

# ARENA TWO

(BOOK #2 OF THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY)

MORGAN RICE

## ABOUT MORGAN RICE

Morgan Rice is the #1 Bestselling author of THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS, a young adult series comprising eight books, which has sold over 100,000 copies and has been translated into six languages. Morgan is also author of the #1 Bestselling series THE VAMPIRE LEGACY, a young adult series published in 2012 comprising two books and counting. Morgan is also author of ARENA ONE: SLAVERUNNERS, the first book in a new trilogy which is a post-apocalyptic action thriller set in the future. Please visit [www.morganricebooks.com](http://www.morganricebooks.com) to read free samples and to stay in touch.

## ACCLAIM FOR MORGAN RICE'S BOOKS

“Grabbed my attention from the beginning and did not let go....This story is an amazing adventure that is fast paced and action packed from the very beginning. There is not a dull moment to be found.”

--Paranormal Romance Guild {regarding *Turned*}

“A great plot, and this especially was the kind of book you will have trouble putting down at night. The ending was a cliffhanger that was so spectacular that you will immediately want to buy the next book, just to see what happens.”

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“A book to rival *Twilight* and *The Vampire Diaries*, and one that will have you wanting to keep reading until the very last page! If you are into adventure, love and vampires this book is the one for you!”

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“An ideal story for young readers. Morgan Rice did a good job spinning an interesting twist on what could have been a typical vampire tale. Refreshing and unique, has the classic elements found in many Young Adult paranormal stories.”

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“Morgan Rice proves herself again to be an extremely talented storyteller....This would appeal to a wide range of audiences, including younger fans of the vampire/fantasy genre. It ended with an unexpected cliffhanger that leaves you shocked.”

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by Morgan Rice

**THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY**

ARENA ONE: SLAVERSUNNERS (Book #1 of the Survival Trilogy)

ARENA TWO (Book #2 of the Survival Trilogy)

**THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS**

TURNED (Book #1 in the Vampire Journals)

LOVED (Book #2 in the Vampire Journals)

BETRAYED (Book #3 in the Vampire Journals)

DESTINED (Book #4 in the Vampire Journals)

DESIRED (Book #5 in the Vampire Journals)

BETROTHED (Book #6 in the Vampire Journals)

VOWED (Book #7 in the Vampire Journals)

FOUND (Book #8 in the Vampire Journals)

**THE VAMPIRE LEGACY**

RESURRECTED (Book #1 of the Vampire Legacy)

CRAVED (Book #2 of the Vampire Legacy)

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“Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.”

--Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

## ONE

There are some days in the world that just seem perfect. Some days when a certain stillness covers the world, when a calm blankets you so thoroughly that you feel as if you could just disappear, when you feel such a sense of peace, immune from all the worries of the world. Immune from fear. From tomorrow. I can count moments like these on a single hand.

And one of them is right now.

I am thirteen years old, Bree is six, and we stand on a beach of fine, soft sand. dad holds my hand, and mom holds Bree's, and the four of us step across the hot sand, on our way into the ocean. The cool spray of the waves feels so good on my face, tapering off the heat of this August day. Waves crash all around us, and dad and mom are laughing, carefree. I have never seen them so relaxed. I catch them looking at each other with such love, and I implant the image in my mind. It is one of the few times I've seen them so happy with each other, and I don't want to forget it. Bree yells in ecstasy, thrilled at the crash of the waves, which are at her chest, at the tug of the undertow, up to her thighs. Mom holds her tight and dad squeezes my hand, holding us back from the pull of the ocean.

"ONE! TWO! THREE!" dad yells.

I am lifted high into the air as dad pulls my hand and mom pulls Bree's. I go up high, over a wave, and scream as I clear it and it crashes behind me. I am amazed that dad can stand there like that, so strong, like a rock, seemingly oblivious to the force of nature.

As I sink down into the ocean I enter it with shock, the cold water at my chest. I squeeze dad's hand harder, as the undertow returns, and again he holds me firmly in place. I feel, in that moment, that he will protect me from everything, forever.

Wave after wave crashes down, and for the first time in as long as I can remember, mom and dad are in no rush. They hoist us again and again, Bree shouting with ever more delight. I don't know how much time passes on this magnificent summer day, on this peaceful beach, under a cloudless sky, the spray hitting my face. I never want the sun to set, never want any of this to change. I want to be here, like this, forever. And in this moment, I feel like I might be.

I open my eyes slowly, disoriented by what I see before me. I'm not at the ocean, but sitting in the passenger seat of a motor boat, racing its way up a river. It is not summer, but winter, and the banks are lined with snow. Occasional chunks of ice float past us. My face is sprayed with water, but it is not the cool mist of the ocean waves in summer but rather the freezing spray of the icy Hudson in winter. I blink several times until I realize it is not a cloudless summer morning, but a cloudy winter afternoon. I try to figure out what happened, how everything changed.

I sit up with a chill and look around, immediately on guard. I haven't fallen asleep in daylight in as long as I can remember, and it surprises me. I quickly get my bearings and see Logan, standing stoically behind the wheel, eyes fixed on the river, navigating the Hudson. I turn and see Ben, head in his hands, staring out at the river, lost in his own world. On the other side of the boat sit Bree, eyes closed, leaning back in her seat, and her new friend Rose cuddled up with her, asleep on her shoulder. Sitting in her lap is our new pet, the one-eyed Chihuahua, asleep.

I'm amazed I allowed myself to sleep, too, but as I look down and notice the half-drunk bottle of champagne in my hand, I realize the alcohol, which I haven't had in years, must have knocked me out—that, combined with so many sleepless nights, and so many days of adrenaline rush. My body is so banged up, so sore and bruised, it must've just fallen asleep by itself. I feel guilty: I never let

Bree out of my sight before. But as I look over at Logan, his presence so strong, I realize I must've felt safe enough around him to do that. In some ways, it's like having my dad back. Is that why I dreamed of him?

"Nice to have you back," comes Logan's deep voice. He glances my way, a small smile playing at the corner of his lips.

I lean forward, surveying the river before us as we cut through it like butter. The roar of the engine is deafening, and the boat rides the current, moving up and down in subtle motions, rocking just a tiny bit. The freezing spray hits my face directly, and I look down and see I'm still dressed in the same clothes I've been wearing for days. The clothes practically cling to my skin, caked with sweat and blood and dirt—and now moist from the spray. I am damp, and cold, and hungry. I would do anything for a hot shower, a hot chocolate, a roaring fire, and a change of clothes.

I scan the horizon: the Hudson is like a vast and wide sea. We stick to the middle, far from either shore, Logan wisely keeping us away from any potential predators. Remembering, I immediately turn back, checking for any sign of slaverunners. I see none.

I turn back and look for any signs of any boats on the horizon before us. Nothing. I scan the shorelines, looking for any sign of activity. Nothing. It is as if we have the world to ourselves. It is comforting and desolate at the same time.

Slowly, I relax my guard. It feels like I've been asleep forever, but from the sun's position in the sky, it's only mid-afternoon. I couldn't have been asleep for more than an hour, at most. I look around for any familiar landmark. After all, we are nearly back near home. But I see none.

"How long was I out?" I ask Logan.

He shrugs. "Maybe an hour."

*An hour*, I think. It feels like an eternity.

I check the gas gauge, and it reads half empty. That doesn't bode well.

“Any sign of fuel anywhere?” I ask.

The moment I ask, I realize it is a stupid question.

Logan looks over at me, as if to say *really*? Of course, if he had seen a fuel depot, he would have hit it.

“Where are we?” I ask.

“These are your parts,” he says. “I was going to ask you the same thing.”

I scan the river again, but still can’t recognize anything. That’s the thing about the Hudson—it’s so wide, and it stretches forever, and it’s so easy to lose one’s bearings.

“Why didn’t you wake me?” I ask.

“Why should I? You needed the sleep.”

I don’t quite know what else to say to him. That’s the thing about Logan: I like him, and I feel he likes me, but I don’t know if we have all that much to say to each other. It doesn’t help that he’s guarded, and that I am, too.

We continue in silence, the white water churning beneath us, and I wonder how much longer we can go on. What will we do when our fuel runs out?

In the distance, I spot something on the horizon. It looks like some sort of structure, in the water. At first I wonder if I am seeing things, but then Logan cranes his neck, alert, and I realize he must see it, too.

“I think it’s a bridge,” he says. “A downed bridge.”

I realize he’s right. Growing ever closer is a towering hunk of twisted metal, sticking up out of the water like some sort of monument to hell. I remember this bridge: it once beautifully spanned the river; now, it’s a huge heap of scrap metal, plunging at jagged angles down into the water.

Logan slows the boat, the engine quieting as we get closer. Our speed drops and the boat rocks wildly. The jagged metal protrudes from every direction, and Logan navigates, turning the boat left

and right, creating his own little pathway. I look up as we go at the bridge's remains, looming over us. It looks like it rises hundreds of feet high, a testament to what humanity was once able to do before we started killing each other.

"The Tappan Zee," I remark. "We're about an hour north of the city. We've got a good jump on them, if they're coming after us."

"They *are* coming after us," he said. "You can bet on it."

I look at him. "How can you be so sure?"

"I know them. They never forget."

As we pass the last scrap of metal, Logan picks up speed and I lean back as we accelerate.

"How far behind us do you think they are?" I ask.

He looks at the horizon, stoic. Finally, he shrugs.

"Hard to say. Depends how long it takes to rally the troops. Snow's heavy, which is good for us. Maybe three hours? Maybe six, if we're lucky? Good thing is, this baby's fast. I think we can outrun them, as long as we have fuel."

"But we don't," I say, pointing out the obvious. "We left with a full tank—now we're half empty. We'll be empty in just a few hours. Canada's a long way away. How do you propose we find fuel?"

Logan stares at the water, thinking.

"We have no choice," he says. "We have to find it. There's no alternative. We can't stop."

"We're going to need to rest at some point," I say. "We're going to need food, and some sort of shelter. We can't stay out in this temperature all day and all night."

"Better to starve and freeze than be caught by slaverunners," he says.

I think of dad's house, farther upriver. We're going to pass right by it. I remember my vow to my old dog, Sasha, to bury her. I also think of all the food up there, in that stone cottage—we can

salvage it, and it would sustain us for days. I think of all the tools in dad's garage, all the things we can make use of. Not to mention the extra clothes, blankets and matches.

"I want to make a stop."

Logan turns and looks at me as if I'm crazy. I can see that he doesn't like this.

"What are you talking about?"

"My dad's house. In Catskill. About an hour north of here. I want to stop there. There are a lot of things we can salvage. Things we'll need. Like food. And," I pause, "I want to bury my dog."

"Bury your dog?" he asks, his voice rising. "Are you crazy? You want to get us all killed for that?"

"I promised her," I say.

"Promised?" he shoots back. "Your dog? Your dead dog? You've got to be kidding."

I stare him down, and he realizes pretty quickly that I'm not.

"If I promise something, I deliver. I'd bury you if I promised."

He shakes his head.

"Listen," I say firmly. "You wanted Canada. We could have gone anywhere. That was *your* dream. Not mine. Who knows if this town even exists? I'm following you on a whim. And this boat's not just yours. All I want is to stop at my dad's place. Get some stuff, which we need, and put my dog to rest. It won't take long. We've got a big jump on the slaverunners. Not to mention, we have a small canister of fuel up there. It's not much, but it will help."

Logan slowly shakes his head.

"I'd rather not have that fuel and not take such a risk. You're talking about the mountains. You're talking about twenty miles inland, right? How do you propose we get there once we dock? Hike?"

“I know where there’s an old truck. A beat-up pickup. It’s just a rusted shell, but it runs, and it’s got just enough fuel to get us there and back. It’s hidden, by the river line. The river will take us right to it. The truck will take us up and back. It will be quick. And then we can continue on our long trip to Canada. And we’ll be better for it.”

Logan stares silently at the water for a long time, his fists clenched tight around the wheel.

Finally, he says, “Whatever. It’s your life to risk. But I’m staying with the boat. You’ve got two hours. If you’re not back in time, I’m taking off.”

I turn away from him and look out at the water, fuming mad. I wanted him to come. I feel like he’s looking out for himself, and it disappoints me. I thought he was better than that.

“So you only care about yourself, is that it?” I ask.

It also worries me that he doesn’t want to accompany me to my dad’s house; I hadn’t thought of that. I know Ben won’t want to come and I would’ve appreciated some backup. Whatever. I’m still resolved. I made a promise, and I will keep it. With or without him.

He doesn’t respond, and I can tell he’s annoyed.

I look out at the water, not wanting to see him. As the water churns amidst the constant whine of the engine, I realize I’m mad not only because I’m disappointed in him, but because I was actually starting to like him, to count on him. I haven’t depended on anyone for a long time. It’s a scary feeling, depending on someone again, and I feel betrayed.

“Brooke?”

My heart lifts at the sounds of the familiar voice, and I turn to see my little sister awake. Rose wakes, too. Those two are already like peas in a pod, like extensions of one person.

I still can hardly believe that Bree is here, back with me. It’s like a dream. When she was taken, a part of me was sure I’d never see her alive again. Every moment I am with her, I feel like I’ve been given a second chance, and I feel more determined than ever to watch over her.

“I’m hungry,” Bree says, rubbing her eyes with the back of her hands.

Penelope sits up, too, in Bree’s lap. She won’t stop trembling, and she raises her good eye and looks at me, as if she’s hungry, too.

“I’m freezing,” Rose echoes, rubbing her shoulders. She wears only a thin shirt, and I feel terrible for her.

I understand. I’m starving and freezing, too. My nose is red and I can barely feel it. Those goodies we found in the boat were amazing, but hardly filling—especially on an empty stomach. And that was hours ago. I think again of the food chest, of what little we have left, and wonder how long until it runs out. I know I should ration the food. But then again, we’re all starving, and I can’t stand to see Bree looking like that.

“There’s not much food left,” I tell her, “but I can give you guys a little bit of it now. We have some cookies, and some crackers.”

“Cookies!” they both yell at once. Penelope barks.

“I wouldn’t do that,” comes Logan’s voice beside me.

I look over, and see him glancing back disapprovingly.

“We need to ration it.”

“Please!” Bree cries out. “I need something. I’m starving.”

“I need to give them *something*,” I say firmly back to Logan, understanding where his head is, but annoyed at his lack of compassion. “I’m doling out one cookie each. For all of us.”

“What about Penelope?” Rose asks.

“The dog’s not getting any of our food,” Logan snaps. “She’s on her own.”

I feel another twinge of upset at Logan, though I know he’s being rational. Still, as I see the crestfallen look on Rose and Bree’s faces, and as I hear her bark again, I can’t bear to let her starve. I quietly resign to give her some food from my own rations.

I open the chest, and survey once again our stash of food. I see two boxes of cookies, three boxes of crackers, several bags of gummy bears, and a half dozen chocolate bars. I wish there was some more substantial food, and I don't know how we're going to make this last, how this will suffice for three meals a day for five people.

I pull out the cookies and dole out one to each person. Ben finally snaps out of it at the site of the food, and accepts a cookie. His eyes have black circles under them, and he looks as if he hasn't slept. It is painful to see his expression, so devastated from the loss of his brother, and I look away as I hand him his cookie.

I come to the front of the boat, and hand Logan his. He takes it and silently puts into his pocket, of course, rationing it for later. I don't know where he gets his strength from. Myself, I go weak at the smell of the chocolate chip cookie. I know I should ration it, too, but I can't help it. I take a small bite, resolving to put it away—but it tastes so good, I can't help myself—I devour the entire thing, saving only the last bite, which I set aside for Penelope.

The food feels so good. The sugar rushes to my head, then through my body, and I wish I had a dozen more. I take a deep breath at the stomach pain, trying to control myself.

The river narrows, the shores becoming ever closer to each other, as it twists and turns. We're close to land and I'm on high alert, looking to the shorelines for any sign of danger. As we round a bend I look to my left and see, high up on a cliff, the ruins of an old fortification, now bombed out. I am shocked as I realize what it once was.

“West Point,” Logan says. He must realize at the same time as I do.

It is shocking to see this bastion of American strength now just a pile of rubble, its twisted flagpole hanging limply over the Hudson. Hardly anything remains of what once was.

“What is that?” Bree asks, her teeth chattering. She and Rose have climbed to the front of the boat, beside me, and she looks out, following my gaze. I don't want to tell her.

“It’s nothing sweetie,” I say. “Just a ruin.”

I put my arm around her and pull her close, and put my other arm around Rose and pull her close, too. I tried to warm them up, rubbing their shoulders as best I can.

“When are we going home?” Rose asks.

Logan and I exchange a look. I hardly know how to answer.

“We’re not going home,” I say to Rose, as gently as I can, “but we’re on our way to find a new home.”

“Are we going to pass by our old home?” Bree asks.

I hesitate. “Yes,” I say.

“But we’re not going back there, right?” she asks.

“Right,” I say. “It’s too dangerous to live there now.”

“I don’t want to live there again,” she says. “I hated that place. But we can’t just leave Sasha there. Are we going stop and bury her? You promised.”

I think back to my argument with Logan.

“You’re right,” I say softly. “I did promise. And yes, we will stop.”

Logan turns away, clearly miffed.

“And then what?” Rose asks. “And then where will we go?”

“We’re going to keep going upriver,” I explain. “As far as it will take us.”

“Where does it end?” she asks.

It’s a good question, and I take it as a much more profound question. Where does all of this end? With our deaths? With our survival? Will it ever end? Is there any end in sight?

I don’t have the answer.

I turn, and kneel, and look into her eyes. I need to give her hope. Something to live for.

“It ends in a beautiful place,” I say. “Where we’re going, everything is good again. The streets are so clean that they shine, and everything is perfect and safe. There will be people there, friendly people, and they will take us in and protect us. There will be food, too, real food, all you can eat, all the time. It will be the most beautiful place you’ve ever seen.”

Rose’s eyes open wide.

“Is that true?” she asks.

I nod. Slowly, she breaks into a wide smile.

“How long until we make it there?”

I smile. “I don’t know sweetheart.”

Bree, though, is more cynical than Rose.

“Is that really true?” she asks, softly. “Is there really such a place?”

“It is,” I say to her, trying my best to sound convincing. “Isn’t that true, Logan?”

Logan looks over, nods at them briefly, then looks away. He is the one, after all, that believes in Canada, believes in a promised land. How can he deny it now?

The Hudson twists and turns, getting more narrow, then widening again. Finally, we enter familiar territory. We race past places I recognize, getting closer and closer to dad’s house.

We turn another bank, and I see a small, uninhabited island, just a rocky outcropping. On it sits the remains of a lighthouse, its light long shattered, its structure hardly more than a façade.

We turn another bend in the river and in the distance I spot the bridge I’d been on just days before, when chasing after the slaverunners. There, in the middle of the bridge, I see the center blown out, the huge hole, as if a wrecking ball had been dropped through the middle. I flash back to when Ben and I raced across it in the motorcycle and nearly skidded into it. I can’t believe it. We’re almost there.

This makes me think of Ben, makes me remember how he saved my life that day. I turn and look at him. He stares into the water, morose.

“Ben?” I ask.

He turns and looks at me.

“Remember that bridge?”

He turns and looks, and I see fear in his eyes. He remembers.

Bree elbows me. “Is it okay if I give Penelope some of my cookie?” she asks.

“Me, too?” Rose echoes.

“Sure it is,” I say loudly, so Logan can hear. He’s not the only one in charge here, and we can do with our food as we wish.

The dog, in Rose’s lap, perks up, as if she understands. It is incredible. I have never seen such a smart animal.

Bree leans in to feed her a piece of her cookie, but I stop her hand.

“Wait,” I say. “If you’re going to feed her, she should have a name, shouldn’t she?”

“But she has no collar,” Rose says. “Her name could be anything.”

“She’s your dog now,” I say. “Give her a new one.”

Rose and Bree exchange an excited glance.

“What should we call her?” Bree asks.

“How about Penelope?” Rose says.

“Penelope!” Bree screams. “I like that.”

“I like it, too,” I say.

“Penelope!” Rose cries out to the dog.

Amazingly, the dog actually turns to her when she says it, as if that were always her name.

Bree smiles as she reaches out and feeds her a piece of cookie. Penelope snatches it out of her hands and gobbles it up in one bite. Bree and Rose giggle hysterically, and Rose feeds her the rest of her cookie. She snatches that, too, and I reach out and feed her the last bite of my cookie. Penelope looks back at all three of us excitedly, trembling, and barks three times.

We all laugh. For a moment, I nearly forget our troubles.

But then, in the distance, over Bree's shoulder, I spot something.

"There," I say to Logan, stepping up and pointing to our left. "That's where we need to go. Turn there."

I spot the peninsula where Ben and I drove off on the motorcycle, onto the ice of the Hudson. It makes me flinch to think of it, to think of how crazy that chase was. It's amazing I'm still alive.

Logan checks over his shoulder to see if anyone is following; then, reluctantly, he eases up on the throttle and turns us off to the side, bringing us towards the inlet.

On edge, I look around warily as we reach the mouth of the peninsula. We glide beside it as it curves inland. We are so close to shore now, passing a dilapidated water tower. We continue on and soon glide alongside the ruins of a town, right into the heart of it. Catskill. There are burnt-out buildings on all sides and it looks like it's been hit by a bomb.

We are all on edge as we make our way slowly up the inlet, getting deeper inland, the shore now feet away as it narrows. We are exposed to ambush, and I find myself unconsciously reaching down and resting my hand on my hip, on my knife. I notice Logan do the same.

I check back over my shoulder for Ben; but he is still in a nearly catatonic state.

"Where's the truck?" Logan asks, an edge to his voice. "I'm not going too deep inland, I'll tell you right now. If anything happens, we need to be able to get out to the Hudson, and fast. This is a death trap," he says, warily eyeing the shore.

I eye it, too. But the shore is empty, desolate, frozen over with no humanity in sight as far as the eye can see.

“See there,” I say, pointing. “That rusted shed? It’s inside.”

Logan drives us another thirty yards or so, then turns for the shed. There is an old crumbling dock, and he’s able to pull the boat up, feet from shore. He kills the engine, grabs the anchor and throws it overboard. He then grabs the rope from the boat, makes a loose knot at one end, and throws it to a rusted metal post. It catches and he pulls us in all the way, tightening it, so we can walk onto the dock.

“Are we getting out?” Bree asks.

“I am,” I say. “Wait for me here, with the boat. It’s too dangerous for you to go. I’ll be back soon. I’ll bury Sasha. I promise.”

“No!” she screams. “You promised we would never be apart again. You promised! You can’t leave me here alone! You CAN’T!”

“I’m not leaving you alone,” I answer, my heart breaking. “You’ll be here with Logan, and Ben, and Rose. You’ll be perfectly safe. I promise.”

But Bree stands and to my surprise, she takes a running jump across the bow, and jumps onto the sandy shore, landing right in the snow.

She stands ashore, hands on her hips, glaring back at me defiantly.

“If you’re going, I’m going too,” she states.

I take a deep breath, seeing she’s resigned. I know that when she gets like this, she means it.

It will be a liability, having her, but I have to admit, a part of me feels good having her in my sight at all times. And if I try to talk her out of it, I’ll just waste more time.

“Fine,” I say. “Just stay close the entire time. Promise?”

She nods. “I promise.”

“I’m scared,” Rose says, looking over at Bree, wide-eyed. “I don’t want to leave the boat. I want to stay here, with Penelope. Is that okay?”

“I want you to,” I say to her, silently refusing to take her, too.

I turn to Ben, and he turns and meets my eyes with his mournful ones. The look in them makes me want to look away, but I force myself not to.

“Are you coming?” I ask. I hope he says yes. I’m annoyed at Logan for staying here, for letting me down, and I could really use the backup.

But Ben, still clearly in shock, just stares back. He looks at me as if he doesn’t comprehend. I wonder if he’s fully registering all that’s happening around him.

“Are you *coming*?” I ask more forcefully. I don’t have the patience for this.

Slowly, he shakes his head, withdrawing. He’s really out of it, and I try to forgive him—but it’s hard.

I turn to leave the boat, and jump onto shore. It feels good to have my feet on dry land.

“Wait!”

I turn and see Logan get up from the driver seat.

“I knew some crap like this would happen,” he says.

He walks across the boat, gathering his stuff.

“What are you doing?” I ask.

“What do you think?” he asks. “I’m not letting you two go alone.”

My heart swells with relief. If it were just me I wouldn’t care as much—but I am thrilled to have another set of eyes to watch Bree.

He jumps off the boat, and onto shore.

“I’m telling you right now, this is a stupid idea,” he says, as he lands besides me. “We should keep moving. It will be night soon. The Hudson can freeze. We could get stuck here. Not to

mention the slaverunners. You've got 90 minutes, understand? 30 minutes in, 30 there, and 30 back. No exceptions, for any reason. Otherwise, I'm leaving without you."

I look back at him, impressed and grateful.

"Deal," I say.

I think of the sacrifice he just made, and I am beginning to feel something else. Behind all his posturing, I am beginning to feel that Logan really likes me. And he's not as selfish as I thought.

As we turn to go, there's another shuffling on the boat.

"Wait!" Ben cries out.

I turn and look.

"You guys can't leave me here alone with Rose. What if someone comes? What am I supposed to do?"

"Watch the boat," Logan says, turning again to leave.

"I don't know how to drive it!" Ben yells out. "I don't have any weapons!"

Logan turns again, annoyed, reaches down, takes one of the guns off a strap from his thigh, and chucks it to him. It hits him hard in the chest, and he fumbles with it.

"Maybe you'll learn how to use it," Logan sneers, as he turns away again.

I get a good look at Ben, who stands there, looking so helpless and afraid, holding a gun he barely seems to know how to use. He seems absolutely terrified.

I want to comfort him. To tell him everything will be OK, that we'll be back soon. But as I turn away and look up at the vast mountain range before us, for the first time, I am not so sure that we will.

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