

Chapter Thirty-Seven

The chapter opens with Tris waking up after a night of uneasy rest, noting Tobias's absence but finding clothes left for her. She showers in the dark, avoiding the harsh lights reminiscent of the Erudite compound, and attempts to rejuvenate herself despite feeling emotionally raw. Determined to appear strong, she pinches her cheeks to add color, masking her exhaustion. Upon returning to the room, she finds her friends—Uriah, Christina, and Lynn—engaged in playful banter, their lightheartedness seemingly orchestrated to ease her tension. Their camaraderie offers Tris a momentary reprieve from her turmoil.

The group's conversation shifts to the recent traumatic events, including Tris's near-death experience and the alliance with the factionless. Uriah's use of outdated Dauntless slang sparks humorous debate, lightening the mood. Tris appreciates their efforts to distract her, laughing despite the weight in her stomach. Christina mentions Tobias's poorly made scrambled eggs, teasing Tris about her Abnegation upbringing, and the group heads downstairs. The contrast between the lively factionless gathering and Tris's memories of Abnegation's quiet discipline strikes her deeply.

Downstairs, the living room buzzes with energy—card games, laughter, and music filling the space, a stark departure from Tris's expectations of factionless life. Tobias appears uncharacteristically relaxed, further unsettling her. Evelyn introduces Tris to the group, drawing uncomfortable attention. A factionless man's blunt question about her survival prompts a strained smile, but Tobias deflects with a remark about defying Jeanine. Tris eats mechanically, observing the dynamics between Tobias, Evelyn, and Peter, her discomfort lingering.

The chapter closes with Tris grappling with cognitive dissonance—the factionless are not the destitute outcasts she was taught to despise, but a vibrant community. Tobias shares how Evelyn reclaimed Marcus's house, hinting at ongoing power struggles.

Tris's unease grows as she watches Evelyn interact with Peter, recalling her earlier warnings about Tris's place in Tobias's life. Despite the warmth of the scene, Tris feels a lingering sense of betrayal, questioning the truths she's been taught and the alliances forming around her.

