

It was just after a long war. The war had been going on from 2020 to a long fifty years later. And in case you can't do the math, it ended in the year 2070. I wish we could go back in time and change it so we never had a war. Now, there are very few healthy people around the sixteen Population Centers of the world, one being the place of my life known as Population Center Miami. Most have died from a newly made sickness, dedicated to war.

It causes deafness and blindness. Sooner or later, after losing your sight and hearing capabilities, you suddenly drop dead, literally. It's a horrible way to die, but sometimes some people can get something different. That's what happened to me, and this is just the beginning of my long story, the story of my new beginning and, in a way, my ending.

I have to keep running, I thought.

Dogs barked behind me as they ran towards their target, just racing at their chance to catch their prey and maybe even their meal.

I can't let them get me! I thought again.

"Hurry up! She's getting away!" a man exclaimed in the distance.

I heard the dogs closing in, their barks and the snapping of their jaws getting louder. The sound of it shook me to the core. I just couldn't go back. It was too dangerous and risky.

I tripped over a giant log and fell to the ground. I frantically got up; sweat dripping down my face and my legs aching to no end. My entire body wanted to collapse and break down. I was so tired. I was too tired to be running like this.

I felt a warm liquid slowly flowing down my left leg. I looked down at my somewhat aching leg.

You've got to be kidding me! I exclaimed mentally.

I had cut my leg. Not too severe to where I couldn't run but it still hurt. I knew I needed to find a city. I could slip away there. Nothing seemed to be giving me the well-deserved break I so desperately needed.

I then fell down a hole and in a net that had come out from under me that were under some leaves. The dogs barked away and looked at me from above. The man looked down and laughed. As quickly as the dart hit me, everything went white.

“Sabrina,” Mom called.

“Yeah, Mom,” I asked, still a bit sleepy and groggy from my long slumber. The nightmare I had rang in my head even as I stood up and attempted to stretch off the sleep and nightmares. *What’s with these nightmares?* I thought groaning.

“Happy fifteenth birthday,” she called. She was in the kitchen, with her breather mask on. It was the only way to get fresh air. I strapped mine on and ran straight to the kitchen.

The kitchen was outside and the contaminated air nearly got into my mask. Yes, the disease had contaminated the air and it threatened thousands of lives. *Note to self: tighten mask.* I tightened it a notch. I soon found my mom with a birthday cake! Because of the sickness, there are very few birthday cakes around. So it is a shocker to see her with one. Especially since when you find one, they were fifty to sixty dollars each. *Where did Mom find the money?* I thought.

“Wow,” is all I could come up with to say.

“I know, right. Here, have some for breakfast.” She handed me the tightly covered cake and I didn’t refuse. I went inside the house to eat the delicious treat of chocolate cake.

As Mom and I ate the slices of cake I had cut, I asked a question, “What was Dad like?”

This made Mom stop eating for a moment “Why would you ask that?”

“I don’t know you just never talk about him. I guess I wanted to know a bit more about him,” I said as curiosity replaced my more realistic reasons.

“He was a good man with a kind heart. I loved him very much and... he loved you,” Mom answered my question.

“How did he... you know, die?” I asked still not thinking on how it would affect her.

“In... in the war,” Mom replied. Her voice began to choke up, and she started to cry.

“Okay, Mom. That’s all the questions,” I said and gave her a hug.

That’s when things went *really* wrong. I started to cough, a lot. “Mom, what’s... *cough cough*... going on? I have never coughed... *cough*... this much in... *cough cough*... my entire life.”

“Oh no,” Mom said her face went completely white and had been overtaken with worry. “Not you, too! I can’t deal with this, not now! Not on your birthday!”

“Mom, what is it?” I asked. Thankfully, it seemed the coughing had stopped for a bit.

“This is how everyone started,” Mom said, and she started to cry once more.

“Started? Started what?” I asked. She knew something that I needed to know it. “It is how

it started when everyone got the sickness. That horrible and incurable disease that kills everyone,” Mom answered. Her sobbing ended to answer the question but began again.

This stopped me in my tracks, and I stood straight up in shock. I had the illness in me! *But how did I receive it? I had my mask...* I thought trying to figure things out. I then remembered I had to tighten my mask while I was thinking about the cake. Maybe some of the contaminated air must have gotten into my mask when I didn’t know it. *What am I going to do now? The sickness takes hearing away within days! And you get blind days after that! Not exactly in that order but, still! The last thing I need is to die at fifteen! And right after my birthday!* I began to cry myself. Not from sadness but from the horrible realization of being sick and becoming nothing but a sad memory within weeks.

This can’t be possible, I thought. I am too young to die!

“Why can’t it be me? Why does it have to be you? A young fifteen year old,” Mom cried.

“It’s okay, Mom. We’ll find a way to figure things out. I promise,” I said trying to sound calm and comforting. But I was also trying to comfort myself at the same time.

“I know... I know... I just want it to be me instead of you. You’re just too young to die,” she said beginning to calm down.

The irony, I thought.

“Well, I have to go to school. Bye, Mom,” I said.

“Goodbye, Sabrina. Take care,” Mom said choking up with tears starting to run down her cheek.

All I did was cough all day. I went to the nurse three times. They thought I had the cold so they let it be. But, later on, kids and teachers stood far away from me. The sickness is a terrible thing, contagious to all, and obviously deadly. I didn’t know what to do. I was in stress all day. No one would come near me, and I didn’t blame them one bit.

If someone else was sick with the horrifying disease, then I would stay away too. For most of those who get the sickness, the government humanely kills them so no one can get sick by that person and so that person doesn’t have to suffer. So I tried to keep a low profile. Sort of hard to do though, when everyone is staring at you, peering at you, and even looking worried about you. It can get depressing, knowing no one will dare sit by you so they don’t get sick. It’s hard, but, it is something you must bear. My own friends, Kelsey and Sara, wouldn’t sit by me. I

guess I would never have any *real* friends anymore. I just wondered why someone sick would be allowed to go to school. But you can't really help it if no one can tell you otherwise.

By the time school was over, people weren't just staring, they were whispering. Though I couldn't hear what they were saying, I knew it wasn't good. Some were even laughing, though those people were usually jerks anyway and I am clueless on how they are still allowed to go to school here. *I'm clueless about a lot of things, aren't I?* I thought.

Seeing and hearing all of this got me even more depressed. I was so confused, though. With so many questions swirling in my head, I thought my brain was going to burst.

Man, what a stupid headache! Why won't it just go away? I thought. Then, when I was finally capable of opening my eyes, everything was a tad bit blurry. *This isn't supposed to happen for a long while. It can't happen. It is supposed to take a few days! I am not supposed to get blind on the first day! It makes no sense!*

What makes me different? I questioned. *Why am I getting it so early? Is it because of my age? No, that's not right. Babies that are months old and get it, still take the same time frame to get blind and deaf like everyone else. Why me? What makes me so different?*

I went home, more questions filling my head by the second in which was giving me a blistering headache. When I opened the velvet colored door and entered the house, I could tell something was up. There was doctor in the living room with full dark blue body suit with a white hood that covered his face. I could tell it was a man, but I couldn't figure out anything else. Not only that though, there were shiny black cars outside that seemed to be couple years old. They had men inside them with earphones. I know what you're thinking, why have cars in year 2071? How do you have cars with so few people? I'm just as clueless to both questions as a mouse.

"Hello, young lady... I am Doctor Valence. I am a specialist at the PCM Sickness Department. I want to help you the best I can," Doctor Valence said. He had an accent that sounded like he was from the country of India.

"But, how? It's not like you have a cure," I looked down with a frustrated face as I spoke.

"But I *can* help slow the process," he said.

"It is a bit too late my eyesight is already failing me," I said.

"But, your mother said this just happened this morning? How is it happening so fast?" Doctor Valence asked concerned. He turned to my mother. She shook her head showing she didn't know how it was possible or that she even knew it had happened so quickly.

“I don’t know. It just happened so quickly. I just don’t what to expect next,” I said when he turned back to me. I threw my face into my hands to hide my horrified expression.

“With the fact that her capabilities are failing at a rapid rate, I have to say, medicine won’t slow the process at all. The thing is, though, I can’t get why she happens to be having the side effects at an unusual rate. It is a sign of something I cannot comprehend,” he said.

A sign for what? I thought.

“What do you mean cannot comprehend it? I am going to be dead within days at this rate! You have to do something! I mean--” I panicked, but I was surprised when a couple of the government agents from the car grabbed my shoulder, “What do you want?” I yelled looking at them.

“Miss Sabrina Dickenson,” one guy said and I decided to call him, Annoy 1 and the other guy I decided to call, Annoy 2. “You will come with us. We would like to speak with you.”

“No way! I know you just want to kill me so the sickness won’t spread! But it’s too late; the sickness has contaminated the air so you can just go back to wherever you go to when you fail like this,” I retorted angrily and shrugged free of their grasp on my shoulders.

My mother just stared. I was always her good little angel. Well, until then. Now that I was furious I wished I could keep going, but suddenly my head felt tired and my legs felt weak and wobbly. Next thing I knew everything went black.

The last thing I remember is the two agents, Annoy 1 and 2, fighting with my mother. Not like a fist fight, heck, my mom can’t even punch a punching bag without saying sorry. But, she was arguing. Wow, that was a first. Mom never got in an argument. She had never fought with anyone as far as I knew. *Note to Self: Never get on Mom’s bad side.*

When I came to, everything had gotten more blurry. It was hard to make things more clear. When I tried to make things clear and tried to focus, my head went into an overly painful headache until I stopped trying.

Why does life hate me so? I thought to myself. *I didn’t do anything wrong to it as far as I know of. Is it just bad luck or something?* I groaned in frustration.

But, I could see nothing but a long vast amount of a white tiled ceiling. *Where am I?* I tried to sit up, but my head got pulled back like I had rubber bands strapped to my head. My black hair whipped onto my face, some of it covering my hazel eyes, when I came to a crash. I

landed on what felt like a metal, laboratory examination table. My pale hands were strapped to the lab desk too, along with my legs. I shook my head to get the hair out of my face and eyes.

Why don't you just throw me out the window or something? Where am I? What do they want with me? Why am I strapped to a laboratory table like I'm some type of experiment? I thought. I needed to know soon or I was going to scream.

"What do you want from me?" I yelled. No answer, "What's going on?" I waited for it.

Finally I got it, an answer, but it wasn't a good one. "You are being held at an isolation facility so we can study you and keep you from getting others sick." I couldn't tell where the voice was coming from, but it sounded familiar just like. No, it couldn't have been, Doctor Valence! But how and where was Mom?

"Where's my mother?" I asked. I was furious to the very nerves of my being that I couldn't break free.

But, then, I realized something that hit me in the gut like a thousand horses had trampled over me. I was awake, but I couldn't see anything. It wasn't just blurry, bright, or blankly white anymore, it was dark and black. That realization was I was officially B-L-I-N-D! I was *blind*!

"Your mother is at the isolation room next to yours. She is *not* going to be able to help you," Doctor Valence said. His voice sounded different than before. It sounded scary and sinister, "By the rate you are losing your capabilities, I must ask you, are you capable of seeing at all now? If you do not comply, we must use force on either you or your mother. It depends on the response." I had a strong feeling that he was grinning sinisterly, and his threats were real.

"Fine, I'll tell you," I was scared, not for myself but for my mother. I couldn't risk her getting hurt. Not because of me, at least. "I'm... I am... I'm... blind already," I stuttered and although I was blind, I felt tears running down my cheeks.

"Oh my," I heard Doctor Valence say with concern that sounded half- hearted. "How is the sickness coming and going so fast?"

"I don't know. How about you ask one of your friends?" I snapped angrily, "Now if you could let me die at my own home that would be great. By the way, I mean just me and my mom."

"I am so sorry but, that will never happen. We need to keep the rest of Population Center Miami safe," Annoy 1 said. It sounded more sarcastic than real and full of hatred towards me.

"Affirmative, we cannot risk the lives of others just for *your* selfish needs," Annoy 2 continued with just as much hatred in his voice. That completely flipped me over.

“If you think you’re so tough, how about you unhook me and we can fight. No guns or weapons. Just good, old hand-to-hand combat!” I screamed now furious and ready to fight to the death. “If I win, you let my mom and I go home and you never see us again. If I lose, I stay, my mother goes. She has no part in this, so let her go!”

“Your proposal is denied, Sabrina Dickenson,” Annoy 1 said.

Boy, did Annoy 1 always do the talking? I thought to myself.

“Let me go!” I yelled and yanked at the bands that held me down to the table.

The next thing I knew, there was the sound of the snapping of the bands one by one. I sat up as fast as I could and ran out the door and through the hallways.

It was as if I knew where to go. Not only that, I wasn’t ramming into anything. But how? I’m blind. Shouldn’t I be ramming into things? Anyway, I ran as I felt like I knew where my mother was and so I kept running on. Moving around every corner and listening to every sound.

“Mom!” I called. “Mom!”

“I am here, Sabrina!” Mom called back. It sounded a bit distant but so close all at once.

When I finally found the door and opened it, I heard my mother crying with fear.

“Mom?” I called. “Where are you in the room? What side?”

“What? Can’t you see me?” she asked.

“Unfortunately not, Mom,” I answered just as sad and scared as my mother made it appear.

Come on, Sabrina. Stay focused. I yelled at myself mentally. I could hear angry shouts.

“Come on, Mom,” I walked over in the direction her voice came from and snapped the straps fairly easy. I helped her get to her feet. We ran as fast as we could; only hoping to get out.

A loud voice boomed on the speaker covered ceiling, “Test Subject 254 has escaped! Lock all room doors.” I heard heavy footsteps trailing behind us. They were moving too fast.

“What’s going on, Sabrina?” Mom asked.

“What?” I asked. I somewhat yelled, unable understand her. Everything was too quiet.

We exited a door and hit the glorious ray of the sun and its light. Wait, sun! Things in front of me became brighter and clearer. Next thing I knew, I was seeing a desert. There was one shining black car right by the door.

“Hey! Get back here!” Annoy 1 yelled coming up from behind us and through the door.

I turned back to see them getting closer and closer. “C’mon, Mom! We have to hurry!”

I ran towards the solid black car. I opened the door and my mom turned on the car. You would think they would take the keys with them and not leave them in the visor. I ran over the other side and got in. "Punch it!" I yelled. She stepped on the gas hard as we zipped through the desert. Because we took the only car and vehicle out here, we seemed to be in the clear.

"Sabrina..." Mom gasped at the sight of my eyes. "What's with your eyes?"

I opened the mirror and moved my black bangs out of my face. To my dismay, my eyes had turned from their hazel color to a dark grey. I gasped at the sight of my own eyes and moved farther back into my chair. I tucked my knees into my chest, unsure of what to think.

"I thought you were blind," Mom stated confused.

"Not anymore. When we got outside, everything was back to normal. It seems my hearing is healing as well," I said nonchalantly.

"But how? It's not even possible," Mom was just as shocked as me. It was on her face.

"I don't know, Mom," I stated and looked out the window and noticed the desert we were in turned into the cold, hard, and cracked roads of PCA. "Mom, why are we going to Population Center Atlanta?"

"It's the only possible safe place I know, and I'm not going with you. I'm afraid that I can't protect you anymore. I can give you the money you'll need but spend it wisely. If you need me to comfort you, here is a phone. Give me a call if you need it," Mom stated. "Stay hidden."

Mom came up to the side walk. She handed me a wad of money that seemed to be about two hundred dollars. I still didn't know where she got the money. She gave me a hug, and I felt every tear she had drip down her face and onto my shirt. My eyes were hot and my vision was blurry from the tears threatening to flow down my face like a giant, rapid waterfall.

I felt at least one tear escape my eyes as I closed them. I tried to stay strong for Mom but nothing could hold back my tears any longer.

"I love you," I whispered in my mother's ear. More tears dripped down my face.

"I... love you, too," Mom choked up and held onto me tight. She then added smiling, but with tears still dripping down her face, "When this is over, we'll be a family again. I promise."

I looked at her and hugged her again, for the last time. She handed me the phone as I stood outside the car. We looked into each others' eyes, each sad and each on tear stained faces. She then tore her saddened face away and drove far into desert and, hopefully, back home. All the while I went on the run for the next few years and have never stopped.