

It was the oddest sensation, Estella thought to herself. There wasn't a sense of anything different happening, but suddenly something was, but it always had been.

She wrestled with that thought in her mind for a moment, but decided to put a pin in it and deal with her more immediate circumstances. From any direction, she seemed to be surrounded by light. There wasn't any heat coming from the light, and there was just an strangely average temperature. It was neither hot or cold, it simply *was*.

*I wonder if that means technically I'm upside down,* she speculated.

*She deceives. Even herself*

Ella glanced around, slightly preoccupied with the fact that no matter what direction she turned her head, she saw the same thing. It made her more aware of her own neck muscles.

“Are we playing hide and seek? I feel like it was really unfair to start and not even let me count,” she mentioned.

*She deceives. Even when alone. She deceives.*

She recognized her brother's voice anywhere, but immediately dismissed it. *There is no way Nate would ever talk to me like that,* she thought.

*She deflects. She deceives.*

“Listen... voice in my head. How about you just stay in there? When I hear'em out loud it's sort of creepy,” she said.

*You cannot deceive yourself.*

She turned around, coming face to face with herself. She noted the only difference was that she was a little shorter. Ella also took note that it was the heels her doppelganger wore, but what she noticed was less about a fashion choice, but an emotional choice. Ella could never bring herself to wear heels of any kind. Heels meant, at least to her, confidence. It was a confidence she lacked.

“This is new,” she said, staring herself up and down.

“You've constructed this nice little corner of the world, haven't you Estella?” she asked.

“I like the place.”

"You would. Everything is roses and sunshine," she pushed her, knocking her over. Ella noted she didn't feel herself land on anything, but the sensation of falling had stopped. "You hide behind this... this facade. If they knew who you were, if they knew what you did, they would hate you. The way you hate yourself," she snapped at her.

Ella stood back up, but found herself with a single tear in her eye and nothing to say. "... it wasn't my fault," she sighed.

"Of course it was. If it wasn't, hold on to it? Why bury it so deep down that you lie to yourself just to live with what you did? Face it, Estella. You're a monster... and a liar."

"No..." she was visibly flustered, and her voice trembled. "I'm a good person," she sighed.

"Lies. You know what you did. Your mother would disown you, your friends would turn their backs on you, your brother would never forgive you. You would be alone, and that terrifies you."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Admit it. Admit it to yourself. You know what you've done, accept that the people who respect you has their respect built on lies."

Ella took a deep breath, then sighed as she wiped the tears away from her eyes. "Alright... I admit it... I'm... bored to tears with this. I mean really? Deep dark secrets? Me? Oh please. I ain't got deep seeded nothing in my closet, missy!" she thought for a moment. "Ain't got nothing? Wow, thats a double negative. I was home schooled, ya know, and my mom would be so disappointed if she heard that. Lemme try again... I do not have anything deep seeded in my closet. No childhood traumas, no daddy issues. I'm a well adjusted chick who's oddly obsessed with pink and I *really* love green beans," she paused. "Wow that my mom would like to hear," Ella explained.

"You dare lie to *me*? I know you, I *am* you," she snapped back.

"No, you're not. You're you. You can look like me, think like me and even like pink as much as me, but the second we started this conversation we were two different people. We experience this conversation from two different perspectives, *I am me*, and I don't care what face you have on, there's only one me," Ella said proudly.

"Very good," a voice said.

It was if the other version of her simply stepped out of view, but suddenly Gabbi was there. It was as if she always been there. It was very offputting.

"Gabbi? What is all this?"

"We needed to test you, to taste your basic knowledge on the intricacies of..." she was interrupted.

"This is recruitment for Time Force, isn't it?" she asked.

"How did you..."

"I've been reading Piggy's blogs for months now. There is tons of stuff out there about you guys. How you step in to preserve the timeline, like a way cooler Men in Black. I'm in," she said eagerly.

"Did you say Piggy has a blog?"

"You guys really think you're that big of a secret? I figured it out in like, a few weeks. There's gotta be way more people who know," she said.

"That explains the leak. It's Piggy. He's the key to all of this," Gabbi said.

"You're telling me Piggy is leaking information from the future?" she asked.

"That's a very linear way of looking at it, but in the crudest sense of the word, yes."

"So I guess that's where we should get started. Where is the rest of my team?" she asked.

"You're under the impression there is a team?"

Ella nodded. "Mmmm Hmmm. The fact that I'm here means you must want the very best to solve whatever your problem is. If you want my best, then I need my team. So, I'll run your errand or whatever, but I need my team or you can zap me back to whatever I was doing," she stopped. "And I do mean my *entire* team."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning I expect Serenity to be there... or else," she said softly.

"Or else what?"

"Then you'll see what years of disciplining myself to stay on the positive side of things looks like when she *isn't very positive*," Ella stated coldly.

There was an odd, awkward silence.

“Have you ever thought about a career in command, ensign?” Gabbi asked her.

“Maybe one day, but right now I'm needed on sensors at the helm of my ship,” she said.

“But you're destined for so much more,” she pointed out.

“The only thing I'm destined for is to be with my team. Now... for you guys to be Time Force you sure waste a lot of time. Come on, let's get moving,” she said.

“As you wish.”