

# Chapter One

## A World of Light

The sound still lingered. Not in the air — the valley had long since gone quiet — but inside her chest, as if the echo of that trumpet had embedded itself in her bones. Abby Lane pressed her back against the rough bark of a pine and pulled Elias closer, her arm wrapped protectively around his shoulders. The boy's breath came fast, his eyes wide and unblinking as though he feared the sound might come again.

They were alone now. The remnant had scattered like sparks from a fire, each one disappearing into the folds of the wilderness, just as they had been told. Some headed north, others east, slipping into shadows and river valleys, carrying truth like contraband. Abby had chosen the woods.

Above them, drones combed the skies. Their red eyes swept the canopy, searching for movement. Each time the faint hum passed overhead, Abby held her breath until the sound faded, willing her heartbeat to quiet.

“Do you hear it still?” Elias whispered.

She glanced down. His face, pale in the fading light, looked older than it had yesterday. Too old for a boy his age.

“The trumpet?” she asked softly.

He nodded.

Abby swallowed. “Yes.”

He leaned his head against her side. “They heard it too. That’s why their eyes keep changing.”

Her gaze lifted instinctively through the trees. Through a break in the branches, she could see the distant glow of the Capitol, pulsing faintly against the night. Like a false star, still standing. Selah Quinn’s voice had already bled from every screen on the way here, soothing the masses, explaining the blast of sound as an “atmospheric anomaly.” Most believed her. Most always did.

But Elias shook his head, as if reading her thoughts. “That wasn’t the sky. It was Him.”

The hum of another drone approached. Abby crouched lower, pulling Elias with her, until they were pressed into the roots of the pine. The light swept once, twice, then drifted on.

When the danger passed, Elias whispered again. “Mama... they’ll call us dangerous now.”

Her throat tightened. He was right. Selah would not let the remnant’s stand fade into silence.

