

Cyber Restricted

Book One

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Dedication:

To the characters who carried on through a complete reinvention of their story, showing me that no rewrite can erase their essence.

Prologue

Citizens of Ascendex are separated into 4 groups: the Shallows, the Midst, the Elevation, and the Eminence. Individuals from the Shallows are the low-income population. The Midst are citizens in the middle, and the Elevation are the citizens of higher income, while the Eminence being of the extreme, essentially, they are nobles.

The familiar aroma of roasted chicken and herbs welcomes me like an old friend as I enter my grandfather's quaint house. *Warning: if you're not a fan of stories, turn back now—you're about to be swept into a whirlwind of tales from his youth, lessons learned the hard way, and jokes that never fail to crack a laugh.* At least, this is how it usually unfolds.

Today, however, the atmosphere is different. Instead of his usual lively banter and familiar anecdotes, a heavy silence hangs over the table like a dense fog.

My grandfather pulls out a chair to sit at the table. His usually animated face marked by a gravity weighing down every line and crease. His usually much sturdier frame appears frail, tenser as if burdened by an unseen weight.

The clinking of utensils on plates is punctuated only by the occasional sigh, the silence between us stretched like a taut string waiting to snap.

His eyes meet mine with a strange intensity, and I realize it's more than concern—something deeper, a flicker of fear hiding beneath the surface. It's as if he's grappling with an invisible foe, one that has stolen his words and left him defenseless. The weight of it presses between us, unspoken but undeniable, a fear so palpable it speaks volumes without a single word being uttered.

We pick at our food in near silence, the clinking of utensils fading into the background, each bite feeling heavier than the last. As the end of our meal draws nearer and nearer, the room grows quieter and quieter with each passing moment, becoming so silent even the walls are holding their breath.

Grandfather sets down his fork with deliberate care, but as he does, he leans in closer to me. His voice is barely more than a whisper, yet each word cuts through the stillness with chilling clarity. "Changes are on the horizon," he murmurs, his words lingering in the air like a premonition. "They will be harsh, unforgiving, especially for the citizens."

It was in this moment, I realized his silence was not merely the absence of words... but the ominous omen of a storm on the horizon, one which threatened to reshape everything we've known.

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For hours last night, I tossed and turned. My mind was a race car, endlessly looping around the same track, asking over and over again: What did he mean? What was he trying to tell me? *Changes? Harsh? Unforgiving?* I don't understand!

Grandpa always has stories to share—stories from back in the day, filled with adventure, laughter, and wisdom. But last night was different. He didn't tell a single story. In fact, he hardly spoke at all.

I keep thinking about it. There was one sentence—no, one phrase—that he whispered to me. A phrase that now feels so heavy, so important, it's impossible to ignore. All evening, Grandpa had been staring at me with an intensity in his eyes, as though he could see something I couldn't. His frail body seemed wound tight, every muscle bracing for something. Then, without warning, he leaned in close, his voice barely a breath against my ear.

"Changes are on the horizon," he whispered. "They will be harsh, unforgiving, especially for the citizens."

I didn't say anything. I couldn't. The words hung in the air, thick with meaning I couldn't grasp. And since then, they've haunted me. I can't stop thinking about it—those words, the way he said them, the way his voice trembled just slightly, like he knew something I didn't.

I've lived my whole life in this city. I've seen it grow; I've seen it change in small ways, but nothing that could ever make me believe something terrible is coming. Nothing to explain why Grandpa would say something so... ominous.

Could he be losing his mind? He's getting old, I know, but surely that's not it. I slam my foot down in frustration, the sound echoing in the quiet room. No, it's more than that. He *believes* what he said. I can see it in the way he spoke, in the way he looked at me.

But why couldn't he just have told me more? Why leave it like this, dangling in front of me like a puzzle I can't quite solve? The thought gnaws at me, relentless.

A distant thud echoes down the hall, and the floor creaks. Footsteps approach my door. A rattle comes from the doorknob before a click floods my bedroom in light. Standing under the doorframe is my mother, who is a shorter woman with brown hair flowing down her back.

She opens her mouth to speak, only to close it again because I mutter cutting her off, “Yes...” I sigh, “I know, I should be getting ready for school.”

She **stands** in the doorway with her mouth hanging open. I imagine she doesn't like me stealing the words out of her mouth, or maybe I rolled my eyes. In all honestly, I'm tired of hearing those same words she—or any other mother for that matter—says every morning, it gets old.

I descend my way down the staircase and step into the kitchen. Only, as I turn to make my way to our food printer, my attention gets redirected by a mound of pancakes towering over the kitchen island.

As I pass by, I swing my arm out to snatch one; however, the plate slides away just before my hand comes within reach. My brother's head peeks around the mound with a grin plastered across his face. My mouth opens and then closes.

Only a few seconds have passed, and he has already dived back in, shoveling more and more pancakes down his already full gullet. Every morning, I try for one of his pancakes. *One of these times, I'm going to get him.*

“Cyrix, c'mon, don't steal all the pancakes,” I complain, “save some for everyone else!”

He shakes his head, still grinning, still chewing a pancake. I'm hardly given a chance to comprehend before his little face, once again, is plunging deep into the pancakes.

“You did not just swallow that whole,” I watch in disbelief.

His head pops out, and he speaks with his mouth full, “Yup!”

I sigh, shaking my head. Guess I'm not getting one of his pancakes today.

My attention slides to the food printer. Keeping my eyes on the touch screen in the middle, my hand slides around the side, flipping the power on. I press a few buttons on the screen and with a hum and a whirr, my breakfast is printing. One blueberry doughnut—coming right up!

One of my grandfather's jokes pops into my head, *"In my time, we had to actually bake the food, not use some lazy machine,"* I laugh to myself. The phrase was something my grandfather couldn't help saying when he would see me press those buttons.

I remember in history class, my teacher once mentioned how, before the age of food printers, people had to prepare their own food. *Could you imagine, with how precious time is, what a waste it would be? Funny... considering I am still lingering on this specific phrase my grandfather says.* Despite this, even I can't help but wonder, *what would cooking a meal be like? I roll my eyes, shaking my head. Ridiculous, food is food, and with technology today, it would be a stupid use of time. I guess... no. Even if you wanted to, it would take forever to find the tools because no storekeeper wants to stock products no one will buy.*

The food printer makes an odd noise as I lean closer, and I jump, backing away from it... the noise stops. I lift my foot, deliberately taking a step forward, and the odd noise comes back. *Weird, this isn't the first time the food printer has made odd noises when I stand too close.*

I would investigate more but, my eyes fall on the clock: 8:10 am, *looks like I've gone over my quota for daydreaming this morning... better scramble to prepare myself.*

I turn around, walking away from the food printer, allowing it to continue its job. I grab my backpack and lift it onto the table, unzipping it to check its contents. *Looks like I'm missing my calculator. I'll grab the spare inside my desk.*

The stairs creak softly beneath my feet as I make my way up, the faint light from the window in our entryway guiding my steps.

My fingers wrap around the doorknob, and a swing presents my room. I head straight to my desk and firmly pull on the handle of the drawer. Inside, the surface cluttered with various odds and ends, a chaotic reflection of my thoughts.

As I rummage through the mess, my fingers brush against the smooth surface of a slim, weathered wooden box tucked away in the corner. With a careful tug, I pull it out, revealing its contents: a stack of parchment-like sheets, yellowed with age and slightly frayed edges.

Each sheet feels like a piece of history in my hands, a tangible link to my grandfather's past.

I remember the day he gave them to me, his eyes sparkling with nostalgia as he recounted tales of a time when people relied on pen and paper for everything. He insisted that in a world overrun by technology, there was still beauty and value in the simplicity of handwriting.

I slip the calculator and the weathered wooden box into my bag.

"I'm leaving for school!" I call, before grabbing my blueberry donut off the food printer and quickly slipping out the door. *I gotta admit, it's nice being able to grab breakfast off the printer in the mornings.*

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Technology, as much as I love it, if it's not something simple like a food printer, I have so many difficulties getting it to behave the way I want it to. Like today, in class, I asked my laptop to do something, and it's as if the stupid machine has a mind of its own. Why do the issues have to be especially common with computers? *Man, if only it were feasible for me to wish for a day where technology would just chill out and allow me, rather than itself, to do the thinking.* Sometimes, I am almost certain my machine has a list of 'weird things' specifically for avoiding the tasks I order it to do. *Why? Stop having a mind of your own!* You're supposed to be doing a search on the web, so why am I staring at my email inbox—*urgh, this is getting old.*

My teacher, Mr. Grenfell, instructs us to open our devices to page 315. *What the—why in the world is my email open once again?*

"Today we begin our electricity lab," he continues.

Me? As much as I wanted to blurt out for him to wait while I fumbled with the textbook page, I knew better. Drawing attention to myself would only make me look like a fool—and the last thing I needed was for someone like Dirck to hear about my tech struggles. Even though he's in a different class, rumors have a way of reaching him, and he'd never let me live it down.

After my third attempt at accessing the textbook, my machine finally decides it's tortured me enough and the loading wheel stops. "*Took you long enough,*" I mumble under my breath, navigating to page 315.

Mr. Grenfell begins going over the safety procedures for this lab, and I slide down into my chair, restlessly crossing and uncrossing my legs. *Dude, we already know all the precautions and dangers.* One could say staying silent goes against my deepest desires. *You know how that'd end...* I must listen to the voice in the back of my head and fight the urge to interrupt him as he rambles on, explaining the dangers of electricity; how to be safe around it, proper precautions, and procedures.

I turn my attention to my laptop, hoping to block out his rambling, but of course, it decides to make his point for him. At first, it's just a tingle, nothing alarming—but then it surges into a sharp shock as my hand hovers above the keyboard. I flinch. "Not funny!"

Mr. Grenfell pauses his instruction and his eyes land on me. "Ender, everything okay over there?" he asks, a hint of amusement tugging at the corners of his lips.

I sheepishly shake my head, still feeling the residual tingling in my hand. "Just got zapped by my laptop," I admit with a nervous laugh, hoping to brush it off.

A mischievous glint dances in Mr. Grenfell's eyes, "ah the hazards of modern technology," he remarks, his tone light but with a hint of teasing, "Perhaps your laptop is trying to tell you to pay more attention in class."

A few snickers ripple through the room, and my face heats with embarrassment.

"Yeah, I'll take that as a sign," I mutter, shooting a frustrated glare at my laptop... *way to help me out.*

Hoping to shake off the awkward moment, I shift my focus back to the lesson.

"This lab utilizes a Tesla coil, which our school has rented for our use today," he finishes, "we will be working with Mrs. Grow's class."

Oh, no. Isn't that... Dirck's class? My stomach twists at the thought. I don't even have to see him to know he's already plotting ways to make my life miserable. He's always calling me names, blaming me for every tech mishap, like I have some magical "computer-breaking" curse. And the worst part? He never has to deal with the fallout—ever. He stirs up trouble, leaves a mess behind, and somehow always walks away unscathed. It's so unfair. Why does nobody ever hold him accountable? *It's so frustrating!*

"Ender."

The sound of my name jolts me back into his classroom. I glance around, finding I am the only student remaining in his room. *Now you've done it.* I can already picture him, purposely holding off on picking anyone just so he can choose me as his lab partner. *Crap... now I am really going to be stuck working with Dirck.*

The first thing I notice is the smug look on Dirck's face. While I was lost in my thoughts in the other room, most of the students had already paired up with their partners, leaving me scrambling. *Please... anyone but Dirck.* My body trembles and my hands grow slick with sweat as the dread settles in, followed by a bulldozing realization.

The air—it's too heavy—can't breathe. I know those footsteps. I don't even have to look; there's no escaping him now. *Why, world, are you turning against me?*

"Guess we are partners now," the smirk on his face is wide as it creeps onto his face.

I respond with a glare.

Mrs. Grow, the other teacher, begins speaking. "We will be studying Tesla coils in today's lab," she begins, "you will be working with your partner to create your own basic Tesla coil."

A low hum fills the room; intensity increases as group's progress on their lab.

So far Drick hasn't done anything to me. Which scares me because, as I have learned in the past, this means he has a much bigger plan in store. *Actually...* now that I think about it, I guess in some ways, the fact that he is doing all the work himself and refusing to let me help isn't all that nice. But to be real, I prefer this over the latter, because I'm willing to bet he would make me feel as if I was doing everything wrong.

But to be real, I prefer this over the latter, because I'm willing to bet he would make me feel as if I was doing everything wrong. I can already hear the kind of thing he'd say in my head— *"Typical. You can't even get this right. What's wrong with you?"* or *"Didn't you break the last one too? Maybe you've got some kind of curse or something because it sure looks like you're the one messing everything up."* He never misses a chance to blame me for any tech failure, like I have some magic power to wreck computers just by being around them. And the worst part? He'd say it loud enough for everyone to hear, making sure the whole class knew exactly who he thought was at fault.

I mean at least he has left me alone. *Maybe I will make it through.* I begin scanning the room—

The teachers... where are the teachers? Why are there no teachers in the room? The air in the room becomes thinner inviting a new world of anguish. At first, I don't believe what I'm seeing. *Surely, the teachers wouldn't leave us all alone during a lab.* At first, I didn't believe it, nor did I want to believe they

would leave a lab full of students. My eyes anxiously perform another scan over the room and the weight of the realization catches up with me.

"How about that," Drick smirks, "no teachers left to protect you."

Why would I even think for a second that I could make it through a whole class without—

two fork-like prongs jab into my side, sending a shock pulsing through my body. His wicked laughter fills my ears as the lab is illuminated by bright blue and white flashes.

He's electrocuting me! I'm frozen, caught smack in the middle of his relentless shock storm! My muscles refuse to obey, locked tight as if bound by invisible chains. An odd tingle vibrates through my body, growing stronger, until my anger ignites into a fire that seethes and boils like a river of lava. My fists clench on their own, trembling with the force of my frustration, while my face contorts with hatred... what happens next is out of this world.

"Click."

At first, I struggle to place the sound. It's faint, almost unnoticeable, until it grows louder. That's when I realize—it's coming from the larger Tesla coil, the one the teacher used for her demonstration earlier. It hums ominously in the center of the room.

The hairs on my back slowly perk up from the electrical field emerging from the coil. *What's going on? Why is the Tesla coil reacting on its own?*

A bolt of electricity shoots across the room, slamming straight into Drick as if he were its target. The prongs stabbed into my sides drop to the ground with a clatter, releasing me from Drick's stinging grasp of electricity.

The air surrounding me becomes hotter—thicker, beginning to reek of the charcoal-like smell of smoldering skin. *Little do I know*, this is a combination of the Tesla coil and the flames of my fury, which still threaten to explode my insides; I am a walking volcano, a weather-alternating, dangerous, and unstable volcano.

When I finally get enough of my bearings back, my mouth falls open, and I stand frozen in a state of shock. I hear a scream, but I'm unable to determine where it is coming from, that is, until a full minute later, I realize where it's coming from. Everything is a blur; it's happening so fast. I don't know what to think because he never screams.

"WHAM!" our teachers slam through the lab doors. I'm sure the whole school has heard the commotion by now.

I catch a glimpse of the ground, and a wave of nausea hits me. *Shouldn't I feel relief that Drick's in pain?* All I feel is the weight of everything crashing down on me. I'm not sure what's happening. My vision spins, the room tilting. I make out one last thing... medical drones. The edges of everything blur, fading. The darkness is swallowing me.

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My eyes snap open in an unfamiliar place.

"Good, you're awake," an older woman in a white dress and hat whispers. "You're in the nurse's office. Try to rest."

I blink, taking in the stark, barren room. *Where's Drick? He should be here, right? After everything that happened, he should be lying in one of these beds, just like me.*

My head throbs as scattered images flash through my mind—the Tesla coil sparking, a burst of light, Drick reaching out. A shiver runs down my spine. The medical drones... were they the last thing I saw? What happened?

I sigh, staring at the whitewashed ceiling. A guilty knot tightens in my chest, but it's tangled with something else—something I can't quite define. Relief? Vindication? Maybe both. Drick had it coming, but still... I can't shake the feeling that what happened wasn't normal.

It doesn't make sense. I clench my fists, a faint tingle of static crawling up my fingers. My thoughts swirl like a storm, but one thing is clear: something changed the moment that Tesla coil sparked, and I need to figure out what.

I imagine the teachers scrambling for an explanation, trying to piece together how the electricity could have traveled so far. A Tesla coil isn't supposed to have that kind of range, let alone turn itself on. But as much as they'll rack their brains, they won't find the answers they're looking for.

Because deep down, I felt it—the moment it happened. A surge of energy, static crawling under my skin, building until it snapped. It wasn't just the coil acting on its own. Something in me had connected with it, directed it. My pulse quickens as the realization sinks in. *No. That's impossible. There's no way I...* But the memory is vivid now: the spark that leaped to life the second my frustration boiled over. The air crackled, and then—him, knocked flat, clutching his chest.

I glance at my hands, trembling as if they're still holding onto the memory of that surge. *Did I do this? Did I make it happen? And if so... how?*

Chapter 1

Did I really control the Tesla coil to shock Drick? The thought sends a strange, curious shiver down my spine. *Could all these weird glitches—my food printer malfunctioning, my laptop acting up—be connected to some strange ability of mine?* The idea gnaws at me.

I'm not supposed to leave the house after sundown. Definitely not allowed to go to a store. It's not just some rule—everything I touch seems to break. My parents think it's a bad omen. So many of the gadgets I touch always malfunction or fry themselves. So, I'm stuck inside.

But tonight... something feels off. A restless weight presses down on me, and despite every instinct screaming to stay put, I tell myself, *just this once*. The lie is bitter on my tongue, but I swallow it as I head to my bedroom. My hands tremble as I open the drawer and pull out a thick wad of cash. *What am I even doing?*

I'm not old enough to drive, but that doesn't stop me from slipping into the garage. My father's bike is parked in the corner, gathering dust. "Sorry, old friend," I murmur, taking the handlebars in hand. I promise I'll bring you back. He never uses it anyway—he won't even notice it's gone.

With the night pressing around me, the sound of the garage door closing echoes louder than usual. I try to push the rising sense of unease aside as I pedal into the unknown.

The sidewalks blur by as I ride, but I'm so anxious to put my new theory to the test, I was given the illusion of a bike ride that felt like an hour.

The sliding doors startle me as they automatically open when I get close. *You really shouldn't be here.* The thought hits me like a punch to the gut. I've never actually been to a computer store before. My parents always keep me away, convinced that any technology I get near is doomed to break. I'm allowed in general stores or grocery stores, though—well, because there's a *much* lower risk of me frying the apples. Might as well grab the cheapest one, I sigh, not like I won't end up breaking it anyway. A red tag marks a tablet on a shelf just below my eyeline—\$42. I grab it and head to the checkout line.

I reach the front of the line and pay for the tablet, my hands trembling slightly as I hand over the cash. After grabbing the bag, I rush back home through the darkness, pedaling hard on my father's bike.



As soon as I get back home, I sprint up the stairs, down the hallway, and into my room, **setting down** the box containing the tablet on my desk.

My fingers tremble with anticipation as I grasp the cardboard box. It isn't long before I am attacking it **like** an eager child unwrapping a long-awaited gift on Christmas morning. With a swift, almost impatient motion, I tear away the tape sealing the flaps, not bothering with caution as shreds of cardboard scatter around me.

Inside, nestled in protective foam, lies a sleek black device. It's noticeably light, almost surprisingly so. *But hey, it's only a budget tablet, I can't be expecting a heavyweight champion now, can I?*

My fingers curl into the foam, lifting the tablet out of the box.

The plastic casing feels smooth beneath my fingertips, but the screen, although not the largest, looks promising.

I peel off the protective film covering the display, revealing its glossy surface. My fingers feel for the power button, and I hold it for a few seconds, allowing the device to power on. The screen lights up showing the manufacturer's logo.

I set the tablet down, turning my attention back to the box. Digging deeper inside, I uncover accessories: a basic charger and a USB cable. *No frills here.*

The tablet finishes booting up, its screen flickering to life with a soft glow. I lift it off my desk, feeling the cool surface beneath my fingers, and begin navigating through the setup process.

The screen shows a home screen, and I hover my finger down over the Notes app icon.

I gasp, my finger freezing mid-air as the Notes app expands onscreen. I never actually touched the screen to press the app's icon, yet here I am, looking directly at the notes app.

Does this mean... could my theory actually be true? I look back down at the screen. I freeze, *how?* There are now words on the screen and my jaw drops.

The screen reads, "Could this actually be true?"

No way, this is exciting—without warning, I hear a thud and a click. My parents are already home.

My heart pounds in my chest. Panic surges through me. I quickly snatch up the tablet and shove it into the top drawer of my desk, burying it beneath a jumble of notebooks and pens. The rush of adrenaline makes my hands shaky, but I'm quick, stuffing the empty cardboard box and packaging materials into a nearby trash bag. I tuck the crumpled bag into the corner, hoping it'll go unnoticed.

My mom's footsteps approach, and I scramble back to my desk, grabbing a textbook from my bag and flipping it open as if I've been engrossed in studying all along. When she appears in the doorway, her eyes scan suspiciously over the room, but I meet her gaze with what I hope is an innocent expression.

"Why is your light still on?" She crosses her arms, asking in a questioning tone.

"Oh, just had some homework to finish up," I reply, forcing a nonchalant smile while trying to keep my voice steady despite the nerves.

Her gaze lingers on me for a moment, but thankfully, she seems too tired to press the issue further. With a weary sigh, she shakes her head, "Alright, but don't stay up too late. You need your rest," she admonishes before retreating from the room, leaving me alone with my racing thoughts.

I let out a silent breath of relief as she leaves; I barely avoided being caught. With the coast clear, I turn my attention back to the tablet hidden in my desk, ready to dive into its mysteries. The house falls silent, and for a moment, I think I'm free to get lost in the stillness... that is, until I glance at the clock. It's late, and school's tomorrow. A heavy sigh escapes me as the weight of reality settles in. But I don't move.

I should shut everything down, turn off the light, and force myself to sleep. I know I should. But the thought of closing my eyes, of shutting my brain off when I'm so close to understanding something—it's unbearable.

Instead, I crack open the desk drawer again. The tablet's screen glows faintly as I wake it up, and my fingers hover just above it. My heart kicks up a beat.

"Show me something," I murmur, my fingers hovering just above the screen. Nothing happens. The tablet stays still, waiting.

I let out a slow breath, shaking my head. Maybe I imagined it. Maybe my mind's too fried from everything that I'm just seeing things that aren't there.

But I don't pull away.

I lean in, barely breathing, waiting—half-expecting.

A faint hum lingers in the air. Or maybe it doesn't. Maybe it's just the silence playing tricks on me.

My pulse kicks up, anticipation curling in my chest.

But nothing happens.

The tablet stays still—just a screen, waiting for input.

Machines don't act on their own.

I let out a breath, pressing the heels of my palms into my eyes. I'm losing it.

Knock.

I nearly fling the tablet across the desk.

The door creaks open, and Cyrix slips in, his face barely visible under the dim glow of my lamp.

"*You're still up,*" he observes, his eyes flicking to the tablet.

I don't move. Don't react. The screen is dim, but the glow is still noticeable.

"*So are you,*" I counter, my heart still racing.

He walks in, dragging his pillow along with him, like he's done a hundred times before on nights he can't sleep. He raises an eyebrow. "*New toy?*"

I push it aside slightly, feigning indifference. "*Just messing with it. Nothing special.*"

Cyrix doesn't look convinced but lets it go. Instead, he plops onto my bed and smirks. "*Why do you look like I just caught you robbing a bank?*"

"*I don't.*"

"*You do.*"

I sigh, raking a hand through my hair. "*What do you want?*"

He shrugs. "*Couldn't sleep. Kept thinking about stuff.*"

I glance back at the tablet, then at him. "*What kind of stuff?*"

He hesitates, his tone becoming more serious. *"You've been acting weird lately. Like... something's going on, but you're not telling me."*

That catches me off guard. *"What are you talking about?"*

He looks at me for a long moment before shaking his head. *"I don't know. Maybe I'm just overthinking it."*

I force a smile, though my chest tightens. *"You're overthinking."*

Cyrix gives me a long, scrutinizing look. He's smart—too smart for his age. If I say anything else, he'll know I'm lying.

But he doesn't press. Instead, he closes his eyes. *"Think I'll just crash in here tonight."*

"Cy, no—"

"I'm already here," he mutters, pulling the blanket over himself. *"Night, Ender."*

I glare at him, but he's not budging. With an exasperated sigh, I turn back to the tablet. Cyrix's breathing starts to slow, but I know he's still awake. I hesitate, then turn off the screen. There's no way I'm risking him seeing anything weird.

For now, I'll wait. I push the tablet back into the drawer and shut it carefully, as if that will somehow keep its secrets locked away.

I sigh and rub a hand over my face, suddenly aware of how heavy my body feels. My mind is still racing, but sleep is creeping in at the edges, dragging me under whether I want it or not. I lie down, staring at the ceiling, the tablet's glow still imprinted in my mind. Maybe tomorrow will make more sense.