# Stay silent, and obey

Protesters are massed at the main gate of the Capitol brandishing placards and chanting slogans. A flotilla of drones from the Ministry of Public Security hovers above them, recording their every move. I’m sure that every last demonstrator will face consequences for their actions today—anything ranging from a sudden job loss, to having their home searched, to being executed live on television for high treason. They’re courageous to be here.

The gate blocking the entrance is a modern-day portcullis—a heavy grating made of steel. Right behind it, jackbooted soldiers holding shields and electroshock batons stand guard. Soldiers patrol the battlements enclosing the park. Vertical takeoff and landing crafts are the only vehicles entering or leaving the Capitol grounds.

We jostle to get closer. The Senate building is tantalizingly close—it’s only a few hundred yards away. So close yet so far.

There’s no way we’ll be able to get inside this fortress. It’s a lost cause.

Harry has come to the same conclusion it seems because he tugs on my sleeve. We move away from the crowd without exchanging a word. Under dark, foreboding clouds, we walk aimlessly for some time before slumping on moulded chairs next to a dim sum stand.

There’s a TV screen hooked up to a diesel generator. On the screen, I see the first senators entering the Senate in anticipation of the vote. We have **thirty-seven** minutes left. The drizzle we had before turns into a downpour. Heavy drops splash on the ground. Head down under umbrellas, protesters start to leave.

Everything I have done has come to naught. I feel like crying and pummelling the table with my fists all at the same time.

“I’m out of ideas, Harry. I surrender.”

Harry’s pale face lights up on hearing my words.

“Surrender. That’s exactly what I should do. Teegan, you’re a genius.”

Harry kisses me on the forehead.

“What?” I’m so confused right now.

“Teegan, listen. Earlier, we walked passed a gate on the northwest side. It was much less busy than the main one. I walk up to it and announce myself as a wanted fugitive. They’ll be sure to open the gate. With this heavy rain, the visibility is low. You’ll be able to sneak in and run to the Senate. He checks the time. We can still make it. We have **twenty-eight** minutes left.”

“Are you mad? God knows what they’ll do to you. I’ve lost Adrian already. I sure as hell won’t to lose you. Not going to happen.” I shake my head vigorously.

“Teegan, I don’t have long to live anyway.” Harry slowly removes his coat. I gasp in horror. His shoulder is covered in blood.

“I got shot at Union Station. I’ve lost … quite a bit of blood already.” He places his hand on the table to keep his balance.

“How could you hide this from me you dumbass.” Oh my God, no, no, no! This is not happening. This nightmare is just getting worse.

“I’ll bring you to a hospital.” I blurt.

“That’s the same as my plan. We’ll both be arrested and have accomplished nothing.”

With a moan, he slips his coat back on before anyone notices the blood. Before the URF interrogate me, they might patch me up first so I don’t die on them. This daring plan might actually save me. Come on. Let’s go. I won’t be able to stand on my feet much longer.”

“No! Let me patch you up. I’m getting better at it, am I not? When I’m done, you’ll be good as new.” Blurry-eyed from the tears in my eyes, I open my knapsack and start scavenging for a t-shirt that I could use to make bandages with.

Harry places a gentle hand on my arm to stop me.

“I’ve lost too much blood.”

He pops the last painkillers and tosses the bottle. He gets up. He staggers a moment before collapsing on his chair. He forces a smile. He gets up again.

I don’t have a choice I think to myself. This is mental, but I agree—Harry isn’t going to make it without medical assistance.

In a daze, I place my arm around his waist to support him.

We approach the West gate. The whole thing has me terrified. I love him. I now know I do. Adrian’s ghost is still there of course, hovering in the back of my mind. I don’t think he’ll ever disappear, but I feel that my destiny lies with Harry.

“Do you have your earpiece?” he asks.

“Yeah.”

“Keep it. They might not notice mine right away. That way, we’ll be able to stay in touch a bit longer.”

Harry takes me in his arms and kisses me sending shivers up and down my spine.

Raindrops pummel our face but we’re oblivious to them.

He pulls back from our embrace, “Should I not make it, take care of Lolo, will you? Tell her I love her.”

“Listen to me. Nothing’s going to happen to you. I’ll be back in no time. Okay?” I paint on a reassuring smile.

“Okay.”

Harry heads for the gate, staggering like a drunken man, on the verge of collapsing at any moment.

I slink to the shadows of a nearby alcove and wait for the gate to open. I have a bad feeling about this. I’m biting my nails like there’s no tomorrow, gnawing off the last bits of nail polish, trying to keep my teeth from chattering. A clap of thunder makes me jump. Lightning electrifies the sky. Harry reaches the sentry booth and announces himself. In a manner of seconds, the gate slides open and four soldiers sprint towards Harry.

As they approach, Harry darts to the right to draw them away from me. In his frail condition, the guards easily catch up to him.

I hear, “I love you” in my earpiece.

With his baton, a guard gives an electric jolt to Harry who tumbles to the ground writhing in pain. His face lies in a deep puddle. The water reaches his nostrils. The anguish I feel at his suffering wells up in my chest and threatens to make me scream and reveal my position.

“Well, well, well. Who do we have here?” says a sergeant. Helped by his exoskeleton suit, he easily lifts Harry’s limp body by the shoulders and holds him one foot above ground. “Harry Price,” he barks in a voice loud enough for his men to hear. “I know someone who’s just dying to see you.”

I force myself to stop watching. I need to forget Harry if I’m to succeed. Keeping to the shadows, I dart inside just as the gate starts closing.

Up ahead, I see a hexagon-shaped brick structure set into the sloping hillside of the West Front lawn on the Senate side of the Capitol Building. There’s no light. It seems abandoned and I decide to head there, hugging the wall. Once in a while, I stop and wait for the floodlights to sweep past me and then race again.

I reached the edifice. Inside, I find stone benches sheltered by projecting roofs of red Spanish mission tile. I take a breather. I’m halfway to the Senate wing. Spotlights sweep the grounds with mechanical regularity. A moment of darkness. I dash to my next hiding place.

I follow the northwest wall towards the Senate wing. A patrol is heading my way. I can’t move. Fuck. If I continue I will be in a spotlight. Shit! Shit! Shit! I check the time. Shit I have **twenty-two** minutes left. Minutes pass. Through my earpiece, I hear someone spitting, the sound of a punch followed by a howl of pain. Oh my God, they’re beating Harry. I can imagine him on a chair, his hands tied behind his back, a light in his face, being interrogated by burly soldiers. If anything happens to Harry, I’ll never forgive myself.

A detonation coming from the Potomac River startles me. Did the Hatters blow up something? Sirens start blaring. In the distance, I see the target—the Washington Monument is broken in half, engulfed in flames.

An armada of VTOL aircrafts take off one after the other, heading west. The commotion attracts the attention of the patrol and this finally gives me a chance to dash to a high hedge where I hide. I race to the back of the Senate Wing. Guards are pouring out of a door. Once the last soldier steps out, I sneak in just behind him.

I made it inside the Senate Wing. I’m shaking like a leaf. Now what? I’m not too sure of where I am. I can’t hear Harry anymore. They probably removed his earpiece, but I keep mine just in case.