



CHAPTER 1

THE TERROR, THE BRAVERY

CHEYENNE

We only have ten days until the trial starts,” Matthew Bennett said. “Do you feel ready?”

Cheyenne Wilder nodded. She heard the Multnomah County prosecutor sigh.

“When we’re in court, please remember to answer out loud. All testimony is recorded.”

“Okay.” Cheyenne swallowed. Even though this was just practice in Mr. Bennett’s office, her tongue felt too big for her mouth. What was it going to be like in the witness stand in a crowded courtroom?

She was glad he had made everyone else stay in the waiting room: Danielle; her dad, Nick; and even Jaydra, who now accompanied Cheyenne every time she left the house.

Jaydra, her bodyguard. Her keeper. Her dad said it was just until attention died down. What if someone else got

it into their head to kidnap her, knowing he had already paid a million for her once?

“And keep your hands away from your mouth,” Mr. Bennett said. “You need to speak clearly. The juror farthest from you should be able to hear every syllable.”

Cheyenne started to nod, then caught herself. “Yes. Okay.”

“And be sure not to chew gum.” He hesitated. “Although, hmm, it could make you look younger. Let me think about it.”

She straightened up. “Why would I want to look younger?” Because she was only five foot two, Cheyenne always sat and stood tall. She wore makeup, knowing it made her look older.

“We want the jury’s sympathy.” His voice firmed. “Ask your mom to pick out something that makes you look younger. Maybe something pink or with ruffles. ”

Cheyenne didn’t bother telling him she didn’t own anything like that. Or that Danielle was her stepmom and certainly didn’t pick out her clothes. She had already figured out this was a one-way conversation. Mr. Bennett wanted the jury to look at her and think she was helpless. Incapable. That she was a victim.

She hated that word.

“It’s a fine line,” he continued. “We want the jury to feel for you, but we also want them to trust every word you say. Initially, I’m going to take you through what

happened, step by step. How you were kidnapped, how you escaped. I want them to feel the same things you did those three days. The terror of your kidnapping, the bravery of your escape.”

Cheyenne hadn't felt brave, though. She shivered at the memory of running through the woods at night. Branches clawing her face. Tree roots tripping her up. Then it started to snow, adding the horrible knowledge that she must be leaving behind footprints.

“When it's the opposing counsel's turn to cross-examine you, he might ask if we've met before. It's fine to say yes. Just say I told you to tell the truth. If you tell the truth and tell it accurately, Wheeler can't cross you up. Never guess or make up an answer. If you don't know or don't remember, just say that. Answer only the exact question and then stop. For example, if I asked you how old you are, you would just say sixteen. You wouldn't tell me the time of day you were born or the name of the hospital. Don't volunteer anything.”

“Okay.” Cheyenne wanted to correct him, to say she would turn seventeen the day before the trial started, but Mr. Bennett didn't like interruptions. Her stomach felt queasy. What if she messed something up? What if Roy walked free? She remembered how he had howled her name as he did his best to kill her.

“That's another thing we might as well start practicing. Say ‘yes, sir,’ and ‘no, sir,’ to me and to Mr. Wheeler.

If you speak to the judge, say ‘Your Honor.’ And no joking around or getting agitated, even if you’re feeling nervous. I’m not just talking about when you’re on the stand. You need to keep it together at all times, even if you have an unexpected interaction in the hallway or outside the courthouse. Your behavior could be observed and factored into the jury’s decision.”

Interaction in the hallway. “Are you saying I might run into Griffin?” Her stomach twisted again. She pressed her fingers to her lips.

He touched her shoulder. The surprise of it, coming out of nowhere like that, made her jerk back.

“You don’t need to worry. We’ll make sure he never gets anywhere near you. And you’ve got Ms. Hamilton to protect you, of course.” He meant Jaydra.

“Have you talked to him? To Griffin?” Cheyenne managed to sound like she didn’t care.

“Yes. He’s in town now. We’ve met several times to discuss his testimony.”

Her heart sped up.

“He’s the one who really has to worry, not you. Wheeler’s going to focus on him like a laser. He’ll try to get under his skin, make him lash out. He’ll argue Griffin’s the one who kidnapped you. Not his father.”

“But it was an accident.” Cheyenne didn’t know who had been more surprised when each of them figured out the other was in the car. “Griffin was just trying to steal

the Escalade, not me. He saw Danielle's keys, but he didn't notice me because I was lying down in the back. And he was going to let me go. It was his father's idea to ask for the money."

Mr. Bennett made a humming noise. "We only have Griffin's word for what he would have done. James Hixon is dead, and Thomas Meadors is in a mental hospital. And even though Griffin freely admitted stealing the car, I'm sure Wheeler's going to make a big deal about his plea bargain. He'll probably claim Griffin is lying about his father's involvement in exchange for not being sent to prison as an adult." He sighed. "Wheeler's going to eat him alive on cross."

Cheyenne must have made some small sound of protest because Mr. Bennett added, "I doubt he's going to ask much of you, since the jury will see you sympathetically. The one thing he might focus on is whether you're really capable of identifying Roy as the man who told your father to pay him five million dollars or else he would send you back in pieces. He's going to say it's impossible to identify someone by only voice or scent."

"I'm blind," Cheyenne said, "not stupid. Sir."

 CHAPTER 2 

PLAN B

ROY

If it weren't for Cheyenne Wilder, Roy Sawyer wouldn't have been lying on the top bunk in a Multnomah County Jail cell. A cell the size of a bathroom, which he shared with a guy named Tiny. Who obviously wasn't.

Twenty-one minutes before lights-on, Roy lay curled under a blanket the color and softness of a burlap sack, trying to ignore Tiny's snores. Tap-tap-tapping on a phone. It was a smartphone that could go online, but Roy was even smarter. First was the fact he had a phone at all. He had sweet-talked it out of the new nurse, Alice, who had taken a fancy to him.

Second, Roy never actually sent any e-mail on it, even though he and his half brother shared an account. *Is everything ready?* He saved the message in the drafts folder and waited for Dwayne to read it. Once he did, Dwayne would hit the delete key.

Poof! Roy's words would be gone. Leaving no record of what had been said. What had been planned.

Then Dwayne would write his own message and save it as a draft. Which Roy would then read and delete. And so on, back and forth. A whole conversation in invisible ink.

While Roy waited for Dwayne's reply, he watched the spider on the ceiling two feet above him busily tending her web. She had set up shop a week earlier, and since then she had provided him with hours of entertainment. The spider was the first nonhuman living thing he had seen in six months.

At home, he worked outside stripping stolen cars, or in a barn with the doors standing open. Hawks wheeled overhead. At night, coyotes yipped in the woods. When Roy was arrested, it had been winter. Now everything would be in bloom, bursting with life. He was still stuck in here.

Roy checked the time. Nineteen minutes left. Just before lights-on, he would slip the phone inside a sock and tuck it in his briefs. He worked on the jail's laundry crew, so he made sure he always got the baggiest pants.

Alice had also gotten him a charger, but there were no electrical outlets inside cells. The dayroom had outlets, but it was far too open. However, the laundry room had several that could be hidden behind stacks of neatly folded uniforms.

In a few minutes, he would roll out of his bunk, pull on blue scrubs over the pink-dyed T-shirt and briefs he was already wearing. Yank on pink tube socks and stuff his feet into plastic shower shoes. The end result was that he looked more or less like everyone else. But even prison couldn't take away his tattoos. An eagle. A snake. Satan riding a Harley. Barbed wire around a heart on his biceps that also read *Janie* in flowing script. This one had caught Alice's eye. She thought it was romantic.

He even had a spider tattoo, but it was of a tarantula, not a house spider like the one above his head. His spider had delicate striped legs and a fat brown belly speckled with black.

The bunk groaned as Tiny rolled over. The jail held more than five hundred people—snoring, farting, mumbling, and bickering. For most, it was catch and release. Others, like Roy, were awaiting trial. Afterward, he would go to state prison, a place he had resolved never to go. When he got out, he would be an old man.

And what happened hadn't even been his fault. It was his boy, Griffin, who brought Cheyenne home. Roy didn't plan it. Didn't ask for it. But when the radio said this girl was the daughter of Nike's president, well, who wouldn't want a little something for her safe return? Like finding a lost cell phone and getting a reward for giving it back. He hadn't touched a hair on her head, Roy thought as he watched the spider delicately wrap up a tiny fly.

The same couldn't be said for Cheyenne. She had pressed a gun against his side and pulled the trigger. Taken out a chunk of meat just above his hip that still ached every time he lifted a load of wet uniforms. And even though she was blind, she managed to run Roy over with his own car. Now he walked with a limp.

Of course, she hadn't gotten in any trouble. No, it was Roy who was sitting here. And Griffin was walking around free. When the dummy was the one to take the girl in the first place. But he was going to get up on the stand and point his finger, run his mouth, spill his guts.

After Janie was gone, Roy had tried to raise the boy right, but obviously he'd failed. Didn't loyalty count for anything anymore? Didn't family? Dwayne wasn't even his full-blood brother, but he was willing to do whatever it took to help Roy get out of this place. Help when Roy's own son had turned against him.

Griffin. Every time Roy looked at him, he saw the boy's mother in the stubborn set of his mouth, in his dark, challenging eyes. When Griffin found out his mom was dead rather than gone, it must have turned him against Roy. And it didn't help that he had taken a fancy to Cheyenne. As if a girl like that would ever care about a guy like him.

Saw our friend in cuckoo's nest, Dwayne's last message had read. He meant TJ, who once worked for Roy. Even though he was dumber than a box of hammers, TJ had been good with tools.

TJ had been fascinated by Cheyenne. She was a little thing, even shorter than TJ. Dark curly hair, brown staring eyes. Eyes that couldn't see TJ's stupid face. Couldn't see anything.

Now TJ was in the state mental hospital, where they had filmed *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The file flickered as it was replaced. When Roy opened it again, his words had been deleted and exchanged for Dwayne's. *He'll be flying free Friday. It's time for the next step bro. Ready Freddy?*

Roy took a deep breath and deleted his brother's words. His finger hesitated over the tiny keyboard. Once he pulled the trigger, there would be no going back.

It was too risky to try to escape. So he had decided to go with plan B. Make it look like the girl had run away. Without her to testify, the case would be dismissed.

But how to get to her? She had a guide dog, which Dwayne reported looked pretty tame, but still. Worse, she was accompanied by a bodyguard every time she left the house. To add insult to injury, she even had Duke in her yard, behind one of those invisible fences. Duke had once been Roy's dog.

Just like Griffin was his son. At least according to Janie. But family couldn't be a one-way street. Especially when there was a chance to kill two birds with one stone. So to speak. He began to peck out an answer.

Some choices were hard. Maybe even wrong. But they still had to be made.

Roy looked over what he had just written. After a long moment, he pressed Save.

And then he reached up with his thumb and smashed the spider against the ceiling.

 CHAPTER 3 

YOU'VE GROWN

GRIFFIN

Dressed in the suit Aunt Debby had bought six months ago for his first hearing, Griffin Sawyer walked out of the bathroom at the Stay-A-While Motel.

“You’ve grown,” Debby said. The fingers of one hand twisted through her short, dark hair. Griffin’s mom, Janie, had had the same anxious habit her sister did, only her hair had been a reddish-brown waterfall to her waist.

Had he grown? He looked down. His ankles were sticking out the ends of his pants. He remembered Debby’s whole family watching some awards show with pretty-boy actors on an actual red carpet. “Isn’t this how guys wear suits now? Short and kind of tight?”

“Not that short and tight.” She sighed. “We’ll need to get you a new suit before we meet with Mr. Bennett tomorrow. We can swing by Nordstrom’s Rack on the way.

Put on your regular clothes. After I take a shower, we'll go get dinner."

Great. The suit would be one more thing he would owe his aunt. After changing, he traded places with her. When the shower started, Griffin stepped outside and lit a cigarette from his hidden pack. Knowing she would probably smell it on him, but telling himself he didn't really care.

Debby hated smoking. It reminded her of his dad. Roy. She didn't get that smoking could calm you. How it gave you something to do with your hands, a place to look, an excuse to turn away every time you exhaled. How it made you feel cooler and also harder.

Cheyenne hadn't liked cigarettes either. Griffin remembered how she had yelled at him, saying he was not allowed to smoke in her stepmom's car. His lips quirked at the memory. As if it didn't matter she was tied up with her own shoelaces in the back of the car.

She was more free tied up than Griffin had ever been just walking around.

But somehow, being around her had made him more free. With Cheyenne, he became a different person. Smarter. Braver. Brave enough to risk helping her escape.

He kicked an empty McDonald's cup and sent it rolling across the parking lot. His life was so much better now. Wasn't it? That's what everyone kept telling him. He

lived with Aunt Debby and Uncle Jeff in Chicago, not with a dad who ran an illegal chop shop and who'd hit you as soon as look at you. And Debby loved him. At least she said she did. Maybe it had been easier to love Griffin when he was eight, which was the last time they had seen each other until six months ago.

So why was he still screwing up? In a few weeks, unless he managed to snag the mail first, Debby would get his report card and realize he'd flunked all his classes, mostly because he had just stopped going.

At his new school, he'd gotten lost in the shuffle. Everyone there had problems. Pregnant girls and drug addicts and kids who were both. Griffin wasn't the only one who struggled with reading, or was more than a year behind in school, or caught up in the justice system. Even the teachers were screwups. They left only a couple of messages about his absences, which he erased before Debby heard them.

Every day it took more and more effort to go, until finally he just stopped walking in the front doors and started walking around the city instead, his little sketchbook in his back pocket. He sketched people he saw—a young mom holding a sleeping baby, an old drunk stretched out on a park bench, a guy walking five tiny dogs.

And even though Griffin told himself to stop, that it was pointless to keep torturing himself, his most frequent subject was Cheyenne. Her heart-shaped face. Her dark

eyes. Her smile and how it turned up higher at one corner.

When he was with her, it seemed like he could be a better person. Someone who wasn't just a thief. Someone who knew more than how to break into cars, how to steal them, how to part them out. Someone better than his dad.

But that feeling had ended six months ago, when he risked calling Cheyenne from Chicago. When he asked if they could keep in touch.

In the woods, he had been willing to die for her. But when he called, her answer had been no.

No.

That “no” still played in an endless loop in his head. Had her voice hitched a little? Were her parents watching? Had they made her say that?

Now they were only a few miles apart. Griffin threw down his cigarette and crushed it under his heel. His chest hurt like something was stuck inside, taking up the space his lungs needed. As soon as the trial ended, he would be back in Chicago, thousands of miles away. He'd probably never see her again.

Not that he would see her here. The prosecutor, Bennett, had made that clear, his blue eyes boring into him. As if he could see Griffin thinking that Cheyenne must have been there before him, breathing the same air. As if he could tell how much Griffin longed to see her, even once.

Bennett had made him a deal. Tell the truth about what his dad had done, about what all of them had done, and his dad would go to prison while Griffin would be free.

But free to do what?

 CHAPTER 4 

SUPPOSED TO BE THE VICTIM

CHEYENNE

Cheyenne was brushing her teeth when she heard movement behind her. Maybe it wasn't even a sound that alerted her but the air shifting. A second later, an arm slid across her throat.

She dropped her toothbrush and tried to spin away. Too late. The arm yanked her back in. A grunt in her ear. The heat of her attacker's body against her back as the arm began to tighten.

Cheyenne knew how it would go down. Once pressure was applied to the carotid arteries, she'd be unconscious within ten seconds. And it wouldn't take much longer to kill her.

She could try to claw the eyes, but her attacker's cheek was pressed tight against her shoulder blades. Try to shift her hips and go for the groin, hoping to at least loosen

the grip. But if that didn't work, there wouldn't be time to try something else.

Her attacker probably hoped she would go down without much of a fight.

Oh, hell to the no. Cheyenne curled her fingers over the arm and yanked, letting her legs go boneless. As she dropped, she twisted, rolling her attacker over her hip. No sounds except for their ragged breathing. But that was enough for Phantom to know something was wrong. Out in the hall, he scratched at the bedroom door her attacker had closed and then began to bark in sharp, staccato bursts. The chances anyone would hear him were small. Mary, their cook and housekeeper, had already gone home. Her dad was in Japan. And Danielle was volunteering at an evening clinic.

Cheyenne managed to stay on her feet, still holding the arm she had grabbed straight up. As her attacker fell, it twisted nearly to the breaking point. She turned her head, and there it was, a pale, blurry line in the tiny slice of vision she had left. She dropped her knees, one on her attacker's head, the other on the ribs, and began to inch the arm back, back, back. Finding the point where it would snap.

"Tap!" Jaydra grunted.

Cheyenne let go and straightened up.

"You were smiling," Jaydra said as she got to her feet.

"Sorry." Feeling her face warm, Cheyenne went to the door and let Phantom in.

“No, the smile was a nice touch,” Jaydra said. “A bad guy is going to think twice or even three times if he sees the person who’s supposed to be the victim smiling.”

Phantom let out one last woof as Cheyenne rubbed the fur behind his ears. She wondered what he thought of Jaydra. Around other people, he would curl up and nap if he wasn’t needed. But with Jaydra, he was always alert.

“That was very good,” Jaydra continued. “You never stopped moving. And you didn’t end up on the bottom. I only weigh one-forty. If some guy weighs two-forty, it won’t matter how many locks and chokes you know. You let him get his weight on you and he won’t even have to know jujitsu.”

“I don’t know why I have to worry about this.” Cheyenne shook her head. “Phantom will protect me.” Hearing his name, he pressed against her thigh. Part of her was braced for Jaydra to come back at her. She liked to spring things on you when you least expected it. Just like she had three minutes ago, when she had come over from the guesthouse and slipped into Cheyenne’s room.

“He’s a guide dog. Not a guard dog. He’s not bred for it, and he’s not trained for it. He’s not like Duke.” Duke had once been Roy’s dog, and as a result, he had some issues. Still, he had helped Cheyenne escape, and she had returned the favor by taking him in.

“But Phantom is smart. Like, if I tell him to cross the street and can’t hear that an electric car is coming, he won’t

move, even though he's supposed to obey me." It was called intelligent disobedience. "So why couldn't he learn to be a guard dog?"

"Not crossing when an electric car is coming is a lot different from deciding whom you're going to bite and whom you're going to ignore. And he can't both guide you and guard you. Even if he tried, that harness is going to get in his way. And what if they lock him in a car? Or hurt him? Even kill him? You can't rely on anyone but yourself to get you out of trouble."

For the past six months, Jaydra had been not just Cheyenne's bodyguard but her trainer. After Nick had hired her to watch over Cheyenne, Jaydra had sold him on also teaching Cheyenne how to protect herself. It was like the orientation and mobility training she had right after the accident, except this focused solely on dealing with bad guys. How to keep safe at the ATM, on public transportation, walking in an iffy neighborhood. What to do if someone grabbed your wrist, your neck, around your waist.

And how to fight back. A sighted person could run away, but a blind person needed to disable their attacker. As long as Cheyenne had contact with her partner, she didn't need to see to use jujitsu. Could be, according to Jaydra, as good as a sighted person. Since she couldn't watch Jaydra's moves, Cheyenne had learned how to kick, punch, and flip people by feeling the position of Jaydra's

body and then copying it herself. They practiced in the home gym, which had been reconfigured with mats covering the hardwood floors and even two of the walls. Sometimes Jaydra attacked her with a plastic training gun or a training knife that lacked an edge on the blade.

Cheyenne had never seen anything but a blurry sideways slice of Jaydra. Three years ago, two cars had been racing down a country road, the same road she and her mom were walking on. Then an oncoming car made the driver in the wrong lane swerve onto the shoulder—and right into them. Her mom had been killed, and Cheyenne had been thrown into a sign. The impact bounced her brain off the back of her skull. While her eyes still worked, the part of her brain that took in the message had been destroyed. The car accident had spared only the far-left edge of her old field of vision, and even that was fuzzy and unfocused. From that, she knew Jaydra had pale skin and long, dark hair. In her imagination, the other woman's eyes were blue. That part she would never know, unless she asked. Her slice of sight wasn't even enough to tell her that Jaydra wore her hair pulled back into a tight braid. Her fingers knew, though. It was useful for yanking when Cheyenne could get past her own reluctance to fight dirty.

Jaydra was all about fighting dirty, if it let you live. All about improvising with what you had on hand. Anything and everything could be a weapon. A phone could be smashed across the bridge of a nose. A pen could stab an

eye or the throat. A bag of groceries could be shoved into someone's arms—and then Cheyenne could attack while they fumbled. Even an empty hand could be slapped across the ear, damaging the ear drum.

That thought made Cheyenne shiver. To be blind and deaf? She had met a few people like that, and while they seemed to have adjusted, to her it would be like being locked in a box forever.

“At the end, you twisted your head,” Jaydra said. “You need to forget about that little bit you can see. It won't help, and it puts you in a bad position versus your attacker.”

“Okay.” Cheyenne repressed a sigh. Nothing she did was ever good enough. She could probably kill Jaydra, and the other woman would manage to come back from the dead to critique her technique.

Still, Cheyenne liked grappling. It made her feel badass. Like a ninja warrior.

At the same time, it was overkill. Her dad and stepmom had turned paranoid and protective. Cheyenne had lost count of the times Danielle had apologized for leaving Cheyenne alone in the Escalade.

But she hadn't been the target. The car had. It was just a fluke Griffin hadn't noticed her until it was too late. A once-in-a-lifetime thing.

Cheyenne couldn't wait for the trial to end. Until then, she joked to her friend Kenzie, she was just lucky Jaydra

was staying in the guesthouse instead of in a bunk bed in Cheyenne's room.

Every weekday, Jaydra took Cheyenne to her private school and then picked her up to take her straight home again. Her dad would no longer let Cheyenne go out to movies or concerts or even to friends' houses. If she wanted to hang out with someone, he said she should just ask them over. If she wanted to go shopping, he said she could have things shipped to her and return those she didn't want.

She felt like she was slowly suffocating. At home it was so quiet. Danielle had her volunteer work, and her dad was always traveling. Some weeks Cheyenne talked to Mary or the gardener, Octavio, more than she talked to her parents. Of course there was Jaydra, but conversations with her tended to be more like lectures. While she could text or call her friends, that wasn't the same as being with them. And even though Kenzie and Sadie would come over if she asked, it didn't change the fact that she was still stuck at home.

"It won't be long until the trial starts," Cheyenne said now. "Once Roy is sentenced, my parents won't have to worry anymore."

Jaydra made a noncommittal grunt.

Cheyenne tensed. "What?"

"It's not only Roy that Nick's worried about. It's anyone with a cell phone. Anyone who looks at you and sees

dollar signs. You're not exactly incognito. You're pretty and petite, so I'm sure guys were already noticing you. Now everyone recognizes you, especially given you always have a cane or a dog. Do you know how many stories have been written about you? I don't mean just *People* magazine. I'm talking tabloids, blog posts, Twitter, Tumblr. Your family has been wanting to shield you from it, but there are a lot of crazies out there. Hiding behind made-up names, anonymous IP addresses. And some of them want to do more than just take your picture."

After Jaydra left, Cheyenne searched for her own name on Twitter. And was immediately sorry after her computer read her the first leering remark.

"I'd like to tie her up and hold her for ransom."

And that was mild compared to the rest. Her stomach crammed into the back of her throat as she slammed her laptop closed.

Would she ever get her life back?

 CHAPTER 5 

BUILDING THE GIRL PIECE BY PIECE

TJ

TJ Meadors lay in his narrow bed in the room he shared with five other men at the Oregon State Hospital and thought about Cheyenne Wilder.

His lips moved as he softly said her name. Even saying it out loud, it still sounded like a whisper. He imagined tucking her long, dark hair behind her ear. Breathing “Cheyenne” into that white shell.

Only this time she wouldn’t flinch.

TJ spent as much time with Cheyenne as he could, even if it was only in his head. It helped him block out reality, like the snoring and mumbling around him. And later, when lights suddenly ripped open the night just so a staff member could untangle a headphone cord from around one of TJ’s stupid roommates’ heads, he pulled the blanket over his face and remembered.

Thoughts of Cheyenne helped him ignore how the

blanket smelled like disinfectant and the pillow was as hard as a board. He just kept his eyes closed tight and filled his senses with memories of her, building the girl piece by piece. Her soft, pale skin. Her sweet smell, like something precious and expensive. Her dark sightless eyes that had looked right at him but never seen him.

Two weeks ago, Dwayne, Roy's half brother, had visited, promising that TJ could see Cheyenne again. Do more than see her, if he wanted.

On the grounds, they sat in white plastic lawn chairs, away from the others. TJ ate chip after chip from the two bags of Ruffles Cheddar & Sour Cream Dwayne bought from the vending machine.

"Easy there, eager beaver," Dwayne said. Roy was thin as a snake, but Dwayne was bulked up, with tattoos crawling up his thick arms. "You might want to think about chewing."

"It just tastes so good. The chow here sucks." Somehow the food service department was able to mess up anything, even spaghetti, but you still had to eat it.

"You always wear a jacket like that?" Dwayne eyed TJ's brown puffer coat, one of the few things he really owned. Underneath he wore "state clothes," which were the cheapest sweatpants, T-shirt, underwear, and socks available.

TJ hunched his shoulders despite the sunshine. "I get cold." He was always cold now. Jimbo was the one who used to complain about how he was freezing, who dressed

in layers until he looked like the Michelin Man. Had some part of Jimbo slipped into TJ after he squeezed the trigger?

“My brother said you liked Cheyenne.”

TJ smiled. “She’s pretty.” He used to have a picture of her, torn from *People* magazine (headline: KIDNAPPED BLIND TEEN ESCAPES ABDUCTORS!). He had kept it under his T-shirt, close to his heart, until a nurse found it and took it away.

“I know what you’re thinkin’, Abe Lincoln. The trial’s gonna be happening soon. She’s testifying against Roy.”

TJ shrugged. Nobody was calling him to testify. Not from this place.

“How’d you like to be with her again? Be all lovey-dovey?”

Even though he wanted it to be true, TJ knew enough to be wary. People didn’t offer you good stuff for free. “How could that even happen?” He reached up to stroke his rat tail, until he remembered how they had cut it off that first day and then buzzed his head in a room that smelled eye-wateringly of bleach.

Dwayne looked around the yard, which was filled with a half dozen guards and more than a hundred patients. Only they weren’t patients. They were prisoners, just like TJ. “Say you could get out of here and go to her. Would you?”

“Yeah, but that’s never gonna happen.” The hope that fluttered in his chest stilled. There were no bars on the

windows here, but there might as well be. Every unit had a locked door. Even if you got through that, the stairs and elevators couldn't be entered without a security badge. And the only exit required passing through not one but two locked gates.

"Never say never. In a couple days, you might get a little present."

TJ still wasn't following. "Are you going to bring Cheyenne here?"

A look of impatience crossed Dwayne's face, so for a moment he looked more like Roy. "No. But I can help you go to her. Every time they let you out into the yard, start pulling a chair right up to the fence."

"And do what?"

"Just link your fingers in the chain links and stare out. And that's all you do. Every day. Pretty soon they won't care, because they'll figure they don't need to. They won't even really see you. The way a place like this works is that they focus on people who're trouble. They're not gonna care about you sitting here doing nothing." Dwayne smiled. One of his eyeteeth was gray. "And then one day soon, you'll just go—poof!"