

THE EXECUTION

The hallway was warm, but Mel shivered as she walked towards the door at the end of the hall. She hugged herself and glanced at the man walking at her side. He was lean and willowy, and he didn't smile. The man stopped in front of the door, but he waved her in. She pushed back the heavy slab of metal and stepped into the sparse room. A nondescript man, in a nondescript suit, sat at a plain desk surrounded by plain walls. All in all it was... plain and nondescript. *Fitting*, Mel thought to herself.

"Take a seat." The man said. His voice was surprisingly reedy. Mel would've thought his voice to be just as forgettable as the rest of him, but it wasn't. It was distinguishable. "Please state your name for the record."

"Melanie Hearst." She answered with her head bowed.

"State your name for the record please." He repeated.

"Melanie Hearst." She repeated, this time lifting her eyes. Daring to stare back with just as much obstinacy and contempt as he regarded her with.

"I think we both know that's not your name." He spoke with forced patience. He even tried to smile. Try being the key word. It looked like he had just swallowed sludge.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean." She smiled back. Hers was much more convincing.

"Fine. If you'd like to play this game, we can. I must warn you, however, that no matter how much you try and evade the truth you won't escape what's coming to you."

"Begging your pardon, Sir, but if my future is already decided then what are we doing here?"

“Just because your fate is sealed, doesn’t mean everyone’s is... You want to help your children, don’t you? I am providing you an opportunity.”

A sharp intake of breath was the only emotion Melanie allowed herself to show, but it was enough. Mr. Nondescript smiled like a hunter with its prey in sight.

“All I need from you,” He continued, “is information. It’s not hard.”

Melanie made an effort to keep her face clear while her thoughts ran faster than a train. She knew the moment she was arrested that her and her husband weren’t coming out of this alive, but the boys? She was hoping they could come out of this unscathed. They were only eight. They were innocent. “What kind of information?” She finally asked. She had a feeling she knew what they wanted, but how much did they already know? Did they think she was acting small and only want a few names? Or did they know the truth?

“State your name for the record.” The man asked with a thin eyebrow raised.

Melanie sighed, “Mae Rutherford.”

Now it was the mans turn to sigh, “Not that name. Your *real* name.”

Panic started to set in. How many of her aliases had they burned? Mae Rutherford was one of her safest ones. She mentally ran down her list, trying to tie aliases together in a way they might. She needed a safe one... *Ah*. She landed on a name she had used only once, it had to be solid. “Dorothy Byrd.”

The man slammed his hand on the table, causing Melanie to start. It was the first time his movements and speech were not methodically calculated. His emotions must have been running higher than Mel assumed.

“Do you not care about your children? Tell me your name!” His voice had risen too, but his eyes were the same: emotionless. *It’s just more calculation.* Melanie thought to herself. He wasn’t frustrated, he just wanted her to think so. He wanted to scare her into admitting the truth, which meant... *He doesn’t know what he’s looking for. He’s hoping I’ll give something away out of fear. Well, enough is enough. Three aliases down, he won’t get anything else.*

“I love my children very much, and I would do anything to keep them safe.” Mel answered calmly. It was true; she would do anything to ensure their safety, which was why she could never tell the truth. The boys’ only chance at safety was if the world changed, and so she would protect her comrades no matter the cost.

“If you care so much, then tell me your name.”

“I just did.” She answered.

“Fine, *Dorothy*, next question. Where is your sister?”

No. “I don’t have a sister.” *Not Zelda.*

“I would beg to differ.”

“Then you would be wrong. I have no sister. I did have a brother once, but he died in childhood.” Her fingers were starting to shake so she slipped them underneath her legs.

“No, Dorothy Byrd had a brother that died in childhood.”

“I am Dorothy Byrd.”

“You are *not*.”

“If you are so sure of who I am not, why don’t you tell me who I am?” Mel asked.

It was time to see just how much they actually knew.

“Fine, but for the record, the chances of saving your sons are getting less and less. Your name is Midna Farore.”

Not. Good. If they knew who she was, who she really was... The ramifications would be catastrophic. She couldn't confirm, she just couldn't. “I-I'm afraid you're mistaken. My name is Dorothy Byrd.” A twitch was starting in the corner of her eye.

The man sighed. “You're not making this better. Think of your children.”

“I am.” This was the only thing she was truly sure about.

“I'm only going to ask once more; where is Zelda?” The man stared her down.

“I don't know any Zelda.” Mel started back.

“Fine. Fine. Enjoy your last night, *Dorothy*, you'll be dead in the morning. Maybe you should take this time to reflect on your choices. You have damned your children. Can you die peacefully with that knowledge?” The man raised an eyebrow.

Melanie gave her first truly genuine smile since her arrest, “I will rest peacefully with my actions. I have not damned my children; you did that with your 'system'. I have given them a chance. *Vai all'inferno.*”

The man's face turned the color of fresh berries as he called in the guard to take her to her cell.

The next morning, at dawn, Melanie Hearst stood on a dais next to her husband. In front of her was a mass of people all waiting to see them pay for their crimes. A woman stood at the podium reading a pre-written message with their names filled in the blank. Melanie barely listened. She already knew what it said: For their crimes against the state Melanie and Jeff Hearst would be hung in front of the public; A sign to all what

happens when people rebel. Her eyes scanned the crowds, hoping for one last glimpse of her sons. She knew it was futile, they had been sent to their grandmother's house several regions away to escape all this. That was as it should be. They were too young to witness death, especially not their parents' death. And yet, Melanie wished she could see them one more time. She could only hope that one day, when they were older, they would finally decipher what she and their father had been trying to teach them. She hoped the boys would understand what their death was for. *The future is in their hands now*, she thought to herself as the platform beneath her feet disappeared and the world went black.