

safe haven

“You can wipe away a memory, but can you wipe away a soul?”

*‘Dollhouse’*, J. Whedon, 2009-10

## Chase's prelude;

Safe Haven.

A multi-national organization specialising in the field of electro-neuron-therapy. This is accomplished through use of a sophisticated technologies developed by the Haven Corporation.

The function of these institutions is to take damaged or otherwise enfeebled members of the populace and rehabilitate them. Making them stable and productive members of society.

Or, at least it's supposed to...

My name is Chase Connors. And I worked for Safe Haven. And not a single day goes by when I don't regret my decision too.

I was chosen from a vast array of potential candidates because of my *compassion*.

When it came too Survivors, Daniel Hayvey, the head of the Omega/Alpha Safe Haven would take anyone.

But he preferred to find the perfect ones.

The durable.

The desirable.

The people believe we *need* them.

What a sad truth.

Economical downfall of global proportions resulted in a second/third Great Depression which has robbed us all of more than currency.

With crime and mental illness on the rise, the people were ripe for being taken advantage of. And they were.

They think Safe Haven helps.

Takes the weak individuals and helps them achieve a sense of closure so they can move on.

It doesn't.

It contracts them and keeps the bodies.

Slaves.

They're erased.

Every trace of their former identity,

Personality.

Life.

Gone.

And what's left but a shell?

An empty vessel waiting to be filled.

And that's exactly what Haven does.

It implants false memories, personas, if you will, onto these 'Survivors'.

Survivors of their pasts, hired out to whoever has the money, connections or lack of morals to do so.

My job?

I'm Guardian. I watch over the Survivors. Well, one.

Ellone..

But she is neither weak, corrupt, nor stupid.

She is someone I trust and respect. Someone I would die for.

She is no shell. She is something far more.

She has risen above the restraints these technologies have placed on her.

She remembers.

Everything.

All except who she was. No, *is*.

I plan to bring about the down fall of this '*sanctuary*'.

To restore what was lost, stolen from us.

Our identities.

Our choice.

Our strength.

Humans are more than mere shells who can have their insides scooped out on a whim.

We are more than memories.

## Chapter One

### Angelo

Awakening from a deep sleep, that's how I remember it.

You open your eyes and take in your 'first glimpse of life', the world outside the Darkness.

"Welcome to the world, Angelo."

I turned my head to find The Voice.

"Hello?"

My first word.

"My name is Emmett," The Voice explained. "Would you like to visit your new home?"

"New?" That word struck me as odd. A home was supposed to be familiar. Maybe he meant *I* was new, not the home.

"Does that unnerve you?" A second voice, a softer voice, inquired

"I don't know." I retreated backwards. The floor was soft and warm.

"Shh, Dimity. Try to remember he's still young, he is expected to become slightly overwhelmed."

I blinked my eyes and finally they focused.

"Angelo, are you thirsty?" Emmett asked.

"Thirsty?" I pondered that for a moment.

"Tired?" Dimity suggested.

"Tired..." I wondered.

"Hungry?" Emmett implored.

"Anxious?" Dimity inquired.

The bombardment of questions went on for a long time. I found myself losing interest after the tenth time I was asked if I was feeling sleepy.

"Is the seat comfortable?" Emmett asked

"The seat is lovely" I replied, smiling.

Emmett gestured for me to follow.

As he led me outside I became overwhelmed.

Light. Colour. People. There was so much. Everything was *so* big.

"This, Angelo, this is Haven."

"Haven..." I gazed out. We were so high up. I held on the railing for support.

"Do all these people live here too?" I asked.

"Yes they do, Angelo. This is your family." Emmett beamed. "Shall we meet them?"

I nodded hesitantly.

As we walked down the stair case to meet everyone, I was welcomed with smiles and hugs, handshakes and 'hellos'.

We stopped when an elderly man stepped out of his office.

"Emmett, I need your notes on the severity of neurological impairment after memory-- oh.

Hello."

"Hello." I offered.

"What's your name?" he asked, beaming ear to ear.

"Angelo. What's your name?"

"Hello, Angelo. I'm Charles Humphrey Deburne. You may call me, Mr. Deburne."

"Nice to meet you," I said extending a hand.

I didn't know why.

Mr Deburne exchanged a funny look with Emmett then took my hand and shook it.

I was then led to a room Emmett had called the 'Reassignment room'.

He said I was going to test something called 'imprinting'...

I looked around. Emmett and Dimity were present, as was Mr. Deburne, and many others I did know.

I looked around, smiling.

"Angelo, are you ready?" Emmett called, his smile wavering.

"Yes Emmett," I replied. In truth I was a little scared.

"Now this might hurt a little, so don't be frightened--"

"For God's sake man," Mr Deburne pushed Emmett aside and pushed a single button.

Suddenly flashes exploded in my head. They were bright and hurt my ears and made my head feel like it was going to split in two.

Then everything turned white, before it all faded to black...

### Chase:

We sat in utter silence.

Dusk was beginning to fade to night.

I put down my binoculars and picked up my thermos full of coffee and took a swig.

It was bitter, cold and entirely unpleasant. But necessary.

I held it out to Ellone. She shook her head.

I picked up my binoculars and looked at the dilapidated hotel opposite us.

"I'm sorry, I don't care what the sign says, I've seen nicer discarded refrigerator boxes on the side of a highway. There is no way this joint is four stars." Ellone exclaimed with disdain.

"Well it's not exactly the norm for Haven clientele to be financially well set." I reminded her.

I tapped her on the shoulder as I saw the guy leaving.

He flagged down a taxi and sped off.

"Step on it," I called with rising anxiety.

With that she ignited the engine and the inert vehicle burst into life.

We trailed the guy a good mile into city-limits before I advised we proceed on foot.

Ellone grumbled a little as she parked.

"Bye baby," she cooed, softly patting the hood of the car as we headed off into the city ruins?.



"Gotta say, I *love* what they've failed to do with the place," Ellone observed with just a hint of sarcasm.

Graffiti covered every visible wall, there were several fires and the streets were littered with debris from broken windows and busted walls.

"You know what they say about sarcasm. It's the lowest form of humour." I teased.

"Really? Because I heard the exact same thing about your love life." She retorted.

I froze.

"Oh come on, it was a joke. Lighten up," I wrapped my hand around her mouth and pulled her into a shadow cast by the immense building beside us.

I raised a finger to my lips and pointed.

It was the target.

He was fidgeting nervously.

Probably knew it was only a matter of time before Haven intervened.

I looked at him with a mix of caution and pity.

He swaggered into a run-down looking pub across from us.

"Best get comfy, he won't be coming out any time soon." Ellone told me, leaning against a wall.

We waited in the darkness for two hours. At least.

Finally our guy stumbled out.

"Night to all yooouse." he slurred.

"God, I can smell him from here. And only half of it is the booze." I grimaced.

"Come on!" She grabbed me by the collar and dragged me part way across the street as we followed him through a dark alley.

Finally we came to a dead end. All that awaited us was some trash and a puddle of what I prayed

was oil.

"I don't understand." she frowned, running a hand through the tangles of her dark brown hair. "I was sure he had gone this way."

"I didn't think I'd ever say this, but I actually prefer the hotel," I admitted.

Suddenly she pushed me aside.

I looked up and the target was there, crow-bar in-hand, ready to strike.

He swung at me; Ellone caught the crow bar, mere inches from my head, and punched the target in the face.

I heard a sickening crunch as her fist collided with bone.

The guy suddenly changed his entire fighting style, swinging his leg beneath Ellone, knocking her to the ground.

He looked at me and with a flick of his wrist a switch-blade fell from his sleeve.

I leapt in front of Ellone, doing all I could to make the deranged man drop his weapon.

I elbowed him and he stumbled back.

The crazed man looked at us, blood oozed from his reddened nose, an unsettling smile on his face.

He swung his leg underneath me and I fell down beside Ellone.

He raised his blade over his head...

And suddenly he fell onto the cold pavement.

I looked up and wanted to laugh.

"Reignor," I chuckled.

"Heya kiddo," boomed Reignor. He extended a gloved hand and pulled me too my feet.

I in turn helped Ellone to hers.

"Thanks," I groaned, rubbing my neck.

"You're welcome," he told me, half-grinning.

"This jerk better be awful grateful when he wakes up or next time I'm aiming the tranq at his ass," he grunted, throwing him over his shoulder.

S.H.

We returned to underground bunker.

"How are Maria and Eliot?" I asked, taking a seat at an unoccupied table a good distance away from \_\_\_\_\_ ears.

"Maria's holding it together. And Eliot's.... Eliot."

"Still lusting after everything in sight?" Ellone asked.

Reignor smirked, finishing off his mug of beer.

"Notice you got a few new scars, things rough up your end?" I asked.

"Yeah, it's tough. Getting harder and harder to let Survivors go free though. Specially since Hayvey's breathing down everyone's necks. Brings in a good four to compensate for everyone lost I reckon,"

"He's a thorny one." Ellone agreed?replied.

I pulled out the withered little tea rose from my pocket and let the memories wash over me...

The smiles, the 'congratulations', the mingling with relatives both chatty and rude.

I slowly buttoned up my shirt, pulled on my pants and shoes and then started on my tie.

It should have been the easiest thing, but somehow it continually thwarted me.

I looked in the mirror for assistance.

"You clean up nicely." Ellone teased with mock surprise.

"Ellone, did anyone see you?" I demanded.

"Relax, everyone's outback. With a wedding going on everyone is too busy to notice a stray Survivor. Besides, they all think I'm imprinted as some ditzzy bridesmaid or something."

"You look beautiful." I told her sincerely as I tried and failed to fix my tie.

I ran my hands through my hair, and then swore under my breath remembering the hour spent trying to make it perfect.

"Come here," she told me, batting my hands away and tying my tie perfectly.

She gently began patting down my disheveled hair.

We gazed into each other's eyes and slowly we started to lean in.

I put a hand to her shoulder.

"No," I breathed.

"Why?" She asked me.

We both jumped as an abrupt knocking on my door startled us back to reality.

"Chase,"

"Reignor," I began, blushing slightly.

"It's time," he told us.

We exchanged a knowing look and then he was gone.

"Are you ready?" I asked Ellone.

"No. But when have we ever been?" She half-smiled; I picked up my jacket as we exited my office.

Ellone took my arm as we headed out toward the faint music, in her hands a modest bouquet of dainty little tea roses.

She tucked one of the roses into my jacket before we headed outside, into the vast garden.

It was vibrant and beautiful. A lush green, with tiny multi-colored flowers bursting into bloom.

We walked down the long, seemingly endless white carpet before reaching the altar.

We parted ways, I headed toward Reignor and several other groomsmen I didn't know and

Ellone towards Maria and a gaggle of bridesmaids.

Then the music changed and all eyes fell on the woman in white slowly advancing toward us.

Her blond hair curled by expert hands and entwined with white blossoms, her lips painted a soft red, her face barely able to contain her exuberance.

When at last she reached us she looked at Hayvey with a look I could only describe as reverence.

We at last it was over we head under a marquee and after finishing my speech, I raised my glass and drank deep, the champagne burning my tongue with its bubbles.

The newlyweds kissed and I was deafened by the vocally expressed enthusiasm of those present.

I looked around. Maria, Reignor, Eliot and Ellone were all present. Each dressed to impress.

Maria, in her bride's maid dress. Over the shoulder, and deep maroon.

Ellone looked effortlessly lovely in a light blue dress, around her neck a simple silver chain with a tiny diamond.

And Reignor, Eliot and I were all in tuxedo's so overly-priced I could knock off two rich, elderly family members and still have only paid for the buttons.

I remember looking around.

Seeing Eliot was hitting on any woman drunk enough to respond to his advances, Reignor smoking a cigar and sitting alone, Maria talking to the bridesmaids, and finally the only other person sitting at my table. Ellone. Playing with her hair. A nervous habit.

Then everyone was called to the dance floor for the first dance.

I took Ellone's hand in mine and we proceeded to the dance floor.

We swirled and twirled, dipped and at one point a slight trip.

Ellone giggled as I pulled her close to me at the end of the song and gently pushed her hair out of her face.

Then a camera flash caught my eye.

I noticed the bride. She turned her head to me and smiled. But then I saw her eyes.

Her dull, vacant eyes...

I manouvered Ellone away from the dance floor and behind the gazebo.

"What's wrong?"

"Hayvey's bride, she's--

"A Survivor. I know."

"How?"

"Her eyes. There's... There's no depth to them. Not like yours."

I placed my hand on Ellone's face and looked deep into her eyes.

"Or yours." I told her.

I remember after that, during the dinner, a shot being fired.

Whether it was aimed at me or Ellone I was unsure. But one thing I knew for certain.

They were on to us.

I drew my gun and we fled. Stole a car and left.

A few months on and here we were. Sitting in our shabby, underground bunker, drinking our sorrows with Reignor.

I looked at him and saw the anguish he tried to mask behind his tough exterior.

I looked up from the rose in my hand, and faced Ellone.

“Best get goin’,” Reignor told me, placing his mug down on the table with a soft thud.

I turned the tiny rose over in my hands, avoiding eye contact.

“Oh, yeah.” He held out a folded piece of paper and handed it to me. “Maria wanted me to give you that. Said it was important. She woulda come herself, only she’s the only one smart enough to hack the system and let us in and out undetected.”

I opened the tiny note and felt a smile spread across my face.

“What is it?” Ellone asked.

I handed her the note and she mirrored my delight.

She leapt to her feet and took off for the car.

“Tell her thanks,” I told Reignor, patting him on the shoulder as I made my way out, trailing after Ellone.

### Angelo:

I walked the halls, smiling at everyone, in awe of everything.

On my way to Emmett’s to admire a fern.

"Beautiful aren't they?"

I turned around.

"Hello Mr. Deburne," I smiled.

He leaned in close to me.

"Your eyes have remarkable depth," he breathed. "Such blue eyes,"

He took my face in both his hands.

“Thank you.” I told him.

"Angelo, you will be my greatest accomplishment," he smiled proudly.



## Chapter Two

### Chase

I sat outside a sleazy motel, in our car. Waiting.

Surely it couldn't take this long. Get in, get out, that's how a professional does it. I should know.

I looked across the street again and heaved a sigh of relief as a familiar length of dark brown hair heading towards me.

She got in the car, slamming the door behind her.

"How was he?" I asked starting the car.

"Asleep. Didn't take much either, was out within the minutes."

"Then what were you doing in there for so long?" I growled.

"Getting the job done," She told me, pulling off her beanie and letting her hair out. "I made sure that I did leave anything so that Haven sleaze could trace us."

She flashed the keycard at me.

"You can say it. I'm awesome."

"So the sedative worked?" I asked.

"No, I used my feminine charms to seduce him and get him to bring me back to his place and struck him with a lamp."

I looked at her, my expression a cross between concern and stern disapproval.

"Yes Chase, of course it worked. He let me in assuming I was the *'lady of the evening'* he paid for and I slipped it to him in his wine."

"That's a relief." I sighed.

"Relax, I was in no real danger. If it hadn't worked I'd have you there... To watch as I mopped the floor with his face." She smiled.

"You do know that I would never have let any harm come to you right?" I asked her.

"Of course I do. I trust you."

I looked at her and smiled.

"I still don't know how I'm ever going to repay you."

"By staying alive." I told her.

Suddenly she fell silent.

I sent a glance to the mirror and saw her looking solemn, she was pulling off her scarf and gloves.

"Do you think... I'm a good person?" She asked me in a voice like a whisper, slowly removing her jacket.

"What would make you ask me that?" I asked incredulous.

"Well... Only the cruel, weak or stupid voluntarily enter Haven. So the question is... Which one am I?"

I stopped the car.

"None." I told her with finality.

"Chase..." A single tear rolled down her cheek. "We both know that isn't true."

"No? Ellone, you were a victim of circumstance. You weren't cruel, or weak, or stupid. You were selfless, kind and compassionate. And Haven took advantage of you."

"How can you know?"

"Because Ellone. I may not know your past, but I know you."

She smiled and wiped away her tears.

I started up the car again.

Suddenly my phone started blaring.

"Ellone, would you?" I asked, tossing her my cell/phone.

"You've reached Mr. Connors phone. He's either in a meeting or tied up in his office. Can I take a message for you?" She asked in her embarrassingly spot-on imitation of a breathy secretary.

"Uh-huh, uh-huh."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Maria," she mouthed, pulling her jacket back on.

"Okay, thanks," she hung up. "Stop the car."

I hit the brake.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Maria's found him."

Ellone told me they address and I turned the car around and floored it.

S.H.

"Are you sure this is it?" Ellone asked me as we got out of the car.

"Run-down apartment, dodgy part of town. Sounds about right." I told her.

"Just once I wish we could break into a nice house," she sulked.

I kicked the door open, gun raised.

"Don't shoot!" wailed the quivering man on the floor. He was hugging his knees to his chest, tears stained his cheeks.

Ellone placed her hand on mine, so I tucked away my gun.

"You know what we want?" I demanded.

"My life?"

"No." I scoffed. "Mr. Deburne, we believe you can help us--"

Suddenly his eyes fell on us and he let out an audible gasp.

"Do you know who I am?" Ellone asked.

He nodded, chortling.

"You're Ellone. My greatest achievement," he turned to face me. "Well, one of,"

"Can you tell me my real name?"

He laughed.

"I've worked with so many Survivors over the years, eventually you forget the names and the faces and all you remember is the accomplishment," he stared back at me again. It was rather unnerving.

"Most of the time I told Daniel to not even bother telling me because I knew I wouldn't remember them anyway." He chuckled. "Ellone, Gerald, Sophia, Angelo..."

I sunk to my knee and looked deep into his eyes.

Pale green, on set of cataracts, but not blank like a Survivor's. Just a glimmer of depth.

"Your eyes have remarkable depth..." he breathed, raising a shivering hand to my face.

I rose to my feet, recoiling from his touch. "Thank you," I growled.

I pulled Ellone aside.

"He's not a Survivor, but that doesn't mean he's not dangerous," I cautioned.

"Charles Deburne was renowned for his intellectual prowess and contributions to advancing the imprinting process. For all we know he could have imprinted himself with fighting skills or who

knows what."

We looked at him.

He was imitating a bee and as he waved his finger about.

"Oh yeah, I'm shaking in my boots. Maybe he'll bark at us if we *really* piss him off," Ellone snorted.

"Mr Deburne, we you like to come with us?" She asked, tentatively stepping forward.

He looked at Ellone eagerly, like a child about to go on a big trip.

"We need you to come with us. To Safe Haven,"

"I will never return to that vile place! Not even if I were threatened with my going or taking my final breath." he snarled, his nose wrinkled in utter disgust.

"Why?" I demanded.

"I have my reasons!" He snapped.

He looked back from me to Ellone and shook his head.

"I never would have thought I see a day when a Survivor is ignorant of its name,"

I saw Ellone's face fall, and I raised my gun and aimed it at his head.

His eyes became wide and his skin a deep alabaster.

"Breath a word us to anyone, and Haven will be the least of your worries," I warned him.

I shot my gun at the ceiling, specks of plaster showered down.

He covered his ear.

I went to leave when I felt his withered hands grab my arm.

"Wait!"

I looked down at him, my expression one of repulsion and pity.

"Angelo." he told me.

"What?" I snapped.

He looked at me with a big smile. He then looked at Ellone. "Survivor. Ignorant of its name," he laughed before heading back to his spot on the floor and rocking back and forth.

I exchanged a worried look with Ellone, before I headed back outside, leaving the hysterical man behind us.

### S.H.

"Do you really think we should have just left him there?" Ellone asked me.

"Of course not. But you heard him. He wouldn't return to Haven if his life depended on it." I snarled, sending a glare at the key card that lay on the dashboard.

"And the gun shot?" she demanded.

"That's nothing unheard of here." I told her.

"I mean't why scare someone who's already terrified?"

"To reinforce it. His fear led him to freedom. And it will keep him alive. Once he learns how to use it."

"Are you scared?" she asked me.

"All the time." I told her, pulling into the parking lot.

I scooped up the keycard and we headed toward the immense building that was Safe Haven.

I punched the button and the elevator doors flew open.

Ellone and I got in.

I was wearing a suit from my corporate days, brief case in hand, and Ellone a white dress.

I chuckled softly.

"What?" Ellone asked.

"The first time I saw you... was in an elevator." I confessed.

"You never told me that,"

I shrugged. "Not much too tell. I didn't say two words to you,"

"But you remembered me?"

"You make quite an impression," I told her. Smiling.

Just then the elevator doors opened and we were in.

The keycard safely in my coat pocket.

I raised my gun, and tentatively stepped inside.

I looked around the hall.

Empty.

I signaled for Ellone to follow.

It was much harder to get in back when the guards were people. Not Survivors awaiting commands.

Finally we reached the rendezvous point.

My old office.

I jimmed open the lock and was both delighted and shocked to see all my possessions exactly where I had left them. A thick layer of dust covered everything.

"Finally!" called a familiar voice, stepping out from behind my book shelf.

"Maria!" I called, pulling her in for a hug.

"Okay, this room's *clean* right?" I asked Maria, tentatively looking around.

Maria nodded, heading to her computer and typing hastily.

"Reignor and Eliot will be here within the hour."

I walked up and looked at the screen.

"How exactly did you do this again?" I asked again.

"A combination of hyper encrypting data and being awesome," Maria told me.

"Hyper-what?" I asked.

"Rather than hurt yourself trying to understand the complexities of it, just gaze on in awe and say 'dude, s'awesome',"

"While I resent being portrayed as a grammatical inept corporate tool, bravo. You stole the gold for your flawless depiction as a know-it-all bitch."

She poked her tongue out at me and began clicking keys.

We looked up as we heard a knocking on the door

It was Reignor and Eliot.

"Welcome back!" Eliot called cheerfully, throwing his arm around me. "I have a question only you can answer." He told me in a low voice.

"What new diseases you picked up on the weekend? Because Maria's right over there if you need a check-up."

"Now that you mention it," Eliot swaggered over to Maria, and leaned in real close to her, "I need a *physical*,"

"Not even if you had four decontamination showers."

"So there *is* a number."

Maria shook her head and continued typing.

"I still don't know how I'm going to hack into the mainframe. I have no clue what the password



is.” Maria told me.

Just then it clicked.

“Try Angelo,” I told her.

Maria typed it in and let out an audible gasp.

“How did you figure it?” She asked. “I’ve been racking my brain for months and you guess it in two seconds!”

“I had a little help.” I smiled.

I cleared my throat.

“We need to put the plan into action,” I told them.

## Chapter Three

"Now everyone knows what their doin'?" I asked.

Eliot was avoiding eye contact.

"Really?" I asked. "You don't know?"

"Just go over it one more time." Eliot begged.

I growled in exasperation.

I looked at Ellone and smiled. She was much more at ease now she had ditched the flowing dress for her jacket and jeans. "Better for butt kickin'," she'd told me.

I took a deep breath, and began;

"Maria will hack the main frame, release a radio wave stretching to all corners of the city's limits and return every Survivor's original identity. She will then open all the exits and turn off all the tech."

"No pressure," Maria told me. Biting her nails.

I smiled.

"Ellone will lead the newly revived Survivors to our bunker and keep 'em safe. Reignor will lead a revolt with anyone willing to stay behind. You take the Haven employees to safety. You lead the Haven employees to safety. Reignor will handle any riff-raff."

"And you?" Eliot asked.

"I'll handle Hayvey,"

We looked at one another. Perhaps for the last time.

We all knew what we had to do.

I went to say good bye to them, but words failed me. How do you say good bye knowing it's the

last time?

I wanted to say something insightful and inspiring. Something that summed up what their friendship meant to me after all these years.

But all that came out was a nervous laugh.

Maria hugged me. Tightly.

I went to hug Reignor then stopped. Awkward. Reignor and I looked at each other and shook hands.

"Manly too the end, aye lil' buddy?" He told me, ruffling my hair.

He went to leave, Maria patted me on the shoulder as she followed. Eliot smirked, leaving.

I looked at them and smiled, they smiled back, then left.

Ellone went to leave but I took her hand and held her back.

I opened my mouth but no words came out.

She smiled and I knew she understood. No words necessary.

She looked at me and then left.

I stood in my office for a moment.

So much history had I collected in my office without knowing.

I sat down in my chair, and picked up the small frame that held the only picture I had of the five of us.

I felt a single tear roll down my cheek.

I wiped it away and arose.

I had to face my fears.

I had to face my fate.

I had to face Hayvey.

**S.H.**

I gingerly made my way through the vast foyer until finally reached the stairs. At the top, Hayvey's office.

I cracked open the door, sliding it slowly open. I tentatively stepped inside. My gun at the ready.

I looked around his giant office, glass panes separating the front and back.

A large window looking out onto the foyer caught my eye.

The view was breath-taking.

I turned around and then I saw him. Back turned.

I raised my gun.

I had one shot.

"No!"

I was rammed aside.

It was Olivia. The bullet ricocheted and shattered a nearby vase.

"Hello Chase." Hayvey called.

"How--?" I began. Olivia ran to her husband's side.

"A little birdie told me you were planning a revolt. And where's the fun in playing chess if the king is out?"

"Is that how you think of yourself. A king?"

"Hardly. I prefer to think of myself as a God." He chortled, walking over to his window.

I went to raise my gun.

"Uh-uh-uh." Olivia waved her finger at me.

"Drop it."

I hesitated.

"I could have security put a bullet in your head in half the time it takes you to figure out which button is the trigger."

I slowly placed my gun on the floor and raised my hands.

"Kick it over."

I obeyed.

Olivia picked it up.

"That would be too easy." She told me as she caressed the gun.

She handed it to Hayvey.

He cocked it and pointed it at me.

I closed my eyes and braced myself.

The shout rang loud and clear, and for a moment time stood still.

I didn't feel anything.

No pain.

Nothing.

I tentatively opened my eyes.

Hayvey had turned and shot Olivia.

Her corpse stared up at me with wide, vacant eyes. The wine colored rug drench in her blood.

"Why?" I asked.

"There's plenty more where she came from." Hayvey informed me.

I tried with everything in me not to look down at the floor at the floor, but the horrifying

spectacle beckoned to me and demanded it not be denied.

"You've been quite a thorn in my side. Swearing off clients. Turning precious employees against me. Stealing my favorite Survivor." He clicked his tongue.

I looked at him as he glared down at the body of his victim with repulsion.

"How could you? She was your wife. An innocent--"

"I'm sorry, innocent? Do you even know who Olivia is?"

"She was an innocent girl you abducted off the street and forced to marry you!" I yelled.

"Olivia is the head of the Delta Safe Haven. I made her a Survivor in order to extend my forces."

Hayvey laughed. "I don't know what you've heard, but Olivia has been little more than a pawn for me. Nothing more, nothing less." He continued to laugh, tears glistening in his eyes.

"You see Chase, trust is for amatuers. Power, true power, lies in the one who is dependent on none other than themselves."

"You rely on plenty and seem to get by!" I spat.

"No. I orchestrate things. People are as disposable to me as this tea I'm drinking. When one cup empties I just get other."

I clenched my fists, my jaw set.

"A Survivor is no more a friend to me than a power saw. They are merely tools to assist those who know how to wield them."

"Survivor's are people, not objects." I snapped.

"Is that so? Than tell me. How does it feel?"

"How does what feel?" I demanded.

"Lying too yourself. Every day. And to everyone around you."

Confusion spread across my face.

“Wha--?”

“You’re a Survivor.”

My eyes widened.

My stomach dropped.

“No...” My face fell to the floor.

"Come now Connors, don't act so shocked. You and I both know on some level you've known for a while now."

"How long?" I asked.

"A couple years."

"How many is a *couple*?" I asked with agitation.

"Well, three." He smirked.

I felt bile rise in the back of my throat.

I wanted to scream ‘Liar’ until my throat was raw.

Yell abuse at him.

Beat him to a bloody pulp.

But I couldn’t.

It made sense.

Suddenly, everything made so much sense.

"You were my greatest accomplishment. After Ellone of course."

"What do you mean?" I asked, my mind still racing.

Faces.

Names.

Dates.

Pain.

All lies.

"You, Chase, are a Survivor yes. But you are special. Special because your imprint, is your original personality. With a few tweaks."

"Tweaks?" I asked venomously.

"Improvements." He beamed. "And Ellone." He sighed happily. "Ellone is unique in a very different way. Unlike you, she did have her old personality wiped, but she is equipped to learn and is able to retain information even after having her mind wiped."

"Why let me live? Why not just kill me?" I demanded.

"I haven't?" He inquired with a sneer. "You don't *believe* that you are dead?" He chuckled.

"I let you live, so that you could deliver me the ultimate weapon. After all, what harm was there?

Losing another Survivor?" He laughed.

"Wouldn't you agree? Angelo?" He whispered in my ear.

He began to circle me like a shark.

"Now, Chase. You didn't honestly believe that I hired you for your compassion now did you?"

He let out a long loud mocking laugh.

He leaned on his desk and pushed a button on his phone.

"So Connors, the way I see it you have two choices. Sign yourself back over to me as a Survivor, or I release a lethal gas into every room but this office. Either way I'm going to wipe you, at least if you consent you'll save some lives."

"Why?" I asked.

"You ask that a lot. Why what?" He demanded.

"Why make me her Guardian? Why not just kill me outright?"



"Well, since you're not going to remember anyway, what the hell. You've been a valuable asset to this company. And one I saw no point in wasting. So, rather than just kill you, I used you. You honestly think something as big as Safe Haven wouldn't do this?"

I was buying time. I felt for my gun instinctly, my fingers fell to my transmitter. I flicked the switch.

"I've all ready signaled security. I've got a Survivor on their way here right now. Why not just surrender, and spare any damage being done too yourself. I don't like hiring out bodies that are bruised. Lowers the price."

"I don't understand. You picked bodies to hire based on strength and looks. You scrapped out the inside like they were shell fish and put in whatever filling the client wanted. Why allow me to think? Why not make me just like them? A puppet?"

"Because Connors, you are so much more than muscles and bone structure. You are... Special."

"You keep saying that!" I snapped. "What? What makes me special?" I demanded.

"Your mind."

"The irony," I growled. "The only Survivor in history to have someone take a personal interest in them."

"You should be thanking me."

"Thanking you? You murdered me! Made me a shell! Hollowed out my body so you could hire me out! If anything, I should kill you."

"I saved you," he growled.

"Saved me? Tell me, what would make me join Haven? What God forsaken thing traumatized me to the point where this looked like a viable option?"

"I'll spare you the details but even I'll admit, it was bad. The fact that you weren't destroyed was

in itself an achievement. A note of your strength. In you I saw an asset. So I had them modify you rather than simply erase you. Unlike other Survivors I just had him extract your painful past. You are a testament to what personal choice can accomplish. You not only work above and beyond the parameters we set but you are also virtually indistinguishable from humans."

"I'm more human than you." I growled.

"The Created telling the Creator who's real." He laughed.

"And Ellone?" I demanded. "What of her? Is she just another pretty toy?"

"No. I had big plans for Ellone. All the other Havens were impressed when I told them of what my Haven had accomplished with Ellone. The first, well, first *successful* Survivor to be equipped with the ability to learn despite having no trace of her former identity left and undergoing regular mind wipes. They were in awe.

But I saw more.

Much more.

Why stop at this? Why not teach her how to fight? How to lie? Here I had a willing soldier, capable of being whatever I wanted her to be. And all without the need of imprinting.

I could transfer her to other Haven's with the intent to kill and they wouldn't be able to tell.

No imprint.

Just another Survivor.

No way of stopping her."

Suddenly, the doors swung open and Eliot burst into the room.

"Run!" I screamed. But he simply smiled at me.

*There are plenty more where he came from...*

It was Ellone.

“Ellone!”

Eliot appeared out of nowhere and slammed me against the wall.

He raised his fist, ready to deliver the final blow.

Ellone caught his fist and throw hid aside.

I slid down the wall. My entire body aching.

“Chase!” Ellone called.

“He’s... a Sleeper...” I breathed.

Suddenly I remembered.

“Ellone... You need to stop Hayvey...”

She leapt to her feet, punching Eliot in the face before racing off.

I got to my feet and readied myself.

Eliot charged.

We threw punches, kicks.

Blood speckled on the floor.

Suddenly I heard a scream.

I punched Eliot and raced off after Ellone.

“Ellone!” I cried.

She and Hayvey were amongst the chaos.

The security had her.

They all looked at me and she seized on the moment of distraction. Slamming her head against her captor’s face. She punched him, knocking him to the floor.

Eliot rammed her and Hayvey called the trigger phrase that would tum make her freeze.

It didn't work.

He looked at me with fear and screamed at Eliot, who suddenly stopped and looked around as though he had just awoken from a bad dream.

"Shoot yourself!" He screamed.

"No likely," Ellone snarled, grabbing him by the collar, drawing her fist back.

Suddenly I saw Eliot, the gun in his hands.

"No!" I screamed.

I tried to pull it away from him but his grip was iron-tight.

"Stop him!" I roared at Hayvey.

"Stop." Hayvey called.

Eliot froze.

"Let Ellone go free and I'll sign," I told him.

"What?" Ellone demanded. "No! I won't let you--"

"Ellone, find Reignor and help him lead these people out of here."

She shook her head.

"Ellone. Please." I begged.

We exchanged glances.

She looked into my eyes.

She turned and disappeared into the crowd.

Hayvey smiled at me and lead me back to his office.

He thrust the piece of paper before me. And I signed.

## Chapter Four

I pulled on the clothes Hayvey had given me. They were typically worn by our Survivors.

As I went to leave my office, my reflection caught my eye.

I looked at myself.

My dark hair.

My pale skin.

My deep blue eyes.

My eyes fell on my clothes.

I certainly looked the part.

I took a deep breath and stepped outside.

I knew it would all be over soon.

I began walking.

I walked amongst them.

The bodies. Survivors and Haven employees alike.

Their faces bore vacant expressions. Eyes empty.

Soon, I would be one of them. Or, rather, I would return to being one of them.

When I approached the door, I stopped.

Hand on the handle.

I needed a moment.

Just a moment.

Too say good bye.

I took and a deep breath and entered.

I saw Eliot's body laying lifeless on the floor. I tried not to retch at the sight of it.

His face usually adorn a smug smirk was as blank as all the others.

"*Chase*, Maria will see you know." Hayvey sneered.

I obeyed, all the while trying to hold an air of indifference.

"Make it quick," I spat.

"Now, now Angelo. Manners." He chided me mockingly.

Maria approached me, and began prepping me for the mind wipe She mouthed the words 'I'm sorry.'

I smiled at her. I looked at her and tried to make her see I didn't blame her.

"Say goodbye to everything that made you *human*" he sneered.

I walked over to the machine. I closed my eyes, preparing myself.

I stood there. My eyes closed. My heart pounding. My fists clenched.

I heard the slightest tick and the suddenly the flashes exploded in my head.

Blinding, deafening flashes.

I wanted to scream but I forgot how,

I felt like I couldn't move,

like my body was separate...

Suddenly the flashes became even more painful.

Intense.

I wanted to close my eyes,

Cover my ears,

But I couldn't move.

I felt the pain ebb and intensify so many times I began to forget which was which.

Then everything went white.

Before it all faded to black...

When I opened my eyes I was lying on the cold linoleum.

"Hello Angelo, how do you feel today?" Hayvey asked me, an all too satisfied smile spread across his face.

I looked at him with puzzlement.

I still remembered.

Everything.

I looked up at him.

"Well, thank you," I said in my best impersonation of a Survivor as I got to my feet.

Surely this was part of his game?

"Angelo," Hayvey turned to me, a smile on his face as though nothing had happened. "let's go home."

I looked at him, searching for some small look of deceit, but something behind him caught my eye. A glint.

Maria was sneaking up behind him, her hand raised above her, something silver in her hand.

Then everything happened so fast it become hard to distinguish one second from the next. I

heard a scream as the scalpel met flesh.

Hayvey slapped Maria to the floor, she knocked the tray of medical tools down with him. Tons of tiny silver instruments fell with *tings* and *clangs* around her.

Hayvey raised his gun.

I charged at him. The gun sliding across the room. I punched him again and again. I roaring curses at him, but I was too enraged to register which ones.

I caught him in a head lock and pulled him toward the machine, and screamed "NOW!"

And then it all exploded in my head again, before fading to white and the welcoming darkness that followed.

### S.H.

When at last I opened my eyes I was in the medical ward. Lying on a bed.

"Mornin'," Reignor called, wincing slightly as Maria finished up his stitches.

"Hey," I called softly.

Then I remembered. Hayvey!

"Where's-- " I began, and Maria just pointed to a bed in the corner.

On it, a wide-eyed Hayvey.

"What's he doing here?" I cried, leaping to my feet.

"Relax." Reignor told me.

"Relax?" I yelled. "Where's my gun?" I demanded.

"He's a Survivor." Maria told me softly, gently leaning me back onto the bed.

I looked over at him.

He saw me and waved shyly.

I waved back tentatively.

"How--?" I began.



"How's your memory?" Maria interjected before I could finish.

"I remember everything." I told her.

"Prove it." Reignor challenged.

"You're jack-ass,"

"Point proven." Reignor nodded.

I smiled/smirked a tad smugly.

"So what now?" Maria asked.

I looked at her.

"This isn't the only Safe Haven in the world, and they all have the potential to go just as wrong."

"Well we can't just sit here and let it," I exclaimed.

"We should get started than," Reignor said getting to his feet. Maria caught him as he lost his balance.

I looked over at Maria bandaging Reignor's wounds.

And I quietly stepped outside the medical ward.

I needed a minute to think.

"Hello," called a soft voice.

Hi?" I turned to see a young woman smiling up at me. She had flowing dark brown hair and stunning, porcelain skin. But the most striking thing about her was her deep, chocolate brown eyes.

She smiled up at me, I returned it.

Suddenly she pulled into a tight embrace.

I gently pulled away.

"I'm sorry. Do I know you?" I asked.

She looked at me with a shocked expression.

"Do you know my name?" she asked me.

"No. I'm sorry."

She looked as though I had struck her.

She looked up at me, her eyes glistening.

"You don't remember me?" She asked.

"No."

She turned to leave then stopped.

"Thank you." She told me.

"What for?" I chuckled.

"Everything." She walked up and gently pecked me on the cheek

She turned to leave. As she walked away I felt something. Something Indiscernible.

"Wait!" I yelled.

She looked at me, wide eyed.

Unsure how to proceed I took a step forward and stuck my hand out.

"I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name."

She smiled, taking my hand.

"Eleanor."

Extension two – Reflective statement;

First I would like to explain that in the process of creating my short story, I eventually decided to pursue a different story with different characters with no link to my original. This decision arose due to an inability on my part to successfully (and satisfactorily) keep the integrity of my story and sustain the word limit. So I opted for an idea I had been developing concurrently with my original narrative.

Early on in the process of creating my initial short story I decided on a character-driven narrative, alternating between dual perspectives of the two main protagonists. The characters were also super-human as I wanted to write a narrative dealing with ostracism and racism, highlighting how people can turn against one another based on anything unique, in this instance, super powers.

The initially narrative drew inspiration from many classic superhero comics and films, including *Superman* and the *X-Men*, as well as more modernised (almost parodies) of the genre, such as the *Incredibles*.

For my second narrative, I had decided to write what I would in my own words describe as a tribute to the cancelled series '*Dollhouse*' by Joss Whedon, which was the largest and most prominent influence on my piece. (Other influences included *Frankenstein*, *Blade Runner*, and some of T.S. Eliot's poetic works) My story dealt with the idea of institutions using technology to wipe away all trace of a person's memories, but small remnants of former identity and personality remain.

These individuals are then hired out after with new personalities, created out of fabricated memories imprinted on them in exchange for monetary incentive for the sole purpose of meeting the needs of wealthy clientele unfazed by the moral implications/ramifications of using another human being in such a way. However, unlike Whedon's work which dealt more with making someone into someone else. I really wanted to deal with the concept of completely erasing someone's life and the lingering feeling of absence left by the loss of your former identity. This struggle and uncertainty of who you are is a constant in my characters journey to bring down the institution and restore those affected by it to their original selves.

But the great thing about my second story was that I had this very relatable theme and I could write to that, compliment that.

The struggle.

The insecurity.

The malleability of human nature.

And despite still having characters I knew and loved, the brilliance of my second narrative was

the idea that absence is better. You don't know the characters' motives, why they're in this place, they themselves deem 'horrible', and this murky history only helps serve the idea that what you don't know may be a blessing in disguise. Even the story's protagonist, who is the most compassionate and selfless person, has you wondering, 'why is he here if he opposes it so much?' Ironically, I had developed each character's back story and had fully intended to include them in the narrative, but ultimately decided against it. Partly due to the constraints of the word limit, and partly because it seemed better to keep their reasons for joining Haven murky. It seemed better to have the 'good guys' have shades of grey. It made them more realistic. The idea of these characters with murky, unexplored depths is appealing because not only does it reinforce this grey-area idea that the characters are themselves in, but it also shows that no one is without blame. Everyone has come to, or been led to this place because of some past trauma and dark past which they, at least originally, wanted to forget.

Safe Haven is a story about memories, and no matter how hard you try, a memory cannot fully be erased, there is always some small remnant left behind.

And also the struggle associated with the loss of identity.

My story is sort of post-modern in the sense that it's meant to make you think about stuff beyond what I have written. Like what if Safe Haven actually existed. Ellone and Chase as a compliment to this theme. You don't know how they really are. Even after spending the entire story with them. You don't *really* know them.

I also decided to use a motif of eyes as windows to the soul. A survivor's eyes are shallow as their memories are stripped and this is like tearing out a piece of their soul. Repressing it. Memories are a part of us. They help make us who we are. If we were to just give them away, it's like we're giving up a part of ourselves. Forfeiting our personal growth and experience for synthesised bliss.

I would also like to note that I actually took some time to try and find names that not only fit my characters, but also the context of my story, for example, 'Ellone', I chose it because it not only sounds beautiful, but also because I loved how close it sounds like 'alone'. And I feel like in the world of Safe Haven most of its inhabitants would feel this way.

As my short story came to a close I was slightly saddened. It was like saying goodbye to a child I had been raising for a year. But like a parent, I must let my baby go out into the world. I have put a lot of my heart, soul and self into my story, so I'm worried about letting it go, but at the same time excited. Through my study of not only English Extension 2, which has been by far my most awesome writing experience ever, but also English Extension 1 and English Advanced, I have learned a lot about myself, my writing techniques and style.