

It seemed to 17 that her family had been labourers in the Factory forever. Her mother claimed that her great-great-great grandparents had worked in the original Factory, and that they had helped in the reconstruction after the One Big One; her most treasured possession was a photo of men and women in rags standing in knee-deep mud in front of a hillside of trees all knocked down in the same direction.

17 had worked since she could walk, when her mother had taught her how to grade waste paper. Then she had cycled with the kids from her rack, chasing heavy metal residues in the flues of the refineries, harvesting mussels in the sewers for their metal-rich shells, sorting through the spill heaps. She had run with the same pack for ten years, had been boss for the last three, but at last she had realised that she wasn't interested in them any more. They were just kids. So she had picked a fight with the next oldest, a lanky boy called Wulf, had beaten him bloody and had told him that he was boss now, and had walked away.

That was last winter. Since then she'd been a free labourer, turning up each day at the canal junction by the cooler stacks and waiting with the others until the shift foremen arrived and made their pick. It was hard, dangerous work. The men went to the refineries or foundries. 17 mostly cleaned the spinners, clever machines which built up hundreds of different things using frames and cellulose spray. The spinners never stopped, their spray heads chattering away right above her while she dug out mounds of stinking cellulose that had accumulated beneath the frames. Blood worms lived in the stuff, thin red whips a metre long that stung bad if they lashed your skin. Rat-crabs too, and roaches and black crickets.

Her mother disapproved. It was time she settled down, her mother said, time she got herself a man and made babies.

They had terrible rows about it. 17 argued that she could do what she wanted, but she knew that if she stayed a free labourer sooner or later she'd get hurt. And if she got hurt bad she'd be sent to work the tanks where wood pulp was dissolved in acid. Most people didn't last long there; fumes ate their lungs, blinded them, ulcerated their skin until gangrene set in. But it was that or ending up as a breeder like her mother, blown up by having kids one after the other, or becoming some jack's troll. She'd already had a taste of that, thanks to Dim, the prime jack of her rack. She'd messed around with the other kids of her pack, but Dim had shown her what real sex was like. She swore she'd kill him or kill herself if he or any other man tried it again.

Then Doc Roberts came, and everything changed forever.

Doc Roberts was ex-Service, come to the Factory to stretch his pension by leechcraft. He rented a shack on the roof of one of the racks at the edge of the quadrant. He filled it with sunlamps and plants and hung out a shingle announcing his rates.

17 went to see him the second decad after he arrived.

"You're not sick and you're not pregnant," Doc Roberts said, after a rough, cursory examination. "Why are you here?"

"You went up," 17 said, staring at him boldly. She had seen him gimping around the market in his exoframe, but he seemed much taller in his little shack. He was very thin inside the frame, like a cartoon stick man. No

hair, his scalp seamed with lumpy scars, his face burned brown and leathery; he looked like one of the turtles that swam in the canal by the cooler outlets.

It was hot and steamy in his shack. The glossy leaves of plants shone in vivid greens and oranges under the rack of purplish sunlamps. There was a shelf of books over his cot, a toilet connected to a tank of spirulina, a glass-fronted cabinet where he kept his pharmaceuticals.

Doc Roberts said, "I upped and I reupped. More than twenty years, girly. It made me what I am."

"I want to go."

"That's a hard road. Stay in the dirt. Find a man. Have babies."

"No! Kill myself first!" Suddenly, amazingly, she was crying. She made fists, knuckled tears. "You tell me. Tell me how. How to get out and up."

Doc Roberts sort of leaned into his frame, the way an ordinary man might slump in a chair. He looked at her -- really looked. She looked right back. She knew he hadn't had many customers. Breeders looked after each other and their kids; free labourers paid to get their lumps and wounds hacked and sealed at the Factory dispensary.

He said, "What's your name?"

She said defiantly, "17."

She'd chosen it herself. She liked the way it screwed up the system.

Clerks would ask if it was her given name, and she'd say no, it was what she called herself. Was she her mother's seventeenth kid, the clerk would want to know, and she'd say no. Her age? She didn't know, fifteen maybe. What was her real name then? 17, she'd say, stubborn, defiant. That was what she was. 17. She had started calling herself that a little while before she'd left the cycling pack, had beaten any kid who called her different until it stuck. Her mother called her 'Teen, a compromise.

Doc Roberts didn't question it. He put his turtle head to one side and said, "You pay me, 17, and I'll give you some teaching. How does that sound?"

That was how it began. She took up cycling again to pay him. Mercury chases were the best. She knew the tunnels under the Factory as well as anyone. She knew where the heavy silvery stuff collected, always came back with twice as much as anyone else. But it was dangerous. Not just because mercury and other heavy metals could give her the shakes or the falling sickness, but because sooner or later a gang of jacks or a pack of kids would find her down there and beat her and maybe kill her for her gleanings.

She surprised Doc Roberts by being able to read (she had learnt from the brief captions under the cartoon notices the bulls pasted everywhere), and he soon discovered her knack of being able to multiply and divide long numbers without really thinking about it.

"You're an idiot savant," he said.

"You mean like a dummy? I'm no dummy."

"Maybe not. But you have a trick in your head. You can do something that takes most people a lot of brain hurt as naturally as breathing."

"It'll help me pass the tests?"

"You're bright, 17. I'll teach you as long as you want to keep paying me. When you're ready you can buy tests that will find out just how bright you are. Intelligence is precious, as precious as mercury or silver or copper or chrome. There may be better things than going up."

"You mean like whores? I don't think so."

A few girls and one boy from her rack had gone that way. You saw them sometimes, visiting their families. The last one 17 had seen, a girl, had worn silver boots, silver panties, and a very short open mesh dress, nothing else. 17 had looked at herself afterwards and knew she'd never make the grade -- wide hips, no breasts, a blob of a nose. Besides, the best the whores could hope for was to become the plaything of one of the Factory bulls until their looks gave out and they were sent to work the Meat Rack.

Doc Roberts gave 17 one of his sharp looks. He said, "I only want money off you, 17. I upped and reupped. Radiation took care of that itch."

She said, "Would this cost more than learning about the up and out?"

"Maybe. If you're real bright the bosses might pay for some of it. They need bright people."

"I'll pay. I want out, Doc. I want it terrible bad."

Doc taught her more than math. He showed her what the world beyond the Factory was like. 17 had never been outside the Factory, and now she hungered after it the way an addict has the jones for ripple or meth or smack. Doc taught her the true name of the world and the true name of its sun, explained its history.

17 had thought that the world was called the World; that its sun was called the Sun. Doc told her that the world was really called Tierra; the sun was a star called Delta Pavonis.

"We came from a long way away," Doc said. "So far away you have to measure the distance in years." It took two days to explain Einsteinian relativity, and the reason why nothing could go as fast as light. "That's why our ancestors came as zygotes in the seeder ship," he said.

"Was it big?" 17 had a hazy idea of something as big as the Factory falling through space towards a star that swelled like a balloon to become the sun.

"Oh no. In travel mode it was not much bigger than you or me. It had a light sail for braking that spread out for thousands of kilometres, but that was only a few molecules thick."

Explaining all this took more days, extra lessons after the lessons 17 bought with her cycler money.

Doc told her, "When the seeder hit dirt it built the first Factory, and that built us and cows and wheat and all the other stuff we eat."

"Like porridge and yeast?"

"Porridge is edible plastic. Yeast, I don't know where yeast came from. Maybe we brought it here, maybe it's native. Some of my plants came on the seeder ship, 17. See the thin green ones? That's wheat grass. I pulp it and drink the juice. That's from Earth, like you and me and cows. The other plants, the orange and red ones, are native. We got rid of most of the native life, but there's still a lot around in unlooked corners."

"Bugs and haunts."

"Yes. I suppose you might have seen one, now and then."

"Seen plenty of bugs, but never yet a haunt. But they say there's one down in the tunnels now. A couple of kids went missing. Bloodworms though. I know about those." She showed him the welts.

"I suppose the haunts get in through the vents of the main cooling plants, or along the slurry pipes from the mines," Doc said. "They are tough things because this was a hard place to live. You know why?"

17 nodded. She had learnt it last week. "Because there's no broom in the system. No Jupiter to sweep up comets that fall from the Oort Cloud."

That's why the Service and Comet Watch is important, else the world would get hit bad every hundred years. But why is it that way, Doc? Why are all the big planets near our sun?"

"No one really knows. Maybe the primordial disc from which the planets condensed was spinning slowly, so the big planets formed close in and locked up most of the heavy metals in their cores. But that's only a theory."

"Well, they should know why. It's why cycling is so important, like they always tell us. Why heavy metals cost so much. They don't pay well for cycling, though. They should, don't you think?"

"That's economics, not orbital mechanics, 17. But I suppose it does all fit together."

Doc was constantly amazed by her ignorance and by her eagerness to learn. She knew about the One Big One, but had thought it had wrecked only the Factory, not the whole world. She hadn't known about settlement of Tierra, the rise of the Syndic and the reason why people went up, hadn't even known that the world was just one of a hundred worlds. She was like a plant that will push up concrete slabs and break apart the seams between steel plates to get at light. She was hungry for everything he could give her. He had watched her work out from first principals why orbits were elliptical. She had soaked up Newtonian mechanics, tensor calculus, n-body interactions. He didn't spend any of the money she gave him. She would need it later, when she got out into the world.

People began to notice that she spent a lot of time with Doc Roberts. 17's mother said that she shouldn't start thinking that she was more than she was, and they had a furious argument, with her mother stirring yeast soup all the time and the latest baby crawling around. 17 stormed out, and then Dim cornered her in the market.

"Tell me why you go wi' that old cripple-man," he said. He was running solo, her one piece of good luck. He had tattoos everywhere, wore only ripped shorts and a harness to show them off, and to show off his steroid-enhanced muscles, too. He stank of sweat and the goo he put on his skin rash. People avoided looking at the two of them; Dim had a hard rep. Dim said, "He not a real man." His spittle sprayed her cheeks. "They cut it off when they go up. Or do you do it with his rack?"

"You dumb as a worm," 17 told him. "Hung like one too. What you have isn't anything. I didn't even feel it."

"You getting a filthy tongue, girly. You getting above yourself."

Dim tried to put his hand over her mouth, but she bit his thumb and got away from him. He shouted after her. "Me and my jacks will find you in the tunnels, quim! We ream you both ends!"

The next day, someone saw a haunt in the sewers, stooping over a kid it had just killed. The day after, Doc told her that some bosses were coming for a bug hunt, that it would be a chance better than any test.

"You shine in this, 17, and they'll take notice."

"You can get me a job bait running? It should be mine. I know the tunnels good. Better than anyone."

"I have a little pull. I'm part of the Syndic, 17, but at a low level, about the same as the Factory bulls. The bulls work for the turf bosses. Above them are the ward bosses, and above them are the big capos. The higher you are, the more you see. The capos see a long way. They give up some of what they have to make sure the world holds together so they can

keep what they have. That's why we have Comet Watch and all the rest of it."

"And one of them will help me?"

"They're coming here to hunt bugs, not little girl geniuses. But you shine, maybe one of them will notice, and he'll ask me about you."

"Will he put me in the Service? Will he send me up?"

"Better than that. You've a mind, 17. It shouldn't be wasted in the up and out." Doc lifted an arm with a whine of servo motor. Loose skin hanging off bone, like the old women who sorted rags. He said, "Look at me. This is what happens to people in the up and out. Muscle wasting, decalcification of bones, circulatory collapse. Radiation fries gonads so the Service sterilises its recruits. Radiation gives you cancers. These scars on my face, they're where keloid growths were cut away. I lost a metre of gut, too."

"But it's still better than the Factory."

"That's true," Doc said. "They made me a citizen, they gave me medical training and the rest of my education. But you can't keep reupping. The Syndic doesn't want people living permanently in the up and out because they don't want to lose control. Suppose people decided to aim comets at the world instead of deflecting them? You get upped and if you do good you can reup, but then they drop you into the well. I'm forty-two, 17. I got maybe five more years."

17 started to say that that was ten more years than anyone in the Factory, but she saw he wasn't listening.

"A mind like yours," he said, "it should burn for a hundred years. That's what a boss can give you, if he sees what you are."

Almost every free labourer and jack signed up for the hunt; hardly any made the cut. But 17 did, and she had learned enough to thank Doc even though she thought she would have made it without his help. Dim wasn't on the list; none of the jacks were. She saw him one time afterwards, and couldn't resist taunting him. She would be safe from him for the next decad, because there was a lot of training to be done.

One of the junior bulls took charge of them. Divided them into groups of three, told them they were bait runners now. They would go ahead of each boss, flush out anything bigger than a rat-crab and drive it towards the guns. He taught them signals made up of long and short whistle blasts, how to use proximity radar and flash guns. But most of the time was spent drilling etiquette into them.

"Never look one of the bosses in the eye," the bull said. "Never speak unless you are spoken to, and always answer at once. If you don't know the answer say so. Say I don't know boss. Go on, try it."

The bait runners gave up an uncoordinated mumble.

"Smarter. Quicker."

I don't know boss!

"Fucking awful," the bull said. "A bunch of crickets could do better." He was a tall man with a pot belly and a bald patch he tried to hide by combing his glossy black hair sideways. There were sweat patches on his white shirt under his arms. He strutted down the line, staring fiercely at the men and women, striking any who dared meet his gaze. 17 looked at her feet, trembling with fear and anger. When he reached the end, he turned and yelled, "You all listen up! The people coming here are some of the most important on the planet. They can erase the Factory at a whim. I have

ten days to bring you to some sort of civilised behaviour. You will lay down your lives for them if necessary. You will give up everything you have, at once and willingly. You will cut off your dicks, cut out the hearts of your children. And you will sing loud and clear when I ask or I'll send all of you to the mines. Let's hear it once again!"

They all sang out.

I DON'T KNOW BOSS!

Doc fed 17 private information about the visiting bosses. The training was so hard he had to visit her in the hour before lights out. It was the first time she had seen him outside his shack. He had pics of each boss, and told 17 which family they belonged to, how they stood in the complicated hierarchies. They were all men, all very young. None of them seemed to have proper jobs. They climbed mountains around the North Pole, sailed catamarans in the southern ocean, spent their winters on the wide, white beaches of the Archipelago. They all looked the same to 17. Tanned skin, broad white smiles, buzz cut blond hair, good cheekbones, firm jaws. She was good with numbers, not people. She still hadn't got their names straight in her head when they arrived.

The whole Factory got the day off. For the first time in a hundred years the machines were stood down. The silence hummed in 17's head. She wondered if it was like the silence of the up and out. The foremen handed out flags and streamers and people waved them as the cavalcade of limousines swept through main drag to the compound where the bulls lived. There were fireworks that night, fans of coloured stars exploding under the dome. Calcium red, copper green, sodium yellow, cobalt blue. The next day the bug hunt started.

17 was teamed with a couple of older men who made it clear they had no time for her. She didn't care. She knew she could shine only as herself, not part of a team. She knew every bit of the sewer tunnels, didn't need to look at the corroded plates which marked every intersection as she blew through the perimeter of the area assigned to her team, making a wide arc that pivoted on one of the Factory's waste treatment plants. There were always plenty of mussel beds and pack crab nests there, and she had a feeling that the haunt would need something to eat other than the three kids it had snatched.

It was dark and warm in the tunnels. Only a few of the lights worked, a broken chain of dim red stars stretching away under the low curved roof. 17 sloshed through knee-deep scummy water. Water fell thunderously in one of the tunnels; huge islands of stiff foam whirled on the currents. Pack crab nests bristled along the waterline there, built of scraps of plastic and metal. The entrance hole of each nest was blocked by the swollen claw of its resident; desperate cyclers risked getting bitten or poisoned to tear up the nests for the scrap they contained. Barnacles floated their feathery sieves on the water, snatched at her wet suit. She edged past a reef of razor-edged mussels, paused at a Y junction.

One way led to the cooling water inlet complex, the other towards the labyrinthine drains beneath the pulp holding tanks. Something was moving towards her, coming towards the junction. She put her head close to the water, heard slow sloshing footsteps, jammed against the wall, ready to blow her whistle. But it was something stranger and more fearsome than the haunt or any bug.

It was one of the bosses.

"Hey," he said breathlessly. "I saw some sign back there. Parallel scrapes on the bricks of the roof? New, cut right through the black slime stuff. My proximity radar gives too many signals because of the currents, but it must be close, don't you think?"

17 nodded. She had forgotten all of the bull's etiquette lessons.

The boss grinned. "That's why you're here, right? You're not on my team, but you guessed it would hang around here."

She nodded again. He was taller than Doc, well muscled and lithe, and impossibly young. His black and pink wetsuit was clean and new, not a rip or patch on it. His gun was slung on one broad shoulder, his breathing apparatus on the other. His grin was very white in his tan face; his hair was so blond it was as white as new paper. She could smell his cologne through the stink of the tunnels.

He said, "I'll bet you know every centimetre of this place. We'll clean up. Raphe will be pissed. Where do you think it might be?"

17 pointed down the tunnel that led towards the cooling water inlet.

"You lead on," the boss said. He kept talking as they sloshed through the water, moving with the current. "You've lived here long? No, wait, I bet you've lived here all your life. You know, I've been further north than this, but it's bleaker around here than at the pole. Just the forests and the sea, and the sea is covered with ice pack. And the mines further inland. I saw the pipes that carry the ore slurry from the air, like black snakes through the forest. That was before the weather closed in. Sleet and lightning? I suppose it's the iron in the rock. I'm not surprised the place is domed; only haunts and ghouls and bugs could live outside. Now, where do we go from here?"

They had reached another Y junction. Both tunnels sloped steeply upward away from them. The inlet complex, fed seawater to the cooling system from concrete surge baffles was half as big as the Factory itself. 17 had never been this close to the outside before and didn't know where to go next, but she didn't want to look stupid and pointed to the left hand tunnel. But they had gone only a little way when it split again.

The boss saw her confusion and said gently, "I'll go right and you go left. We'll meet back here in ten minutes. Oh, I bet you don't have a watch. Here."

He stripped black chronometer from his wrist. "I have a chip," he said.

"This is just jewellery."

17 took it. It was very heavy. The casing was titanium or chrome steel or some other impossibly rare alloy. Certainly the crystal beneath which black numbers counted the seconds was a cultured diamond.

The boss said, "I don't know your name."

"Katrina."

She said it without thinking.

The boss made a funny little bow. "Katrina, I'm pleased to be hunting with you. If you see anything, blow hard on your whistle and I'll be right there."

Two minutes into the tunnel, she knew that the haunt was close. Pack crab nests crushed. Fresh scrapes from the thing's spines on the ceiling, on the walls. A breeze chilled her face. It smelled as fresh as the boss, clean and wild. The smell of outside. The light ahead was daylight.

The haunt was at the screens at the end of the tunnel. It had already twisted aside the first set, was prying at the second. It was silhouetted against the thin grey daylight. Thousands of white flakes -- snow -- blew

around it.

It turned on her with a swift liquid grace, opening its mandibles wide. It was as tall as the boss and thinner than Doc. Its long body was articulated in a dozen places. Its carapace was red and gold. Fringes of bronze hair grew thickly at the joints and at the bases of its spines. Its dozen limbs were as thin as wire and impossibly long.

It had a terrible beauty.

17 froze, one hand on her utility belt. Flares, the proximity radar, a flash gun useless in daylight, her whistle. Nothing else, not even a pry bar. She could have burnt it with a flare, but she knew that would only enrage it, not kill it. It didn't matter if a few bait runners were killed as long as the bosses got their sport.

When she did not move, the haunt turned back and started to pry at the screen again. It was working at the bolts, she saw, trying to turn them against beds of corrosion. It was trying to get out.

Pipes hung from the ceiling in an overhead maze. Rotten lagging hung from them in leprous sheets. 17 ran forward, jumped as the haunt whirled again, grabbed a pipe with both hands and swung through ninety degrees, right over the thing's head. The soles of her boots crashed into the screen and it bowed outward with a squeal. The haunt slashed at her, catching several of its wire-thin claw-tipped limbs in her wet suit. Frantic with fear, she twisted while it squalled below, got a leg free and kicked and kicked at rusted mesh. The haunt dropped to a crouch and threw itself at the screen.

Screen and haunt tumbled away. Hanging upside down from the pipe, 17 saw the haunt fall, but she could not believe it was gone. Snow and wind blew around her. She was still hanging there when the boss came back and found her.

He helped her down. He saw the signs of the haunt and leaned at the edge of the broken screen, looking down. 17 trembled with cold and spent fear. She was convinced that the boss would kill her, but when he turned he was grinning. He said that the hunt itself was more fun than killing some poor bug, and then he was gone, running into the darkness beneath the Factory. 17 followed as best she could. She had twisted her ankle when she had kicked out the screen.

She didn't see him again. By the time she got back to the mustering point the bosses were flying back to the city. She racked her equipment and went to find Doc to tell him that she had failed, and found the worst thing of all.

Doc was lying battered and bloody in his broken and battered exoframe amidst the ruin of his indoor garden. He was dead. A motor in the exoframe kept trying to lift his left arm, whining and relaxing, whining and relaxing. 17 tore out wires until it stopped. Books lay everywhere, torn and soaked with water leaking from a broken irrigation pipe. All the sunlamps had been smashed. The glass front of the pharmacy cabinet was smashed; the shelves were empty.

17 saved a few of the books, picking them at random, and left Doc for the Factory cops to find. They came for her a few hours later, but she knew they couldn't pin Doc's death on her because she had been down in the tunnels. They questioned her anyway -- Doc had been a citizen after all -- but the beating was routine and in the end they let her go. One told her that Doc had probably been killed by some junky looking for a high, but



she knew better.

She knew even before she saw Dim. It was the next day. He was whistling and hooting amongst his jacks while she waited with the other free labourers.

After a shift spent reaming out pipes which carried cellulose sludge from one settling tank to another, she paid to get real clean, bought gloss and perfume from the store. The perfume stung her skin. It smelt more strongly of roses than any rose had ever smelt.

Dim was hanging with his jacks in his usual bar. She ignored him but knew he'd come over.

He did.

"I hear some junky did your cripple-man lover, girly-girl. You don't worry. Dim'll see to all your needs."

17 endured the touch of saliva spray on her face, the smell and heat of him. She found it amazingly easy to smile.

Dim said, "How did the cripple-man do you? Not good I bet. I bet you come looking for me to show you how all over again." This last said loudly, for his jacks to hear. He acknowledged their whistles and hoots with a casual wave. "I got what you want," he told 17, his voice close and hoarse in her ear. "Prime worker meat, hot and hard."

17 put her hand between his legs, squeezed what was there and walked right out, her heart beating as quickly as it had when the haunt had turned to face her.

Dim followed her through the market, shoved her into a service entrance behind one of the stalls. "Not here," she said. "I know a place."

"I bet you do. But we ain't going to any of your secret places."

He was breathing heavily. She let his hands do things.

"You didn't come armed," he said. "You know what's right for you."

"I know."

"That junky who did your cripple-man did you a favour. You wait here."

He was back two minutes later with tubes of vodka. "We go to my place," he said, and held her wrist tight. She didn't resist.

It was an upper bunk in the men's dorm. She felt the brush of the eyes of every man who turned to watch as Dim walked her down the narrow aisle. She got up on the bunk. The mattress stank of Dim and stale marijuana. There was a TV hung on a stay in one corner, a locker at the foot of the mattress.

She started to pull at her belt while Dim velcroed the curtains together.

When he turned she snapped her wrist and at the same time thrust her hand forward; the long sliver of plastic she'd ripped from her belt stiffened when she snapped it, went into his eye and punched through the thin bone behind it. Blood burst hotly over her fingers. He shivered and fell on her with all his weight, dead as poor Doc. She found the card that opened the locker, shoved his body through the curtains and dropped all the vials and capsules and hypos on top of it, swung down and walked out, looking straight ahead.

No one tried to stop her.

Thirty days later she was five thousand kilometres away, under a hot blue sky on the roof of the Service induction building. She was in a line with two hundred fresh recruits, waiting for the shuttle copters that would take them out to boot camp. She was wearing the cleanest dungarees she had ever worn, crisp and sky blue, polished boots, a padded impact helmet with

its silvered visor up.

Doc Roberts had wanted to change her orbit by a close encounter with one of the bosses, the way ships gained delta vee by swinging past a planet, but she knew that this was her true vector. She would fly it as true and straight as she could, climb as high as she could. She had only her hunger. The rest she had left behind. She was no longer 17. She was a recruit, newly born into the world.

The sergeant addressed the line. He was a veteran, his face like a leathery mask, one eye socket empty. His exoframe was just like Doc's. "You're in the Service now!" he yelled. His amplified voice echoed off into the sky. "You're going up and out, beyond the ken of mortal men. You're meat in a can. Everything human will be burnt away. You don't want that then step out of line now!"

No one did. The Service's psych profiling was good.

"Close up and straighten up," the sergeant yelled.

Moving in unison with her fellow recruits, she snapped down the visor of her helmet. She was no longer 17. She had left that behind with her true name. 518972 was stencilled in black above her visor. That was her number now.

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