

CHAPTER 49

An hour later, Thomas sat in front of the Keepers for the Gathering, just like he had a week or two before. They hadn't let Teresa in, which ticked him off just as much as it did her. Newt and Minho trusted her now, but the others still had their doubts.

"All right, Greenie," Alby said, looking much better as he sat in the middle of the semicircle of chairs, next to Newt. The other chairs were all occupied except two—a stark reminder that Zart and Gally had been taken by the Grievers. "Forget all the beat-around-the-bush klunk. Start talking."

Thomas, still a bit queasy from the Changing, forced himself to take a second and gain his composure. He had a lot to say, but wanted to be sure it came out sounding as non-stupid as possible.

"It's a long story," he began. "We don't have time to go through it all, but I'll tell you the gist of it."

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When I went through the Changing, I saw flashes of images—hundreds of them—like a slide show in fast forward. A lot came back to me, but only some of it's clear enough to talk about. Other stuff has faded or is fading." He paused, gathering his thoughts one last time. "But I remember enough. The Creators are testing us. The Maze was never meant to be solved. It's all been a trial. They want the winners—or survivors—to do something important." He trailed off, already confused at what order he should tell things in.

15

"What?" Newt asked.

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"Let me start over," Thomas said, rubbing his eyes. "Every single one of us was taken when we were really young. I don't remember how or why—just glimpses and feelings that things had changed in the world, that something really bad happened. I have no idea what. The Creators stole us, and I think they felt justified in doing it. Somehow they figured out that we have above-average intelligence, and that's why they chose us. I don't know, most of this is sketchy and doesn't matter that much anyway."

"I can't remember anything about my family or what happened to them. But after we were taken, we spent the next few years learning in special schools, living somewhat normal lives until they were finally able to finance and build the Maze. All our names are just stupid nicknames they made up—like Alby for Albert Einstein, Newt for Isaac Newton, and me—Thomas. As in Edison."

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Alby looked like he'd been slapped in the face. "Our names ... these ain't even our real names?"

Thomas shook his head. "As far as I can tell, we'll probably never know what our names were."

"What are you saying?" Frypan asked. "That we're freakin' orphans raised by scientists?"

30

"Yes," Thomas said, hoping his expression didn't give away just how depressed he felt. "Supposedly we're really smart and they're studying every move we make, analyzing us. Seeing who'd give up and who wouldn't. Seeing who'd survive it all. No wonder we have so many beetle blade spies running around this place. Plus, some of us have had things ... altered in our brains."

"I believe this klunk about as much as I believe Frypan's food is good for you," Winston grumbled, looking tired and indifferent.

"Why would I make this up?" Thomas said, his voice rising. He'd gotten stung on *purpose* to remember these things! "Better yet, what do you think is the explanation? That we live on an alien planet?"

35

"Just keep talking," Alby said. "But I don't get why none of us remembered this stuff. I've been through the Changing, but everything I saw was ..." He looked around quickly, like he'd just said something he shouldn't have. "I didn't learn nothin'."

"I'll tell you in a minute why I think I learned more than others," Thomas said, dreading that part of the story. "Should I keep going or not?"

"Talk," Newt said.

QUESTIONS: The following statements are either true or false. Tick [✓] the correct option, then justify it using rods as they appear in the text. Both parts are required for [1 mark]

1) Two chairs were left empty because Zart and Gally were absent.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TRUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | FALSE |

Justification:

.....

2) The Creators believe the group is special because of their intelligence.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TRUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | FALSE |

Justification:

.....

3) Thomas couldn't remember anything about his family.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TRUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | FALSE |

Justification:

.....

4) Alby didn't see anything helpful during his Changing.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TRUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | FALSE |

Justification:

.....

40 Thomas sucked in a big breath, as if he were about to start a race. "Okay, somehow they wiped our memories—not just our childhood, but all the stuff leading up to entering the Maze. They put us in the Box and sent us up here—a big group to start and then one a month over the last two years."

"But why?" Newt asked. "What's the bloody point?"

45 Thomas held up a hand for silence. "I'm getting there. Like I said, they wanted to test us, see how we'd react to what they call the Variables, and to a problem that has no solution. See if we could work together—build a community, even. Everything was provided for us, and the problem was laid out as one of the most common puzzles known to civilization—a maze. All this added up to making us think there had to be a solution, just encouraging us to work all the harder while at the same time magnifying our discouragement at not finding one." He paused to look around, making sure they were all listening. "What I'm saying is, there is no solution."

50 Chatter broke out, questions overlapping each other.

Thomas held his hands up again, wishing he could just zap his thoughts into everyone else's brains. "See? Your reaction proves my point. Most people would've given up by now. But I think we're different. We couldn't accept that a problem can't be solved—especially when it's something as simple as a maze. And we've kept fighting no matter how hopeless it's gotten."

55 Thomas realized his voice had steadily risen as he spoke, and he felt heat in his face. "Whatever the reason, it makes me sick! All of this—the Grievers, the walls moving, the Cliff—they're just elements of a stupid test. We're being used and manipulated. The Creators wanted to keep our minds working toward a solution that was never there. Same thing goes for Teresa being sent here, her being used to trigger the Ending—whatever that means—the place being shut down, gray skies, on and on and on. They're throwing crazy things at us to see our response, test our will. See if we'll turn on each other. In the end, they want the survivors for something important."

60 Frypan stood up. "And killing people? That's a nice little part of their plan?"

Thomas felt a moment of fear, worried that the Keepers might take out their anger on him for knowing so much. And it was only about to get worse. "Yes, Frypan, killing people. The only reason the Grievers are doing it one by one is so we don't all die before it ends the way it's supposed to. Survival of the fittest. Only the best of us will escape."

65 Frypan kicked his chair. "Well, you better start talking about this magical escape, then!"

"He will," Newt said, quietly. "Shut up and listen."

70 Minho, who'd been mostly silent the whole time, cleared his throat. "Something tells me I'm not gonna like what I'm about to hear." "Probably not," Thomas said. He closed his eyes for a second and folded his arms. The next few minutes were going to be crucial. "The Creators want the best of us for whatever it is they have planned. But we have to earn it." The room fell completely silent, every eye on him. "The code."

"The code?" Frypan repeated, his voice lighting up with a trace of hope. "What about it?"

75 Thomas looked at him, paused for effect. "It was hidden in the wall movements of the Maze for a reason. I should know—I was there when the Creators did it."

QUESTIONS: Find the word or phrase which means the following:

1) erased (lines 41-44)

.....

2) controlled (lines 56-58)

.....

3) crucial (lines 59-61)

.....

4) covered (lines 75-76)

.....

CHAPTER 50

For a long moment, no one said anything, and all Thomas saw were blank faces. He felt the sweat beading on his forehead, slicking his hands; he was terrified to keep going.

5 Newt looked completely baffled and finally broke the silence. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, first there's something I have to share. About me and Teresa. There's a reason Gally accused me of so much stuff, and why everyone who's gone through the Changing recognizes me."

10 He expected questions—an eruption of voices—but the room was dead silent.

"Teresa and I are ... different," he continued. "We were part of the Maze Trials from the very beginning—but against our will, I swear it."

10 Minho was the one to speak up now. "Thomas, what're you talking about?"

"Teresa and I were used by the Creators. If you had your full memories back, you'd probably want to kill us. But I had to tell you this myself to show you we can be trusted now. So you'll believe me when I tell you the only way we can get out of here."

15 Thomas quickly scanned the faces of the Keepers, wondering one last time if he should say it, if they would understand. But he knew he had to. He *had* to.

Thomas took a deep breath, then said it. "Teresa and I helped design the Maze. We helped create the whole thing."

20 Everyone seemed too stunned to respond. Blank faces stared back at him once again. Thomas figured they either didn't understand or didn't believe him.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Newt finally asked. "You're a bloody sixteen-year-old. How could you have created the Maze?"

25 Thomas couldn't help doubting it a little himself—but he knew what he'd remembered. As crazy as it was, he knew it for the truth. "We were ... smart. And I think it might be part of the Variables. But most importantly, Teresa and I have a ... gift that made us very valuable as they designed and built this place."

He stopped, knowing it must all sound absurd.

"Speak!" Newt yelled. "Spit it out!"

"We're telepathic! We can talk to each other in our freaking heads!" Saying it out loud almost made him feel ashamed, as if he'd just admitted he was a thief.

30 Newt blinked in surprise; someone coughed.

"But listen to me," Thomas continued, in a hurry to defend himself. "They *forced* us to help. I don't know how or why, but they did." He paused. "Maybe it was to see if we could gain your trust despite having been a part of them. Maybe we were meant all along to be the ones to reveal how to escape. Whatever the reason, with your Maps we figured out the code and we need to use it now."

35 Thomas looked around, and surprisingly, astonishingly, no one seemed angry. Most of the Gladers continued to stare blankly at him or shook their heads in wonder or disbelief. And for some odd reason, Minho was smiling.

"It's true, and I'm sorry," Thomas continued. "But I can tell you this—I'm in the same boat with you now. Teresa and I were sent here just like anyone else, and we can die just as easily. But the Creators have seen enough—it's time for the final test. I guess I needed the Changing to add the final pieces of the puzzle. Anyway, I wanted you to know the truth, to know there's a chance we can do this."

40

Newt shook his head back and forth, staring at the ground. Then he looked up, took in the other Keepers. "The Creators—those shanks did this to us, not Tommy and Teresa. The Creators. And they'll be sorry."

"Whatever," Minho said, "who gives a klunk about all that—just get on with the escape already."

45 A lump formed in Thomas's throat. He was so relieved he almost couldn't speak. He'd been sure they'd put him under major heat for his confession, if not throw him off the Cliff. The rest of what he had to say almost seemed easy now. "There's a computer station in a place we've never looked before. The code will open a door for us to get out of the Maze. It also shuts down the Grievers so they can't follow us—if we can just survive long enough to get to that point."

"A place we've never *looked* before?" Alby asked. "What do you think we've been doing for two years?"

50

"Trust me, you've never been to this spot."

Minho stood up. "Well, where is it?"

"It's almost suicide," Thomas said, knowing he was putting off the answer. "The Grievers will come after us whenever we try to do it. All of them. The final test." He wanted to make sure they understood the stakes. The odds of everyone surviving were slim.

"So where is it?" Newt asked, leaning forward in his chair.

55 "Over the Cliff," Thomas answered. "We have to go through the Griever Hole."

QUESTIONS: CHOOSE THE CORRECT ANSWER

1) What did Thomas reveal about himself and Teresa?

- a) They were friends with the Creators.
- b) They were forced to be part of the Maze Trials.
- c) They built the Maze willingly.
- d) They wanted to destroy the Maze.

2) What "gift" did Thomas and Teresa have?

- a) They could run faster than others.
- b) They could communicate telepathically.
- c) They could control the Maze's walls.
- d) They could see the future.

3) What did Thomas warn about the escape attempt?

- a) It was almost suicide.
- b) It would be easy if they trusted him.
- c) Only Teresa could lead the way.
- d) The Creators would help them escape.

4) Where did Thomas say the escape point was?

- a) Near the Map Room.
- b) Behind the computer station.
- c) Over the Cliff through the Griever Hole.
- d) In the center of the Maze.