

and into the clear

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Summary

Miss Parker has to choose between Jarod and the Centre (and well, doesn't she always?)

Parker folds her phone closed, stares at it for a moment.

She puts the phone away.

**

She sits at her desk, taps her fingers against her keyboard. 'J,' she taps, then 'A,' then 'R,' and then she stops.

Why the fuck does she know Morse code?

She pushes away from the desk in disgust.

She's too old for this shit.

**

"Oh, Miss Parker," Broots says, looking around. "You'll never guess what I heard."

"Try me, Broots," she says.

She's never surprised.

**

Jarod calls, he writes, he drops hints. He emails anecdotes from Rome, sends a photo of himself standing in front of the pyramids. *They're just a suburb of Cairo!* he writes in his ridiculous, perfect cursive, and she rolls her eyes. Of course he's amazed, he always is.

Don't let them get to you, he writes.

He should know better.

**

She steps out of her office, passes by her brother.

He waves.

**

At some lousy diner she looks up and sees a familiar silhouette. *Daddy* forms on her lips, but the silhouette resolves itself before she has a chance to call out, and he doesn't look anything like her father, not at all.

Still, she looks for her father's smile in the faces of pedestrians, listens for the rumble of his voice in passing conversations.

**

She pulls into her parking space; glares across the carpark. In the lobby she waits for the lift, impatient; scratches her wrist, and when she looks up she meets Sydney's eye, his face stern. If she didn't know better, she'd think he was being serious, but she knows when Sydney's mocking her. She snarls, "Don't even think it, Einstein," before she steps into lift.

"Miss Parker," Sydney starts to say, and she frowns at him until the doors close.

**

The doors open on her brother, and she rolls her eyes. "Don't you have anything better to do than bother me?"

"Sis," Lyle says, his arms wide open like maybe he expects a hug. "I bring great news."

"You're moving to Antartica."

Lyle laughs. "I would love to see some snow, but no, nothing so exciting as that." He pauses, fiddles with the space where his thumb used to be. "The Triumvirate has given us permission to shoot on sight."

Parker shakes her head at him. "Shoot who on sight?" she asks, and as he opens her mouth to answer her stomach drops and she knows. Damn him.

"Why, Jarod of course, Sis. He's used up too many of our resources, he's too much of a risk. We can't let him get away again, and the constant search to bring him back is just too costly. I'm sure you can't wait to be redeployed onto a more useful project."

"Oh, I'm desperate for it," she says, and he grins even more.

"Keep your gun by your side, Sis." The grin on his face is wide, and she itches to punch him.

She resists the urge, walks down the hall instead.

**

When he calls, just this once, she won't answer.

She doesn't pack, she doesn't hint, she doesn't leave any clues.

He's smart enough, he'll work it out.

And if he doesn't, well.

She runs.

END

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