

Every year eight children go missing from their homes, there's no pattern, not age or gender. All we know is they never take children younger 5 or older than 16. The question is, where do they go? Will I make it to 16, or not.

I watch as rain pounds the cracked concrete pavement. The black clouds and grey stone bricks of the wall I lean on obscure any traces of colour that may have been left of the world. After the war that destroyed most of the world everything has been dull and devoid of colour. I skitter across the pavement into the shadows as I watch people mope and sulk across the street. We try not to look sad, but it's hard when there's no colour left in this walled city that is the world.

"June!" Comes September's soprano voice, echoing through the alley way. She's too cheery for this melancholy world... I slink out of the shadow I was hiding in. "why are you hiding?"

"It's time," I whisper, my eyes downcast. "What if I'm next?"

"It's okay," She thumps to the ground next to me. She carefully rests her hand on my shoulder. "You want to talk about it?"

"No," I turn away so she doesn't see the small tears that trickle down my face. I shake her hand off my shoulder and get up. I walk away, head bowed against the rain, leaving her dripping in the gutter.

"June!" She calls after me, "June, wait up!" I ignore her. I hear her slosh through the rain after me. What I was about to do would hurt her. Don't, I reason, I have to, I can't lose her too. I stop.

"September, don't follow me," I say in a dead voice. "Go away..."

"What? Why?" Her voice is full of hurt.

"I don't need you, I never did..." I hear her start to cry.

"I thought we were friends!" She screams at me. I turn, only to see the empty space where my friend was, my only friend. What have I done? The right thing. A tear slides down my face.

The orphanage door creaks open. I enter, careful not to wake anyone. I start shoving food into my backpack. I pull on my brother's coat, my brother. December died a year ago, I'd been told there'd been an accident at the factory, I knew better, because December wasn't there. I slip December's pendant over my head. I wasn't coming back, it was too dangerous. A flash of lightning temporarily illuminates the room. I glance at the clock, I gotta go. I rush from the room, I know it's futile, I'll never make it out of the city in time.

My head smacks against the pavement as I trip over a stone. Dark blood flows down my face and streaks my hair. Black silhouettes race through the shadows, I'm too late. They've found me, don't let them hurt September. Oh no, September. Just then one of the figures steps forward, with September. Shadow clouds his face, then he smiles, his teeth gleam perfect white. Lightning briefly flashes. Then I recognize him, January, one of our leaders. I'm confused at first, then he raises a silver knife. The blood drains from my face as I realize what he's going to do.

September looks terrified, she quivers, eyes wide. He plunges the knife deep into her chest.

"September!" I scream. Restraining hands fall on my arms as I reach for January, wanting him to pay

for what he's done. They drag me away from Septembers body, leaving her bleeding in the street.
Blood stains the water, I thrash and scream, not September, she's all I have left.

They lock me in a cell with seven other kids, seven orphans.