

The Red

*N*obody actually believed what was said on the news that day. People went to work as if they heard nothing at all. The only difference was Elders stood prouder, and Minors stiffened.

I am a Minor, and I, too, could not believe the news that day. It wasn't until I was taking my morning commute that I saw an Elder—who looked to be in his 50s—walk up to a Minor and request her companionship.

The Minor was a white, collegiate girl in her 20s who, from the looks of textbooks in her hands, was en route to campus. She was unequivocally beautiful—blonde hair, slender body, intelligent eyes. It was no wonder the Elder gunned for her.

She politely denied his request.

She may not have heard the news or, like everyone else, did not believe it.

As the train slowed, the Elder pulled out a scarlet necklace from under his shirt. At the end of the necklace was a tiny pendant—a compact case with a red button inside. He flicked it open and pressed the button. When the train halted, a group of soldiers in red camo swarmed in through the doors and followed the point of the Elder's finger.

It happened so quickly.

The Red engulfed the girl. Her books were flung across the floor. Her scream pierced the air.

One soldier had the Minor by the hair. Another held her hands behind her back. They ripped her from the train and shoved her onto her knees. Tears were welling in her eyes, and a cloth was jammed in her mouth.

She stared up at the soldier facing her. The girl's pleading eyes moved up the barrel pressed into her forehead. The soldier pulled the trigger.

Blood splattered everywhere. The Minor's body went limp.

The doors closed, and the train continued.

Everyone on the train was so stunned no one spoke. All I heard was the train moving along its tracks.

From that moment on, oh I believed.

Minority

*T*hey were the cruelest during the first few days after the Bill was ratified.

They wanted to show that They were serious, that we must obey, and that if we rejected an Elder, They would make an example of us.

The moment on the train was one of many. Many, many lives were lost during those first few days—several thousand in Philadelphia, close to a hundred thousand in D.C., and a quarter of a million in New York City.

I could be next.

Before our phones were disconnected and confiscated, I read an article about this one Minor who was executed in her practice after rejecting companionship with one of her patients.

It happened everywhere, in all public spaces, even in front of children as though to tell them, *When you turn eighteen, this could be you, so don't try anything smart!* Might as well show them while they're young, right? Show them what it means to not follow the Law. Show them that their bodies belong not to themselves but to *Them*.

Not every child would endure Minority, though. For the right price, you could be exempted from the civic duty, which the Divided *swore* was henceforth obligatory.

Obligatory, my ass. Only the super-rich would wiggle out of a law created to suit their kind.

When bodies piled up, and people began accepting the Law, we Minors—the poor, the middle class (if there ever was such a thing), and even the lower rich—went into hiding.

Unfortunately for us, Elders came seeking.

Autonomy

I have five siblings.

The two oldest are thirty-seven and thirty-eight years of age. They lucked out and never had to be a Minor. They don't know what it's like.

The year the Bill was ratified, they were instantly inducted into Elderhood.

I don't think my older sister, Goldie, would like it very much. Of course, Elderhood is far better than Minority. They have more freedoms, like personal autonomy, companionship, polygamy, and the freedom of choice; the freedom to choose whomever they want to screw.

But still, I don't think Goldie would enjoy having total control over a Minor's life and body and fucking someone who doesn't want to fuck her.

My older brother, Silv, I don't know very well. He's the conservative one of the bunch and lives in the south of the Divided.

Our region of the post-United isn't actually called the Divided. Imagine what the rest of the world would think! No. *I*

call it the Divided. You might find the name unimaginative. I find it appropriate.

Anyway, I don't think Silv would rape someone. But to have autonomy over a Minor... maybe.

I could be wrong about the rape. Many people who I thought were better than that still did it.

When the Law allows you to do something, more people do it than you would expect.