swallows them whole.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Tali and Shay slog their way around the trees, breath clouding before them.

SHAY
How much longer to the border?

TALI
At this rate, we'll just barely make it by nightfall, I think.

SHAY
No breaks?

TALI
No breaks.

Shay picks up her pace, taking the lead.

TALI (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

SHAY
Trying to put as much distance between us and the Reapers, like you told me: "go as fast as you can, and don't look back."

TALI
You don't even know where we're going.

SHAY
Oh, and you do?

TALI
We're going east, towards the coast. There's a secret ship there that can smuggle us out of here for good. It's a one night only kind of deal, docks tonight, leaves same time tomorrow.

SHAY
Great. So we save our own necks meanwhile everyone else is literally losing their minds.

(CONTINUED)

TALI

Hey, I'm trying to keep us alive here.

SHAY

Oh yeah? And what about all those other girls - they were our friends, our family. You didn't try to keep any of them alive.

TALI

Right, because going back for them now is going to make a difference. They were just girls, Tali.

SHAY

We're just girls!

TALI

You know what I mean. Besides, it's not like they're dead --

SHAY

They're as good as and you know it! They'll Void them all! They won't have a free thought in their heads --

TALI

You should just be glad that you do, that you even have the option to waste time arguing with me right now! We can't save everyone; it's suicide!

SHAY

We at least have to try!

TALI

What we have to do is stay alive. Whether you like it or not, it's eat or be eaten, us or them. For once in our goddamn lives, we have to choose ourselves!

SHAY

You don't understand --

TALI

I'm not letting you get yourself killed trying to do the "right" thing, okay? This generation's already got enough martyrs.

(CONTINUED)

Shay lets out a whimper and turns away. Tali grabs her wrist and pulls her back around.

TALI
You're not dying before me. I'd
kill myself before I'd let that
happen.

The girls stare one another down, angry, bitter, searching.

The harsh, clattering call of magpies vibrates through the trees.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

Tali and Shay sit around a small campfire at the edge of the woods, empty cans of beans and soup lying beside them.

Their shadows stretch and flicker across the grass.

SHAY
We have to go back.

TALI
We can't. I know you're scared, but
we have to keep pushing forward.

SHAY
I think that's my line.

TALI
What are you talking about?

SHAY
I'm talking about sending a message
to the Reapers, about proving that
we're not puppets they can hang in
the dark until they're in the mood
to pull out all our stuffing!

TALI
If we leave now, we don't have to
worry about any of that!

Shay slaps her own leg for emphasis.

SHAY
No! If we run, we hide, and they
still win. We have to show them
that they don't own us!

She rubs the spot on her leg almost convulsively. Tali watches her.

(CONTINUED)

TALI

Shay, I can't go back there, not after what they did to me, what they would have done to you. We got away! How could you possibly want to go back?

Shay begins cleaning up, shoving things into her backpack.

SHAY

Because while we get away with our lives, they get away with the equivalent of rape and murder, and at the end of the day we all keep our silence and it makes us no better than them.

She glares at Tali, who averts her gaze, looking down at her feet.

Shay gets up and stands in front of the fire, staring hard into the flames, determined not to cry.

Behind her, Tali twists her fingers.

TALI

When I was in that holding cell, I started thinking maybe getting Voided wouldn't be so bad. Before the Second Wave, I was always on the run. I tried to rationalize how I'd gotten caught in the first place. I'd been so careful, followed all the rules, especially number one: "go as fast as you can, and don't look back" - last thing my mom ever said to me. But the Reapers got to me anyway, and all of a sudden her sacrifice meant nothing, the rules meant nothing, I meant nothing. I think in reality I was just tired. Tired of running, of the lies, of having to be this cold, selfish person who didn't have time for grieving or giving a damn, but really was only ever terrified. So I laid there in the dark, resigned myself to it, and cursed my heart for every beat it made in protest.

As she speaks, Tali approaches Shay, grabs her gently by the wrist. Shay turns into the motion. Her hair falls into her face.

(CONTINUED)

TALI (CONT'D)

And then you came, and it was like entering the eye of a storm.

Tali reaches up and tucks the stray strands of hair behind Shay's ear. Her hand lingers as a tear rolls down Shay's face. She wipes it away.

TALI (CONT'D)

Everything around us, inside us, was chaos, but all you offered me was peace. There's a lot about this world I still don't understand, but you in that moment was by far the most extraordinary thing. And I knew more than anything I wanted to protect that - everything that you are. ...You saved me. I'm just trying to return the favor.

Shay swallows, pulls Tali's hand down, but maintains eye contact.

SHAY

That's not how this works. You can't just act on assumptions about who I am or what I want and call it even. You feel like you owe me something, fine, but this - you and me - whatever it is we have - might be a lot of things, but it is not a competition.

She goes back to her pack.

TALI

That's not what I - look, you know I'm in your corner --

Shay rounds on her.

SHAY

And now you want to leave me there!

TALI

You're the one who's leaving! How can you want to go back there when you know what's waiting for you?

SHAY

Tali, the thought of taking one step back into those woods makes me want to drop to my knees and weep.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHAY (cont'd)

But so does leaving all those girls behind. I ache for them just as much as I do for us, for the kind of life you want to make with me --

TALI

So why are you choosing them over me? They're practically strangers --

SHAY

So are we! Why does it have to be 'us or them', why can't it be 'and?'

TALI

Because that's what choice is, and it's just about all we have left!

SHAY

The only choice I'm making here is not to hide anymore!

TALI

But you won't have to hide, not with me!

SHAY

No, just from the rest of the world!

TALI

But who cares? We can be together! God forbid I suggest we could even be happy if you'd ever take a breath and realize that not everything has to be a fight! Is it really so bad if we escape it all? Start a new life together, be free?

SHAY

Being alive isn't the same as being free.

TALI

Well, what good is personal truth if you can't even remember it? Once you're Void, that's it - you're nothing, you're hollow - just a body!

(CONTINUED)

SHAY

I already know what hollow feels like. I know what it is to be seen as no more than my body, my biology. Who better to show the Reapers that people have parts that can't be manufactured than me?

TALI

But how can we even go up against them? We're just two girls with no idea what we're doing.

SHAY

That's the whole point though! You can't bottle up the indefinite! They can't control what they can't understand! If they can't put their finger on who and what we are, they can't touch us at all!

TALI

You know what they can put their finger on? A trigger. You think you're a threat to them? All the more reason for them to start shooting on sight! We're not invincible!

SHAY

I don't care! I need them to see, I need them to see me.

TALI

I see you! Isn't that enough?

Shay turns away.

CUT TO:

HARVESTING FACILITY HQ - DUSK

Three FIGURES in suits stand around a monitor, watching Tali and Shay with interest.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

That's enough. Kill the power. Take them.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

The girls are plunged into darkness, as though the sun has been shut off.

SHAY (O.S.)

Tali?!

TALI (O.S.)

Shay, run!

The sounds of frantic footsteps and heavy breathing overlap with rushing wind and the hissing of seeping smoke.

GRAYSCALE NIGHT-VISION:

The girls run hand in hand.

Tali falls. Shay pulls her upright, pushes her ahead of her.

Between sharp gasps, Tali repeats her mother's words over and over.

TALI (O.S.)

Fast as you can, don't look back.

Fast as you can, don't look back.

Fast as you can, don't look --

Shay's hand slips out of her grip.

Tali looks back. Freeze-frame.

CUT TO BLACK.