

# Chapter Seventeen

The chapter opens with Tris waking before sunrise in the compound, observing her companions still asleep. She ventures into the nearly empty hallways, noting the architectural emphasis on natural light through glass ceilings and walls. Drawn to revisit a mysterious sculpture she noticed earlier, Tris examines the imposing artwork—a dark stone slab with a suspended water tank above it, dripping water at regular intervals. The sculpture’s symbolism is later explained by Zoe, a Bureau member, as representing the Bureau of Genetic Welfare’s gradual approach to solving genetic issues: the stone signifies the problem, the water symbolizes potential, and the drops represent incremental efforts.

Zoe interprets the sculpture optimistically, emphasizing how persistent small actions can eventually reshape the stone, as evidenced by a shallow impression formed over time. Tris, however, questions whether such patience is always practical, suggesting that some problems might require more aggressive solutions. Their conversation reveals Tris’s skepticism toward the Bureau’s methods, though she acknowledges the quiet hope the sculpture inspires. The dialogue highlights a tension between gradual change and urgent action, reflecting Tris’s impulsive nature contrasted with the Bureau’s measured philosophy.

The tone shifts when Zoe reveals she was sent to bring Tris to the labs, where an item belonging to Tris’s mother awaits. This news stuns Tris, evoking a mix of curiosity and emotional turmoil. As they walk, Zoe warns Tris that her presence may attract attention, as Bureau members have been observing her actions via surveillance screens. Tris reacts with discomfort, resenting the idea of being watched and idealized as a hero, especially given the life-or-death struggles she’s endured. Zoe apologizes for unintentionally trivializing Tris’s experiences, but the tension lingers.

The chapter closes with Tris grappling with the discomfort of being scrutinized by the Bureau, a feeling compounded by the impending encounter with her mother's belongings. The juxtaposition of the sculpture's symbolism and Tris's personal journey underscores themes of agency, legacy, and the weight of external expectations. The narrative sets the stage for deeper exploration of Tris's past and her conflicted relationship with the Bureau's mission, leaving readers curious about the revelations awaiting her in the labs.

