The customer leaves at last, and Sonia came to the back room to meet them. "So, you're Unwinds and you want my help, is that it?"  
  
 "Maybe just some food," says Connor, "a place to rest for some time. Then we'll be on our way."  
   
 "We don't want to be any trouble," says Risa.  
  
 The old woman laughs at that. "Yes, you do! You want to be trouble to everyone you meet." She looks at Risa. "That's what you are now. TROUBLE." Then she says softly. "But you dont have be sorry for that. You didn't ask for any of these. " She looks at the two of them, then says to Risa: "If you really want to live, dear, you two can have a baby again. They won't unwind a pregnant() girl, so that will buy you nine whole months."  
   
 Risa is surprised and doesnt know what to say. Connor feels his face turns red, and says, "She . . . she wasn't pregnant in the beginning. It's not her baby. Or mine."  
  
 Sonia thinks about this and takes a closer look at the baby. "Not yours, hmm? Well, now I know why you're not feeding it with your own milk."  
   
 Risa doesnt find it funny at all. She goes on feeding the baby with milk and her finger. "Are you going to help us or not?"  
   
 Sonia points to a very big box and asks Connor, "Think you're strong enough to bring that over here?"  
   
 Connor gets up, wondering what is in the box. He pulls it with all his power() and places it before Sonia.  
   
 "Not much of a strong boy, are you?"  
   
 "I never said I was."  
  
 Sonia doesnt open the box, but sits on it.  
   
 "So what's in it?" Connor asks.  
   
 "Letters," she says. "But it's not what's in it that matters. It's what's under it." Then she pushes away the blanket() that was under the box. There it is, a small door with a pull-ring().  
   
 "Go on," says Sonia. Connor pulls the ring and opens the door. He sees steep() steps leading down into darkness. Risa, with the baby in her arms, comes close to the door.  
  
 The steps are steep and uneven(), but Sonia insists on() leading the way. Connor tries to give her support, but she says angrily, "If I want your help, I'll ask. Do I look weak to you?"  
   
 "Well, yes." Connor says.   
  
 Sonia gave him an dirty look and then turns on a light.  
  
 Risa gasps(). Connor looks where she is looking and he sees them. Three kids. A girl and two boys.  
  
 The kids seem to be close to Connor's and Risa's age. Unwinds, too, for sure. They look tired.  
  
 "Oh god, stop staring()," she says to them. "You look like a pack of rats()."  
  
 Sonia walks slowly around the space, pointing things out to Risa and Connor. "There are foods on these shelves(). Eat whatever you want, but don't leave anything over or you really will see rats. Bathroom's back there. Keep it clean. I'll go out and get some food for the baby."   
  
 "How much longer?" asks the oldest of the three rats, a big guy who looks at Connor with distrust, as if Connor might take away his role as the leader or something.  
   
 "What do you care?" says Sonia. "You got something important() to do?"  
  
 The kid doesnt speak, he just looks at Sonia with anger and crosses his arms, showing a shark tattoo() on his arm. Ooh, thinks Connor with a smirk().  
 Scaring. Now I'm really scared.  
   
 Sonia replies. "Four more days until I dont have to see you anymore."  
   
 "What happens in four days?" Risa asks.  
  
 "The ice cream man comes." And with that, Sonia goes up the stairs(). The door is closed with a big sound.  
   
 "Dear, sweet Dragon Lady() won't tell us what happens next," says the other boy, a thin kid with braces() on his teeth. His eyes tell of sleepless nights, but his hair looks good. Connor can tell that this kid comes from money, although his clothes are old and dirty,.  
   
 "We get sent to harvest camp and they cut us up, that's what happens next," says the girl. She's Asian(), and looks as unfriendly as the kid with the tattoo, with pink hair and a choker() on her neck.  
  
 Shark Boy looks at her angrily. "Will you stop talking?" Connor notices that the kid has four marks of fingernails() on one side of his face. The girl has a black eye.  
   
 "It's not the end of the world," she says. "Just the end of us."  
  
 Risa gives Connor a look, and he knows what she's thinking. We have to spend four days with these kids? Still, she hold out her hand to them and says hi. Connor does the same, although he doesnt want to.  
  
 Turns out, each of these kids, just like every Unwind, has a story. And every story is sad enough to make people cry.  
   
 The thin kid is Hayden. As Connor thought, he comes from a very rich family. When his parents got a divorce(), there was a long custody() fight over him. In the end, there was one thing his mother and father could agree on. That is, each of them would rather see Hayden unwound than allow the other parent to have custody1.  
  
 The girl is Mai. Her parents kept trying for a boy, until they finally got one but after having four girls first. Mai was the fourth. "It's nothing new," Mai tells them. "Back in China, in the days when they only allowed one kid each family, people were killing off their baby girls."  
  
 The big kid is Roland. He wanted to join the army(), but it seems that he is too fierce() and scary(), even for the army. Like Connor, Roland got into fights at school. But that's not what got him to be unwound. Roland had beaten up his stepfather() for beating his mom. The mother took her husband's side, and so Roland was sent to be unwound.  
   
 "That's so unfair," Risa tells him.  
   
 "Like what happened to you is any fairer?" says Connor.  
  
 Roland looks at Connor and says. "You keep talking to her like that, maybe she'll find herself a new boyfriend."  
  
 Connor smiles a little, and looks at the tattoo on his arm. "I like your dolphin()."  
   
 Roland doesn't smile back. "It's a tiger shark, idiot()."  
   
 Connor keeps it in his mind never to turn his back on Roland.  
1 Each of them would rather see Hayden unwound than allow the other parent to have custodyHaydenHayden  
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