

The wind smacks against my face. I can taste the salt in my mouth as I open it to yell.

“Jacob!!!!!!”

His face cracks into a crooked smile as he flies up out of the ocean. “Are you CRAZY?!! You KNOW not to use powers when anyone else could be watching!” I am stern, but I can’t help smiling a little. Jacob, my cousin, just had his 13th birthday. Our family is special, because every other generation of us has powers. That means that my grandchildren will have powers. On your 13th, you find out what power you have. Jacob’s power is that he can steal people’s powers for a little while. Sure, he has to be within 30 feet of them, but still, I find it kind of annoying. I look up to see Jacob sitting on the mast of the boat grinning.

“JACOB! Get down from there RIGHT now.”

Jacob jumps from the mast, falling and falling. Right before hitting the deck, he decides it would be a good idea to shoot back up and then land next to me.

“Have you ever even thought about stealing someone else’s power instead of mine?” I ask him.

“You’re the one that’s the most powerful.”

He has a point; I have the power of Air. Air is one of the four main elements: Fire, Water, Earth, and Air and those are the four main powers. There are always only four people living with an elemental power. I have Air because my grandpa had Air. That’s all I know about my power, which is why I’m on my way to my grandma’s house along with my cousins Jacob and Lucy, and my brother Jasper to find out more.

“Hey Jacob, let’s head back inside, it’s getting cold,” I tell him.

“Oh come on Lyra, can’t you just fly with my once? Pleaaase?” He begs.

“Fine, but only if you promise me that you’ll come down right away when I say so,” I tell him.

“Yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes!” He’s so excited that I can’t help but laugh.

“Well then, let’s go!”

I jump up and spin as I fly up into the dark, vast sky. Jacob follows, doing flips and twists. We fly around each other for a bit, and then we lie on our backs, just floating in the air as we look up at the stars. Jacob points out the Little Dipper, and I find Orion’s

Belt. I'm so caught up in the moment that I don't even notice the group of people come onto the deck beneath us. Jacob quickly pulls me behind one of the flags. We wait there for a bit, too scared to talk. Instead, we listen. There are five of them; three men and two women. One of the men talks first.

"So, you said that there are kids with powers *on this boat*?"

"Four of them," a woman says.

I look at Jacob. He looks really scared. I'm not scared as much as I'm confused. As far as I know, only my family knows about our powers. The other woman talks next.

"Orders from HQ are to capture them and bring them back alive so that we can perform tests. I hope this goes well, because I really want to have a power. HQ said that if everything goes smoothly, we could choose our own power. They also said that they are completely sure that the new test machines will work," she says.

Okay, now I'm scared.

"What room are they in?" a different man asks.

"Room 306," the first woman says our room number.

"It's not going to be easy. According to their files, one of the girls has the power of Air," says the last man.

"How about taking them one at a time. Let's start with the youngest." She consults a tablet in her hand. "Her name is Lucy and she's seven years old."

"I feel bad taking kids," the other woman says.

"Susan, you were put onto this case because you're quiet and know computers well, so why not stay quiet and stay in the room on your computer," says the other woman.

As Susan is leaving, she walks directly by where Jacob and I are floating. She walks past, but at the stairs, she turns back around and stares me right in the eyes. I stifle a scream. Still staring into my eyes, Susan yells across the deck.

"What room is it again, Heather?"

"How do you not know? 345!" Heather sounds annoyed, but I don't turn around to look. Susan is still looking at me. She raises an eyebrow as she yells back.

"Okay, thanks. Meet me back there," The last part she says directly to me, and then she leaves.

Heather mumbles something and goes back to talking to the men. I am still staring at the spot where the woman named Susan was standing. What could she have meant? Did she actually mean for me to go to a room that belongs to people trying to kidnap me? I'm torn. On one hand, it did seem like she could help me because she said that she didn't want to kidnap children, but on the other, she could have been covering and just trying to lure me there.

I grab Jacob and pull him behind me. We weave through the flags, constantly glancing backwards. When we get to the stairs, I make a quick dive and then run down the hallway and into our room. Jacob is following close behind.

"Why so excited?" Jasper asks.

Words start spilling out as I breathe heavily. "Heather... Kidnap us all... Lucy first! Susan... Helping us or testing.... us now?... I can't tell and... So so so scared! Jasper.... What... Should... I do?"

"Whoa, whoa! Sit down and drink some water. Tell me when you are ready to explain everything more clearly."

I do as told, and then explain everything with great detail. When I'm finished, Jasper sits still for a couple of minutes. Finally, he says, "Go to Susan. Now."

"But, why? If I go, she might kidnap me! I think we need to think this through some more!" I tell him.

"Lyra, listen to me: There is no time to think about this. Anyway, if she tries to kidnap you, you will most likely be able to fight her off, seeing as you are a very powerful person," He sounds so confident that I can't help but feel confident myself.

"Okay, how about this: I'll go, but if I'm not back in half an hour, you come and get me?" It seems reasonable to me. Jasper's power is that he can kick down practically anything, so if I get into trouble, I bet he would be there in seconds.

"Sounds good, now go!" Jasper urges me on.

As I walk down the hall, I remember the day I turned 13. I remember the cake and the sunny sky, and I remember the gigantic pile of presents. I remember opening them one by one and I remember the feeling I had when the last present was left on the ground. It was a slip of paper no bigger than my palm, but I remember how important it

seemed at that moment. I remember not wanting to open it. I remember trying to get Jasper to open it for me, and I remember him refusing. I remember finally, after staring at it for several minutes, unfolding it, and seeing the word. One single word. AIR.

After that day, nothing was the same. There was this constant feeling inside of me that now, I had a power - which is to say: I had power. I was more powerful than my parents. It wasn't just because of the power of air, it was about the fact that now, I was a teenager. I felt more free than ever, and I felt self-confident. I felt like I was able to talk to my parents without them looking down on me.

As I walk down the hallway now, four years later, I start to realize what I'm doing. Either I'm about to walk into a room where a woman is waiting to help me get away from an evil group of people who want my power, or I'm about to walk into a room where a woman is waiting to do all sorts of tests on me and attempt to drain my powers. I balance these two options out. They seem quite even to me, so I decide just to hope for the best. Room 345 is at the end of a hallway that branches off of ours. There is a faint glow coming from the crack at the bottom of the door. I walk up, take a deep breath, and knock. At first no one answers. It's quiet. I turn to leave. Maybe I got the room number wrong? Suddenly, the door opens revealing Susan in a lab coat.

"Well that took you long enough, didn't it?" she asks accusingly.

"I-I'm sorry," I stammer.

"Never mind that. Come on in. We have a lot to discuss." With that she pulls me inside and locks the door.

The room looks no different than our room – except for the big black chair sitting in the middle of it. It looks like a big dentist's chair, and it has tons of different chords and wires coming off of it. I realize now that Susan doesn't want to help me; she wants to get at me first. I turn to the door and try unlocking it, but Susan is there in a flash. She grabs my arm and twists it in such a way that makes me scream.

"Shut up child, unless you want me to tape your mouth closed," Susan threatens. I take my free hand and blast air at her. Susan ducks just in time.

"How stupid do you think I am? You don't actually believe that I don't know how to defend myself from your stupid power?"

I'm too scared to speak, so I try flying to the ceiling. Susan grabs onto my foot in

the last second and then pulls herself up so that she's holding on to my arm. I try wiggling and shaking her off, but nothing works. I decide to just float. After about two minutes, Susan is mad. She begins to scratch my hands and arms. This hurts immensely, but I don't give in. Instead, I start smiling and whistling. This only makes her angrier. She attempts to grab a fistful of my hair, but I twist my head quickly. If Susan were able to breath fire out of her nose like in the movies, there would be a fire in her room.

I'm struggling to take off my shoe to which Susan is clinging when the door opens and Heather and her colleagues walk in. At first, Heather seems shocked, but then it turns into anger.

"Susan? How could you?! You just want to have them for yourself, don't you? You want to impress HQ with your 'amazing talent' in catching kids, right? Well you know what? . . ."

As she continues her rant, I use the distraction to slowly untie my shoe and slide it off. Susan doesn't even notice until she is sprawled on the ground at which point I am already at the door trying to unlock it. One of the men grabs me, but I just blow air at him. Luckily, Heather left the key in the lock, so I sprint out the door and down the hallway. As I pound on the door of my room, I notice the other two men running toward me. Jasper opens just as one of them grab my arm. Jacob reacts quickly and pulls me toward him. It's as if I'm the rope in tug-of-war. Jasper grabs onto me as well, and the other man joins his friend. Lucy comes up to me and asks me what's happening. I tell her that we're playing a game and that she should grab onto my arm with Jasper and Jacob. She giggles and then does as told. Even though she's tiny and only has a bit of strength, Lucy makes a difference and I am catapulted into our room. Jacob closes and locks the door quickly while Jasper lies me down onto the bed. The men slam on our door a couple times and then all is silent.

"Where's Lucy?" Jacob asks. I notice suddenly, that she is gone. Jacob jumps up with Jasper and me close behind.

"345!" I shout.

We get there in a couple of seconds. From inside, I hear Lucy screaming. I try the door, but it's locked. Jasper kicks it, and the door falls just in time for us to see Lucy's

eyes closing. She is sitting in the chair that I saw earlier. Heather and Susan are hovering over her. The man whom I knocked down earlier is sitting on the bed with a pack of ice on his forehead. I guess I hit him harder than I thought. The other two men are nowhere to be seen. Too shocked to move, I just stand there. Jacob and Jasper, however, race into the room. Just as they reach the chair, the two men jump out from behind the bed and grab them. I feel like I'm floating underwater. Everything is slow-motion; Jasper punching one of the men, Jacob flying up to the ceiling, Lucy's eyes slowly opening, Heather and Susan yelling, everything is slow until the man I knocked down earlier starts charging toward me. I gather my senses and launch myself at him, hitting him in the stomach. The man grunts, but continues to pursue me. He jumps on me, and drags me to the ground. I kick his shin and jump back up. I run to Lucy and shake her. Susan and Heather lurch toward me from both directions, but I fly up to the ceiling in the last second. They go crashing into each other. It looks like a scene from a movie. I land softly and unplug Lucy from the chair. Jacob and Jasper are still fighting, and the other man whose name I have gathered is Henry is still lying on the ground, twisting in pain. Heather and Susan are unconscious; I guess they hit their heads. Lucy starts crying as I pick her up and run to our room. I set her down and ask her where she is hurt. At first, she doesn't respond. She is completely silent. She's just in shock, I tell myself. They didn't do anything to her. Just then, she begins to speak. She's talking so fast that I can't even understand her. I only understand one word: Headquarters.

"Lucy, calm down, be quiet, it's ok. You're ok. Just tell me what's the matter."

"Nothing's the matter," she says matter-of-factly.

"What did you say about headquarters just now?" I ask her.

"To be completely honest, I'm not sure what I was saying either," she says.

Just then, Jacob and Jasper walk in. They have bruises all over, Jacob's lip is bleeding, and Jasper's nose is bleeding, but they're smiling.

"Look Lucy, your heroes are back!" I say, smiling as well.

Lucy jumps up and hugs them both, before returning to me and hugging me as well.

"What'd ya say, should we go finish them up?" Lucy asks.

"What do you mean 'finish them up'?" I ask her.

"Well, you know, suspend them over the ocean until they learn their lesson never to mess with my crew and me,"

"You know, that's not that bad of an idea," Jacob says.

"Last one there is a rotten egg!" Lucy yells as she races down the hallway.