

# Finding

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Her parents have been murdered, her best friend taken from her. She's lost everything. But what will she find?

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"Now you'll need to tell us your whole background. Start from the beginning." The Revolution leader looks up at me from his clipboard with his cold gray eyes, an icy stare as frigid as the stone floor we sit on in this underground base.

The leader can't be more than twenty five years old, yet the stress lines on his face tell of someone decades older. He sits stoically with the perfect posture of the soldier he is. Not the kind of person you would want to bear your life story to. But he does not scare me, few things do anymore. I look back at him and begin my story.

The pain of remembering dominates my mind, but I don't let that show. I tell him of my parents, how we had lived a happy life together until I was nine. I had the loving early childhood experience that every child is entitled to. My mom had been an orchard worker and my dad a school official. We had lived in the poorer part of West, in a town called Acron, just forty five minutes outside The City.

"Now tell me about the last time you saw your parents." The man interrupts me from my reminiscing.

I try to keep my faltering voice steady as I answer. "I had just turned nine, and I came home from school. I played chess with my father." I start, almost smiling at the memory.

"Our neighbor ran over and talked with my mother for a while in rushed whispers. I assume she came to warn us. I remember my mother started packing things into a little knapsack and she talked to my father. They seemed very scared. I knew something was wrong. Then my parents came to me and handed me the bag. They told me I had to leave and run. I did not ask questions, I had been taught not to." I add, my voice breaking with unearthed emotion, but I go on.

"There was a pounding on the door then, as my parents were urging me to leave. Through the thin curtain I saw government men. My parents kissed me goodbye and I ran out the back door." I blink back the moisture in my eyes that's threatening to spill and my voice gives way to my emotion as I finish.

"Even as the two shots rang out, I did not stop, I did not look back; I ran through my tears."

When I finish the leader sits unnerved and clears his throat. "Do you know of the reason your parents were shot?"

I shake my head.

"We have access to government records, I'll look for your parent's names and the reason they were killed."

I say nothing.

"What happened afterwards? Between when you left and now, where did you go? How did you keep safe if you were on your own? Did the officials look for you?"

"I don't believe so. I kept running for a long time then traveled around for three years."

"On your own? You were all alone?"

"Yes." the lie slips easily, eagerly off my tongue. He nods, satisfied.

"Then I met Ebony Cutler." I offer more of myself, my story. "I stayed with her until two days ago when she died and you guys found me."

I shake my head, trying to stop the frown from forming at the sad thought of Miss Ebony dying. She had taken me in. She had asked no questions. For five years she had been my home and I had forgotten my hurt as I had helped take care of the old woman. She had loved me.

I think of the day after she had died. The day the Revolution had found me. There was to be no funeral for Ebony, she would only be buried in our backyard. I had packed up the rest of Miss Ebony's belongings and left to take it to the auction house. It was late, already past our government enforced curfew but the auction house was close and I would be fast. I was thinking about where I would go now that Ebony was gone and I was not aware, not thinking clearly. I remember being hit in the head with the butt of a government official's gun and someone kicking the box out of my hands. I saw three young government officials surrounding me. Taunting. Why was a pretty girl like me out past curfew? Didn't anyone care for my virtue? Then the hits came. I was hit twice then I was helpless on the floor. Kicks came, more threats and vile laughter. It all happened so fast I had no time to react.

Then I heard other footsteps. Calculated footsteps so unlike the drunken steps of my assailants. The officials yelled and stopped their abuse abruptly. I gave into unconsciousness. The next thing I remember is waking up here.

But where is 'here'? I'm still slowly figuring that out. I know this is an underground secret facility. Full of people united against the government. And I suppose that's all I need to know, I know I want to belong here if this is a place where I can work to overthrow the corrupted government we are all oppressed by. And I'm being debriefed and interviewed because I want to stay.

"Well, good thing we found you." the Revolution leader awkwardly starts and jerks me from my thoughts. "Lark, you're in. But you have to know that here we live on a need-to-know basis." He looks at me with his reserved gray eyes almost questioningly.

I nod. I'd rather live by need to know.

"You now go by number 56. We go by numbers in order to protect our government known names and identities. This is a precaution in case the government was to find any of us. And we give numbers out randomly. If we went in numerical order the government would be able to know who is most experienced and who has been here the longest. The number of 56 may seem quite random to you, but that's because it is."

The Revolution leader walks to the door of the debriefing room, puts his clipboard under his arm and opens the door for me. He smiles a strained smile and I smile back. Though I don't know much about this place, I have a feeling I will like it here. And here is a heavenly alternative to where I would be had Revolution members not found me.

I lead the way out the door and at the counter I am given a nametag. 56. The lady, number 94, nods and smiles at me while I pin it on my shirt. The Revolution leader gives her the clipboard with notes on me and she in turn gives him his nametag. 33. He thanks her then turns to me one last time.

"Well, 56, good luck. I hope you don't come to regret your rescue." Another pained smile that makes me wonder what he's been through in his life, and then he goes back in through the door we came out of.

"Just wait here a moment, 56. Someone will come for you." 94 smiles at me again. I stand still and wait. I am in a waiting room of sorts. Glass walls separate me from the rest of the cave. 94 sits behind a desk and the door 33 and I came out of is one of five that line the wall.

A girl comes in through the door leading out into the main hallway of the underground facility. I don't know what's out there; I had been unconscious when they brought me in. The girl looks to be about my age. She is tall and has a small, thin frame. She's wearing the deep

blue uniform everybody else is. She sees me, smiles at me like we are best friends already and says,

"56? Would you please follow me?"

I follow her out and immediately she begins talking. She puts an arm around my shoulders as we walk and she seems to walk with a light bounce in every step.

"Hi, my name is Fallon. But when others are around you'll have to call me 47. It is nice to meet you! They told me there was a new girl here and asked if I would show you around. You'll be sharing the room with us. We've got your bed ready and a uniform I think will fit you." She looks me up and down as if sizing me to the uniform.

"Do you have any other belongings?" Fallon asks me, one perfect eyebrow raised.

"No, I just have this." I pat the worn knapsack on my back, once black but long ago faded to a threadbare gray. I've always carried it with me.

We walk forward through an open doorway that leads into a great big cavern. I stop and gaze up. We must be pretty far underground for the ceiling to be this high. There are fluorescent lights on the sides of the stone walls and tables on the floor surrounded by chairs. At the front of the room is a platform. There are small groups of people gathered at the tables, talking and laughing.

"This is the Great Room." Fallon gestures to the cavern. "Serves as cafeteria, meeting room, and place of leisure. We just came from the labs." She points to where we walked in from.

"The Great Room is the middle of it all. Everything leads here."

We continue forward. There are four other doorways leading out of the Great Room positioned next to each other. We stop in front of them.

"The left leads to the boys' sleeping area. Next are the Revolution leaders' rooms. Then the training chamber and this one," Fallon points to the far right hallway with a pale pink curtain blocking it, "Is for the girls." She smiles like it is a big secret and pulls me through.

We walk through the curtain and into the hallway. Rooms line the walls, all with curtains instead of doors. As we walk I hear the chatter and laughter of girl's in their rooms. Fallon walks ahead and stops at a purple flowered curtain. The curtain is light purple with flowers alternating gray and a darker shade of purple. There is a sign on the side of the doorway that reads the numbers 47, 13, 77, and 56.

"This is it. We already added your name." She smiles.

"Welcome to our home." Fallon gushes pride as she enters our apartment and announces that 56 is home.

I set foot in the room and take it all in. Two metal bunk beds line the walls and a dresser stands opposite the doorway. Six eyes stare up at me expectantly, Fallon and two other girls. They all look to be in their teens like me. One girl sitting on a bottom bunk has rich dark skin, curly brown hair and eyes blue as crystal. She smiles at me.

"Hi, I'm 77. Nice to meet you 56." She shakes my hand and whispers, "My name is Lane." her crystal blue eyes not leaving mine as she gives me that secret and her trust.

The other girl stands regally next to Fallon. She has long dark brown hair that is dyed lighter at the ends. Her chocolate brown eyes eye me like I am below her. I probably am. I feel insignificant now in this new environment. She offers me a hand, not even smiling,

"Sable. 13. You've got this bottom bunk. Here's your uniform." She grabs a dark blue bundle from the bed and hands it to me. "You should change now." Her eyes judge my frayed pants and shirt. Then she walks out of the room like she is above all others.

Lane and Fallon start talking while I change. They tell me where the bathrooms are, how the bell rings when it's time for a meal and how we have meetings every other morning. Training for me will start tomorrow morning as there is no meeting and they are so happy I'm here with the Revolution and wow they must be lucky to get me as their new roommate.

I listen to them but all I can think about is how I lied.