

# **Under the Never Sky Study Guide**

**Under the Never Sky by Veronica Rossi**

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## Plot Summary

"Under the Never Sky" by Veronica Rossi is a futuristic look at a world in which the population is divided between those who live in Pods, and those who survive under the sky. It is a story in which world is plagued with air that is seething with electrically charged storms charring any place where they meet land. As a result, a large portion of the population chose to live in self contained city sized Pods.

In the Pods, the populations use technology to escape their confined environment. By creating 'Realms' that span the course of history, the future, and any destination that can be imagined, those who dwell within the Pods manage to stimulate themselves with a rich and diverse environment. These Realms are accessed by way of a 'Smarteye' which is part bionics and part electronics. It attaches itself over one eye, acting as both a regular eye, and an eye into the Realm of their choice. Called 'fracturing', this method of being in two places at one time is how they cope. Aria lives in this world, and while her actual contact to human beings is limited, she lives an active virtual life. A genetically engineered child (as all are in the Pods) Aria was given the voice of a Falcon Soprano. She can sing like an angel, and every Sunday she meets her mother in the Opera Hall to sing for her. It is the one time in each week where she has her mother's undivided attention. The most recent time that her mother came to her for a song, she told her that she had to leave. Her work would take her to the Bliss Pod and she had to leave early, so she'd come hoping for one last song in person. It was to be the last time she would see her mother. When radio contact with Bliss is lost, Aria tries to get information from Consul Hess's son Soren, but Soren is suffering from a condition that is affecting an increasing number of people in the Pods. It is also the focus of Lumina's work at Bliss. Called DLS or Degenerative Limbic System, it removes inhibitions, causing the sufferer to confuse pain with pleasure and anger with happiness. It causes reckless behavioral breakdowns. When Aria is kicked out of her Pod, and left to die in the real world, she suffers contact shock. She sees much of the world for the very first time.

In a strange coincidence, an Outsider from the Tides tribe called Peregrine happens to be close enough to help Aria. Though as a rule he would have as much use for her - a Mole - as she would for him - a Savage, but they are forced into a alliance of cooperation. Aria will act as intermediary to locating Talon, Peregrine's nephew, and in return, Peregrine will see her safely through the unclaimed lands. He keeps his word, saving her from all dangers and she keeps hers, helping him to contact Talon, but neither of them gets what they want and both see the world through different eyes.



# Chapters One - Three

## Chapters One - Three Summary

"Under the Never Sky" by Veronica Rossi is a futuristic look at a world in which the population is divided between those who live in Pods, and those who survive under the sky. It is a story in which world is plagued with air that is seething with electrically charged storms charring any place where they meet land. As a result, a large portion of the population chose to live in self contained city sized Pods.

Aria follows Soren, Bane, Echo and Paisley to Ag 6. Soren jams the signal so they can leave without alarms ringing, and they remove their Smarteyes. The floor is covered in dust and above, pipes and beams cross the ceiling but there is no sign of damage yet. Food decays in waist high plastic mounds and they discover a door which leads to a forested terrarium. Aria finally asks Soren about Bliss but learns nothing. Bane and Echo help to gather branches while Aria tries to talk Soren out of 'discovering' fire, fearing for the safety of all six thousand who live in Reverie.

The flames soon spread and Soren wants to add more. Aria grabs Paisley's hand and they run. The boys chase, Soren howling and the others joining in. The lights flicker and go out. Smoke makes her eyes water and she tries to restart her Smarteye, never having turned it off before. She finally tells it to record as Soren tackles Paisley. Aria tries to help but Soren manages to pin her down. Holding her arms firmly to her side with his legs, he digs into the skin around her eye, prying the Smarteye loose. Aria feels pain like never before and something warm and wet spreads across her cheek. His hands clamp around her neck until suddenly his weight lifts and she hears him curse. She pushes to her knees and sees an Outsider.

Aria looks at Perry, blood running down her face, and taking two steps falls over unconscious. When the second male runs toward Perry with a metal bar, he throws his knife which finds its mark. Soren, though bigger, is an inexperienced fighter and is soon curled up in a fetal position on the ground. Aria is still unconscious. Perry puts her eyepiece in his satchel, and picks her up. The smoke is thick so he follows the wall of the dome to the door. He leaves her in the outer chamber, hoping she lives, and closes the outer door behind him. An hour later the dome is a bump on the horizon. He sits for a moment, still smelling the stench of the fire. Going through his bag, he discovers the eyepiece and curses, having intended to leave it with her. He'd crept up to them, curious, but when Soren ripped the eyepiece from her face, he couldn't just stand by. He thought perhaps he could sell the eyepiece to traders in the spring. Deeper in the bag is the apple he had taken for his nephew, Talon.



## Chapters One - Three Analysis

It has been five days since Aria heard from her mother, Lumina, who began missing their daily visits via their Smarteyes. Aria is hoping to convince Soren to get her some information regarding Bliss. It is why she and Paisley join Soren, Bane and Echo as they break into the Agriculture 6 dome. Though just a service dome, it had been damaged in a storm, so access had been banned. Having picked the lock, they turn off their Smarteyes and enter. The dome is filled with rotting fruit and vegetables, abandoned, but Soren insists it is safe. Bane finds a door, leading to a forest sized terrarium and they all enter. Aria runs her hands over the bark, amazed, feeling a real tree for the first time. Soren immediately mimics a savage, tossing his shirt aside and running around the trees, gathering sticks to build a fire. When Aria asks Soren about Bliss, he realizes that the only reason Aria sang for him was for information, and promises he may have information later - after he's done. They build a pile of sticks and Soren lights it, oblivious to the danger involved.

They are all a bit mesmerized when the fire begins, each of them seeing real fire for the first time. Aria and Paisley run, but Bane and Echo join Soren, and the combination of wild, keening noises makes Aria wonder what is happening to them. Soren calls for the other two to bring fire with them. Soren grabs Paisley, and Aria turns back to help, getting herself snared as a result. Soren pins her to the ground and digging his fingers into her flesh, he rips the Smarteye from her face. Warm blood drips down her face and the pain is unbelievable. He begins to throttle her with his bare hands when just as suddenly, the weight is lifted. Soren curses with surprise and Aria pushes herself up to see an Outsider.

Soren asks him how he got in, surmising it was at the same time as he had disarmed the system. Overconfident, after hours of time in virtual conflicts, Soren hits him, but has no idea how to use the fact that he is bigger than Perry. Perry easily subdues him and the second Dweller that comes forward. Afterward, he retrieves his knife from the second Dweller and swears, reminding Perry that he'd warned him. He gathers the unconscious Aria up and carries her to the outer room where he hopes she'll be safe from the growing fire inside. Then he puts some distance between himself and the dome. When it is merely a bump on the horizon, he stops and opens his satchel, thinking about having broken into the Dweller's fortress. Just that alone would be enough to have his brother cast him out of the tribe. The confrontation with the Moles only made matters worse. He wonders if his actions today will affect the tenuous peace between his tribe and the Dwellers. He goes through his bag, seeking the item he grabbed for his nephew and comes across Aria's eyepiece instead. He'd intended to leave it behind, but now perhaps could sell it to the traders in the spring. He finds the apple, smelling the sweetness of it, and realizes what a waste of time it had been to break in.



# Chapters Four - Six

## Chapters Four - Six Summary

Perry returns to the Tide compound where Vale and his son Talon are already asleep. He climbs to the loft and soon Talon burrows himself in the blanket beside him. Perry pulls the blanket back to see his nephew, and the smell hits him like a wave. He smells just like his mother Mila had when the illness had come on strong. Talon admits that his legs sometimes get numb and he can't scent as well, but he is in no real pain. He asks what Perry brought him, but Audiles in the tribe can hear as well as he can smell, and Perry doesn't dare reveal it yet. Talon thought his uncle had left for good, and Perry admits he will have to leave soon, but for now tells Talon to sleep.

Aria wakes, clothed in a Medsuit. Dr. Ward sedates her and when she wakes next, he tells her that the Consuls are expecting her. Consul Hess - Soren's father - takes the lead and is the only one there when Aria arrives. He says the other Consuls are attending remotely but without a Smarteye, Aria has no way of knowing whether or not he is telling the truth. He asks for her account of the incident, and she tells him all that she can remember. When it appears that she is being held responsible for everything, she suggests they locate her Smarteye for its record of the ordeal. Hess asks if she is able to travel, telling her a ride is waiting to take her to her mother. She thanks him and leaves with the two Reverie Guardians that arrive.

Perry wakes and takes Talon to the cookhouse where Brooke dishes out some gruel. The Aether storms have been bad, scorching the earth and making growing food difficult. The Audiles are already whispering and Perry can sense it likely has to do with his fight with Vale. Vale is nowhere to be seen, and Perry is anxious to take Talon hunting, but Talon tells him that his father has forbidden him to leave the camp. Perry assures Talon they could be back before Vale returned, but Talon is afraid the Audiles have heard them and will make life difficult. The Audiles suddenly get up and head outside, having already heard Vale returning dragging a healthy sized buck behind him. The Hunter's Song begins and people run to relieve Vale of his burden. Perry's jealousy is hard to control and he realizes he shouldn't have come back.

## Chapters Four - Six Analysis

The compound is quiet when Perry returns in the dead of night, just the way he prefers it. During the day, tempers are anxious with encroaching winter and the shortage of food, but at night the air clears itself of human emotions and the scents are quieter. With the extra sensitivity of his eyes and nose, he is designed more for night than daytime. He enters his brother's home, grateful to find that he is already asleep with his son Talon. Grief still hangs in the air, only a month since his brother's wife Mila died. For a moment, he thinks about challenging his brother Vale for Blood Lord, able to take risks that Vale avoided. Perry is Marked. He is gifted with the uniqueness of not just one



dominant Sense, but two, making him even more rare. Only a Scire with exceptional noses could smell fear, or despair, or as in this case, illness. It made Perry hate the gift for what it reveals. Talon joins him, climbing under the blankets beside him, and Perry can smell the illness surrounding him. It is a long time before Perry sleeps, and then he dreams he is back in the fire with the raven haired Dweller.

Aria wakes in a strange room and tries to send her mother a message, but realizes she doesn't have her Smarteye. She vaguely remembers seeing a file marked Songbird. Aria's mind blurs as Dr. Ward informs her that only she and Soren have survived, unable to accept that her seventeen year old friend can actually be dead. Aria is sedated, and upon waking is told that the Consuls are waiting for her. Consul Hess will conduct the investigation, Dr. Ward tells her, and Aria immediately realizes the truth will not be of much help to her, but she has little choice but to tell it. She tells him everything she can remember, but Hess has heard a different version from the only other survivor - his son. She blurts out that her Smarteye, when found, will back her up as she recorded Soren's behavior. Consul Hess tells Aria that a ride is waiting to take her to her mother at Bliss. Grateful, and thinking only of seeing Lumina, she thanks him and leaves with the two Guardians.

Perry notices that Talon is favoring one leg the next morning, and it is obvious when he friends run by that he misses running with them. This year, food is available largely because of Perry's sister Liv who had been promised to a Blood Lord from the north. She jokes when she leaves, but neither Perry nor his best friend Roar laugh when she cites how expensive she is. The Tides will receive a total of four cows, eight goats, five bags of herbs, ten sacks of grain, and two dozen chickens - half now and the other half when she had arrived. Perry wants to take Talon hunting so that he can give him his gift in private - away from the prying ears of Audiles and where the scent of the apple won't give him away, but Talon tells him he is not allowed to leave camp. Shortly after they've eaten breakfast, Vale returns dragging a two hundred pound buck behind him. Perry is consumed with jealousy, knowing that he should have been the one to have caught it, and resentful that his brother had done so. Talon feels his suppressed rage, and it mixes with his fear that Perry and his father will fight again. Perry knows he should never have returned.



# Chapters Seven - Nine

## Chapters Seven - Nine Summary

Aria follows the Guardians to a transportation hub, still wearing the Medsuit. Without windows, Aria has no idea how far they've gone. The Dragonwing slows and the Guardians all don their helmets. The door opens but there is no sign of Bliss, and instead, desert stretches as far as she can see. The hatch closes and the Dragonwings leave. She watches until they are lost to sight, marking the place where they disappeared in her mind. Heat soaks through her suit and it turns itself on to cool her down. She looks to the sky and sees Aether for the first time, like lightning trapped in currents of the sky, some areas thin like veils and others thick like liquid currents. A truly incredible sight follows when the sun comes out for a brief appearance. She coughs and is light headed, her eyes and nose streaming.

Vale scents the air as he approaches, his gaze stopping on Talon and then Perry. They disagree once again on whether or not the Tribe should move before the Aether storms worsen, but when Vale asks Perry where they should go, he has no answer. While he and Vale are worth something because they are Marked, those who were not Seers, Auds or Scires would not be welcome in another tribe. Before a fight can ensue, Talon steps up and asks his father if he and Perry can go hunting. Vale agrees but despite Perry's objections, insists that Wylan go along.

After another coughing fit, Aria hauls herself to her feet, determined to at least keep up the pretense of survival, though she knew it to be unlikely. She walks until she no longer can, and then sits and thinks about the last time she saw her mother. She had asked that Aria sing to her in her room instead, and Aria had balked, singing a ditty about cannibal candy instead of the usual operatic selection she would normally have sung. Lumina hides her disappointment, and leaves. Aria had dropped her Singing Sundays after that and though she and Lumina still spoke every night from Bliss, something subtle had changed.

## Chapters Seven - Nine Analysis

A Guardian helps her into her restraints and then sits with five others on the opposite side. They travel for a short time and then stop. She asks if they are there, and one tells her that she is. The door opens revealing the desert. Bliss is nowhere to be seen. She begs them to let go as they push her out the door. The Dragonwings leave and she is stranded in the desert, with nothing as far as the eye could see. Her Medsuit regulates her temperature, but she knows there are many ways to die in the Death Shop. Even her first ever glimpse of the sun or of Aether isn't enough to make her forget the worst method of dying. The worst one she can think of is rotting alone.





As Vale approaches, Talon pulls back behind Perry, reminding Perry of how he'd once done that with Vale when their father returned. Vale promises to make Talon a new handle for his knife with the rack, although Perry can see nothing wrong with the one he had made and given the boy. Calling Perry 'little brother' knowing it irritated him, Vale asks him if he still believes that they've over hunted the region. Perry does, and knows most of the animals had already left, sensing the growing strength of the Aether. Perry comments that they should still move, but Vale is certain that to survive they must simply ride out the coming storms. Talon can sense the increasing tension and inserts himself between his father and uncle before something bad can happen. He asks if Perry can take him hunting and Vale is unable to deny him, but sends Wylan as chaperon despite Perry's objections.

Aria walks for as long as she can and then sits thinking about the last time she met her mother in the Paris Opera Realm. She had done so at eleven o'clock every Sunday of her life. Lumina always arrived first, dressed elegantly. Aria's falcon soprano voice is flawless and for an hour each week she entertains her mother, despite hating opera, because it is the one time that she has her mother's undivided attention. Aria had been petulant and childish the last time her mother had asked her to sing, and refused. Now she realizes how stupid she'd been and would give anything to have been able to take it all back, never knowing at the time it would be the last time she would entertain her mother with her genetically altered voice. She sang the Tosca aria then, choking on the words and telling her mother how sorry she was as she sat in the emptiness.



# Chapters Ten - Twelve

## Chapters Ten - Twelve Summary

Perry takes Talon to the ocean, letting Wylan get ahead and when Wylan gets bored and walks off, Perry pulls out the apple for Talon who eats half and shares with Perry. Wylan warns of the arrival of Dwellers. Perry thrusts Talon at him and sends him back to camp. Perry takes a small piece of copper wire and wraps it around the shaft of one of his arrows. He aims high and the arrow seems to gather the Aether before it hits the Hover craft, taking it out. The second Hover lands and six men get out. Perry gets one but a shot from a Dweller hits him and he stumbles, unable to right himself. The Dweller asks for the Smarteye, and Perry insists he'll give it to them if they'll leave the others alone. One of the Dwellers picks Talon up and takes him to the Hover. Perry sees what they are doing and tells the nearest Dweller they are dead as he backs into the water. The Dweller has no experience with water, so Perry gets the upper hand. He takes back the eyepiece but Talon is gone. Wylan has a large knot on his head and throws up twice before reaching Perry. They get back to camp where a celebration is taking place. Perry tells Vale the Dwellers have taken Talon.

Aria walks until dark. The sky is swirling and flashing with blue waves that are coming toward her. In a flash, she sees a figure and calls out. Perry charges her, saying he should have let her die, having lost everything because of her. He grabs her wrist and together they run, bending low as it begins to rain. While cool at first, she is soon shivering. She steps on something and cries out, balancing on one leg. He picks her up without warning and closeness of him to her is making her nauseous as he runs, not stopping until they reach the mouth of a cave. He leaves her there, and seeing her chance, she sets off down the hill. Her foot catches between two rocks, wedging in so she is unable to move.

Perry frees her foot while she is still unconscious and wraps her in a blanket. The next morning he leaves the cave to hunt, managing to spear a rattler and that night, Aria's fever begins. The next afternoon she wakes and scurries away from him, calling him a Savage. He asks if that's what they are called, and she quickly adds that they are diseased, murderers, and cannibals according to the stories she'd heard. She asks for water and he passes her his waterskin. She drinks and tries to hand it back, but there is no chance he'll ever drink from it again. She can keep it. He asks why she is out in the open, and pulls out his knife to assure her he is serious. Her fear is acrid despite her assurances that she isn't afraid.

## Chapters Ten - Twelve Analysis

Perry takes Talon to the ocean and uses the opportunity to give Talon his apple. They sit together, Perry feeling as though he is exactly where he should be. Talon challenges Perry's thoughts of leaving. Tears streaming, he begs Perry not to leave until after he is



gone. He tells Perry that his father promised him he wouldn't fight him, and if Perry would make the same promise, things could be okay. Unable to, he tells Talon he has to leave, and angry, Talon rejects him completely. Hovers, Wylan says in that moment, fear radiating from him. Perry fights the urge to run to Talon whose screams are shrill. The Dwellers easily overcome Wylan and grab Talon. Perry tells Talon to stop struggling, throwing the eyepiece at the Dweller, but that doesn't stop them from taking Talon. While Perry deals with one of the Dwellers, another one puts him into the Hover and leaves. Wylan can barely stand after the hit he took, throwing up as he makes his way to Perry. They head back to the compound where Perry must tell Vale what happened and his suspicions as to why. He admits having broken into the Dweller's fortress. Vale tells him their father was right - Perry is cursed. The hateful comment takes the life from Perry. Vale loses his composure, and lunges for Perry. Knowing that he has to get Talon back, Perry pushes through the crowd and runs.

Aria walks, convincing herself that she has a chance of finding somewhere safe to take shelter. Her only good fortune seems to be the Medsuit which is at least keeping her warm. The Aether appears brighter. When she hears a noise, she calls out, and is surprised to see a human figure coming toward her. He tells her to get going, giving her a shove as another funnel comes down. Warmth rushes past Aria as Perry tackles her to the ground and pins her down telling her to close her eyes. The shrieking and the heat is unbearable. When it finally subsides, Perry lets her go. Blood is coming from her nose and she turns to run when the Outsider grabs her, spins her around, and yanks her suit off, yelling that she is calling the Aether to her. They run and she steps on something sharp, halting her. When he picks her up, she digs her nails into him making him lose his footing. He promises to hurt her worse if she does it again. When they reach the cave, he lets her go. He puts her down inside, commenting that as a Mole, must feel right at home. He leaves her there briefly, and she sees her chance to run, but doesn't make it far. Her foot becomes wedged between two boulders and unable to move, the last of her strength disappears. She loses consciousness. As she fades she knows she hasn't gotten far enough away.

Perry starts a fire, and frees her from the rocks while she is still out cold. He wraps her in a blanket, and then lays down as far away from her as he can without leaving the fire entirely. She hasn't moved by morning, so he makes the fire again. The cave is considered off limits by Vale, but is still used by traders, and stocked with food and even some healing compound which Perry uses on her feet before bandaging them. He notices she needs stitches, but since she will only likely die anyway, it didn't matter. When she finally wakes, she quickly backs away from him, clamping her legs together and making Perry laugh. Had he wanted that, he assures her, he would have already had plenty of opportunity. He can't understand why she is out, and she isn't forthcoming with an answer, despite his veiled threats with his knife. She insists she doesn't fear him, but her actions and her scent betray her. He mentions her scent and can feel her mood shift as she bursts out laughing hardly able to imagine that to this Savage, she smelled.



# Chapters Thirteen - Fifteen

## Chapters Thirteen - Fifteen Summary

Aria listens, but doesn't hear the Outsider anywhere. She is surprised to discover he'd bandaged her feet. She goes out and asks why he brought her there. He explains that he needs information. She realizes he wants to get into Reverie and laughs, assuring him that isn't possible. When he returns with her Smarteye, she feels the first glimmer of hope. He promises to return it to her if she answers some questions. He asks again why she is out there, and she explains that only she and Consul Hess's son Soren survived. He asks if she still has allies inside, and her first thought - Paisley brings a wave of grief. She says her mother will help. The biotech works right away, but nothing else appears. Perry asks her to give it back to him so that he can get it fixed. Telling her to stay where she is, he says he will return in two weeks, but Aria refuses to be left behind despite his assertions she would be safer there. He tells her she will have to walk, and tosses her some clothing which she reluctantly dons.

Before they leave, Perry uses book covers to create makeshift shoes for her, already deciding that if she didn't make it, he would continue to Marron's himself and find a way to trade himself and the Smarteye for Talon. By nightfall, her feet are raw and he gives her more healing compound. They stop for the night, and hours later Perry wakes to hear the sound of singing. At first he thinks he might be dreaming, but then he catches her tears in the air and her fear. He asks her what is wrong, using her name for the first time, and she tells him she'd seen Soren. He looks around, checking the area with his senses, and tells her that no one is there. He asks her to give the device back, and though reluctant at first, she gives in with a mild threat from him.

Every day that passes her feet hurt more. At midday he finds water by digging a hole and Aria watches as Perry sharpens his knife and studies the Aether in the sky. Perry tells her on the third day he will have to hunt, and adds that they are leaving his brother's territory. He explains that the dispersed live in the territories between; those who live out of a tribe's protection. He warns her that once they cross a bridge ahead, she will have to be quiet as this is the land where all of her stories about them come to life. Her feet continue to worsen and by midday they are oozing a combination of pus and blood. They find another cave, and Perry asks her to stay there while he hunts, giving her his small knife for protection. It gets dark quickly and for comfort she takes her Smarteye out of his bag and puts it on, but it hasn't repaired itself. Instead, she goes down the slope to pick some berries she'd seen but when she returns to the cave she finds it occupied by three men. Frightened at first, their leader introduces himself as Harris and talks in a voice that Aria finds calmly. He invites her to stay for dinner and she is thinking about accepting when Perry returns and all pretenses are forgotten. A short confrontation later the three men are dead and Aria is left gasping with shock and fear.



## Chapters Thirteen - Fifteen Analysis

Aria pretends she is in a Paleolithic Realm in an effort to calm herself, but this is much too real. She thinks about the Savage and wonders about many things, but mostly she fears his eyes. While colors are all the rage in the Realms, the Savage's eyes are reflective as well as bright green and they were real. When she confronts him about rescuing her, he admits that he needs her help. He is trying to find someone taken by 'her people'. She assures him it isn't possible, but he goes past her into the cave and returns with her Smarteye. Feeling as though there is some hope for her survival now, she agrees to help him in return for the Smarteye, but he senses her lie and tells her that she will help him regardless. Stunned that he could be so acute with his judgement of her emotions, she gets defensive, reminding him that she had already agreed to help. He hands her the Smarteye, and she puts it in but is immediately disappointed to discover it isn't working at all. He asks for it back, telling her he knows someone who can probably fix it, and the thought makes Aria laugh out loud. He is prepared to leave her behind for the two weeks it takes for him to travel there and back, but Aria is more afraid of being left alone than she is of being with him, so she swears she won't hold him up, and reminds him that she may not live two weeks and any information she can glean would not happen unless she came with him.

When Perry wakes, he second guesses the deal he's made with Aria. He makes shoes for her from book covers, careful not to touch her as that seems to set off some kind of panic response. She tries the makeshift shoes on and is surprised that they fit relatively well, laughing when she sees that the title but as Perry can't read, the irony of the cover he used escapes him. Aria introduces herself, but Perry doesn't respond in kind, so she purposely calls him Hunter instead. She is full of questions and he can hardly believe how much she talks. When he wakes that night to hear her singing, he thinks he is dreaming at first, but his senses pick up her fear, and her tears. She tells him she'd just seen Soren and he is instantly awake and searching the area with his extra senses and finds nothing near. Perry decides she must have been dreaming, but Aria insists that they don't. He asks about her eyepiece, but it is still dead and he can't understand why she would continue to wear it. She tells him how Realms work and that they were created so that boredom from living in the pods wouldn't drive them crazy.

She struggles to keep up, in constant pain and with constant headaches. The only sound now is the sound of her book covers - The Odyssey - crunching as she walks. When they stop, Aria takes out the rocks she's found and picked up, lining them up in a row to study them. To Perry, they seem ordinary, but she insists that each one is different from the next - a fact she finds fascinating. She sees the dirt under her nails and for the first time realizes that they may be growing. In the Pods, it was one of the pointless things that had been eliminated. She sees it as her continuing regression. She makes up a tune to be sung in her mind - a mournful and terrible melody that would never be sung out loud. They find a cave and he tells her to stay there, but she doesn't want to be left alone, even though he loans her his small knife. Lonely, she puts on her Smarteye, but it still isn't working. She disobeys Perry and heads down the hill to pick berries she'd seen earlier, but when she returns, she finds the cave occupied by three

men. Afraid at first, their leader removes his mask and talks to Aria until she relaxes, inviting her to join them for dinner. Perry returns and from the darkness, declines their offer before killing all three.



# Chapters Sixteen - Eighteen

## Chapters Sixteen - Eighteen Summary

Perry hurries to Aria, asking if she is hurt. When he sees the berries in her shirt, he yells at her for risking her life for poisonous berries. Frustrated, Perry tells Aria what direction she has to go in, and leaves, but he keeps an eye on her as she makes her way east to the Blackfins compound. He discovers that the compound is empty, and there are few traces of the settlement that had been there just one year ago. Aether storms ravaged the area leaving only one partial home standing. He drops his bag at the door to let her know where he is and sinks down onto a straw mattress. When she arrives and lays down using his bag as a pillow, he manages to rest. The next morning, while she still sleeps, he notices her feet are raw and bleeding. The book covers are long gone, and Perry is overcome with guilt. She sits up against the house and he can feel that her temper has changed. He asks her what's wrong and she tells him she is dying. She is bleeding, she adds and he asks if she ate any of the berries. She hasn't, but is convinced her end is near, and gives him her eyepiece, telling him she hopes he finds the boy he is seeking. He recognizes that her scent has changed and inhaling he realizes that her Dweller musk is all but gone, leaving the scent of violets in its wake. He steps back, suddenly realizing what has changed, and realizes that she has no idea what is going on. Quietly, he tells her that it is her first blood.

This is worse than even being kicked out of Reverie. Aria is terrified to realize that she could now randomly conceive. She lies back on the filthy mattress and dreams again, her dream evolving into a nightmare from which she wakes sweaty and shaking. Hours pass. The Outsider enters once, dropping a chunk of meat in her lap, and much later with a pile of things he's collected for her. He hands her a coat of wolf fur, a pair of boots, and a handful of cloth which has been boiled clean. He also gives her a leather coat, a knitted cap, and a leather belt. Then he tells her his name is Peregrine, like the falcon. She thanks him and he tells her how his tribe handles first blood. Aria doesn't see it as a joyful experience. In fact, she becomes obsessed with his ability to kill so quickly, and though he manages to mostly hold his temper, she yells, and hurls accusations until he finally tells her she has no idea who he is, and warns her that her talking could be the death of her. Then he tells her that the Croven will seek retaliation and they will have to keep moving, regardless of the dark.

Perry knows it is only a matter of time before the Croven pick up his scent. The air is colder as they climb the mountains and the pine forest is thicker, making it difficult for Perry to scent anything for a while. They are well into the borderlands now. He searches for game trails, sharing a rabbit and some roots, but hunger gnaws at him. At midday they rest, Aria looking pale and drawn. Late in the afternoon they stop again, and he offers to find them some food which she insists she doesn't want from him. He can sense her despair. They follow the creek up the mountain until he crosses a scent that stops him. Telling her to rest, he jogs away and then returns with a branch containing berries. He slowly teaches her how to find her own food, telling her what to watch for,





and how to check if berries are poisonous or not. After he finishes, she eats the blackberry, joking that it would be quicker and easier if she just asked him.

## Chapters Sixteen - Eighteen Analysis

Perry is beyond angry with Aria for leaving the cave, and causing him to have to confront and kill the Croven. She has no way of knowing that the Croven planned to have her for dinner, but Perry had felt their hunger. He knew. He tries to explain, but Aria isn't listening. Finally, exasperated, he tells her their destination for the night is three hours east and then turns and sprints for the Blackfins compound at the foot of Mount Arrow. He intends to leave her, but finds that he can't. Instead, he trails her until they are close and then goes ahead. The compound is empty, with hardly a sign of the bustling place it was just a year earlier. He can see signs of the storm that ravaged the place, and puts his bag at the entrance of the single building still remaining so that Aria knows where he is. He isn't able to sleep until he hears her shuffle in and settle down, using his bag as a pillow.

Dwellers didn't menstruate and procreation happened through genetic design. Part of her thinks she is breaking down or malfunctioning. She had expected to die, but the idea of menstruating is something she finds utterly barbaric. He explains that in his tribe, a woman's first blood is cause for celebration because now she can have children, but Aria considers it all primitive. She asks if he's killed before, and he doesn't answer. Somehow that makes her angry and she tells him to add Soren to the list of many, including Paisley, Bane and Echo. She doesn't consider that if he hadn't intervened, she could have put herself on that list. She yells at him, telling him she won't forget what he's done, and he tells her that if it is any consolation, neither will he. She needles him about having a conscience, and he becomes angrier, his hand automatically resting on his knife, but she is confident he doesn't hurt women or he already would have. He corrects her, telling her he has killed a woman before, and if she keeps talking, she just might be the second. She realizes he is telling the truth. He warns her the Croven will retaliate and tells her they have to keep moving. She tries to calm herself, grateful at least for the boots he'd given her.

Perry had committed the consummate sin when he killed the Croven by leaving their bodies for the scavengers. The Croven believed that he should have burned or buried the bodies to preserve their everlasting souls. Aria walks ten paces from him and he looks at her, knowing he should have done some things differently, and he can still sense her temper now, which hasn't changed since she called him a monster. They continue on for most of the day, and in the approaching evening he crosses a scent that makes his mouth water. She rests till he returns with a branch containing berries, and then teaches her how to determine whether or not they are edible. She follows his instructions, and when she presses the berry to her lips, he can't take his eyes off her. Suddenly he realizes that he hasn't thought of her as a mole in a while, and in fact, everything seems to be more and more feminine about her. Her face is easy to look at, and in fact beautiful, even when she is tired and discouraged. The scent of violets



surrounding her is like an elixir and he stands up quickly, unsure of what to do. She jokes with him and for a moment he feels like a foolish youth.



# Chapters Nineteen - Twenty One

## Chapters Nineteen - Twenty One Summary

Aria is unable to sleep. Suddenly Perry stands and yells 'Roar', and a whistle breaks the silence. He races down the hillside and she struggles to keep up. At the bottom he embraces Roar with enthusiasm. Perry is unaware that Liv is missing and after constructing a screen together, Roar brings Perry up to date. Perry tells Roar where he is going and why. Aria hears noise and Roar tells her it is only Cinder - a young man who has been trailing him for some time. Cinder joins them but when he discovers that Perry is a Scire, he scuttles off into the bush fearfully. Aria questions what a Scire is, and soon joins Cinder. Roar offers to mediate and Perry walks away. Roar explains, telling her about their history together and about Liv.

At midday, they manage to kill a boar, but instead of celebrating like usual, Roar is subdued. Perry stakes a piece of meat for Cinder and takes it to him, and explains that the Croven are after them. He tries to convince Cinder to head south, away from them and the Croven, but Cinder isn't afraid. He catches up with Aria and asks if she needs to rest while Roar drops back to ascertain where the Croven are now. He comes back with news that they've split up and their smaller groups are catching up. They continue on late into the night. Perry doubles back to Cinder, telling him it's his last chance to leave, but Cinder is defiant. When Perry tries to force the issue, a change comes over Cinder and a blue flame erupts in his eyes. Before he can do anything, Cinder's veins light up, and the hand on his bow flares with heat. He remembers little else. Aria and Roar come to help and Cinder yells at them to stay back and trembling, asks Perry what he made him do. Aria kneels and looks at Perry's hand, now swollen to twice its size and black with big red blisters. She hands him a bottle of Luster and using the gauze that acted as her belt, she carefully wraps it. Roar returns with Cinder whose clothes are blackened and wide patches of scalp are bare. Roar wants to leave him behind and even Cinder agrees, but Perry and Aria won't hear of it. Finally, to keep peace, Roar picks him up and cursing, carries him up the mountain. Perry battles thirst and pain like he has never known, and as his smell returns he can sense at least two dozen Croven coming fast.

When night falls, Roar is no longer able to carry Cinder and drops him on the ground. Perry says they are almost there, but Roar has nothing left so Perry pulls Cinder to his feet and begins hauling him forward. Roar tells them they have to run and they go as fast as they can. The Croven's bells are disorienting Roar and he sends Aria ahead, telling her to get to Marron's and get them some help while they try to slow the Croven down. She reaches a stone wall and follows it to a wooden gate, calling out for help. A man appears and the gate opens. She stumbles in and as the gate begins to close she asks for Marron. He immediately dispatches help and orders Cinder taken to medical. Aria can hardly walk as Marron ushers her forward into Delphi. He offers to give her a place to rest until Perry and Roar return, which she declines telling Marron that Perry is injured. Another set of instructions is issued to ready the medical staff for their arrival.



## Chapters Nineteen - Twenty One Analysis

Aria isn't sure what she thinks of Perry anymore. She's seen him decapitate a man, but the man had been intent on having her for supper. When he asks her how she feels, it seems to be a more intimate than innocent question. They are still three days from Marron's when Perry calls out Roar's name, saying that he knows he is out there and can smell him. Perry grins, telling Aria their luck has turned. They embrace, smiling. Roar introduces himself to Aria and asks her if she sings. She tells him she does, and he asks Perry if she is a dweller. He admits she is and Roar says they'll catch up over a couple of bottles of Luster. He is sure that with Perry along, it is only a matter of time before they find Liv, thinking that Perry already knows she is gone. Perry didn't know, and worries even more now, because the deal with Liv to go to Horn territory is what ensured the Tide's food for the winter. Roar asks about Vale, Mila and Talon, and Perry tells him Mila is gone; about losing Talon; and about his deal with Aria to have Marron fix her Smarteye so that she can contact her mother at Bliss and perhaps get information on Talon and his whereabouts. Aria hears a noise and Roar tells her about Cinder who joins them briefly, but refuses to stay when he discovers that Perry is a Scire. This opens another line of questioning when Aria asks what Scires are and when she learns about Perry's abilities she follows Cinder into the bush. Perry follows, but Aria is embarrassed and angry. Roar offers to stay with her and Perry walks away. Roar gives her some of the background between himself, Perry and Liv, enabling her to understand them both a little better.

Perry feels better with Roar along. With his sense of smell dulled, he can rely on Roar's hearing to keep them out of trouble, and they can make better time. Perry knows before Roar even tells him that the Croven are coming. They have about half a day's lead. Marron's is still two days away. He asks him where his parents are and he lies, telling them an Aether storm killed them. Perry can't figure out why Cinder is convinced the Croven can't hurt him, wondering if his temper is off. When Perry tries to force the issue, something in Cinder changes and somehow he harnesses the Aether and directs a bolt at Perry that cooks the hand on his bow. When the contact is broken, Cinder asks what Perry made him do, horrified that he'd injured him. Roar goes white when he sees Perry's hand. Roar is ready to kill Cinder but Perry insists he be brought back. He stumbles away in shame and Perry insists that Roar go after him, unwilling to leave him to the Croven. Roar brings him back while Aria bandages Perry's hand. Then Roar carries Cinder up the hill as fast as he can while Aria and Perry follow. The Croven are closing in.

By nightfall, it all comes to a head. Roar is unable to continue carrying Cinder, and Perry takes over briefly, but the Croven are too close. He and Roar send Aria and Cinder ahead, telling Aria to get to Marron's and get them some help as fast as she can. She finds the stone wall quickly, following it to a gate and hollering for Marron until the door opens. Marron can hardly believe that a dweller is at his gate, and his surprise continues when he discovers that Perry and Roar are behind her. Aria explains the Croven's are almost upon them, and Marron quickly dispatches help. Then he takes Aria

inside to await their arrival. Aria is stunned by both his proper Victorian attire, and the lavish surroundings of the room he takes her to.



# Chapters Twenty Two - Twenty Four

## Chapters Twenty Two - Twenty Four Summary

Perry needs to hold the Croven off long enough for Roar and Aria to get to Marron's with Cinder. He struggles with his bow and using his feet, fires a clumsy shot. Roar appears, and taking Perry's bow he begins to fire as they back up the mountain towards Marron's. Sensing movement, Perry turns to see Marron's men coming. He and Roar turn and run without stopping till they reach the courtyard. Someone leads him to the medical facility where a commotion begins. He hurries toward the noise and finds Cinder slumped in a corner looking trapped. Perry tries to calm him, but can feel the surge of power as the lights go out. He tells Roar to get everyone out and then shuts the door. Perry sits and tells Cinder where he is. He can feel Cinder's temper as it darkens, cold and black. Cinder asks about his hand, filled with shame.

Perry wakes Aria to tell her that he has arrived. His hand is in a cast and pain killers have dulled the worst of his discomfort. When she wakes the next time, she showers and wraps her feet in towels. She comes out to find the bed made with a pile of clothing, slippers and a single red rose waiting for her. Rose, a doctor, comes to look at her feet again, and Aria realizes she'd been tended to even as she slept. Rose warns her that Perry is not able to commit, based on her previous experience.

Aria makes her way down to where Perry, Roar and Marron are talking. As soon as they sit, they are served, beginning with soup made with Morels that they grow on their own. Marron tells her they are working on her Smarteye, trying to fix it without setting off a locating signal. Aria asks about the Croven, and Marron tells her they are gathering on the plateau below. He is convinced that the severity of their response can only mean that Perry had killed a Blood Lord. Now, nearly forty of them are waiting outside the walls. Roar tells them that Lodan, the Blackfins Blood Lord, had set off for Sable where rumors claim that some have found the Still Blue where the skies are free of Aether. Perry sits forward, entranced by the idea. Marron asks Aria where her mother is and when Aria tells him that she left Reverie to work at Bliss for a special project. Marron's reaction quiets the entire room. He explains that Bliss has suffered a severe Aether storm and was destroyed.

## Chapters Twenty Two - Twenty Four Analysis

Perry and Roar hold off the Croven long enough for Marron's men to catch up and help them. They make it to the compound and into the courtyard with relief where Perry is immediately taken to medical for treatment. He becomes aware of a disturbance next door and realizes that Cinder is there and anxious. He hurries to him and tells Roar to get everyone out before another accident can occur. Already the electricity thrums through Cinder enough that the lights go out. When Perry and Cinder are alone, he asks Perry where he is. Perry tells him that they are with friends, but Cinder is still not



comfortable. Consumed with guilt, he asks about Perry's hand, and Perry tells him it will be fine in time. Knowing he could have killed Perry, he admits his lack of control over the fire inside and sobs, not wanting to live with it anymore. He begs Perry to leave, and sensing the depth of his despair, Perry does as he is asked.

Perry wakes Aria to tell her he is back, as Marron had promised he would. When she asks about Roar, she breaks the spell that held them momentarily and he offers to go and get him, but she declines. He leaves to get some sleep and she lays back in the bed, marveling at the fact that she is warm, safe, in a room and in a bed. She feels safe. When she wakes again, she showers and dresses in the clothes she finds on her bed. The doctor returns to look at her feet and Aria asks about Perry. Rose admits that she and Perry already knew each other, and had become very close a year earlier. She warns Aria that Perry is unlikely to give of himself and though Aria insists they are only friends, Rose advises she tread carefully.

Aria thanks Marron for the clothes and the rose, and he takes them into the dining room to eat a proper meal. Aria soon understands that Marron has spent a lifetime assembling the treasures that surround him, trading with others for services, and safety. They ask her questions about the Pods and she tells them about life on the inside. Marron's people have been working on her Smarteye, and he tells her that they are close to getting it working, but that to breach the protocols for security that surrounds the Realms may not be so easy. She asks about the Croven and learning that they are gathering, and more are arriving frightens her. Marron assures her that they are safe and hopes that when it gets colder, they'll simply give up. Roar tells them about the Blackfins Blood Lord, Lodan, and his attempt to merge his remaining tribe with the Tides, along with Vale's refusal. Perry is surprised as he'd heard nothing of the sort. Roar claims that Lodan headed for the Horns afterward, hoping to find the area they call the Still Blue because it is the one place where the Aether isn't. Perry's attention is drawn, as he had been trying to convince Vale to leave the region they were in before the Aether storms became any worse. Vale refuses to relocate however. Aria talks about her mother's work as a geneticist, and when she mentions the most recent posting to Bliss, Marron pales, explaining that Bliss had recently been destroyed by an Aether storm.



# Chapters Twenty Five - Twenty Seven

## Chapters Twenty Five - Twenty Seven Summary

Perry stands outside Aria's door but hears nothing, so he heads down to the Navel. Marron has rigged a camera outside so that they are able to monitor the activities of the Croven until the Aether destroys it. It is easy to see that they are setting up camp. Marron talks about some old tunnels under the mountain which he says may still be passable. Perry goes to Aria's room and tries to console her, telling her they aren't sure of anything yet, and apologizes to her for being so difficult. She accepts the apology under two conditions - that he describe his own temper to her, and that he stay with her for the night. He agrees.

Marron takes Aria down to the Navel where a vase of roses sit. Her Smarteye should be powered up is at just under eight hours, and time slows to a crawl. The courtyard is silent since the Croven had begun firing arrows over the wall earlier that morning. Rose and Slate and inform them that Cinder left via the east gate and Marron is livid. Aria finds Perry on the roof and he takes the news with a shrug. They wait together and Perry tries to explain what rendering is. Perry asks if she'll sing for him. She agrees, and when she finishes, the entire courtyard is silent as all had stopped to listen. Perry is overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the sound and takes her hand in a gesture that has the same effect on her.

Marron finally fixes her Smarteye, and discovers both files are still there. It shows that night, and they don't bother watching the whole file, just grateful it is there. The next file is even worse. Her mother's voice and image fill the room. She describes the work she is doing, and tells Aria about the breakdown occurring in the limbic systems of those who lived in the Pods. It causes a form of insanity in which impulses are out of control and feelings interchangeable. She admits to having devoted her efforts to studying the Outsiders to find a cure, which is how she met Aria's father. Aria is stunned and speechless. Lumina continues to describe how she now only worked with Outsider children, and Perry begins to fall apart. The admission is plain. At the end of the video, he hurls a table at the screen and leaves. Marron tries to comfort Aria, offering her a permanent home if she wants one, and telling her he hasn't given up yet.

## Chapters Twenty Five - Twenty Seven Analysis

Perry asks Roar to talk to Aria for him but Roar refuses, amused. Perry goes into her room, and reminds her that so far the information about Bliss is just a rumor, and perhaps only part of the compound was destroyed. She finally understands how he feels about Talon. Perry admits that he could have been easier on her during their trip, and she promises to forgive him under the conditions that he describe his temper to her and when he does, she asks if he will stay the night with her. Perry is hesitant, knowing that it is dangerous as Scires often become rendered to another person during the



harmony of sleep. It is how he became rendered to Talon. Considering he'd been sleeping within a few feet of her for over a week, he agrees, telling her he'll be right beside her on the floor.

The courtyard is quieter the next morning and Marron explains that the Croven have been firing over the wall all morning. Cinder manages to sneak out and Aria climbs to the roof to tell Perry. They talk for some time, and Aria looks at Perry's tattoos, stifling the urge to run her fingers along them, then realizes that he knows exactly what she is feeling. Embarrassed, she asks him what he'll do after finding Talon. He tells her about his intention to start a new tribe with those who will join him. Being without Talon is like part of himself is gone, he explains trying to tell her what rendering is. He asks her to sing for him and she stands, singing an aria that stops all other action within earshot. He closes his eyes and tells her that her voice is as sweet as her scent - violets. She tells him what the words mean, and he takes her hand, filling her with such intensity that it is like she is breathing for the first time.

Perry takes her hand as they watch the file she recorded. When they see Soren grab her by the leg, Perry tells her she doesn't have to watch it all, and she agrees, stopping it with six minutes left to play. Marron opens the Songbird file next and Lumina's face appears. She tells Aria that Bliss is seriously damaged. Then she explains her work. She reveals that the limbic system, or the animal mind as she describes it, has vastly deteriorated. Degenerating as a result of lack of use, the consequences are catastrophic. Fear becomes a thrill, pain and pleasure are confused, and stress is sought out instead of avoided. Reason and cognition break down. Entire Pods have fallen to this disorder or syndrome, and now, Lumina continues, she's been working with Outsiders, searching for genetic solutions. It is how she met Aria's father, she tells her. Now, she mostly works with Outsider children, she reveals and Aria feels pain that is unbearable, telling herself this cannot be real. The last thing Lumina does is ask Aria to sing for her, telling her that wherever she is, she is sure that she'll hear it. Perry hurls the small table at the monitor with a strangled cry and leaves. Aria watches the recording three more times upstairs, telling Marron that DLS is what happened to Soren. Regardless of whether or not she finds her mother now, Marron tells her, she has a home there for as long as she wants. She puts on the Smarteye and tries to access the Realms but her access is denied but Marron is not ready to give up yet.





# Chapters Twenty Eight - Thirty

## Chapters Twenty Eight - Thirty Summary

Aria is blocked from the Realms, but she sends Roar to tell Perry if he wants to, he can try to go in himself and find Talon. She describes how the Smarteye will feel, and he closes his eyes. She puts him in a forested Realm first to get him used to movement in the Realms. The effect is so disorienting that he stumbles into the bathroom with Roar's help and stays there for some time, dizzy and queasy. Aria tells him it was the same for her as she first entered his world. He goes in a second time, and this time he manages to settle the images in his mind. He bends down and picks up a few rocks, seeing what Aria had once told him about their uniformity, and agreeing that real was better.

When Perry is acclimated, Aria takes him to the research Realm. She continues to direct him through her mother's lab and as they read the names on the doors, Perry curses, recognizing Clara as a girl who disappeared the year before. He finds the room with Talon on the door, and going through it he sees no one at first, but then Talon materializes. He doesn't recognize Perry at first, but when Perry calls him Squeak, all reservations are gone. Perry asks where he is, and Talon tells him in the Rev Pod. Talon seems enthralled with his new surroundings, and tells Perry he has no desire to leave. In fact, even Vale is there with him, and as Perry tries to absorb that, he is detected and only has time to tell Talon he loves him before the screen is blank.

Aria takes Perry upstairs, and he follows without thinking. They talk about the future and he acknowledges that he will return to the Tides and become their Blood Lord since Vale is no longer there. Aria still intends to make her way to Bliss and Perry offers to take her there first, but he still insists he'll get her better shoes, carry her rocks and even answer any of her questions. She asks why he really offered to take her to Bliss and he tells her he wants to. Suddenly he realizes why he made the promise that he shouldn't have. He had rendered to her.

## Chapters Twenty Eight - Thirty Analysis

When Perry is told he can use the Smarteye to perhaps find Talon, he reluctantly heads for the elevator before remembering that he'd destroyed the monitor downstairs the last time he was there. He apologizes to Marron, promising to find a way to make it up, and Marron tells him that a favor owed by Peregrine is enough. He puts his hand over Aria's and asks her if she is alright and he can see that she agrees that no matter what, they'll face it together. His first attempt with the Smarteye leaves him dizzy and nauseated. Aria sits with him, lightly stroking his jaw and he breathes in the scent of her, knowing how dangerous it was, but knowing he needed her now. He takes her hand and turning it, rests his face in her palm. He tries a second time, Aria guiding him, and manages to find his balance.



With more control, Aria takes him into a research Realm where he finds more than he bargained for. Another girl who went missing from the Tides a year earlier is there as well, but shrugging off the distraction he runs down the hall to Talon's room. The act of entering the room is enough to summon Talon who is at first fearful when he sees Perry. Perry doesn't understand why his nephew doesn't recognize him, but as they talk, and Perry uses familiar phrases, Talon begins to relax. When Perry calls him Squeak, he throws himself into his uncle's arms. He tells Perry he is eating fruit three times a day, and even gets to fly, adding that he has no desire to leave where he is. He asks Perry who is Blood Lord of the Tides, adding that his father is there with him. Perry is stunned, but isn't able to ask the myriad of questions that surge forward as he has been discovered. He only has time to tell Talon he loves him before he is separated. He loses his composure, trying to yank the Smarteye off and Aria calms him again. She wraps her arms around him and he holds on as the tears drip onto her skin.

Aria takes Perry to her room and acknowledges that Talon looks all right. Aria had been sure that her mother would not have been involved in anything that would hurt a child, but Perry disagrees. He tells her that by taking the children she hurt them; that they weren't Moles. As soon as the words leave his mouth he regrets them. He apologizes, and after a moment tells Perry that his nephew is a lot like him. He asks her if she hates the idea that she is part Savage, but she acknowledges that it is what has kept her alive, and his emotions come close to the surface again. He resents this weakness he is showing her, and she surprises him by lying down beside him. Aria comments that a lot makes sense now where it didn't before. He asks if she hates the Savage part of herself, but she knows it is what kept her alive, and he knows that she is talking about him. He reaches for her hand. They talk about their plans for the future, and though Perry intends to return to the Tides and become Blood Lord, he insists on taking her to Bliss first. It only takes a moment for him to realize why he made that promise. He had rendered to her.



# Chapters Thirty One - Thirty Three

## Chapters Thirty One - Thirty Three Summary

Perry, Roar, Marron and Aria discuss how best to escape the compound without succumbing to the Croven. Perry suggests they leave during an Aether storm and Roar adds that they could head east where the Croven won't go because of the wolf population. They spend the morning planning and then can do nothing but wait for a storm. Perry tries to work his injured hand with his bow, and Aria asks if she can try. When she struggles with the weight of the large bow, Roar suggests she try knife work instead and she agrees while Perry begins making practice blades out of wood. It is late afternoon before Roar has covered the basics and asks Perry for them. Then her real lessons begin. When they are done, he insists on payment by song, and Aria laughs, agreeing. The song astounds Roar with its richness.

While they wait for the weather to turn, Aria trains with Roar. On the horizon she could see funnels forming. Since she arrives early that morning, she begins going through some of the motions on her own. Perry arrives before Roar, and offers to train with her. It doesn't take long before Perry realizes that he can't be this close to Aria and still concentrate and she isn't faring much better. She steps into him and they kiss, tentatively at first, but then deeply. Roar witness this and teasing, he finally manages to get Aria to concentrate on a lesson. Perry interrupts much later to announce it is time to go.

Marron insists on sending Gage and Mark with them, with the added instructions to help Aria to return to Delphi if Bliss is truly destroyed. They leave through a gate on the north side of the wall and he scans the canopy for sleeping sentinels. Perry is stopped when Aria puts a hand on his back and points to a figure asleep in the crook of a tree. Another is higher up. The challenge is to kill them without setting off an alarm. Perry's arrow takes the first man easily, but he grunts as the breath leaves him, and his cohort calls out to him. When there is no answer, he leaves the tree, trying to make it back to his group but Perry catches up and dispatches him quietly. He is putting his knife away when he hears Aria cry out.

## Chapters Thirty One - Thirty Three Analysis

Perry remembers the weakness he'd felt after rendering to Talon, and knows that Aria has no idea what happened the night before. He tries to promise himself to keep his distance from her until he can deliver her to Bliss. Marron offers to send some of his men along with them, but Perry refuses to be responsible for more deaths. Instead, he suggests that they leave during an Aether storm when the Croven won't be as vigilant. They can head east from there and into wolf country. To counter the issue of restlessness and anxiety while they wait for an opportunity to leave, Roar teaches Aria how to use a knife while Perry makes practice blades out of wood. After an afternoon of



practicing, Aria sings for Roar as payment, and as an Aud, he is simply astounded by her ability. He knows that Perry has rendered to her.

They wait for the weather to turn and with each passing day, Aria's hopes of finding her mother alive dwindle. She focuses all of her attention on training with Roar. When Perry tries to take his place one day, they both quickly realize that they have other things in mind when they get close to each other. They end up in an embrace and are kissing deeply when Roar arrives. He teases them, and then puts Aria through her paces, without speaking, reminding her that there will be distractions in life as well. The sky turns and it is time to go.

Marron is disappointed to see them go, have enjoyed the stimulation that their visit brought. He reminds Aria that she is always welcome. Roar asks Perry if he'll rescind the deal with Sable where Liz was concerned when he becomes Blood Lord and though it is within his purview. Perry wonders what Aria will do if Bliss is truly gone. He thinks about her living at Marron's - just a week's travel from the Tides, but at the same time recognizes that they would never accept a Dweller, especially not after what had happened to Clara, Talon and Vale. Still, he is amazed at how much she has changed since their first days together. She spots the sentries first and Perry takes them out, but is almost paralyzed when he hears Aria's muffled cry.



# Chapters Thirty Four - Thirty Six

## Chapters Thirty Four - Thirty Six Summary

A third man appears trying to get the horn so that he could warn the others. Knowing she has to stop him, Aria launches herself. He hears her at the last moment, pushing off the tree and they fall to the ground, but Aria's knife finds its mark and his weight is dead atop her. A wild-eyed young girl grabs the horn, scampering away as another figure reveals itself. Aria gropes for her knife, but the figure is Perry. She tells him they have to find Roar just as the horn is blown. They run forward, discovering Gage's body. Roar is sitting against a tree and tells them that Mark is dead. The Croven are coming, and Roar's leg is badly cut. Perry hoists him up and begins to run. They get to an outcropping of rocks and crouch behind them. Perry fires until he runs out of arrows.

Surrounded, all they can see are dozens of beaked faces in black cloaks. The leader tells Perry to lay down where he is and Perry refuses. Aria takes his hand as Roar tells them hoarsely to get down. The Aether is charged, and burns Perry's nostrils as Cinder strides through the Croven fearlessly. He turns to face the Croven with raised palms. Perry grabs Aria and leaps behind the rock on top of Roar as Cinder lights the night with fire. Perry covers them until the night is quiet. Cinder lies naked near them. He tells Perry he made it right. They return to Delphi where when Marron learns what happened, he asks Perry to go. Perry tells Roar to come in the spring with Cinder who agrees without hesitation.

Perry and Aria leave Delphi again. When dawn comes, Aria hears barking and tells Perry they need to find somewhere safe. He curses himself for not taking more arrows from Delphi. The wolves are closing in as Perry spots a rope ladder. He lifts Aria up and follows her up into a small shack. Seven wolves bark and claw at the tree below them. After an hour, the barking stops. One wolf howls, sending a chill down their spines. Without a word, Aria gets up and cupping her hands she imitates the howl to perfection. A second howl from her has the wolves walking off into the night. They are able to relax then, and she passes time asking him about his Senses, trying to understand him better.

## Chapters Thirty Four - Thirty Six Analysis

Aria tangles with the third man who revealed himself, and manages to keep him from the horn still dangling from the first Croven Perry killed. His dead weight on top of her pins her to the ground, and she struggles to free herself as a young girl races up the tree and grabs the horn. She runs with it just as Perry arrives. He sees the blood on Aria and for a moment thought it belonged to her. He mutters that for a moment he thought it had happened again, and Aria tells him they have to find Roar. They run through the bush as the horn is sounded, and find Roar injured against a tree. The wound in his leg



is arterial, and Perry doesn't think twice. He picks him up and they run, ducking behind a rock outcropping where Perry fires arrow after arrow until nothing remains.

As they stand together, surrounded by Croven, all Perry can think about is all the things that he hadn't yet accomplished. He realizes that he will likely die there. Aria puts her hand in his, realizing he needed her close. Roar tells them to get down, and Perry senses the change in the Aether just in time. He pushes Aria behind the rocks on top of Roar, covering them as Cinder lets loose with a charge that has the Croven screaming, cowering and dying. When he is finished, the air is quiet and pungent with the smell of burning wood and flesh. Cinder looks at Perry's hand, and tells him he made it right. Perry wonders if Cinder has ever known anything but pity and fear. They manage to get back to Delphi, but when Marron and the others learn that Mark and Gage are both dead, he asks Perry to leave with Aria. Perry understands immediately. Marron wants the Croven to leave, and that will only happen if they are gone. They leave Roar and Cinder behind, extracting promises from both that they'll join them in the spring.

Perry and Aria run until dawn, but the wolves close in and they are forced to find somewhere safe. At what seems like the very last moment, Perry spies a rope ladder and pushes Aria up ahead of him. He barely makes it up behind her as the pack of wolves circle the tree below. Perry can feel the depth of Aria's distress as the wolves howl below until she gets up and cupping her hands she howls back at them. The second howl she sends into the night convinces them to leave and Perry is stunned. They are able to relax then, and Aria asks Perry about the extents of his abilities. He describes the things he feels and senses, and before long they are in each other's arms. He takes her there, in the small shack for the first time, and knows that it could not be more right.



# Chapters Thirty Seven -Thirty Nine

## Chapters Thirty Seven -Thirty Nine Summary

Perry is much more open the next day, answering her questions and teaching her about her surroundings. She likes the things she is discovering about herself. That night he uses their blankets to make a hammock and tells her his deepest secret. He reveals the fact that his mother died giving birth to him, and that his father held him responsible. In truth, Perry grew up believing he'd killed his mother, and ruined his father's life.

Stunned, she tells him how wrong he is, and insists that he is selfless and loving. She reminds him of the people he's saved, including her, and tells him that his heart is good. His Senses tell him that her words are true, and he holds her close.

They are in the foothills when Perry scents a badger. They find two holes and Aria fans smoke into one end while Perry waits at the other, but the badger turns. Aria gets up and walks slowly forward, stopping half way and smiling. Taking his knife, she thrusts it into the dirt. Later, she describes the sounds she hears and asks if she is possibly related to Roar. He realizes that her father likely came from a long line of Audiles since her sense was so strong. She asks him about Vale, and they walk into the night.

Aria's hearing becomes more defined with each passing day. She notices her footfalls become quieter, and tries sneaking up on Perry. When she finally manages to do so, he doesn't laugh as she expected, but wraps his arms around her. They are getting close to Bliss. When they reach Bliss, there are about thirty hover craft involved in what appears to be a rescue. She outlines the plan she has to Perry and he reluctantly agrees. She walks down quickly, heading straight for the black truck, needing to know if her mother was in there, and praying she isn't.

## Chapters Thirty Seven -Thirty Nine Analysis

Perry is different with her the next day as they travel. He answers all of her questions, and teaches her about the plants and flowers around them. She savors every moment, seeking excuses to bring him closer whenever possible. She learns that his Senses first became evident when he was four. She learns about his mother and father, feeling a tenderness for him that is almost painful. When he tells her about his birth, and the death of his mother, her heart breaks for him. He explains how his father held him responsible for taking her from him, and how he himself felt that way as well. She holds his hand, and tells him who she sees when she looks at him. Putting her hand over his heart, she feels the strength of it beating and sees the trust in his eyes.

When Perry discovers the scent of a badger, he sets up to catch it but it doesn't come out as expected. Instead, Aria gets up and walks across the ground until stopping, she tells him the badger is right beneath her. She can hear him below the earth, and taking Perry's knife, she plunges it through the dirt and catches their meal. After they've eaten,



she tells him about the extent of the sounds she hears. He strains to hear them as well, but isn't able to. They are three days from Bliss, and his anxiety is increasing. He doesn't know what they'll do if they don't find Lumina.

Each day, Aria seems to hear more and more of the world around her. Perry tells her that her father had to have been a formidable Audile himself to have passed this on to her. She thinks about her father, wondering who he was. They reach the hills in the late afternoon, and climb them to finally see Bliss. There are at least thirty hovers already there, performing a rescue of some kind, and Aria tells Perry her plan to get down among them. He reluctantly agrees to stay behind. She all but floats down the hillside and makes her way to the black truck parked near by.





# Chapters Forty - Forty Two

## Chapters Forty - Forty Two Summary

Perry watches as Aria manages to get into the black truck to search for Lumina. He sees her dropping a Guardian suit and boots out the back, along with a helmet. She drags them under the truck and puts them on. Then she signals him and Perry nocks an arrow, aiming for the spotlight that shines on the entrance.

When the light goes out, a dozen men come down the ramp to see what happened as Aria slips inside. Walking with purpose, she searches, seeing people lying in bunks stacked along the side walls. She hears Doctor Ward and for a minute they just stare at each other. He leads her down the hall, and she follows, already hearing in his voice that Lumina is dead. He pulls a gurney out and leaves her alone. She bends down and quietly sings the Tosca aria her mother loved. As she finishes, the door opens and three Guardians enter, demanding her Smarteye. She lunges for the door, but a Guardian with a white baton stands in her way. A light flashes and she loses consciousness.

Perry waits for her to come out again, and when she doesn't, he realizes she won't. He runs into the darkness until he comes across six men around a fire. He approaches and offers Talon's knife in return for a drink and is given two bottles of Luster. In only an hour, the first is gone. The leader, his hair in a long braid, approaches Perry, and squares off with him. He knows that if he loses, he will be forced to either pledge fealty or die. He takes a fair beating before deciding to defend himself. It takes no time at all to gain the upper hand, but he doesn't force him to choose submission or death. He tries to bandage himself and when he wakes, Braids is crouched beside him and his wound is properly dressed. He gives him Talon's knife back.

## Chapters Forty - Forty Two Analysis

Part of Perry hopes that Aria will find her mother in the black truck as it would be one way in which she would come back to him, but when he sees her drop a Guardian suit out of the back, he knows she hasn't found her. Perry watches her put the suit on and signal him. He aims carefully, and takes out the spotlight for her.

Aria walks with purpose, and discovers chambers of people stacked in bunks. All are dead. Every breath she takes has the odor of death and it is hard for her not to imagine what had happened. When Dr. Ward comes in, she takes a chance and says hello to him. He knows she is looking for Lumina, and takes Aria to her, giving her a few moments along with her body. Devastated by the sight of her lifeless body, she bends close and quietly sings the Tosca aria her mother loved so much. She finishes just as three Guardians arrive - one of them holding a white baton. A light flashes, and her world goes dark.



Pery waits, but she doesn't return and he realizes she won't. He can't bear the thought of being without her. He runs toward the scent of smoke and finds six men sitting around a fire. He trades Talon's knife for two bottles of Luster, hoping to dull the ache in his heart, but when one is gone an hour later, he feels no better. No amount of Luster can dull the pain of Aria's absence however. All he wants is Aria - her voice... her touch. He almost allows the leader to best him, the demand for fealty or death right behind it, but at the last moment he comes to his senses and defends himself. He doesn't demand his loyalty afterward however, simply telling him he owed him a bottle of Luster. By morning, his head is pounding. He tries to bandage the cut on his arm, but is still to befuddled with Luster to do a decent job. He closes his eyes and wakes again to find his wound carefully bandaged. The leader hands him Talon's knife.



# Chapters Forty Three - Forty Five

## Chapters Forty Three - Forty Five Summary

Aria wakes in a small chamber without her Smarteye, unafraid. A screen opens to reveal Consul Hess. He tells her that with the increasing Aether storms, and encroaching DLS, Bliss will not be the only Pod to fail. Their only hope is to find the Still Blue. More specifically, they want her to find the Still Blue for them. To convince her cooperation, Hess shows her video footage of Talon and Perry. The last thing Hess tells her is that her mother did leave them with the answer - it was Aria. That night, in her own clothes again, she leaves Bliss in a Dragonwing with six Guardian escorts, and tells them where in the Death Shop to take her.

Winter has begun and Perry, and the six men he met after leaving Aria behind travel when it is safe. It takes a week before he finally gets home to the Tides, and he is stunned when he sees Vale come forward. He asks him how he can be there when Talon said he was with him, but the answer comes to him in a flash. Vale had arranged Talon's capture himself. Bear steps up and tells him he is wrong. Sable had sent the second shipment of food a week earlier. It is enough confirmation for Perry who tells them all that Liv ran, and never joined the Horns, so the food hadn't come from them. Perry can't believe that Vale would sell Talon for food. Vale charges Perry and they fall together. The second time Perry is ready and pins him insisting he pledge his fealty, and he agrees. Reef comes forward and sniffs deeply, shaking his head only slightly to confirm what Perry already senses. He is lying. Vale makes a move for Perry's knife, but Perry is faster and Vale's throat is slit as Perry becomes the new Blood Lord of the Tides.

Roar stands in Delphi's courtyard and asks Aria what he should convey to Perry. Aria tells him to say nothing, but Roar insists that he'll find out she is there. She hugs him close and just before he is gone, she spies the wildflowers and calls him back. She finds what she is looking for and takes it to Roar, telling him to give it to Perry. Confused, knowing she likes roses, Rose asks her what it is and she tells her it's a violet. Two weeks later, she has left Marron's and sits at a fire cooking a rabbit. She missed Roar and Cinder. In the night she hears footsteps, hearing them increase, and then become a run. She can hear his heartbeat, then his breath and his voice, telling her everything she longed to hear.

## Chapters Forty Three - Forty Five Analysis

Awake for hours in a small chamber, Aria is still unafraid. Having faced the Aether, wolves and cannibals, learned what love was, and learned how to let go; she no longer feared whatever lay ahead. Small speakers buzz and a screen opens revealing Consul Hess and Dr. Ward. Hess tells her they viewed the Songbird file and tells her that until then, he'd been unaware that she was so unique. In that moment, Aria understands the



glass between them. They feared they would catch something from her. Hess confirms everything her mother told her in the recording, and adds simply that they are running out of time. Reverie could be the next Pod wiped out by a combination of Aether and DLS and their only hope was to find the Still Blue. Aria is surprised to hear them speak of it, and when Hess informs her that she is to find it, she flatly refuses to help him in any way. He asks her to think about the six thousand people who died at Bliss, and then about her friends at Reverie. He also tells her she's seen and heard too much to be returned to Reverie, so she has little choice, especially when he adds the leverage of Talon and Perry. That night, she is buckled into a Dragonwing with six Guardians, but this time she tells them where to drop her, feeling confident and unafraid.

The storms are strong and the sky is full of funnels. One evening he tells them about the Still Blue, pledging that if it is there, they will find it. They travel a week to reach the Tides and Perry is stunned when Vale approaches. He tries to make sense of it. He tells Vale he's seen Talon, and Talon told him that Vale was there with him. Vale feigns ignorance but Perry remembers how Talon finally identified him, and knows that Vale is lying. A sick feeling comes over him as the truth settles in like a blanket. Bear is sure that Perry is wrong - Vale wouldn't have given Talon up willingly, and they had enough food from Liv's betrothal. The second shipment had just arrived. It is the final assurance. Perry tells them about Roar and losing Liv, without having delivered her to the Horns. When he sees Brooke in the crowd, he tells her that the same had been done with Clara. Bear asks if it is true, and Vale all but admits it. He launches at Perry, but the conflict is brief as Perry pins him and insists he pledge his loyalty. He does so, but Reef steps up and inhales the lie, nodding slightly at Perry to confirm what he already knows. Vale lunges for the knife and Perry draws it across his throat, finishing him.

When Roar and Cinder are ready to leave for the Tides, Aria is at first reluctant to tell him she is at Delphi, but Roar insists that if he asks, he will have no choice but to tell him. She hugs him and at the last moment picks a violet from a spray of wildflowers, telling him to give it to Perry. Two weeks later, Aria has left Delphi. She misses Roar and Cinder, and is unable to just sit and wait. She sits at a fire, her ears assuring her she is safe, and roasts a rabbit, thinking about how terrified she had been of fire in the beginning. She hears footsteps, and knows it is him long before she is in his arms again, hearing the words she longed for.



# Characters

## Aria (aka Songbird)

Aria has hair and eyebrows that are as dark as a raven's, and the genetically created voice of an angel. Aria is thin, and her skin is a mooth contrast against the pink of her lips. Aria is seventeen thousand years old, considered a teenager. Her face is finespun and delicate, and her features are beautiful - genetically engineered perfection. Aria has gray eyes. Anywhere else, she would be seen as a rare beauty, but life in the Pods has long since eliminated the ordinary and plain variety of people. Given the option, parents all chose to have good looking children, and by doing so, they became ordinary. Aria therefore, has no idea that she is the beauty that others see her as,

Aria was also given the voice of a falcon soprano, and her ability to sing stops all in earshot in their tracks. It is especially magical for anyone who has a stronger sense of hearing - Audiles - like Roar. Aria sings regularly for her mother, meeting her each Sunday in the opera theater, but she doesn't appreciate the value or importance of these meetings until after her mother dies, When Aria records Consul Hess's son Soren exhibiting signs of DLS, she is summarily evicted from the Reverie Pod and dumped outside to fend for herself. She manages to rediscover who she is, and find love in a world that is as harsh as it is wonderful.

## Peregrine (aka Perry)

Peregrine has blond hair that is usually snarled and tangled like a Medusa's. His eyes are reflective, like an animal's and tattoos circle around his arms. He is without electronics whatsoever, and carries a long knife. Perry is a Scire, revealed by the bands on his arms, and is a Scire of some rarity. Instead of having only one heightened Sense, he has two. Perry is Night-Sighted and can see in the dark as well as most see in the daytime, and he can also Sense tempers or feelings with unerring accuracy. Being a Scire also means that his sense of taste and smell are heightened. Often, he tastes the meal served, and the remnants of the meals that had been served before in the same bowl. Perry is covered with imperfections. His nose is long and like a gladiators. It has a bend near the top where it appears to have been broken more than once and he has pale scars that she can see through the scruff he still has on his jaw. Perry is eighteen thousand years old. As a Scire, he doesn't trust what people say, knowing that most often, people lie.

Perry's ability as a Scire enable him to render to another person making life without them a misery of loss. He renders to Talon, his nephew, as a result of many nights sleeping in close contact. The same thing happens when he spends the night on the floor in Aria's room. From that day forward, life without her seems impossible. He goes back to the Tides after taking Aria to Bliss to find her mother, and discovers that his



brother Vale sold his own son for food, along with one of the other children from their tribe. He takes Vale's life when Vale refuses to submit to his leadership.

## Roar

Roar is Perry's best friend. He is lean in build and his features are sharp. He wears clothes that are fitted, and his hair is dark. He wears black clothing, without frays or tears, and is the kind of polished handsome that he could easily have been a character in one of the Realms Aria was used to. He looks like a prince, but his eyes have the glint of pirate about them. His smile is appealing. Roar, Perry and Perry's sister Liv all grew up together.

Roar has been in love with Liv for as long as Perry can remember. When he is tasked with taking Liv to the Horns, she runs. Roar is a Scire. His extra sense is as an Aud, further augmented by his ability to hear a person's thoughts when he touches them.

Roar tries to help Perry get Aria to Bliss, but an attack by the Croven leaves him badly injured. They manage to get him back to Delphi where he stays with Cinder until they are able to travel and meet him again at the Tides compound.

## Marron

A good friend of Perry's, Marron's compound is located near Mount Arrow. He is a trader, a ruler, and a little bit of everything. Marron has blue eyes and a round face. He is short, and could be considered portly, but he moves with unusual grace. Marron wears Victorian style clothing, complete with a black tailcoat and blue vest. The look is complete with spats and a white silk puff tie. He calls his home Delphi, although Perry and Roar call it the Box because of its shape. His eyes have a child like curiosity and he has a nervous habit of twisting a ring on his finger.

## Cinder

Cinder is a young man that Roar comes across in the borderlands. He was sleeping in the middle of the woods and was in bad shape when they met. Young, Cinder is only about thirteen and after Roar gives him some food, he becomes Roar's shadow. He looks like a northerner, and his eyes are dark and have a feral look to them. He is frighteningly thin, appearing to barely have enough meat to hold his skeleton up. His shirt reveals collarbones that stick out and hangs loosely on him. Cinder's hair is blond and dirty. and his eyes are filled with fatigue.

Cinder has a connection with the Aether, activated by fear or anger, that can be directed as a weapon. He has little control over it however, and accidentally burns the skin from Perry's hand when Perry tries to convince him to go a different route to avoid the Croven. He makes up for it later by clearing a path through the Croven when Perry, Aria and Roar are pinned down.



## Talon

Talon is Perry's nephew. He is seven years of age, and in the month since his mother died, he has taken to long periods of silence with everyone but his uncle Perry. Recently, Talon is showing signs of the same wasting disease that his mother died from. Talon is the first person that Perry has ever rendered to, and as such, has a bond with him that is unbreakable. When he is taken by the scientists, it is later discovered that his father Vale not only approved, but arranged the transaction in an effort to save both his son and his tribe. Talon is traded for a year's worth of food and liberal visiting rights. When he is taken to the Pods, they introduce him to Realms in which he can fly, give him medication, and ensure that he has fresh fruit regularly. It takes little time before Talon does not want to leave.

## Vale

Vale is the Blood Lord of the Tides tribe, and is Peregrine's older brother by seven years. His Scire markings consist of one band on each of his biceps. He is tall, as Perry is, and his Naming Mark resembles their valley, cutting a line across his heart. His hair is dark, and he wears it pulled back. Vale has green eyes. Vale's wife is named Mila. She died after becoming sick and her son Talon shows signs of the same wasting illness soon afterward. Vale is a patient man who never put anything before the good of his tribe.

## Soren Hess

Soren is the son of the Director of Security for Reverie. He is well muscled, having the kind of skin that only the very privileged can afford. His father created a pod named after him for his eighteenth birthday (Soren 18). His skin is tanned, which is the kind of upgrade that only comes with privilege as no one living in Reverie had ever so much as seen the sun. Soren is a master at code cracking. He rules the combat and sports Realms where competitions and ranking rule.

## Lumina

Aria's mother, Lumina works as a scientist. She is working on a solution to the issue of Degenerative Limbic System that is occurring with more and more frequency. To that end, she goes to the Bliss Pod where experiments are being conducted on Outsider adults and children in an effort to establish why they are not similarly affected, and how she can reverse the problem, if at all. She is killed when an Aether storm hits Bliss and at the same time an attack by those affected with DLS occurs. There are few survivors.

Lumina took an Outsider's DNA to mix with her own, creating Aria - a fact she does not reveal to Aria until after she is dead by way of a video taped message.



## Theo (aka Echo)

One of the two brothers who followed Soren everywhere, and who lost his life when he and four others left Reverie and entered Agriculture 6, starting a fire that soon got out of control.

## Olivia (aka Liv)

Peregrine's sister, Liv was traded to the Blood Lord of another tribe in return for enough food to ensure the Tides survive the winter. She disappears before she can be delivered by Roar. Live is tall, and has hair like her brother Perry. She is also a Scire like her brother, if not even stronger.

## Dr. Ward

One of Lumina's colleagues, Dr. Ward is a 5th Gen who is quiet and has a square, serious face. Years earlier, Aria had wondered if Dr. Ward was her father.

## Consul Hess

Soren's father, Consul Hess is a 12th Gen, meaning that he is already well into the second century of his life. He is stocky and even-featured - traits his son shares.

## Brooke

Brooke lives and is part of the Tides tribe. She and her sister Clara had both been part of the tribe until Clara had gone missing a year earlier. She can hardly believe it has already been a year since she was taken, but still Brooke has not given up hope. Brooke is easy on the eyes and has a soft spot for Perry. She is also a Seer, but she sees much better during the day than Perry does.

## Paisley

Aria's best friend, Paisley is one of the group of five who exited Reverie to enter Agriculture 6 - a damaged dome. She has fingers that are slender, and long red hair that she twists in her fingers when she is nervous.

## Rat

Rat has bells around his waist that ring with every step he takes. His teeth appear to have been filed down to points. Rat is a member of the Croven.





## Trip

Trip is slight of frame and bald. He has a large and pointed nose and intricate tattoos around his eyes that resemble embroidery. Trip is a member of the Croven.

## Harris

He is tall and wears a black cape. The hood is pulled over the top of a crow-like long beak and he wields a staff with feathers and rope at the top. He is over six feet tall and his eyes are blue and glass like in their clarity. When he removes his mask, he reveals his youth, and speaks with a smoky baritone voice that is beautiful. Harris is the Blood Lord of the Croven.

## Croven

The Croven are the name of a tribe of cannibals.

## Blackfins

A tribe of Outsiders that lived close to the foot of Mount Arrow. Aether storms and their resulting fires had leveled all but one of the homes that had previously existed.

## Horns

Another tribe that trades with the Tides, the Horns are the tribe that Liv was promised to in return for enough food for the Tides to survive another winter.

## Reef (aka Braids)

Reef is one of six men that Perry comes across after escorting Aria to the Bliss Pod remains. He is tall and wears his hair in a long braid down his back. Reef waits until Perry is under the influence of Luster, and tries unsuccessfully to take him on. By the following night, all six men have pledged a fealty to Perry.

## Lodan

Blood Lord from the Blackfins who offered to pledge to Vale in return for safe haven for the rest of his remaining tribe, but Vale refuses. All but the children (who were taken into the fold) are consumed by the Croven.



# Objects/Places

## Reverie

Reverie is the name of the pod that Aria lives in. It is a sterile environment in which disease and illness has been eradicated.

## Smarteye

A Smarteye is a clear device worn over the eye that is usually always on. The Eye is the electronic device that allows the user to travel to the Realms.

## Bliss

Bliss is the name of the research pod that Aria's mother, Lumina, works in. It is hundreds of miles from Reverie where Aria is.

## Realms

The Realms are virtual places that were created so that those who were forced to move into the pods would be able to travel to other times and places, giving them the feeling that they were free from the pods themselves.

## Agriculture 6

One of the domes that supplied Reverie with food, oxygen and water, damaged in a storm that recently occurred.

## Death Shop

What those who lived in the pods called the world beyond.

## Tilted Green Bottles

The name of the band that played at Soren's eighteenth birthday.

## Outsider

Name given to any of those who still survive outside the pods.



## **Dweller (aka Mole)**

Name that the Outsiders have given to those who live in the pods, never emerging into what is left of the real world.

## **Shield Valley**

A stretch of land that reaches from the Reverie dome almost to the region that belongs to the Tides.

## **Tides**

Name given to the tribe that Perry belongs to, the compound consists of stone homes worn smooth by time.

## **Soren 18**

The pod that Soren's father named after him on his eighteenth birthday.

## **Rendered**

The name given to the bond that Scires make with others that is deeper than love, more intense and more complicated. It is a sharing of all emotions - good, bad or indifferent.

## **Aether**

Aether is the swirling in the sky that intensifies with winter, causing fire and water to come together in the sky. The storms start earlier each year, and last longer, bringing fire storms to earth. For sixty years the Aether scorches the Earth, causing mutations as new diseases thrived. The fortunate ones take shelter in the Pods.

## **Luster**

A form of alcohol similar to Mead, Luster is thick, pungent and sweet, tasting like a spiced honey drink.

## **Medsuit**

A suit designed to monitor the vitals of the person who wears it.



## **Panop**

The central dome of Reverie where Aria has spent most of her life, Panop is where most everything happens. There are forty levels that have everything from housing to schooling and from dining areas to the atrium it is all organized around.

## **Blood Lord**

Name given to the leader of a given tribe.

## **Dragonwing**

Rounded iridescent hovercrafts used to get from pod to pod.

## **Moss Ledge**

Where Vale finds the two hundred pound buck he brings back to the compound.

## **Mount Arrow**

Located east of the mountains, Mount Arrow is where the Blackfins compound once existed.

## **Scire**

A Scire is the name given to people who are Marked by bands on their arms that reveal that they have a dominant sense. Some, like Roar, have enhanced hearing, called 'Auds'; some, like Perry have more than one Sense (although this is rare) and is a Seer who is Night-Sighted as well as being able to sense Tempers or emotions.

## **Delphi**

Formerly a mine, and then a nuclear shelter, it is now Marron's compound and one of the few truly safe places left.

## **Still Blue**

A place that is spoken of that is supposed to be free of Aether.



## **Navel**

The area that is the only destination for the elevator within the Dephi compound. It contains bits and pieces from the real world before the Unity and banks of computers equipment.

## **Degenerative Limbic Syndrome**

The name Lumina gives to the scientific phenomena that has occurred as a direct result of the creation of the Realms, and the desire to control everything from pain to illness. The limbic system, or animal responses in our brains cease to function causing catastrophic consequences including the confusion of pleasure and pain, the desire to be stressed or fearful instead of avoiding it, and a desire to take life instead of give it.

## **DLS 16**

The research Realm that Aria directs Perry to when he is wearing the Smarteye in an effort to find Talon.



# Themes

## Dwellers vs Savages

Dwellers are the name given to those who live within the Pods in "Under The Never Sky". In this version of Earth, the sky has scorched the Earth with such ferocity that many of the world's inhabitants took to living within self contained Pods. As generations pass, and still more generations are born within the Pods, there are fewer who remember the reality of open air. People who lived within the Pods bored easily however, not able to go outside and unable to entertain themselves in the usual fashion, they created virtual worlds for their amusement, duplicating the real world cities and locations past and present as closely as possible. Of course there were mistakes made. Many of the representations of virtual worlds created did not even come close to the real thing despite great efforts in that regard. Things that were touched, and smelled did not always translate as well virtually as they did in reality. For example, there were difficulties translating snow, bodies of water, the smell of the forests, and the sight of the sun in the sky all paled compared to the real thing. Food is grown in grand scale terrariums under cover and travel is done carefully by Hover from one Pod to another.

Savages is what Dwellers called those who continued to live outside the Pods. They are tribe like peoples, each settling into territories whose boundaries are watched and guarded carefully. They trade among themselves, grow their own food, and hunt for what cannot be grown. Between the areas claimed by one tribe or another is wilderness. These tracts of land belong to or are claimed by no one, and laws of the land do not apply. It is an eat or be eaten, kill or be killed environment that is rife with savages, cannibals, thieves and murderers. Savages avoid Dwellers and Dwellers avoid Savages, neither trusted by the other.

Though the Dwellers all believe that they are far advanced over the Savages, Aria, as an outcast Dweller, learns that for all of their ingenuity, their lifestyle has divorced them from reality. Much the same could be said for electronics today as they consume the youth who do not recognize life without them while the oldest generations still recall horse travel, hunting, farming and living in concert with the land without the 'benefit' of electricity.

## Genetic Advancements vs Natural Selection

Genetic advancements that the Dwellers enjoy include being able to 'create' the genetic blueprint for their children. They can select any qualities that they want to enhance such as Aria herself who has a Falcon Soprano voice enhancement that her mother wanted her to have. Other children of privilege are able to enjoy everything from a tanned looking skin to hair and eye color; intelligence to athletic prowess, etc. As a bi-product of genetic manipulation, it was decided that disease should no longer exist; perfection is attainable for a price; canine teeth are unnecessary; hair and nails shouldn't grow; sweating is



icky; and a whole host of other 'practical' changes should be implemented. It also forces birth regulations to control population as death by illness is all but eliminated and creates a population of 'pretty people' as by choice few parents would opt for plain.

What natural selection does is maintain the variety and the balances in nature. It allows for both ends of the spectrum to exist and for nature to sort out whether or not they continue to have a voice. Natural birth allows evolution to slowly occur as with each generation we adapt to better conform to the environment we are in. It also allows men and women to continue propagating the species the way we were intended to. Illnesses still occur, but it is all part of the process of survival of the fittest and knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next.

Barring a natural disaster of epic proportions, it is easy to see why natural selection would be far preferred to the genetic copy.

## **DLS Before And After**

The oldest portion of the human brain is the limbic system which is the system that controls most of our basic drives including our ability to comprehend fear, our desires to procreate, our ability to make decisions and our reactions to stress. The limbic system is our animal mind. Referred to most often as our gut reactions, our reflexes come from this region of the brain. When scientists attempted to improve on nature, they began by eliminating fear. They also eliminated the urges that corresponded with mating by conducting insemination in the laboratory instead. The creation of many Realms within which a person is able to experience life without risk of injury or stress reduced the need for the limbic system to such a degree that it simply began to deteriorate,

Without stimulation, emotional responses stagnated. Fear became thrilling; pleasure and pain became confused; and stress became sought after much like an aphrodisiac. The desire to give life became a need to take it, and the results are catastrophic. Without the limbic system to guide them, people reverted to their most animal state - destructive, aggressive and combative. It is one of many examples of how our bodies and minds work in concert with each other, both required to maintain an equal balance.



# Style

## Point of View

"Under The Never Sky" by Veronica Rossi is written from the first person perspective of the two main characters - Aria and Peregrine. The story opens from Aria's perspective. The first two chapters describe the events that precipitate Aria's summary eviction from the Pod where she had lived her entire life. The eviction comes on the heels of a stunt pulled by Consul Hess's own son, and taped by Aria as he and his friends built and lit a fire that inevitably killed all but Soren and Aria. In chapters three and four, Peregrine is introduced. He had gone in search of medicine for his young nephew Talon who will die without treatment. He returns to the Tide compound where his brother is the Blood Lord after rescuing Aria from Soren who surely meant to kill her. From here on, the chapters alternate mostly from Aria to Peregrine with the perspective changing to suit. This alternating perspective is essential to the story line in that it allows the reader to understand the enormity of the challenges faced both by Aria who must experience everything in the world for the first time, and by Peregrine who must deal with what is largely a babe in the woods and keep her alive in order to facilitate his nephew's rescue. Each of these characters believes the other to be lacking in intelligence and they each consider the other to be uncivilized as it evident by the names they have grown up calling each other - moles and savages.

## Setting

"Under The Never Sky" is set in a future or alternate version of Earth. In this reality, the Earth has gone through a form of upheaval that was almost beyond recovery. The air became so poisoned with an electricity they refer to as the 'Aether' that to live normally was considered to be largely impossible. As such, the people created huge Pods to accommodate the populations. These Pods are self contained cities. They are entirely divorced from the real world in every way. To deal with the inevitable boredom created by the limited space and stimulation available within the Pods, virtual worlds, cities, and time zones were created. Accessed by an eye piece that is part organic and part electronic, these Smarteye devices are fitted over one eye which it melds with, becoming part of the eye, but like a computer can be accessed to open files, search data bases, and access the Realms or virtual worlds created. Before Aria is thrown out of her Pod called 'Reverie', she had never seen the sky, sun, rocks, trees or anything else in its true form, and she quickly discovers that the real world is only poorly imitated by the Realms she so enjoyed all her life. Those who did not join the Pods when they were constructed instead remained in the real world. They adapted to the changing circumstances, lived without electricity for the most part, and survived by using the land to hunt, fish, and farm as we once did. They learned to read the violent electrical storms that scorched acres of earth, and evolved without interruption or interference by geneticists or scientists.





## Language and Meaning

Veronica Rossi does a wonderful job of mixing realities - virtual and real - in a way that is believable and coherent. She uses virtual reality as a method of coping for those who are confined and manages to bring the Pod structures to life in the reader's minds. In addition to their world, she manages to create an alternate version of life for those who existed outside the Pod structures, describing their lives as similar to our earlier days before the electronic revolution. Both of these groups evolve independently of each other. The group within the Pods takes electronics to the next level where to combat boredom and confinement, virtual Realms are created and most inhabitants spend more time within those worlds than anywhere else. In the second group, that remained out of the Pod structures, life evolved more naturally. Rossi describes a rather idyllic style of life where the people live in large communities called Tribes; the inhabitants survive by hunting, fishing and farming. Each tribe is ruled by a single leader called a Blood Lord, and leadership can be challenged by any tribe member who desires and believes they can win. Authenticity is established with her use of descriptions by both sides when referring to the other such as the Outsiders referring to the those in the Pods as Moles while those inside the pod call those who live outside Savages or Cannibals.

## Structure

"Under The Never Sky" by Veronica Rossi is a science fiction/future fantasy of two hundred and sixty pages (in the electronic version) and four hundred pages in the paperback version. It is divided in to forty five chapters. In the electronic version, the chapters range from four to eleven pages in length and averaging just under six pages overall. The chapters are all titled using the name of either one or the other main characters - Aria or Peregrine - and reflect the first person perspective that the chapter is written from. While the chapters at first glance may seem short to some, it is important to the story development that each character present their feelings and opinions, as well as their perceptions of their alternate main character as both of these characters have evolved in a much different life and lifestyle than the other. The first - Aria - has grown up entirely within the Pod environment, having been genetically created by her parents and lived a life of virtual confinement. She has no first hand knowledge of the outside world, and lives under the common misconception that life on the outside is certain death. In fact, she has grown up calling the land outside of the Pods the 'Death Shop', believing that to be outdoors is certain and inevitable death. The other main character - Peregrine - also has a skewed perception of how his counterpart lives. Calling her and her kind 'Moles', he and others on the outside believe that to expand, the people who lived within the Pods must have dug into the earth, thus the name 'Moles'. The alternating structure used here is important to the development of this story and the author has done an outstanding job of weaving a tale of exploration, discovery, love and commitment.



## Quotes

"You better live, little Mole." Chp 3, Pg 24  
Peregrine to Aria when he first saves her from Soren.

"I can't leave the compound anymore." Chp 6, Pg 43  
Talon to Perry when Perry suggests they go hunting so that he can give him the apple he took from the Dweller's pod.

"We leave this land, we die." Chp 8, Pg 55  
Vale to Perry when Perry tries to convince him to move the Tides.

"If I stay, either you father will die or I will." Chp 10, Pg 64  
Perry to Talon as he tries to explain why he can't stay with the Tides.

"You know a person - an Outsider - who can fix this?" Chp 13, Pg 84  
Aria to Perry when he tells her that he will take her Smarteye to someone to have it repaired.

"They wanted to share their food with us... and you just killed them." Chp 16, Pg. 106  
Aria to Perry after he rescues her from the cannibals that she still doesn't realize had her on the menu.

"It's like drinking a campfire, but it's good." Chp 19, Pg 124  
Aria to Roar after her first taste of Luster.

"Being away from him, it's like part of me is gone." Chp 26, Pg 172  
Perry to Aria as he tries to describe what it is like to be away from someone he has rendered to - Talon.

"Over generations in the Realms, the usefulness of this part of our brain has vastly diminished." Chp 27, Pg 177  
Lumina to Aria via the Songbird file as she explains the consequences of DLS on the inhabitants of the Pods.

"How could I hate what's kept me alive?" Chp 30, Pg 194  
Aria to Perry in response to his question as to whether or not she hates the half of her that is Outsider now that she knows the truth,

"I should know how to defend myself when we get out there." Chp 31, Pg 198  
Aria to Roar and Perry as she asks them to teach her how to use a bow and arrow.

"I made it right." Chp 35, Pg. 217  
Cinder to Perry after he uses his power to save Perry, Roar and Aria from the Croven who have them surrounded.



"Dispersed life not suiting you, Tider?" Chp 42, Pg. 244  
Braids (Reef) to Perry as he comes upon him and his friends after leaving Aria,

"You know, I was unaware of your unique genetic makeup when I put you outside?"  
Chp, 43, Pg.127  
Consul Hess to Aria after she is caught saying goodbye to her mother at Bliss.

"You don't know what it's like getting food out of this!" Chp 44, Pg 255  
Vale to Perry and the Tides as he tries to justify selling both Clara and Talon for food.



## Topics for Discussion

What are Pods? Why were they created? What do they contain? How is Pod confinement dealt with? How successful is it and why?

What are the main differences between Moles and Savages? What similarities are there?

What is a Scire? How many types of Scires are there? Are all Scires of the same potency? How is a Scire valued within a tribe, and why?

What is the biggest problem facing the colony known as the Tides? What deal was made to alleviate the bulk of that issue, at least temporarily? What happened to impede the deal? What is the likeliest reason?

What kind of marriages are usually arranged, or kept under tight control among the Outsiders? Why is that the case?

How are children conceived among the Pod population? How does that differ from the Outsiders? How do both Aria and Perry feel when they learn how things are done in each other's world?

What deal is made between Perry and Aria? How can Perry be sure that Aria will live up to her end of the bargain? How many times does he save her life between meeting her and arriving at Marron's? What are the consequences of his actions on her behalf?

Who is Cinder? Where does he come from? What is unusual about him? What damage does he cause and who is on the receiving end? What is the extent of the injury?

What is the conflict that exists between Perry and Vale? What exacerbates the issues they already have with each other? What comment does Vale make that stuns Perry when Perry returns without his son Talon?

What betrayal causes Perry to question his connection to Vale? How does Perry find out? What deception does Perry discover is being told to Talon? How does this information affect Perry?

Who do Aria and Perry run into on the way to Marron's? What is his connection to Perry? Who is he looking for and why? Why does he think Perry is there to help him?

What is unusual about Marron? What is Delphi? What was it before? How has Marron changed it, and what enables him to do so?