

Blue and green light strikes my vision with a brutal force as I open my eyes for the very first time. Strange liquids fill the glass tank in which I am floating, drifting. A screeching sound, the metallic roar of foreign machines penetrate my senses, brutalising my ears. When I open my eyes again, the world beyond the tank remains blurred, though figures, dark silhouettes crowd the tank, their shoulders hunched. I imagine the hunger of desperate predators in the eyes of these strangers.

In the corner of my eye something dark and thin, a sliver of metal, extends within the tank, stretching toward my body. As I turn to face it I see yet more of them. Something sharp presses into my back. I spin again, legs kicking wildly in the water. The needles surround me, piercing my skin in a unified, sharp assault.

Pain soars through my skull and the world vanishes around me, replaced by a dark, damp alleyway.

I stride through the alley, toward the body, my shadow is chased by neon lights and my hat is beaten down by pouring rain. A man lies dead at my feet, his blood mixing with the rain and filth pooling on the floor. His file said he was a hated man, someone behind me suggests that was why he's been killed. As always, the person behind me is wrong, they miss the big picture. I mumble something under my breath, a thought incomprehensible to me most of all, before tipping the contents of a flask between my lips.

The world shakes, and changes. Something breaks within my mind. My eyes split apart and I scream my way into a new place.

I'm in a police station, lying on a bench and waiting to see a client. A man in blue overalls approaches me. A quick glance around the room reveals three others in similar uniforms. As the man grabs me by the shirt and lifts me up, I look down. I'm wearing the same outfit.

I sigh. Of course, I'm not here to see a client. I'm one of the prisoners.

The man's saying something, yelling, really. Apparently I'm the reason he's here. Doesn't explain why I'm in prison, but it explains why he just punched me.

Oh. He just punched me.

It takes a moment of frozen time for the pain to register.

It takes several moments more for the concept of pain to unfold, like a letter caked in congealed mould, within me.

I spin from the force of the blow and fall, collapsing to my knees, in a brand new place. I'm crouched down in a bar behind an overturned table, bullets cutting the air around me, tearing my cover to tiny, wooden shreds. Something, a bullet or fragment of wood, catches me in the side. There is no pain, only blood.

I'm out of ammo.

A bullet shatters a piece of table and takes me in the shoulder. I collapse, falling to my stomach, face striking the hard surface of the bar.

The world shakes one more time and I shut my eyes. Something screams, pitched fury and fear. My body writhes and hands press against me, holding me down. Turning me over? Something cold touches my back. Hands, unwanted, are all over me.

Where are my clothes?

I want them to stop but they can't hear me over the screaming.

I open my eyes. Blue and green light strikes my vision once more. But before I can close them, rough fingers grip my face and hold the eyelids open. Tears fall down my cheeks and the screaming continues. More hands, pressing on my legs. The piercing light begins to dim.

Am I the one screaming?

As a test, I try to close my mouth.

The screaming stops.

Slowly, the world falls quiet around me. Hushed voices speak nearby. Lights hum and my breathing shakes my body, rattling it from skin to bone. The fingers holding my eyes open release my face. One by one, the strange and foreign hands on my form slip away. I blink, but resist the urge to screw my eyes shut once more.

Instead, I focus on my breathing, slowing it down. My hands shake against the cold hard floor. After a moment, the hands return, gently this time, lifting me up and carrying me. It's a short journey, before they set me down on a chair. Another figure appears in front of me. A man. He shines a bright light in my eyes, moving it left, then right. Terrified that they'll force my eyelids open once more, I keep my eyes open.

After a brief examination, the man leaves and someone else presses something into my hands. Whatever it is, it's soft. I look down. Fabric, dark. I search my memories for its name but find only the memories of the alley, the prison and the bar.

"It's a gown," speaks the voice of an unfamiliar figure. She's old, smiling gently. Green clothing, faded, worn. Grey hair hangs in tangles down her cheeks. How long has it been since she washed it? Bags under her eyes. Tension in the face muscles. Is she forcing the smile?

"I'm sorry about them, animals," she continues, "They really can be monstrous. Normally we try to restrain you with straps and a bed and the like, but it's a busy day and we didn't have any left."

"You haven't gone home in a very long time," I finally said. My voice is tired, lower than I expected. A bit of gravel. A touch of hostility. Is that who I am?

I don't quite know who I am.

“Don’t be alarmed,” The woman says, “Your memories will come in time. I’m also a clone, I remember leaving my tank as vividly as the day it happened.”

“Clone,” I whisper, the word meaning nothing to me. “Why can’t I remember anything? Why can’t I remember who I am?”

“Because you’re no one,” The woman responded, “Every clone is no one at first. Until they regain the memories of someone. Your’s are still fading in, but you’ll have them all back eventually, I assure you.”

My attention returns downward, down to the gown in my hands. I run my thumbs over the surface. When I next speak, my voice is hollow. “I’m no one?”

“For now,” the woman said, “But then, very soon, you’ll be Aria Moon.”

“Aria Moon,” I said, testing the name on my lips.

“Welcome,” The woman extended her hand, “Welcome, Aria Moon, to Harmony.”