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Large-Print Edition

by

Angela White

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Prologue

Like most days, the sound of the ocean is haunting. Not much scares me anymore, but the whispers I hear in those powerful swells are terrifying. Thanks to the apocalypse that caused the end of the world, I’ve become the guardian of a refugee camp called Safe Haven. Surrounded with carefully observing sentries, I sit by the immense Pacific Ocean as people work and play,
confident that my Eagles will protect them while I tell you about the war, and about how we were forced to flee our beloved homeland in the awful aftermath. The fall of society was a nightmare from which we couldn’t wake. Some of us still haven’t, and soon, we’ll be at the water’s mercy again. In less than two months, we’re going home. And I’m the only one who knows.

The real America still waits for us to rebuild, but mostly, simply, for us to return. Before we undertake that perilous journey, I have to get the three hundred fifty-seven souls here ready for the trip, and I only know one way it can
be done—Adrian has to come back and lead us home, as he promised. Adrian… That incredibly patriotic man has been exiled, even though he is the only reason we survived. His secrets were the excuse the camp needed to turn on him, but I won’t do that. I can’t. I swore myself to him the same as the rest of his Council, and like them, I still believe.

I’ve gotten ahead of myself, far beyond the beginning, when our future didn’t look as good as it does now. Most people surviving here won’t talk about the long, ugly journey we made together. They say those memories have faded, but I know a lie when I hear
one. Some horrors, you just never forget. Like our final battle with Cesar. It’s been five years, but I still see the thick streams of blood running down rain-soaked trees. I still smell men burning alive in their metal coffins. I dream of it sometimes, of the cold, wet night when I was the bait, and I’m sure Adrian does too. It was the moment we knew our people would live—because of one man’s dream and his terrible lies.

Adrian kept us alive, gave us everything he had, and he always did what was best for the camp, no matter what it cost him personally. He taught us to be stronger than we thought we could
be, to defend each other and ourselves and through it all he lied by omission. He knew these scared, hurting survivors would never have trusted him, would never have given him a chance, if they’d known who he really was.

We came a long way together in the year after the war, thousands and thousands of miles of heartbreaking devastation, and it hurts those of us who remain loyal to witness him accept their unfair judgment without a fight. It makes everything we lived through feel less important than it was, weakens the magic somehow, and I can’t allow that.
I’ve been detecting open doors again, and that sly ocean cautions me, says the trip home will be as hard as the one we undertook to get here. If there’s a storm coming for the flock, then it’s our guardian we’ll need to guide us through it.

So, for Adrian and for those of us standing by him, still ready to die for him, and for the dreams he made me believe in from almost the first minute I set foot in his refugee camp, I will tell our story and leave nothing out. Maybe then, these people will realize what he did for our country, accept how much we
owe him, and allow him to reclaim what’s rightfully his–us.

Before I tell you about our harsh, ugly journey, let me show you what happened on that day, what they did to us and what we did to each other.

This is how our story of survival began…
Chapter One

This is the Way

December 21st, 2012

1

“This is a joke, right? One of Milton’s gags?”

When no one spoke, President Carter examined the paper he’d been given to read, wishing he had surrounded himself with more experienced people. He had no idea what came next. It
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