

Aegean keeps her face neutral as she boards the ship with Bryony, her nerves itching to clear the ship one last time even though her connections have already determined the place is safe. Though her swords, weapons, and instincts are sharper than a blade's edge, her heart aches for Bronwyn and her inability to rescue her parents. Her deep care for others has always juxtaposed her ability to get her job done, being both the reason she passed and nearly failed the Tourmaline Training Academy For Young Fighters.

She looks around, trying to spot Indigo and getting a better idea for the layout of the ship. Her boarding before had been hasty, her main priority being aiding the authorities in capturing the criminals and freeing the prisoners. She blinks to herself, still in awe of the direction her day has taken. She went from pacing around in Tourmaline's Fighter's Agency, answering incoming calls and messages. Her fellow workers brought her attention to Indigo's, making fun of the way she talked. She stole ownership of the exchange, rolling her eyes at the others, and was glad she did once she saw what Indigo was saying. It had been the most bizzare conversation she had ever had.

Clover: THANK YOU! I've been trying to get you all to listen to me for ages!

Aegean: Hello Clover, are you requesting the authorities?

Clover: YES!! I was doing research on the ships around this storage facility and I discovered that the *Questria*, and even though I'm going on a quest, I was not prepared for *THIS!* THEY'RE CRIMINALS!

Aegean: Excuse me, Clover, please slow down. I have a few follow up questions for you. Firstly, the ID you're messaging with is a year or more out of date. I've opened up your file for your current one, and... ma'am, are you committing identity theft?

Clover: . . . . . Um, not... exactly?

Aegean: I'd like to help you, but I need to know who you actually are. Here, I've made the conversation confidential. It will delete automatically. Please be honest with me so I can help you.

Clover: Clover is my older sister. My name is Indigo. I was trying to meet her but she left me in this storage facility and refused to let me go with her and wants me to get on this other ship but I wanted to board the Questrial but they've been taking prisoners for years!

Aegean: how did you acquire this information?

Indigo: I got into some old files and cross referenced them with some news reports and crime reports.

Aegean: Ok... so, Indigo, you're breaking the law by doing what you're currently doing. Not only identity theft but-

Indigo: the files I was looking at were all public. I just did the digging.

Aegean: so, you're requesting backup, on a hunch?

Indigo: not a hunch! The files clearly show that this is fishy!

Aegean: ok, I'm going to check it out with you.

And... now she's here.

"Indigo!" She calls out, not sure where the girl went. She's a finnick thing, her train of thought leading her all different directions. That's why she had stolen the conversation from earlier. Not everyone is good at being patient. And even in the past several hours Indigo's already tested her patience, and patience is one of Aegean's strongest traits.

She's managed to get Indigo an authority-issued ID unconnected to her home planet by her request and goes to hand Bryony's hers as well.

"What's this?" She asks, pushing a dirty blonde strand of hair behind her ear to take the card.

"Your ID. I got them for you and Indigo."

"Where is Indigo? And how do you two know each other?"

"I have no idea and I'm the fighter sent when she requested the authorities."

"Indigo!!" They call out together.

"Over here!" She calls. They follow the sound of her voice to a

medbay on the ship. "Go up to the panel," she instructs, standing in a confined area.

"Indigo, what is this?" Aegean asks.

"It's a bioscanner. To make sure none of us are carrying infectious diseases. I already scanned the ship for them, so all that's left is us!" Aegean shares a look with Bryony and follows Indigo's instructions to starting the scan.

"You're clear," she informs her and then Indigo does the same with Bryony and Aegean.

"Awesome! All clear. Surprising, considering Bryony's-" Indigo stops talking once she notices the look on Aegean's face.

"I'm gonna locate the quarters with Bryony, can you look into getting us a pilot?" Aegean asks and Indigo nods, taking off to the research lab. When Aegean had arrived at the storage facility earlier, Indigo had already memorized the layout of the entire ship. Aegean's fairly certain she remembers the direction given Indigo's lengthy explanations of the ship. Indigo can be a little chatty but Aegean knows she's the best navigator that she's ever interacted with. "Ok, this should be it." Aegean clicks on the screen at the opening of the wing and locates a map of the layout of the quarters. "How about this one," she gestures. "Huge bathroom and room."

Bryony's eyes widen at the sight of it.

"I don't need all that," she insists.

"Well, I'm not going to take that room, and Indigo claimed this one," Aegean gestures. "So, you're not hurting anyone by taking it."

"What about the pilot we need?"

"We get dibs first. Come on, you were in captivity for months. Let yourself enjoy some luxury after all that, ok? You deserve it."

Bryony nods and the two venture toward the room.

"This is huge," Bryony marvels.

"The bathroom's even nicer," Aegean adds, walking toward the bed, where Bryony is looking at the bedding with what can only be described as an intense longing. "When was the last time you slept?" She asks her gently. Bryony furrows her brow.

"I honestly have no clue."

"Why don't you shower and get some rest? I'll take care of things with Indigo."

"No, I need to be there to find my family," Bryony insists and Aegean tries not to flinch at the reminder of her failure earlier.

"You're not going to be much use to them without rest and fighting skills. I'll make sure Indigo does some more digging, trust me, she's good at that. I promise I'll come get you as soon as I know anything, alright?"

Bryony looks down at her feet. She doesn't give anymore protests but something is still holding her back.

"I'm... sorry. I don't want to be alone again." Aegean takes this into consideration and works out a plan in her mind.

"I can come check on you at set intervals? Make sure you're alright?" Bryony bites her lip but nods, resolve filling her eyes. "You can do this, Bry." Bryony's eyes widen at the nickname and Aegean quickly realizes she struck a nerve. "I'll be back in a bit, ok?" Aegean starts, resigning to give Bryony some space.

Indigo's already jabbering away before Aegean even walks into the doorway.

"Wait, did you just say something about Cobalt?" Aegean interrupts her.

"Yes! I'm working on looking through Bryony's files—"

"We need a pilot first, Indie."

"I already did that. She's coming in an hour. So..." Aegean tunes out Indigo's chatter as she scans over the file of the pilot Indie selected. She's pleased with the findings and tunes back in to Indie in time to hear her mentioning something about an asteroid belt and a facility on the outer edge of the solar system they're currently in. Well, she's glad she'll get to report to Bryony that Indigo is already ten steps ahead of where they thought she'd be.

"You think that's where they are?" Aegean asks, looking at the pictures Indie's pulled up.

"All the signs point to there, but there are a few other locations I still need to cross reference. Where's Bryony? I need to tell her the news!"

"I'll tell her. I promised I'd check on her every so often."

Indigo looks over to the side before locking eyes with Aegean again, her expression tight.

"Is she ok? The bioscanner's not good at tracking the health of the mind."

"She will be. At least ok as she can be after what she endured." Aegean makes her way back to Bryony's room after her assurance to Indigo. Bryony's seated at the vanity in the room with a towel wrapped around her as she brushes through her hair. As Aegean registers what's in front of her, she realizes she hadn't even made sure there were the necessary things in here for Bryony to use.

"The person who lived here before was a total diva," Bryony says once she notices Aegean's confused look. "Clean towels, unopened hair brushes, and clean sheets too, at least I think so. It's nice to have

some luck for a change," she sighs, placing the hair brush down. Aegean's thrilled to see her without the grime on her face and her hair is ten shades lighter after washing all the dirt out of it. "I forgot this was what 'me' looks like," Bryony shakes her head, studying her reflection.

"You look good," Aegean compliments and Bryony lets out a little smile. Aegean takes the silence that follows as her cue to tell Bryony the news about her family.

"Thank you so much," Bryony tells her. "For all of this. For saving me from that cell. For the first time in months, I feel safe." Aegean smiles and checks in again on Bryony a little while later to see her sound asleep underneath the covers of her new bed. Aegean figures she'll leave the light on for her and shuts the door behind her as she exits, letting out a breath. She stares at the wall in front of her as her heart races.

Her mind flashes back to when she found Bryony's parents on the ship.

Bryony's mom had insisted she leave her for her daughter. Lev told her to take good care of his sister, and Aegean had stood helpless as she watched the knife being lifted from against Roux's throat.

"Fine," one of the crew members had spit. "We don't need the girl anyway. She's more trouble than she's worth."

And then they all disappeared in a blink. Aegean had traded the lives of Bryony's family to save the life of a girl she only knew from glimpses at the academy. She felt powerless in that moment. An impossible choice.

And she has no idea how she's going to tell Bryony the truth.