

Love's Treason

In a blink, the three of us appear. Somewhere else. We're surrounded by forest, and I have no idea where we are.

I stumble, catching myself on a tree and Abigail lets out a small moan.

"That's the first time I've teleported three people. I don't think I want to do it again," she complains.

"What are we going to do?" Veronika asks, clearly panicking at the newness and reality of the situation. Without even attempting to read her mind, I can clearly sense the waves of panic circuiting her mind.

We just ran away from the prison we were being held in, took out the tracking devices so they can't find us, and are now stranded in the middle of a forest.

"We can teleport to a town. We'll steal some food and stuff, then decide what to do." I have recovered from the initial shock and take charge of the group.

"Yeah, but if we're seen in town, we'll be reported. And then we'll have the police on us!" Veronika points out. Because of the tattoos they gave each of us when we first arrived, there's no way we can go unnoticed.

"We'll teleport into a store, steal some cosmetics and then zip out before anyone sees us," I suggest.

I personally don't think Abigail can handle that, but I keep that thought to myself.

Abigail turns around. "Natural makeup," she suggests, revealing her mud-stained face.

I pause to evaluate her work. With a thin coating of mud, her tattoo becomes invisible and as the mud dries quickly, the color becomes a normal skin tone.

"That could work." Veronika admits grudgingly.

At Abigail's insistence the two of us apply a coating of mud as well. As it dries it becomes itchy and I'm sure this will drive me crazy.

"Come on, now we can head into town." Abigail offers us each a hand. At my hesitation, she explains. "I've seen maps of this city, I'll teleport us to just outside the city limits and then we can head in. No one will recognize us."

Before I have a chance to talk myself out of it, or to consider what a bad idea this is, I take her hand.

In the span of a blink we reappear in a different part of the forest. Through the trees, I can see the outline of the city ahead. There's lots of people out on the streets, and I wonder if school is out for the day. The sight of the city and bustling streets fills me with dread.

I don't allow myself to pause for a second thought, I just set out towards the people. Veronika gives a small sigh and falls in line behind Abigail.

We dart out of the woods and manage to blend in with the crowds of young people on the street. After we pass a few streets though, I stop dead.

"What is it?" Abigail asks.

"*Shh!*" I switch to communicating telepathically. *"I didn't realize where this is... That's my brother up ahead! My house isn't far from here."*

"*What do you want to do?*" Veronika manages to project her thought to me telepathically. I'm honestly surprised by her effectiveness.

"We should stop at a cosmetics store; I want to get this mud off my face. After that, we'll find a quiet spot to discuss what to do. If we need to stay somewhere for a bit, we might be able to crash at my place..." I respond, projecting my thoughts to both Abigail and Veronika.

Abigail and Veronika share a brief glance but follow me as I lead us down the street. After walking a short distance, I stop and indicate a store. We enter together, trying to act casually, although for me it's been nearly a year since I've been in "normal" civilization.

"Are we going to steal something?" Veronika projects the thought.

I don't reply, but shake my head slightly, hoping Veronika will catch it. I lead us down a few aisles and pause beside a stand of powders.

"Excuse me? Could we have a sample of this please?" I call, as a store clerk walks by.

"Certainly." The woman replies cordially and supplies me with a small container of the type I indicated.

At my beckons, Veronika and Abigail follow me into a washroom at the back of the store. "This won't perfectly match all of our skin tones, but it will have to do."

We enter the washroom, locking the door behind us. I take the sink first, washing off the mud that is now caked to my face. Once finished, I step aside to let Veronika rinse her face while I grab a paper towel to dry my face.

I brush my wavy brown hair back behind my ears and open the small sample case of makeup. "There's not much here, so we're going to have to use it carefully."

I sparingly remove a bit of the powder and apply it to my cheek with my right pinky. The powder is a bit pale compared to my tan skin, but I believe it won't look too out of place. I continue until the tattoo is sufficiently hidden and pass the jar to Veronika.

I admire her work, for the colour nearly matches her skin perfectly. Abigail's skin is much paler than either of ours and the darker powder looks a bit odd. Since we have some left, I quickly dab a small amount onto my other cheek so they'll match. Abigail follows suit and we finish the container.

"Front door, or teleporting out?" Veronika asks, shooting a nervous glance at the door as if expecting someone to come charging in.

I extend my senses, and locate the clerk's mind. She's in the back, restocking some shelves.

"The clerk is busy, so we should be able to leave unnoticed." I announce.

Veronika shoots me a dirty glance. "What? I didn't read her mind." I don't bother trying to explain the intricacies of telepathy to her, but hope she'll believe me.

Veronika raises a single eyebrow skeptically, but doesn't press the matter, instead following Abigail as she leads the way back out. We hurriedly leave the store, collectively breathing a sigh of relief upon returning to the busy streets.

"Are we going to go to your place?" Veronika asks, warily eyeing the bustling road.

"We don't have anywhere else to go... so I suppose so." I agree hesitantly.

I haven't seen my family since I was first taken and I'm not sure what their reaction will be to my appearance with a couple of girls they've never seen before.

As I pointed out, we don't have anywhere else to go, or any better plan, so I set out across the familiar street.

After about ten minutes I pause at the end of a driveway. Apprehension fills me as I question what my family's response will be to my return. I'm not certain they'll be pleased to see me.

"This it?" Abigail asks.

I nod grimly, set my face and head up the driveway. I can hear the two fall in line behind me and have to concentrate extra hard to block their thoughts. People have always thought that being a telepath would be an amazing advantage, but I've found it extremely difficult at times when I want to block out other's thoughts.

Finally reaching the door, I pause a second more, then knock. At this moment I feel vulnerable. If any of my neighbors were to see me right now, we would be turned in immediately.

A long minute passes until my older brother finally opens the door. He looks surprisingly older considering it's only been a little over a year since I was taken away. The two of us stand, silently staring at each other.

Jacob is first to speak. "Jayda?"

I nod slowly. "It's me, Jacob."

His mouth closes firmly and he ushers Abigail, Veronika and I into the house quickly, making sure to lock the door securely behind us.

He looks like he could hug me, but isn't sure if he should. "When they took you away... I never thought I'd see you again. What happened? Where did they take you? How did you escape?" He immediately begins peppering me with questions. "And who are they?"

I kick off my shoes and lead my friends into the living room where I take a seat in my favorite chair, glad to see so little has changed.

"These are my friends, Abigail and Veronika. Abigail is a teleporter and Veronika is a telekinetic," I inform him.

I can clearly read the thoughts Veronika is projecting at me, questioning whether it is safe to tell my brother this. I shoot her a dirty glance and turn back to Jacob.

"I was taken to a prison. I was given training and learned to control and how best to use my power. Eventually the three of us were put into a team and were given a mission to fulfill." I begin. "We did not agree with our mission and teleported away."

"So, you're a telepath?" I wonder if Jacob thought that I had been wrongly accused. Hurt suddenly flashes across his face. "Are you reading my mind right now?!"

He leaps to his feet and paces the room in agitation, as if movement could block my telepathy.

"I'm a telepath, but I'm not reading your mind! I wouldn't do that to you." I feel wronged that he would suspect me of such a violation of privacy.

"Oh, but that's what they all say, isn't it?! So innocent, so trustworthy; I would never do that! That's what was said long ago, but we all know how that ended. Which is exactly why you were taken away!" Jacob's voice raises and I notice that both Veronika and Abigail have tensed as preparing for a fight.

"Jacob, I'm still Jayda, I'm still your younger sister. What have I done to make you so distrustful?" I cry, distressed.

“You’re a telepath, how can I trust you when I’ve been lied to for so long?” Jacob freezes in the middle of the room, glaring angrily at me.

“I didn’t know I was a telepath until I was tested. I’m sorry Jacob, but please...” I try to reason with him, ignoring Veronika and Abigail who look ready to bolt for the door.

“We’ll see what Mom and Dad have to say when they get home!” He threatens, then storms out of the room. After a moment I hear the door to his bedroom close and lock.

“Is it safe? Will he turn us in?” Veronika asks nervously, glancing around as if expecting the police to come bursting through the front door at any second.

“He won’t tell.” I answer confidently.

“How do you know?” Veronika’s accusation is clear.

“I didn’t read his mind!” I exclaim in exasperation. “He’s my brother, I know we can trust him.”

“He may be your brother, but he could have changed.” Abigail states darkly, then shrugs casually. “This whole escape plan was not thought through well. If we get turned in, it’s our own fault, really. We should have taken food and made a plan as to where we could go.” I’m surprised by how calm Abigail sounds.

“Well, we’ll just have to wait and see how my parents react.” I add, uncertain of how they’ll respond. They are loyal to the government, but surely the love of their daughter will be stronger.

“Let’s go get some food.” I decide and lead the others into my kitchen.

I take my place nervously at the table, struggling to block out all the loud thoughts. My parents decided to wait to discuss our return until we can all talk around the dinner table.

“These are my friends, Abigail and Veronika.” I introduce them to my parents after Father sends me a pointed glance.

“Are they cursed like you?” Mother asks, without a hint of diplomacy.

“I’m telekinetic,” Veronika volunteers boldly.

“I’m teleportic.” Abigail admits reluctantly, sending me a questioning glance which I pointedly ignore.

“You’re not welcome to stay with us for more than a few nights. We cannot risk having you around here.” Father states bluntly.

“I assumed as much. We simply needed somewhere to stop and get a good night’s sleep before we continue on our journey.” I reply coldly. “We will also need some supplies.”

“Of course. You may stay the night, and we will send you off with what you need in the morning.” Mother responds stiffly.

“Thank you.” I nod my head gratefully and turn to the meager meal before me, eating it mechanically.

“You may stay here in this room.” Mother informs me coldly and closes the door behind the three of us.

“Well, then...” Veronika mutters. “Your family certainly isn’t very friendly. Did you see the looks your father was shooting me?”

"I'm sorry, guys. I guess it was just a bad idea to come here." I apologize, bleakly surveying the small room. I wonder what my old room is being used for now.

"It's not your fault; you couldn't have known. Let's just get a good night's sleep and we'll head out in the morning." Abigail forces herself to sound cheerful for my sake.

"What's our plan? Where do we want to go, and what are we really trying to do?" I ask.

Silence ensues upon my serious questions. We made no real plan when we left; we're just flying by the seat of our pants.

"We can't stay in the city." Veronika states glumly.

"What do you want to do? Teleport out into the wilderness and make a living there?" Abigail can't keep the biting edge of criticism out of her voice. Knowing Abigail as well as I do, I know she's simply feeling tired and overwhelmed, but Veronika stiffens at her sharp comment.

Veronika pulls the thin blanket Mother provided around her shoulders, stretches out on the ground and turns her back to both of us.

"I'm sorry." Abigail apologizes quietly, then walks across the bare room to take a seat under the window.

Our room falls silent, allowing me to hear snippets of my parent's conversation across the hall. An uneasy feeling enters my stomach.

"Should have turned them away-" Father's gruff voice sounds angry.

"Own daughter-" I hear Mother reply.

"Of the Accursed!" Father finishes and I hear him storm out of their bedroom.

I'm shocked at his reaction, and sort of surprised Mother didn't stick up for me more. I'm saddened that our society has turned even my own parents against me to this degree.

I curl up on the floor, tugging the blanket up over my head and try to sleep.

"Get up!" Abigail hisses at me, yanking on my arm.

I leap to my feet instantly. "What is it?"

Before she can reply, someone bursts into the room. It's a police officer. He reaches out roughly and grabs ahold of me.

"Freeze where you are!" He orders. "Try to teleport and she'll get a bullet through her head!"

I swallow quietly, but quickly accept the situation. I'm sure more police officers will be quick to show up and I know we're running out of time to act.

"Go, now! It's my own fault. Just save yourselves." I project my thoughts to both Abigail and Veronika.

Veronika pauses and glances at Abigail, then turns to me. *"I think I can stop the bullet from hitting you. Abigail's going to try teleporting us out of here. If it doesn't work... I'm sorry."*

I read the thought she projects to me. It's risky, and even in her thoughts I can tell how unsure she is of herself and her ability.

"I have them here!" The police officer calls over his shoulder into the hall and I can hear others approaching.

Recognizing this as our last chance, I signal Veronika to be ready. Suddenly I lash out, trying to knock the gun from the man's hand. He fires once at my heart.

Time seems to slow as I watch the bullet fly towards me. If it hits, I'll die. I can't put words to the momentary panic I experience, but I needn't have worried. True to her word, Veronika stops the bullet and, in a second I bound to her side.

Other officers file into the room and pandemonium ensues. Bullet after bullet is fired and I seriously doubt whether Veronika can hold them all off. But miraculously, she does. It's as if we were surrounded by an invisible shield, for all the bullets simply stop in midair.

In the midst of the confusion Abigail grabs my and Veronika's hand and teleports us away, but as we disappear I read a thought directed at me.

"Jayda, I hope you can hear this. I'm sorry." Jacob's voice fades as we reappear in an alley.

"No!" I cry in anguish, and slump against the nearby wall. I crumple to the ground immediately, my legs refusing to support me any longer.

Abigail rushes to my side, staring down at me in confusion and concern.

"They turned me in, Abigail. I thought they loved me." My heart feels like it's been broken to pieces, smashed by a hammer.

"Abigail, Jayda...it looks like we have company," Veronika interrupts hesitantly.

I turn my head, too defeated to even stand. And then I see them. It's a gang of Accursed.