In the distance, metal groaned as another wall shifted, and Thomas felt a chill go through him. His teeth chattered a little, and he could feel his muscles starting to tighten.

He turned slowly, because there was silence in the maze now. Just the sound of himself breathing. He and Minho, although Thomas could not hear it. As he rotated, he could see the other boy, leaning against a moss-covered wall, a hand over his mouth.

It had worked.
The Griever had not made it out of the closing corridor in time. It must have been crushed between the two walls. They were safe, for now at least.

“We did it,” Thomas said around heavy breaths, a smile taking form on his face at the thought. “I can’t believe that worked.”

“I can’t believe you were dumb enough to try,” Minho said, awe in his voice.

“I didn’t really think,” Thomas shrugged, “I just knew we were not going to be able to outrun it, or hide from it. The best chance we had at making it through the night was getting rid of the Griever on our tail.”

There was a beat of silence and Minho looked up, frowning at the wall that had closed right behind Thomas. “No one has ever killed one before; I wasn’t even sure they could be killed.”

“You think it lived through that?” Thomas asked thoughtfully, squinting at the wall like it might contain the answer.

“No,” Minho said, shaking his head. “I heard it. The way the metal screeched, when the wall slid into place. It wasn’t the same as it usually it. There was something else caught there. And the noise-it-” He trailed off and looked at the ground, unable to finish his thought. But Thomas understood. Besides, there was no way anything could survive the wall crushing it, not even something that lived in the maze. It was not possible. The walls were too thick and too heavy. The Griever had not stood a chance.

“So, what do we do now?” Thomas asked.

“We should get out of here,” Minho said quickly, “away from this place. We don’t know what the Griever was capable of. It could have called for help. Or it could start to give off a smell. We will be safer if we keep moving for the night.”

“All night?” Thomas asked skeptically. His breathing was evening out, but he could still feel his heart racing, the blood pounding in his veins.

Minho didn’t bother to answer, he just straightened up, readjusted his vest, and took a deep breath. Then he was off, jogging, not running like he sometimes did. Thomas did not have a choice; he did not want to be alone, not if he could help it. Minho knew the maze and Thomas did not, he was lost on his own. So he took off after him.

Minho did not look back, but he must have sensed Thomas behind him, because as soon as Thomas caught up, Minho sped up just a little.

Running like this was actually nice. It gave Thomas a chance to think. What did it mean that they had never killed one before? Could there be something in the body, in the wreckage, which would help them find a way out? The Griever was full of potential secrets, of unknowns. The key to the whole maze could be in there. After all, Grievers had to come from some place, had to be somewhere during the daytime.

Daytime was still hours off, still a long time coming. Thomas knew they had not made it yet, they had not yet survived the night. But he could not help but feel victorious; the longer they ran, the better he felt.

His own heartbeat was no longer echoing in his ears and he was starting to calm down. As the
adrenaline left his body, the reality of the situation settled on him heavily. The night air was crisp, a little chilly. Without the roar of the fire and the heat of the other body, Thomas was surprised to find himself cold.

In the distance, metal groaned as another wall shifted, and Thomas felt a chill go through him. His teeth chattered a little, and he could feel his muscles starting to tighten.

Thomas stopped, shaking out his arms and feet, which were starting to feel numb. It was not just from the weather, he knew, it was something else. He was cold, too cold. He leaned up against a wall and closed his eyes, trying to center himself.

The sound of footfalls got farther away and then all the sudden came right up close to him. A warm hand landed on his shoulder and Thomas could not help the shiver that went through him, as he leaned into the touch.

“Thomas-” Minho started, his voice low.

Thomas blinked his eyes open and looked out through shaded eyelashes, surprised to see how close Minho was standing to him. “I just need a second,” Thomas rasped.

It had only been hours before that Minho had abandoned him with Alby’s unconscious body. But this time Minho was not running away. He was there, by Thomas’s side. He had come back to stay with him. Thomas knew it probably meant nothing. This was different, after all. He was not helpless or unconscious and there was no Griever that they could hear getting closer. But it was still something.

“You’re freezing,” Minho said, frowning at him, giving him a look of concern. “I think you might be in shock.”

“It’s just cold tonight,” Thomas said, sounding unconvincing even to himself through chattering teeth.

Minho squinted back at him, his dark eyes shining in the black night. They were all Thomas could see, as Minho took a step even closer, his toes touching Thomas’s own. Bright planes reflecting the shining moon, almost full of it, so that they no longer even seemed to hold their own color. “It’s not cold, Thomas. It’s never cold here. It’s just you. We need to get you warm.”

“What do you mean?” Thomas could not help himself from asking. There was still so much about the Glade he did not understand. “What about in the fall? In the winter?”

“We don’t have that here,” Minho said, not really paying attention to his own words. Thomas knew Minho was not paying attention because no one in the Glade had ever given him a direct answer like this before.

Minho stepped a little closer, so that the front of his body was now pressing up against Thomas’s, matching him almost perfectly. He wrapped his arms around Thomas, holding pressing himself to Thomas’s body, and together he sat them on the ground. Thomas did not protest, did not do anything but follow along.

He could feel the heat of the taller boy, burning through his clothes. Everywhere Minho was touching him felt like it was on fire, like he was holding his own body up to a furnace.

“You have crops and trees,” Thomas tried to reason, tried to keep his mind on the question at hand, instead of how good Minho felt, how his muscles were relaxing. “You have to have autumn.”
“I have been here for more than a year,” Minho said, but his voice had gotten rougher, somehow, quieter. “The weather is always hot, always the same. The crops get rotated and the trees lose their leaves. The whole forest turns beautiful shades of red and orange and gold. But it never gets cold.”

“But you know how long you have been here,” Thomas said, giving into the warmth and letting his head fall against Minho’s chest, snuggling in to the heat like his body craved. He was starting to feel more like himself, a little better. His teeth were not chattering and feeling was returning to his fingers. “You know it’s been more than a year.”

“We count the Greenies,” Minho said, practically murmured into Thomas’s hair. “No one can remember who they are, but we all remember how long a year is.”

Thomas tried to shrug, but somehow it just brought him even closer to Minho, so that he could feel the other boy’s breath on his neck. Since arriving in the Glade, Thomas could not remember ever feeling this relaxed, this calm. It was a strange feeling, since they were in danger.

They were still in the maze, a Griever could still show up at any moment. But Thomas could feel the day starting to catch up with him. His eyelids felt heavy, his breathing was slowing, and sleep was close.

When his eyes did fall shut, even for just a second, all he could see was crunching leaves, swirling around his own head. A weird sort of vision, because he could not remember the place or the reason. But it felt like a memory. Aubrons and burnt oranges, floating all around him, crackling under foot with every step.

“Don’t you miss it?” Thomas asked.

“Miss what?” Minho breathed, sounding just as tired as Thomas felt.

His exhalation on the back of Thomas’s neck, felt almost like a warm breeze, the sort which might lift fallen leaves off the ground. Thomas could almost see them, creating a small vortex, dancing merrily in the fading sun.

“The way the wind feels,” Thomas was almost asleep now, “in the autumn. When it cuts through your sweater, making you happy to be warm.”

Minho’s breath was evening out, getting slower, as the taller boy fell asleep, holding tightly to Thomas. “Warm,” he mumbled, drifting off.

Thomas let his eyes close; he needed sleep, they both did. They had been through a lot for one night. Now there was nothing to do but rest. The danger would be there in the morning.

“Warm,” Thomas agreed, nuzzling his head into the crook of Minho’s neck.

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