

Silent Screams - The Story of Lavinia

Warning: This fanfiction contains spoilers about the books and films of "The Hunger Games." It was written by me, Luca. An AI did the final touches for me. Now enjoy!

Prologue: Whispers in the Forest

I run.

Not for the first time. Not with these shoes, not through this forest, not in front of them. But this time... this time it feels different.

The ground beneath my feet is damp and soft, a carpet of moss and leaves that swallows my footsteps. I hear the cracking of branches behind me—the others are slower, heavier. They think they have time. I know better. I know how quickly they can strike if you stumble, if you hesitate, if you... scream.

But I don't scream. I can't.

The wind whistles through the trees, whispering something to me I don't understand. I want to believe they're words of hope. Maybe a song. Maybe the one my mother used to sing when I was little, before... before it all began.

A light flickers between the trees. Orange. Moving. Torches.

They've found us.

I press myself deeper into the darkness. My hair—that damned fiery red—doesn't hide well in the shadows. I curse silently. Once again, I wish I were ordinary. One of those people who aren't seen. Who don't stand out. Who don't have to run away.

A hand reaches for me—not roughly, not violently, but trembling. It's Darius. His gaze says more than his lips ever could. We're lost, he knows it. And so do I. But we keep running.

And then... I hear them. Footsteps. Others. Lighter ones. Not heavy like those of the Peacekeepers. I look through the branches – and see them.

A girl. Dark hair. A bow in her hand. Eyes like sharpened stone. She looks at me.

Directly into my eyes. Not by chance. Not by mistake.

She sees me –*really*. As if I were more than a shadow. More than an enemy. More than... a victim.

I want to scream. Not out of fear. But... for help. For help, damn it! But my lips remain silent. As always.

Then a whistle. Not from her. From them. So close that I can feel the trembling vibrating in my bones.

I turn away. I keep walking. And hope she saw me. Hope she remembers.

Because if no one remembers, I was never really there.

A scream—male, tortured—rips through the air behind me. I want to turn around, but something tells me: If I stop now, I'll never be able to run again.

1 - Honey-Sweet Lies

The lies tasted of honey and candied plums.

This is what my childhood smelled like: sweet and sticky, shiny like the marble floor of our apartment in the third ring of the Capitol. Every morning, I woke up surrounded by flickering screens and the faint hum of food dispensers. Life was simple. And yet... also wrong.

"Lavinia, eat your nutrient cubes!" my mother called, running a diamond-studded brush through her hair. "You have to look beautiful for the party next week."

"I don't feel like it," I mumbled.

"Pull yourself together," she said sharply. "We have obligations."

I nodded and popped the cubes into my mouth. They tasted of sugar and nothing. Like everything here.

At the age of nine, I began to view the Hunger Games more consciously. I sat on the fluffy couch, legs dangling, and watched a boy from District 10 get speared in the back. No one in the family looked closely. Only me.

"Why are they dying?" I asked quietly.

My father turned up the volume. "Because they have to."

Later, secretly at night, I scrolled through forbidden archives. I found reports about District 13. About rebellions. About broken promises. And I understood: The Capitol was not the savior, but the executioner.

When I was thirteen, I met Silas. He was secretly working in the Ministry's supply lines—or rather, he was sneaking in there to gather intelligence. Silas was two years older, with soot-smeared hands and a smile that sparked.

"Did you know that in District 7 they send children under the age of twelve to the mines?" he asked one evening, flashing me a stolen log.

"No," I whispered.

"Look around, Lavinia," he said harshly. "Everything here is built on blood."

We met secretly. We exchanged rumors, maps, and plans. At sixteen, Silas said:

"There's a possibility. A route through the old supply tunnels. We could get away. Get out of the Capitol."

"Where to?" I asked.

"First toward District 1. Maybe further. Maybe... to 13."

I hesitated. Then I nodded.

We planned every move. Every hiding place. Every lie we told our families. On the day of our escape—a cloudy afternoon—we wore simple technical suits. No colorful fabrics, no flashy accessories.

Silas pressed a bundle into my hand. A small knife, some dried meat, and a bottle of water.

"Ready?" he asked.

I nodded, even though my heart was racing.

We left the Capitol through a barely guarded service entrance. No one paid us any attention—children of the elite are considered untouchable. And yet, with every step, I shuddered, as if the ground itself were sounding an alarm.

The first few hours were easy. We followed an old, overgrown road that had once carried freight. The forests were eating away at the asphalt, and nature had reclaimed the land.

"This is where Panem really begins," Silas murmured.

I stepped on a broken signpost. DISTRICT 1 – 32 MILES.

A tremor ran through me. So close.

We took turns sleeping at night, one of us always staying awake. The sounds of the forest—cracking, rustling, distant screams—made me shiver. But I preferred the darkness to the bright light of the Capitol.

On the third day we came across a raging river.

"We have to go over there," said Silas.

"How?" I asked doubtfully.

"There's an old maintenance dock a few miles upstream."

We fought our way through brambles and mud. My legs were bruised, my arms scratched. But I didn't complain. I wasn't allowed to.

Just before the sun set, we saw it: a half-collapsed footbridge, overgrown with ivy.

"This is our chance," said Silas.

We groped our way across the creaking wood, every step a risk. The water rushed below, dark and greedy.

"Just one more piece!" Silas called to me.

Suddenly, something cracked. A board splintered beneath me. I screamed and desperately clung to a shaky strut.

"Lavinia! Hold on tight!"

Silas grabbed my hand. He pulled me up with a jerk. I gasped, feeling my heart pounding.

"Thank you," I whispered.

He grinned crookedly. "That's why we're partners, right?"

As we reached the other bank, the forest lay silent and damp before us. Far on the horizon, a light flickered—not as bright as in the Capitol, but steady.

"This is District 1," Silas said.

I nodded, unable to speak. My legs trembled. Not with fear. With hope.

Hope that a new life awaited beyond this forest.

Maybe a life of freedom.

2 - Shine and bars

The streets of District 1 sparkled.

Not like the Capitol Boulevards—no, this wasn't a play on light and illusion. Here, real material glittered: glass, metal, fine fabrics in dusty display cases. Beauty, yes—but not tangible.

"So this is luxury," I murmured.

Silas stepped next to me, his gaze alert. "At least the packaging."

We had spent the night in an abandoned freight shed, smearing our clothes with dirt to appear inconspicuous. No one asked us where we were from. In District 1, it wasn't uncommon for people to show up if they wanted to sell something or were looking for work.

"If we don't want to stand out, we need a name. Two, to be exact," I said quietly.

Silas nodded. "I'm Joren now."

I thought. "Then I'm Mina."

So we entered District 1 – not as refugees, but as shadow figures among many.

The marketplace was bustling. Merchants shouted, haggled, and advertised. Gold rings, crystal vases, embroidered cloaks—all handmade for the Capitol, none for the people here themselves.

I saw a woman with leather-tanned hands place a necklace on a velvet cushion. Her fingers trembled slightly, probably from fatigue. A boy, barely twelve, pushed a cart of polished watches past. His eyes were dull.

"This is all for *she*" said Silas. "And us? We're the dirt that carries it."

"How do you know all this?" I asked.

He shrugged. "I've read a lot. And listened."

A man who appeared to be in charge of a warehouse looked at us scrutinizingly. "You two are looking for work?"

"Yes," Silas said immediately. "We come from a marginal area. We have a few hands and aren't afraid of dirt."

"Hmph," said the man. "All right. Sort boxes. No questions. No breaks."

We nodded.

Inside the warehouse, the smell of metal, sweat, and faint electricity filled the air. We sorted watch cases, bracelets, and clasps—fine work, yet mindless. Hours of silence were broken only by the scraping of boxes.

After our shift, we were given a thin soup and some beans. Silas looked at the bowl, then at me.

"Not Capitol enough?" he asked with a crooked grin.

I smiled weakly. "Actually, at least it tastes like... something."

We stayed for several days. We slept in various ruins, worked during the day, and observed at night. District 1 had two faces: glamour for the camera, misery for the rest.

One evening, we heard a parade. The new tributes were introduced—children, perfectly coiffed, smiling, proud.

"They're cheering," I said, stunned. "Why are they cheering?"

"Because they believe it's an honor," Silas replied bitterly. "District 1 is drilled for it. Victory is their religion."

I looked into the faces of those around me. There was pride, yes – but underneath it all... fear. Not of the games. But of failure.

On the seventh day we were almost discovered.

A peacekeeper stopped us on our way back to the shelter. He was young, clean-shaven, and wearing a helmet that seemed to shine like a jewel.

"Names?"

"Joren. And this is my sister Mina," Silas said calmly.

The guard frowned. "No registration."

"We're just passing through," I added hastily. "We... were going to District 3 for work."

He looked at us. His gaze lingered on my face for too long. I felt my heart racing.

Then someone stepped out of the shadows. An old man with a smile that warmed nothing.

"They're harmless, Tyrek," he said. "I saw them today while sorting."

The guard hesitated, then nodded. "Go on."

Only when we were out of sight did I whisper, "Who was that?"

"I don't know," Silas muttered. "But we should move on tomorrow."

I nodded.

The next morning, we left District 1 before sunrise. No goodbyes, no traces.

We left the glamour and bars behind us.

And went towards the next shadow.

3 - Rock Escape

District 2 smelled of rock dust.

Not the clean dust of a dry path, but that heavy, fine, gray veil that settled on everything: on window sills, on faces, on thoughts.

"The whole district is like a mountain that is slowly dying," Silas said as we crawled between two rubble walls.

I said nothing. My throat was dry. We had been traveling for hours, on foot through the border area, without maps, without a destination – only with the vague feeling that *behind* this district continued. On and on.

"I used to think," I finally said, "District 2 was... important. Strong. Clean. A place the Capitol honors."

"It does. But only the parts that deliver parades," Silas replied. "This isn't what you saw in class."

Before us lay a huge, hollowed-out depression—a disused quarry filled with water. Shimmering green, lifeless. At the edge stood half-ruined machinery. A hut with a rusty roof leaned crookedly against a rock.

We climbed down. Every step triggered small avalanches of debris. I felt my legs burning, but I said nothing. It was better not to complain. Silas was right: no one here cared about two strangers.

We stayed in the hut for two days. During the day, I lay on the floor and listened to the wind whistling through the cracks. At night, we whispered, shared breadcrumbs, and reminisced.

"You know why we're here, right?" Silas asked suddenly.

I looked at him. "You mean... here, in District 2?"

"No. On the run."

I remained silent. Then I said quietly, "Because I couldn't stand it anymore."

"Because you knew too much," he corrected. "You were too close. Too smart. And I... I got you out."

I looked at him for a long time. Then I nodded. "You saved me."

On the third day, we went into the city. Or what was left of it. District 2 had no "capital"—just stone. And villages. And warehouses. Men in dirty uniforms loaded sacks onto conveyor belts. Women lugged tools, barely speaking. Children carved patterns into stone tablets, probably for the Capitol.

"Do you think they still believe in the system?" I asked.

Silas looked around. "I think they believe in food."

We stole a few potatoes, a carrot, a small piece of bread. No one shouted after us.
– either they hadn't noticed it or they didn't want to see it. In District 2, every thought was too much. Everything was functional. Quiet. Hard.

In the evening, we stood on a hill above the city. Below us, scattered lights blinked, shrouded in thick fog. Above us, the sky was empty, as if extinguished.

"What if they come and get us here?" I asked.

"Then we'll keep walking," said Silas.

I nodded. And believed him.

But before we could sleep, we heard the roar.
Not a hovercraft. Not an attack. But... a quarry that was back in operation. Machines screeched. Men shouted. Searchlights pierced the darkness.

"We have to leave," Silas said immediately. "If this is an active mining area, then we'll be under control soon."

We packed our few things—a blanket, a pocketknife, a crumpled map on cloth—and set off.

Further and further east, the night behind us.

We left District 2 through an old supply tunnel that once transported ore for processing. Damp, musty, and narrow. But quiet.

When we finally saw light again, our faces were gray from the dust, our hands sore
– and our hope has become a little harder.

We had survived the stone. But
the road was still long.

4 - Between wires

District 3 was cold.

Not climatically – but in his soul.

The streets were geometric, the light was harsh, the windows opaque. Everything seemed... planned. Precise. Dangerous.

"This place," said Silas as we climbed between the metal masts of a disused transmitter, "smells like micro-espionage and electrocution."

I grinned. "And smells like old coffee."

A rusty sign creaked in the wind: *Communication Center 7 – Access only with identification* I stepped closer. "Do you think the systems here are still working?"

"Probably not. But who knows—maybe there are remnants. Fragments. Data. Memories."

We set up camp in an empty house—concrete, clean. Too clean. I didn't trust him.

In the night I heard a clicking noise. No animal. No wind.

A human.

I ripped the blanket away and pulled out the knife.

"Slowly," said a voice from the darkness. Calm. Old, but not frail. "I'm not here to report you."

A man stepped out of the shadows. Barely fifty, wiry, eyes like sensor lenses.

"Who are you?" Silas asked. His voice was deep. Suspicious.

"You're not from this district," the man replied. "And I'm not from the Capitol."

Silence. Then:

"My name is Kore."

Kore didn't talk much. And when he did, it was in fragments. But he knew things—circuits, networks, old transmitter systems. He led us to a basement beneath an abandoned school, where an ancient interface flickered. Green. Disturbing. Alive.

"What is that?" I asked in a whisper.

"A connection," said Kore. "Or what's left of it."

He didn't explain everything to us. But enough. He was looking for a signal—a specific code, from somewhere beyond the districts. From where no one suspected anything anymore.

"District 13," Silas muttered.

Kore said nothing. But he nodded.

"Why do you want to go there?" I asked.

Kore looked at me for a long time. Then he said,
"Because I want to kill her."

I froze.

"Who?"

"Those who sold my daughter. To the Games. For fame. For technology. For an experiment."

He rubbed his eyes. "She was thirteen. I was a technician. I was proud. I entered her into the system."

A bitter smile. "One click. And she was gone."

Silence.

I placed a hand on his arm. "So you're seeking revenge."

"No," he said quietly. "I seek justice."

We stayed with him for two nights. Kore showed us how to tap wires, hide, and fool cameras.

He was smart. Almost too smart. I liked him. Silas did too. Although we didn't say so.

On the morning of the third day, the green interface flickered on. Kore sat in front of it, staring into the matrix.

"There. Do you see that?"

Silas stepped closer. "An echo?"

"A tunnel. A path. A data hole... somewhere between District 5 and... further south."

I leaned over the screen. "Is that... a signal from 13?"

Kore looked at me with sparkling eyes. "*It/ivesstill.*"

just a splintering sound. Then the dull thud.

Kore twitched. Blood gushed from his chest. A
gunshot.

Silas shouted, "Behind us!"

I pulled Kore aside, too late. His eyes looked at me—confused, not frightened. He had expected this. Just not today.

"Run..." he breathed.

"No!" I held him tight.

"Lavinia, we have to!" Silas grabbed my arm. *NOW!*

I let go.

We ran.

Through wires.

Through smoke.

Through darkness.

Kore died in the dirt.

With his gaze upwards – at a system that had broken him.

He had shown us the destination.

District 5, then 6, then 7...

And at some point – the last point on the map.

District 13

5 - Two cards

The morning after Kore's death was silent.

No birds, no machines. Just the wind whistling through empty pipes.

We were sitting in the shade of a dilapidated granary. Silas had spread his map on the ground—folded, soaked, taped several times. Every line was his own.

Kore's plan was off the mark. Clear markings, coded paths, handwritten annotations in strange shorthand.

"Your old man promised a lot," Silas said coldly, without looking at me. "He was shot before he could prove it."

I clenched my fists. "He risked his life to show us something. You saw it yourself. – the signal, the coordinates..."

"And what if it was a trap?" Silas stared at the paper floor. "What if the card is just bait?"

I shook my head. "He wasn't one of them."

"I know you liked him," Silas said quietly. "But feelings won't get us past 13."

Silence.

Then I stood up. "And what does your plan bring us? A detour to District 9? A tourist route along the coasts of District 4?"

"District 4 is safer. Fishermen, not military. Fewer cameras."

He carefully folded his map. "We'll take my route. At least until the end of 4."

I looked at him. "And then?"

"Then we'll see."

We took his route for two weeks.

Between docks, fishing nets, salty air. District 4 was peaceful—and empty. The residents spoke little. Many didn't look at us. Some secretly handed us water. One warned us: "The coast is clean—but leave the mountains alone. People disappear there."

We stayed in the lowlands.

We camped in a boathouse on the edge of District 4. I stared at Kore's map. Again and again.

The name flickered in my head: *Echo-7*. I couldn't just... run away.

"Silas," I said into the darkness. "I'm going to District 5. Kore showed the way."

He didn't answer immediately. Then: "Alone?"

"If necessary."

He turned to me. "You don't even know if this Echo-7 is real."

"And you don't know if your plan is better."

He looked at me for a long time. Then he sighed. "You're damn stubborn, Lavinia."

I grinned. "I was in the Capitol. I learned stubbornness."

He laughed quietly. And nodded.

"All right. Kore's map. District 5. But if this is a trap..."

"Then we'll improvise." I handed him the card. He unfolded it.

Together we looked for the coordinates.

The next morning we set out. Destination: Echo-7.

6 – The Man Without a Shadow

Sometimes, when the wind crept over the power lines, it sounded like voices from another world. Perhaps that was why District 5 felt so alien. Not hostile—just... electrically charged. Like a place that had forgotten what silence meant.

We arrived at sunrise. The streets were empty, the houses functional, made of metal panels and insulated glass, many without residents. Machinery dominated the scene: substations, transformers, abandoned control towers with camera shells that nevertheless moved.

"If I didn't know better," Silas murmured, "I'd say lightning itself lives here."

I didn't smile. The tension hadn't left me for days. We wore Kore's map under our jackets, every curve memorized. And somewhere there, between the lines and symbols, a man was supposed to live who shouldn't have existed: Echo-7.

But District 5 had no interest in visitors. We moved between shadows and dumpsters, slept in transformer sheds, and ate canned goods from broken-in supply depots.

On the third day we found it.

A power pole, isolated at the northern end of the district. Below it: an old distribution station, rusted, with shattered glass. A symbol was barely visible, carved into the concrete—a circle with seven lines. I stared at it for minutes. My heart raced.

"Coincidence," said Silas. "Someone just scribbled."

"That's him," I whispered. "Echo-7. That's his signature."

Silas rolled his eyes. "Maybe an electrician's nickname."

I bent down and ran my finger over the carved lines. They were new. Smooth, precise. "No. This is for us."

We left District 5 through an old maintenance gate in the fence. Beyond it, the forest began. A no-man's-land between 5 and 6—without paths, without maps. Only the smell of damp leaves, rotten wood, and flickering courage.

The first night was quiet. The second... not.

A crack. Then a flicker. I opened my eyes wide – someone was standing there. Dressed in black, motionless. The hood pulled deep over his face.

Silas reached for his knife.

"Too late," the stranger said quietly. "If I'd wanted to kill you, it would have happened long ago."

He stepped into the light. His face was crisscrossed with scars that streaked across his skin like lightning. An old Capitol uniform stretched over his gaunt body—the crest painted over with soot.

On his back: a folded antenna, old but functional. Energy hummed quietly within.

"Rian Soven," he said before we could ask. "But that doesn't matter. Nobody calls me that anymore. Most people say Echo-7."

I cautiously took a step closer. "You knew Kore?"

"I knew many. Few well." He looked at me as if he could read my innermost being. "But yes—I knew you were coming."

"Where from?" Silas asked suspiciously.

"Because I'm the last one left."

We sat by a fire that smelled of wet moss. Rian spoke slowly, precisely—like someone who had learned never to reveal too much at once.

"I was an officer. Capitol. Elite communications unit. I decoded all the rebel signals. Until I found one I didn't want to report."

He looked into the fire.

"It wasn't what they said—it was how they said it. Human."

I felt Silas's tension slipping next to me. Rian was no longer just a rumor. He was real. And broken.

"I'm not your guide," he said. "But I can show you the way."

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small, scratched device—a radio module, barely larger than a pack of cigarettes.

"Press the button when you're in the southern tunnel of District 6. Only there. Then an old freight train channel will open. One trip, no turning back."

"Why don't you come with me?" I asked.

Rian shook his head. "Because I'm needed here. Not in 13. I'm the last light for others. And I'm tired, Lavinia."

I froze. "How... how do you know my name?"

He smiled wearily. "You're not the only one seeking freedom.

By morning, it was gone. No more fire, no sound, no trace. Only the radio module remained, carefully wrapped in a cloth.

I picked it up.

It felt heavier than anything we had ever carried.

"So," said Silas. "To District 6?"

I nodded.

"To District 6."

7 – Electric Shadow

District 6 seemed like a ruin with a pulse. Old train stations, broken bridges, half-sunken tracks – but underneath, the hum of electricity. Always electricity. As if the entire district refused to be completely dead.

We had barely slept for three days. Two people on the run, trying to remain invisible, while the ground beneath us vibrated like the whisper of a long-gone war.

It was on the third evening that it happened. When everything tipped over.

"Your card was wrong," said Silas.

I turned around. "What do you mean?"

"That factory up there – it should have been south. According to *their* Map. But we're clearly western. If we continue like this, we'll end up directly in the power grid. And then that'll be it."

I shook my head. "The radio module only works at the station near the old carriages. Rian said so."

"And what if Rian isn't on our side at all? Have you ever thought about that?"

I wanted to respond, to shout at him, to hit him. But I remained silent.

Silas looked at me. "I'm sleeping somewhere else tonight."

I nodded. Without knowing why.
Then he left.

Night fell quickly. District 6 was no place for dreams. I found refuge in an old maintenance tunnel beneath a collapsed ramp. My breathing was loud. My thoughts louder.

And I couldn't sleep.

I lay there, staring into the darkness. The ground beneath me was cold and unyielding. Above me, old cables crackled in the wall. I heard the words over and over again:

What if Rian isn't on our side at all?

What if I was wrong?

Silas was gone, and I was alone with that damned module. I held onto it as if it were a talisman. But it was just technology. No guarantee. No promise.

I turned on my side. Then back again. Minutes turned into hours.

Guilt gnawed at me, digging into my ribs. I had trusted Kore too much. Because I liked her. Because I needed someone to give me hope.

And Silas...

He was so much more than just an ally. Even though we never talked about it.

At some point I just sat there, arms wrapped around my knees, staring at the flickering band of light coming through a crack in the wall.

I thought of the Capitol.

Of the lies that tasted like honey. Of everything I had lost.

And I thought of Silas.

Whether he was lying in a tunnel somewhere and also not sleeping. Whether he was thinking about me, too.

Shortly before sunrise, I heard footsteps.

Slow. Heavy.

I reached for the knife. My heart was racing.

Then he stood in front of me.

Silas.

Wet from the rain, dirt on his face, but with that look I knew. It said: *I had time to think.*

He sat down next to me.

Not a word. Just silence.

After a while I said, "I couldn't sleep."

"Me neither."

We were silent for a long minute. Then he pulled the card from his jacket and placed it next to Kore's.

"We're going to your station," he said.

I felt tears welling up in my eyes. Not from sadness, but because he had stayed.

I took the radio module out of my pocket and held it against the wall. A quiet whirring sound.

Then part of the wall moved back.

Behind it: a corridor. And somewhere within it, the next answer.

I went first. And Silas followed me.

8 - Splinter wood

The first steps in District 7 felt like a cut.

The ground was soft, covered with needles, the air damp and musty. The smell of resin immediately clung to everything—skin, hair, clothing. Trees so dense that the sky was merely a whisper. And somewhere beyond: the sawmill. The heart of the district. Or rather, its stomach.

Crushing, mechanical, insatiable.

We disappeared like shadows. No one asked about strangers. Too many faces came and went these days. Harvest time, they said. For wood. For people.

Silas and I stayed on the fringes. Old warehouses, abandoned editing bays. I'd thought the cold would subside, after District 6—after the night when no one slept. But it remained. Between us. In every sentence that came too late. In every evasive glance.

On the second day, Silas cursed when he got a splinter under his fingernail.

"If I ever have to go into a forest again, it will only be to die in it," he muttered.

"Or to find someone," I answered quietly.

He looked up. Not hostilely. But not conciliatory either. We both knew: the moment hadn't arrived yet.

And then it happened.

On the third day. In the shadow of a disused transport gondola.

A girl.

Younger than us, maybe twelve. Dirty, thin, wearing clothes that didn't belong to her. Her eyes were too big for her face. But she knew who we were.

"You're heading south, right?" she said, without fear.

Silas raised his eyebrow. "Why do you care?"

"Because I was too. Until they took him."

She told it as if it were an anecdote.

Her brother. Eighteen. He'd asked too many questions. About District 13. About old maps. About places that supposedly no longer existed.

They had taken him away one night. The wood never saw him again.

"I don't want to know where you're going. But I can help you get through it," she said. "If you promise not to leave me here."

I looked at Silas. And for the first time in days, there was no defensiveness in his eyes. Only determination.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Nessa," she said.

"And you have to be quiet. The trees hear everything."

We followed her. Two rebels – and a child who knew more than both of them combined. Through sawmills covered in blood. Past traps intended for animals – which often hit people.

Up to a slope overlooking the valley. There, in the fog: the old railway line that led further east, to District 8.

We hesitated.

Not from the path. But from the moment.

Silas turned to Nessa. "You said you didn't want to stay behind. But this is getting more dangerous. There are no trees to protect you."

Nessa shrugged. "I've been alone my whole life. Now I at least want to be there when something happens."

We knew she was right.

And so we continued.

Three shadows. One map. And a destination that didn't yet know we were coming.

9 - Threads

District 8 smelled of chemicals. Not of fresh laundry, not of fabric. But of sweat, dye residue, and the pain of labor. The entire city was a tangle of mills, printing shops, and administrative centers, held together by wires and a faint hum that never stopped.

"Like a cocoon," Nessa whispered on the evening of her first day there. "But made of wire, not silk."

Silas was surprised. "That was... poetic."

"I can do things differently," she replied with a grin.

And indeed: Nessa was changing. Not loudly, not quickly—but noticeably. She spoke more often, asked intelligent questions, helped organize provisions, and kept an eye on street corners where guards patrolled. Everything you wouldn't expect from a child. And that's precisely why it started to work.

She wasn't just a follower – she became a part of it.

I found myself trusting her. Listening to her.

How I slept better at night when she was around.

Silas too, although he initially resisted.

But one night – when we were hiding in an old warehouse, among neatly folded rolls of cloth and dusty uniforms – I heard him say to her:

"You remind me of my sister. She was your age when..."

He broke off.

But Nessa said nothing. She just nodded. And that said it all.

During the day we hid, moving only when traffic was at its heaviest – we were invisible in the crowds streaming out of the weaving halls.

We weren't working, but I let Nessa show me how to break threads without being noticed. Small acts of sabotage. Tiny acts of resistance.

She was better at it than me. Faster. More agile. And she laughed while doing it.

"The threads are breaking, Lavinia," she whispered to me one evening. "At some point, they'll all break."

I didn't know if she meant the machines or us.

On a particularly stifling day, we watched a parade. Two peacekeepers on motorcycles were in front, followed by a truck with banners: *Efficiency is honor*. People clapped – out of fear, not joy.

I leaned toward Silas. "How far is it to the border?"

"Three days' march," he said.

"With a child?"

He looked at Nessa. She was tying a makeshift headband out of scraps of fabric. She looked like someone who had never done anything else.

"With her we can do it," said Silas.

And I believed him.

That night, the three of us sat around a small lamp made from a converted battery capsule. Nessa had fallen asleep, her head resting on my shoulder.

Silas looked at her. Then at me.

"If someone had told us we would have a child with us..."

"...we wouldn't have believed it," I finished.

But deep down I knew:

This – the three of us – felt like the future for the first time.

10 - Stalks

District 9 looked like a lie.

Fields as far as the eye could see. Golden waves under an open sky. The wind carried the scent of wheat and freedom. No roar of machines, no sirens. Only the gentle crackling of the stalks and the fluttering of the fabric people used to shade their faces from the sun.

"We could stay here," Silas murmured on the first evening as we sat in a dilapidated barn at the edge of a field.

"You could," I replied.

But we both knew that wasn't an option.

Nessa, however, blossomed.

She ran ahead as if the fields were her home. Her steps were light, her gaze brighter than ever. For the first time since our escape, there was something carefree about her—like a child she had long since ceased to be.

"If there is such a thing as a false sky," she said, "this is what it looks like."

We worked during the day. It was easy to blend in with the seasonal groups. The workers spoke little. Many came from other districts, brought in for a few weeks, for a pittance. Nobody asked questions if you pitched in.

Silas carried sacks. I tied sheaves. Nessa sorted grain at the mill, where no one paid any attention to a little girl. It worked. For a while.

At night, we spoke quietly. About paths, about maps. About District 10. About the next border.

But also about other things.

"Have you ever thought about your life *after* 13?" Silas asked one evening. I shook my head. "There's no after until we get there." "Yes," he said. "The after is the only thing that keeps me going."

Nessa said nothing. But she listened. She absorbed every word, as if trying to piece together a distant future—like a picture made up of long-forgotten puzzle pieces.

Once, while staring at the stars, she said, "Maybe we can start over there. Maybe we're just... nobody there."

"Being nobody," I said, "is sometimes the most beautiful thing."

The days passed. Gently, almost deceptively calmly. In another life, we might have stayed. In another life, it would have been enough for us.

But that wasn't our life.

And somewhere out there, District 10 was waiting.

11 - Betrayal

It began like any other day in District 9.

Golden fields. A gentle breeze. The taste of cornmeal and dust on the tongue.

But something was wrong.

People talked less. The foreman was nervous. And when the three of us arrived at our assigned field, it seemed... empty. Unnaturally empty.

Nessa left us early.

"I'll get some water," she had said. Her tone was strangely firm. Now she was gone.

Then came the first buzzing.
A hovercraft, barely audible. Just a shadow against the sky.

"Lavinia," Silas said quietly. I
had sensed it too.

It happened quickly. Too quickly.
Suddenly they were there—Peacekeepers, ten or more. From all sides. No warning. No time.

"Down! On the ground!"
"Identification!"

I stood frozen. Silas grabbed my hand. "Bury yourself!"

The earth was loose, the rows deep. I threw myself into a furrow, pulling Silas with me. Shots. Screams.
Someone shouted: "They're here, I saw them!"
But no one came closer.

I heard the rattle of a wagon. Silas crawled toward me on all fours. "The
corn truck. Two fields over. Now."

"They see us."

"Not yet. Come on!"

We ran.
Not straight ahead—zigzagging, over the edges of the fields, through knee-high gold. Two shots. A
scream behind us. Not us. Not yet.

Then the truck. The tarp was open. We jumped.

A moment of weightlessness. Then darkness, stuffy and dusty. Grains of dust trickled into my hair.
I lay still. I heard my own heart.

The car drove off.
No shot. No shout. Just the rumble of the street.

Hours passed. Perhaps only minutes. When he stopped, it was night.

We crawled out – into another world.

The fields were barren, the air thicker. And above a rusty sign read:

DISTRICT XI – Main Harvest Zone 3

We had done it.

But we hadn't completely escaped.

For on the wall of the supply station, barely visible in the dim light, hung a new poster.

"WANTED: Traitor Nessa Halwick – Collaborating with deserters. Brother released. Sentence pending."

I stepped closer.

Silas stood silently next to me.

A picture of her – not scared, but determined.

"She did it... because of him," I said.

Silas just nodded. "He was 18, right?"

I remembered. Nessa had once said her brother was almost of training age in the Capitol. He wasn't a child. But she loved him. And he owed her.

She had betrayed us.

And saved us.

"She knew we could do it," I whispered.

"Or hoped."

We moved on—deeper into District 11. Not safe. No wiser. But alive.

And deep down, a new goal burned: To move on.

For Nessa. For everyone who helped us.

For what lay beyond the borders.

12 - The Two of Us

The rain had swallowed the silence. Outside, it rattled against the broken roof, but in the darkness of the old spinning mill, I heard only his breathing. And my own.

I sat on the dusty floor, my back against a wall that was barely standing. The air smelled of old wood, damp fabric, and something I couldn't name. Perhaps longing.

Silas was only an arm's length away. Too far.

I could feel his gaze long before I returned it. That silent observation that had never made me nervous—only alert. Alert to everything that remained unspoken.

"You're shaking," he said quietly.

I didn't know if he meant my voice or my body.

"It's just the rain."

He laughed briefly, hoarsely. Then he came to me. Without hurrying. Without saying anything. He sat down next to me, very close. Our shoulders touched, quite by chance. Quite intentionally.

I turned my head. His cheek was only centimeters away. "If I kiss you now..." he began.

"Then do it."

He did it.

His lips were warm, soft, and for a moment nothing happened except that light pressure—so careful, as if I were fragile. I placed my hand on his neck, pulling him closer. Then the kiss became deeper. And longer. My heart was beating fast, too fast, and yet everything inside me was calm.

His fingers slowly found my back, slid under my wet shirt, exploring my skin with a reverence that made me dizzy. I breathed against his mouth, felt his

Hand on my stomach, hesitant, groping – like a promise that couldn't be broken.

I pulled his shirt over his head. He let me do it, looking into my eyes as if checking to see if I really wanted to do this.

I wanted.

He kissed my neck, my shoulders, as if he were memorizing every memory. I felt his lips on my breast, his hands on my waist. My body tensed—not with fear, but with desire. I was no longer a soldier, no longer the hunted. Just a girl. Just me. Only in this moment.

We collapsed onto the blankets together. My fingers dug into his hair, his breath became hotter, more urgent. I wanted to feel him, completely, wanted to feel him everywhere. Our bodies moved like two puzzle pieces finally coming together.

But we didn't go too far. Not quite. We stayed at the edge. Panting. Trembling. More skin than air between us.
More desire than words.

His forehead rested against mine, his heart pounding against my chest. "Lavinia," he whispered, as if my name carried a weight he wanted to bear.

I placed my finger on his lips. "We only have this night."

And so it was.
That night, we touched not only bodies, but also the hope that something could remain. Even if everything fell.

13 - Last Escape

It had become cold. The autumn forest of District 12 smelled of damp leaves, dead life, and a faint promise of snow. Lavinia pulled her hood tighter around her face, even though it provided little warmth.

Silas had said that they only had to hold out for one more night. Then he would

meet his contact. Maybe. Probably. Hopefully.

"Just today, Lavinia. I can feel it," he had said.

She had nodded, but she felt nothing but tiredness, hunger, and fear. A fear that crackled like dry wood in a fire—ready to flare up at any moment.

A branch cracked in the distance.

Silas had moved away to observe the edge of the forest. They shouldn't have been traveling alone together long ago—not to Nessa. Not after all their losses. But the argument lay like dust on their bond. Unspoken, but palpable.

And yet...

Tonight he had come back. He had taken her hand. He had looked at her as if, in that moment, there was only her.

Then he kissed her.

A kiss, quiet like a farewell and yet full of hope.

And now... he was gone.

A whisper rippled through the undergrowth. Lavinia instinctively ducked behind a fallen tree trunk. Her gaze swept over the area.

And then she saw him.

Silas.

He ran.

No more plan, no more goal.

Only the instinct to survive.

But there was a buzzing sound above him.

A hovercraft. Gray, large, silent.

The trees bent under the wind caused by the vehicle. Cones of light groped their way through the thicket.

Silas was captured.

"No," Lavinia whispered – or wanted to.

But there was no sound.

No sound.

Her throat suddenly ached, as if something had choked her. Panic shot through her as she tried to call out again. Her lips formed the name—"Silas"—but her body no longer obeyed.

She was silent.

One shot.

Silas fell.

Lavinia froze.

Then – a metallic whirring behind her.

She wanted to duck, run, and flee. But a net hit her from behind, knocking her off her feet.

The world was spinning.

Her hands grasped into the void.

Then the ground rose.

The hovercraft pulled her up.

She fought back.

Kicked around.

But the silence in her throat was the worst.

She was trapped – in her body and in the net.

Through the narrow gap between the mesh she saw the forest shrinking below her.

And then – people.

Two.

A boy with a determined look.

A girl with a long, black braid.

They stood there, half-hidden behind a tree. Not in uniform. Not with weapons.

For a moment their eyes met.

Lavinia screamed silently.

Help me!

With her last strength she had to say something again: “Si-”

But she couldn't do it anymore and had to cough.

The hovercraft accelerated.

The forest disappeared.

The ground that supported them became heaven.

And Lavinia knew: This was the end.

Not escape.

Not hope.

But of something much bigger.

Because somewhere beneath her lay Silas.

And she was alone.

14 - The Last Way

Lavinia didn't know how much time had passed. She lay on cold metal that vibrated beneath her. The floor was rough, her cheek ached from pressing against the unyielding surface. There was a whirring sound above her—the roar of a hovercraft, that much was clear. So, it was. Calm down.

Silas.

The thought hit her harder than the blow that had knocked her to the ground. She remembered the moment—how he had thrown himself protectively in front of her, how his hands still reached for her as the tranquilizer shot paralyzed his body. His gaze—determined, demanding, and... tender. And then nothing.

She forced herself to breathe calmly. The cargo hold was dark, only a single light blinking red in time with her fear. Other bodies lay around her. Motionless. Prisoners. Perhaps dead. Perhaps just broken.

The flight dragged on. At one point, she was dragged out of the room, pushed through sterile corridors, never addressed verbally—only with looks, touches, and silence. Capitol standard.

She was washed. Stripped. Deloused. Shaved. Degraded. Not a word was spoken. No one asked her name, origins, or motivation. It didn't matter. She was property. Now she was.

The cell was white, too white. Sterile, blinding. No bed, no window. Just a thin mat, a bucket, a camera. Always the camera.

Days passed. Or weeks. She didn't know. Food came through a hatch. Silent. Tasteless. Lifeless.

Sometimes they came. Quietly. In white. With gloves. They took her blood. Performed tests. Read her eyes like a book. Never spoke. Never explained. Just observed.

Then the day came.

She was picked up – not roughly, but almost too politely. Too precisely. In a room as sterile as all the others, she was placed on a chair. They didn't restrain her. It wasn't necessary.

A man in a black uniform entered. A doctor? An executioner? Who could tell the difference?

"You chose not to obey." She remained silent. Of course.

"We take your word. Not your life."

He turned around and nodded to a silent assistant. A tray of instruments was prepared. Cold. Metallic.

She wanted to scream. But she didn't scream. Her fear was a storm in the silence. Her thoughts screamed enough.

Then came the cut.

Hours later—or was it minutes?—she lay back in the white cell. Her throat burned. No sound came from her lips. No noise. Only the echo of loss.

She couldn't speak. Not anymore. Never again.

And Silas was dead.

15 - 232

A rage that knows no direction.

Not against the system—that would be too easy.

Not against Silas—that would be too painful.

No, it's a deep, nameless rage against one's own powerlessness. Against the fact that she was everything—and now she's nothing.

232.

Days pass. Months. Years. She learns to stop counting. Just to function.

Unthinkable.

Just obey.

And yet something remains. Something inside her. A residue of *I*.

A shadow of Lavinia.

A voice – not in the throat, but inside.

Then, on a day like any other, the command comes.

“Avox 232. Quarter 12. Visit.”

She doesn't understand immediately. *Avox* have No visitors.
But she is led, like a shadow through sterile corridors. Then a door opens.

And there they sit.

Their parents.

Flawless.

Cool.

Foreign.

Her mother wears lavender, her father a gray jacket with gold buttons. Everything about them screams Capitol—everything about them screams past.

They say little.

"You look... healthy." "They're treating you well?" "There was nothing we could do..." "Your room is still there... in case..."

She remains silent.

What could she say? Nothing is the same anymore.

Nothing will ever be the same again.

She just stands there.

Then she leaves.

Without looking back.

As the door closes behind her, all that remains is the faint hum of the lamps.
And the realization:

She is no longer Lavinia.

She is 232.

But 232 will not be forgotten.

16 - Standstill

Mornings. Always the same sound. Not the bright ring of an alarm clock or the warm murmur of a familiar name—but this cold, artificial hum. It crept into her head like a memory she can't shake. Lavinia opened her eyes. Again. Another day. And another. Year after year.

She lay straight, as always. The blanket flat, her back straight, her arms at her sides. Discipline – practiced, forced. In the first few weeks, she had twitched, trembled, and screamed in her thoughts. Now there was only silence. And that noise.

The room was bright. Too bright. The white walls swallowed all emotion. Her hair was cut to a uniform length—no longer the soft cut from her Capitol days, but stern, angular, like a shadow of her former self. Number 232. No name. No word. No voice.

The clothes were the same as always: gray, tight, functional. No individuality, no beauty. Practical, clean, regimented. The fabric rubbed against her skin, barely noticeable—just enough to let her know she was still there.

She sat up. Moved at the speed she had been taught. No hesitation. No exaggeration. Between "command" and "movement" lay exactly one breath. No more, no less. She was a shadow, functional, obedient. And yet—she was still there.

The training was over—the dull learning, the months of training on how to carry trays, how to become invisible, how to ignore pain. Now there was only life in between. The gray hours. The eternal sameness. The wordless routine.

She knew when the hallway was empty. She knew when the water was getting lukewarm. When the guards were changing. When she could blink without anyone noticing. Everything was calculated, silent, predictable. That was what made it so difficult.

Sometimes she stared at her own hands. Those fingers that had once turned pages, written notes, and caressed Silas's face. Now they carried things. Cloths, trays, cups. Everything functioned—everything served. Everything was insignificant.

When she was alone—and she was often—she thought. Not in words, but in images. Her escape route. The map. District 4. Silas's kiss. His blood. His eyes, the way she slowly... No.

That was forbidden. Thinking was dangerous. Remembering was dangerous.

And yet... she remembered.

He lived on in her head. Always where the controls weren't looking. In the void between two tasks. In the empty gaze in the mirror, where she saw number 232—and in the depths, Lavinia. The one who felt the wind in her hair. The one who had a voice.

Days passed. Weeks. Maybe months. Time was a rumor. It didn't matter whether it was winter or spring. The windows were sealed. Light was artificially controlled. Feelings? Irrelevant. Orders mattered. A nod. A hand signal. A kick if you were too slow.

And yet. In a moment, as she picked up a towel, she suddenly felt something. Something inexplicable. Warmth? No. Hope? Not yet. But the hint of resistance. The slightest thought: *I'm still here.*

That day, she stood there a moment longer than she was allowed to. She stared at the door. Just a second. But it was her second.

Nobody noticed.

And so it began: not an uprising, not a revolution—but a quiet, imperceptible defiance. The desire for more than just stagnation.

That was all that remained.

And all that was needed.

17 - The Girl from the Forest

The day began like any other.

Buzzing. Light. Standing up. Shower.

Uniform. Look at the floor.

232. That was all she was.

The first signal sounded, as always, at exactly the same time. She joined the line. No questions. No stares. No thinking—just functioning. The route to her assigned work led through smooth hallways, past silent guards, and through doors that opened with only a beep.

Today it was cleaning duty in the reception wing. Tomorrow maybe it'll be serving food again. Or making the beds. Or nothing at all. The days were hardly different.

But today something happened.

She was intercepted. No sound. Just another signal. Another path. Another space.

A supervisor in white—not one of the cruel ones, but one of the exactly indifferent ones—pressed a new ID band into her hand.

"Special Service – Training Center. 74th Games."

Lavinia stared briefly at the ribbon. Her fingers tightened around it, as if it were something important. She said nothing—she couldn't. But something stirred inside her that she hadn't felt for a long time: alarm.

She had never seen the games. Not directly. Avoxes weren't allowed to have an opinion. They only saw the action from the periphery. Shadows in the background. But this time... she was part of it.

The room was magnificent. Capitol standard. Gold ornaments, glass surfaces, velvet furniture. Lavinia entered with her eyes lowered, a tray in her hands. The floor was mirror-polished. She could see herself in it—a gray figure without a name.

Then she saw the others: stylists. Carers. And...

The girl.

She recognized her immediately.

Dark braid. Hard gaze. A hint of insecurity in the shoulder position.

The girl from the forest.

Lavinia froze. Just for a moment. But it was enough.

Katniss' eyes met hers.

Her lips formed words. "I know you."

Lavinia recoiled. She couldn't see it, but inside, everything was falling apart.

The stylists stopped talking. There was a brief standstill.

Then the blond boy stepped forward – Peeta – and said quickly:

"She just looks like someone we know from school. Delly Cartwright. Quite a resemblance, isn't it?"

A laugh. Uncertain. Compulsive. The tension dissolved superficially.

But Lavinia was still standing there.

And inside her: panic.

She had seen.

She had been recognized.

She was someone again.

For a moment.

Then she stepped back. Put down the tray.

Turned around.

Went.

Back in her cell she couldn't sleep.

The ceiling was the same. The silence

was the same. But there was

something different inside.

Katniss lived.

And she remembered.

It was dangerous. It was forbidden.

But Lavinia couldn't stop thinking about it.

The games had begun. And with

them—something inside her.

Something she thought was lost.

18 - Not your fault

The door slid silently to the side, as always.

Lavinia entered. In her hand was a silver tray, carrying fresh towels, a bottle of soothing oil, and sterile wound dressings. Everything exactly as ordered. Everything was quiet.

Katniss sat in the middle of the room. The blanket above her was torn, books lay on the floor, her pillow was ripped open, her hands were bleeding slightly—there were fabric fibers sticking to her right fist. Her eyes were red, not from crying, but from anger.

She looked up as Lavinia entered the room. And for a moment, there was nothing between them but air and memory.

Not a word was spoken.

Wasn't allowed to either.

Lavinia moved slowly, carefully, as she had been taught. No sudden gestures. No prolonged glances.

But Katniss's gaze didn't leave her.

He was full of... what?

anger?

Shame?

Pity?

Lavinia didn't know.

She knelt down, put down the tray, and picked up the wipes. Katniss wordlessly held out her hand. The cut wasn't deep, but it was messy.

Lavinia carefully dabbed the blood. The water was cold. Her fingers weren't shaking—that would have been considered a mistake—but there was a stabbing pressure in her chest.

No one in the room spoke.

As she bandaged the hand, she looked at Katniss again. Just for a moment. And there it was.

A whisper without a voice.

Katniss's mouth moved. Very quietly. "I'm sorry."

Mission.
A crime.

Lavinia froze—not out of fear. But
out of emotion.

No one apologized to her. Never. Not in the Capitol.

Not in training. Not in the
cell.

She wasn't supposed to say
anything. Couldn't say anything.

But she did it anyway.

She raised her hand.
Lightly.
Just a hint.

A finger pointing at Katniss's chest. A
shake of the head.

Then: her hand on her heart. A
nod.
A look.

*You don't have to apologize. You
didn't do anything.*

Otherwise you would be like me now.

Katniss swallowed. Her hand twitched, as if she wanted to say something to Lavinia, to touch her—but then she
lowered her gaze.

Lavinia stood up.
Took the tray.
Waited the prescribed moment. Turned
around.

Left the room.

Later, in her cell, she sat awake for a long time.

The gesture had cost her more energy than all the commands of the past few weeks. But it was the first time she had given something again.

No outcry.

No protest.

Just a sign.

Just a look.

And yet: more than anything she had done in years.

She was Avox.

Number 232.

But she hadn't disappeared.

Not yet.

19 - Jubilee

It was a different kind of trembling than the first time. No stage fright. No stress. No fear.

Lavinia felt it in her fingers as she zipped up her uniform shirt. The fabric was the same. The light in the corridor was the same. The scent of polished hallways and expensive perfume – all familiar. And yet: all wrong.

75. Hunger Games.

The jubilee.

A distortion. A repetition with sharper edges, a deeper fall.

Katniss came back.

Peeta too.

And this time the Capitol knew: The two were no longer naive tributes. They were symbols. Sparks. And Lavinia was sent back to them.

Darius was there now too.
He used to wear a uniform. Peacekeeper. Now he wore gray.

Number 451.
No name.

He recognized her. That was new. Avoxes usually didn't look at each other.
But he did. And she looked back.

A silent understanding grew between them. We
know.
We remember.
We obey – but we do not forget.

When Lavinia faced Katniss again, it was without surprise.
Katniss barely flinched when she opened the door and saw Lavinia there—tray, silent eyes, hands steady.

But her shoulders slumped for a moment, as if she were breathing in something that had been missing for a long time.

Nothing was said. Of course not.

But her eyes searched Lavinia's as she served. And Lavinia let her be.

The service had become more dangerous. There were ears, cameras, and sensors everywhere. People were expecting something – they were just waiting for the *How*.

Lavinia sensed the tension in the corridors. She sensed it in Peeta's silence, softer than Katniss's, but no less heavy. She sensed it in the stylists, who worked more quietly, laughed less often.

Everything was made up – but beneath the powder lurked the truth.

It was no longer a game. It was
preparation for war.

And she, Lavinia, was right in the middle of it again.
This time not as a girl who was seen – but as a shadow who saw everything.

Darius was her only support.

They exchanged no gestures, no notes, no signs. Only glances. Once, their paths crossed in the airlock for cleaning.

He looked at her.

Long.

Sad.

And then: a nod.

Nothing more.

But it was enough.

She wasn't alone.

Not entirely.

On day two before the arena ceremony, she was led into the basement.

Control, they said.

Medical.

Standard.

But she saw the device.

The clamps.

The electricity.

And she knew: It wasn't about security. It was about pressure.

About power.

She didn't see Katniss again that day. But she knew what she would be wearing tomorrow: The Mockingjay.

And a target on your back.

Lavinia didn't dream that night. But she remembered.

To Silas.

To the clearing.

To the magnetic claw.

And she wondered – when the time came,

whether she would be pulled back into heaven in the same way.

Or whether the ground came this time.

20 - No Silence

The cell was smaller than anything Lavinia had ever experienced before. No window. No mattress. Just steel. Cold.

Peeta's cell was across the hall. She couldn't see him, but she heard him. Not always.

Only sometimes.

A cough. A scream in his sleep. The echo of his fists against metal.

They had left him alone. But not really. They left him *watch*.

First Darius.

Lavinia heard the beating, the fall, the choking. But no voice.

Just a dull sound of skin on the floor. And in between: panting.

His body resisted – but his speech was dead.

They came to her on the third day.

They led her into the room without shadows.

Lights on the ceiling. A camera.

Peeta was there.

She saw him—trembling, angry, desperate.

His arms were shackled.

A scream that was directed at her.

"No! NO! Let her—"

But it was already too late.

They tied her to a table. Not brutally—that wasn't necessary. She was calm.
Not out of fear.
But out of dignity.

Her eyes met Peeta's.

And she said nothing.
Not because she couldn't – but because she didn't *wanted*.

The guards laughed.
“Dead tongue, dead soul,” said one.

Then the electricity came.

The first impulse was like fire.
The second, like ice.
The third was pain like she had never known.

But she didn't scream.

Her muscles twitched.
Her eyes rolled back. Her
lungs sucked in air –
but no sound.

Silent until the end.

Then – a twitch. A
final breath.
A silent, burning end.

And Peeta screamed.
Not for her.
But for what they had taken from him.

They had killed Lavinia.
But they hadn't silenced her.

She had come silently. She
had remained silent.

And yet she had *said more than most with voice.*

Later, when Peeta could speak again, he would say her name. He would talk about her eyes. About the gesture. About the look. About the girl who should not be forgotten.

Not as Avox.
But as Lavinia.

epilogue

*We thought she'd been forgotten. The fact that her name didn't appear in any reports was intentional. A statistic. Another number among many. 232. Avox. Female. No known connections. No significance.
We were wrong.*

The recording begins with a flicker. The old film material appears damaged – streaks dance across the image, fragments of sound crackle in the background. Barely any contours are discernible, only the pale face of a girl, half in shadow. Her hair is straight, cut like everyone else's. Her uniform is wrinkle-free. Only her eyes – her eyes give everything away.

A faint whisper can be heard, perhaps from the ventilation. Or is it a suppressed sob?.

She couldn't speak. But she answered. Always. In her own way.

The voice off-screen is calm, almost reverent. A woman—young perhaps, but from the way she speaks, you can tell she's been searching for a long time..

She served in the Capitol for three years. Without a name. Without a voice. And yet: her silence echoed on. In the Peacekeepers' reports. In Peeta's memory. In Katniss's gaze. In the surveillance circuits.

A still image appears. Lavinia, motionless, in a bright hallway. The camera doesn't recognize her as a person—she's just a shadow in the corner. Unrecorded, overlooked. Inconspicuous..

She wasn't important enough for a death notice. Not prominent enough for revenge. And yet I wonder: Why was her file encrypted, as if she were a threat?

The screen flickers. Individual words appear. "Avox." "232." "Last sighting: Capitol,

Sector 9".

Then: silence.

A new voice. Old, shaky, distorted by time..

If you find this here... look no further. It was better this way. Some things... are too dangerous to remember.

The file aborts.

Only one last fragment remains: a name, typed onto the screen in trembling letters.

Lavinia

#lavinia