

SCOTT SIGLER

Pajari is dead.
Fury fills him. He stands, stares down at her.
“We saved you. This is your fault!”
He kicks her body, once, twice, almost a third time before he realizes what he’s doing.
Vanev falls to his knees.
Like Bureau, he starts to cry.
They did the right thing—they helped Pajari. Doing so cost them all that there is. They helped her; she died anyway.
And because of her, he, too, will die.
He can’t hear Marija’s weapon. He can’t hear anything but the roar of the fire. Is Marija still alive? Is Bureau?
If so, they won’t be for long.
All around the small crater, the dying jungle rages with flame.
He coughs, harder than ever before.
It’s getting hard to breathe.
Smoke crawls down the crater’s slope, an intangible beast oozing toward him.
Vanev can’t stop coughing.
He tries to block out the burning pain in his hands and face.
He will not see fourteen.
He will not even see tomorrow.
He feels dizzy. The ground spins beneath him.
He falls to his back, staring up at the night sky, at the stars, wondering if Em and the others made it.
O. Vanev closes his eyes.
In his last moments, the world fades away, and a tiny shred of his past rises up from the darkness, a past that was never his.
Oscar. That’s what the O stood for.
His name was Oscar.

Author’s Note: This story is part of the Generations Trilogy, also by Scott Sigler. The series includes the novels *Alive*, *Alight*, and *Alone*. “The Last Child” takes place during a pivotal moment in *Alone*.

SO SHARP, SO BRIGHT, SO FINAL

SEANAN MCGUIRE

Seanan McGuire has released more than forty traditionally published works under both her own name and the pseudonym “Mira Grant” since the publication of her first book in 2009. She has won the Hugo, Nebula, Campbell, Alex, and Pegasus Awards, which is a very nice thing to be able to say. Seanan lives in the Pacific Northwest with her collection of cats, comics, and creepy dolls. If you need her, look to the nearest cornfield. She is always there. Waiting for your call.

They don’t like bright light, and it’s bright today, so bright that it’s giving me the nagging edge of a headache. That’s a good thing. Means until they hit the final stages, the middle of the day is as close to safe as it gets. We slept during the day for the first couple of months, like we had to shift our own internal clocks to match the monsters if we wanted to stay alive. I got over that pretty quick. If I’m going to die, I’d almost rather do it fast, with all the lights off, and never see it coming. They don’t like water, either. When it rains—and it’s been raining more and more as we move toward the wispy edge of winter—the streets are empty, and I can run down the sidewalk and see them watching sullenly from their hidey-holes, nothing but eyes in the dark, angry and yearning to lash out. They hate us. How they *hate* us, for the crime of being alive and uninfected.

They’d change both those things in a second if we let them. If we get careless. There was this song I heard once. A funny song, on one

of my little brother's nerd radio shows. It was about the old Looney Tunes characters, about that coyote who always wanted to catch the roadrunner. He talked about all the times he'd lost, all the times he'd failed, and then he said—sang, I guess—"Remember that I have to win only once."

I remember.

I remember a lot of things I don't want to remember.

I remember my little brother—Danny, Danny, it's so hard to even think his name anymore, after everything that happened, after everything fell apart—sitting at the dinner table, talking too fast around a mouthful of mashed potatoes, trying to make us care about some stupid article he saw online. Bats in Arizona, he'd said. Rabid bats, and rabid coyotes, and rabid dogs turning on their owners.

"Whatever, Cujo," I said, and rolled my eyes, and Dad laughed, and I felt this hot pride in my chest, because I'd made our father happy and Danny hadn't, and sometimes that was what mattered. We weren't brother and sister—we were combatants in the same gladiatorial ring, both fighting for the prize of parental approval.

That night, I won and Danny lost, and I'd give anything to take it back, anything at all. Even my life. If I could just rewind the clock long enough to relive that one evening, to savor my food and smile at my brother and be his friend and his supporter, not his adversary, I'd take the consequences willingly.

But I can't. The world is broken, the world is *wrong*, and still we don't have time travel, or magic, or any of the other things the books used to say would come and save us. We just have the sunlight, and the rain, and the slow decay of everything that matters.

We just have the end.

I'm hungry.

It was easier before the power grid went down. Back then, I could flip a switch and play God, let there be light, let there be safe passage through the aisles of canned vegetables and shelf-stable legumes. I ate so many beans during the first few weeks that I was terrified I'd fart so loudly it would lead them right to me. Death by flatulence. Not a great thing to put on my headstone—not that I was ever going

to get one. Graveyards are a thing of the past, of course. They're *smart*, the ones who used to be us, and they like to leave corpses in the places we're likely to go, propping them up against walls and stretching them across doorways.

Corpses carry all kinds of disease. Not just the big one. Lots of nasty things enjoy making a meal of human flesh, and if you breathe in too deeply around the dead, you're likely to join the legions of the lost in no time at all.

So first the stores filled up with dead bodies, and then the lights went out, and now every Target is a potential killing field, every Safeway is an abattoir, because there's no flashlight bright enough to keep them away forever.

I'm so hungry. I'm hungry, and I'm thirsty, and my head is killing me.

Someone has already done the hard work of smashing the store windows; glass glitters in the sun, tipped here and there with streaks of blood. I don't know if it's ours or *theirs*, which means I have to treat it all as an infection risk. The light stretches into the store, bright and buttery and inviting.

I can't see any food there, but that doesn't have to mean anything; maybe the shelves at the front have been picked bare, or maybe *they* pulled the food back, out of the light, to save it for themselves. They don't usually spend their days sleeping on linoleum, and why should they? They still have houses. They still have beds, and shelter, and walls to keep out the weather, the sun and rain. We accidentally created the perfect dens for our own destruction, and now those of us who are still *us* scavenge around the edges, trying not to be seen.

It's probably safe. It's *probably* safe. There's almost no chance someone is hiding in there, waiting to strike. Unless it's a hungry dog. They don't have homes anymore, and they're all infected, and they hide wherever the sun doesn't reach, at least until the final stages, when the anger and confusion and disorientation is finally enough to drive them out into the light.

I pull a rock out of my pocket, weighing it carefully in my hand before I fling it through the opening. It clatters on broken glass, rolling across the linoleum with soft thumping sounds until it comes to a rest against the base of a shelf. There are no other sounds. I start

to step forward, and stop as a hand grabs my elbow.

Any contact is enough to make me freeze. I count to ten and there's no pain, no teeth in my shoulder or knife in my side. Slowly, I turn.

The girl behind me must have been pretty, twenty pounds and a bunch of showers ago. Now she's gaunt and filthy, like everyone else. They don't like water, but they got to keep all the showers, all the warm, comfortable bathrooms and soft, clean towels.

Nothing about this is fair.

"Wait," she mouths, and she isn't hurting me, so I wait, because everyone who isn't attacking is an ally now: that's the way you stay alive.

I wait, and all is silence, and I'm about to shake her off and follow my stone into the store when I hear it. It's a small sound. I might not have noticed it if I hadn't been standing in silence for so long.

The clap of a palm against a shelf, soft and moist and undeniably human, too high up to belong to a dog, too quick to belong to an unthinking creature.

Something in me deflates. The store isn't safe. "Thanks," I mumble, and I both mean it—I'm still alive, still uninfected, still *me*—and I don't, because part of me is waiting for the day when I slip. Remember that they have to win only once.

I can't give up. I can't surrender. For Danny. For the way he used to laugh in triumph when he unsnarled a particularly tough problem, for the way he was teaching himself how to code, for all the things he was never going to have the chance to do—for the way he tried to warn me, before everything went wrong, when we thought we'd have our entire lives to learn how to safely love each other, allies and adversaries and gladiators in the same ring, competing for the safe harbor of our father's affection. Because he didn't have this chance, I have to keep fighting, and fighting, and fighting, until something takes the fight away.

But I'm so tired. I'm so tired, and I'm so lonely, and sometimes I just want it to be over.

"Don't worry about it," says the unfamiliar girl. She looks me over, measuring, assessing. We're going feral, one day at a time, locked out of the civilized world our ancestors spent their lives creating. "You from this neighborhood?"

She's really a stranger, then, not just another neighbor I never took the time to know. "A couple blocks over," I say.

"It's not safe to stay so close to home."

I rankle at the faint disapproval in her tone. She's right, of course. We all figured that out fast. Most of my friends have run as far away as they could, seeking sanctuary in the unfamiliar. Unless something changes, I'll never know whether they made it.

Nothing's going to change. This is the world now. Danny saw it coming. Danny tried to warn me. Maybe there were other Dannys, older Dannys, Dannys in white coats with letters after their names, and maybe there's a bunker somewhere filled with scientists and government officials, all of them working around the clock to find a cure or a vaccine or something, some way for them to take the world back. Probably, even. My brother was special, but he wasn't unique.

I guess it should make me feel better to think that this isn't the way humanity ends. It doesn't. It just makes me more tired. What does it matter if there are still humans in a hundred years? Danny won't be there. My friends won't be there.

I won't be there.

"It's not safe to run, either," I say. "I don't know where to find food anywhere else. I don't know where to find shelter. Where are you from?"

"Hillsdale."

I blink slowly to muffle my surprise. Hillsdale is an hour's drive from here. "Do you have a car?"

"No."

Of course she doesn't have a car. Some of *them* have cars. They drive around at night, windows down, plates of bacon in their passenger seats, like anyone who's stayed alive this long is stupid enough to give it all up for a few strips of fried pig. If it still is pig.

It's been so long since I've seen a truck pull up behind any of the local grocery stores, and I know the shelves aren't being restocked, and the power's been out for weeks, so it's not like anyone still has a freezer full of squirreled-away supplies for a rainy day.

People are supposed to taste a lot like pigs. I bet we'd make pretty good bacon.

"So how did you...?"

"I walked." She looks at me defiantly. "I didn't want to stay where they knew me."

"Sorry?"

"You shouldn't be here if this is where you're from. They *know* you. Unless..." She pauses, gives me a thoughtful look. "Orphan?"

That would be the easiest answer. If there's no one who can lure you in with a smile or a plate of bacon or the whisper of your name, you might be almost safe staying where you feel like you belong. Most of the people I see clustering in the brightly lit places are orphans. Some are self-made, but that doesn't change the word, only the way you got there.

I shake my head. "No. My father and brother are still in the house where I... where I used to live. I mean, they were last time I checked. My father was... he was one of the first around here. He's probably late-stage by now. My brother may be alone."

Danny always hated to be alone. My heart clenches at the thought. The stranger looks at me, calculation in her eyes. "No one else is in there with him? Just your brother and your father, who's probably late-stage?"

"Yeah."

"So if we kill them, we could take the house?"

She says it so calmly, like it's the solution to all our problems. I stare at her, silent in my horror, and wonder how we got here. Will it really matter if we stay uninfected?

We're all going to wind up monsters anyway.

Danny stayed interested in the rabies outbreak in Arizona. It was always so hard to predict what would interest him, and once something did, he tended to grab and hang on as hard as he could, like learning everything there was to know about some new kind of robot or battery or disease would make it something he could control, something he didn't have to be afraid of. Sometimes he would come to my room, eyes grave behind his glasses, and try to explain it to me.

"Rabies is scary," he said.

I laughed at him. When I think about it now, it makes me sick. He was my brother—is my brother, no matter what else has changed—and when he tried to tell me something that mattered to him, I laughed. Maybe I deserve everything that's happened to

me. Maybe I'm being punished for laughing.

But he should never have been punished that way.

Id been laughing at him since we were little kids, since Id been the first one to figure out that with Mom gone, Dad's love was all we had, and he didn't have enough for the both of us. Undaunted, Danny pressed on.

"Rabies is scary, but because it's only transmitted through fluid contact, it's never been scary enough to be a real threat. Even when we've had *bad* outbreaks, people could mostly stay safe by staying away from wild animals and seeking medical attention immediately if they thought they might have been exposed. Look at how often people decide not to vaccinate their dogs, even though a dog that gets infected will always have to be put down. It's stupid. It's shortsighted and it's stupid."

I sighed and pushed myself away from my desk. "What does this have to do with you being in my room on a school night? You didn't even knock."

"The bats in Arizona."

"Uh-huh. You keep bringing them up."

"There's this outbreak there—it's huge. Biggest one we've ever seen, and it's been affecting all sorts of other local animals, even ones whose owners swear that they never came anywhere near a wild animal. Researchers have been trying to figure out how this is happening, and they finally did." He paused dramatically.

Looking back, that should have been the moment when I realized how bad things were going to get. Danny always looked so happy when one of his obsessions came to a head. I think it was sort of like popping a mental zit for him. He poked and prodded at the problem until it was ready to blow, and then he squeezed it clean.

He didn't look happy that time. He looked scared, and small, and a little confused, like he couldn't understand how the universe could be this cruel.

"So?" I asked. "What is it?"

"It's airborne."

I frowned. "So? Everything's airborne. That's what makes a virus a virus."

"Not true. A lot of viruses are transmitted through fluids, or

fomites, or other mechanisms. Ebola isn't airborne. Neither is herpes. Rabies has never been airborne before. That's how we could keep it under control, even a little bit. It's endemic in the mammals of North America. We've never been in a position to eradicate it. I don't think we ever *can*. It must have... it must have mutated somehow. It's spreading without actual contact."

"So?"

"So rabies is *bad*." He looked at me solemnly. He looked so small, and so young, and so afraid. "You know how in zombie movies, suddenly your friends aren't your friends anymore? Because they got a disease?"

"Yeah?"

"Rabies is sort of like that. It affects the brain. We don't know as much as we'd like about what it does in people, because when someone gets exposed we try to treat them as fast as we can, before they can get sick, but in animals, rabies causes paranoia, aggression, a fear of light, an aversion to water... and they can still do everything they could do before they got sick. A dog with rabies can still play fetch and remember how to use the doggie door. A person with rabies could probably still do anything a person without rabies could do."

"So it's like a zombie virus only people could still use tools?"

"Um," said Danny. "Yeah."

"Cool," I said, and I had never been more wrong about anything in my life, and I'll be paying for that word until I die. The whole world will. Danny already did.

My little brother was smart—is smart—but he didn't know everything, because no one knew everything, not then, maybe not even now.

He didn't know that the new form of rabies is only airborne when it's carried by canines: dogs and wolves and coyotes. Something about the mutation that makes it thrive in the lungs goes away when it gets into any other kind of animal. So the bats were sick because bats just get sick sometimes, and then the dogs got sick because rabies vaccinations were expensive and most people thought they were a waste of money, since how often is your dog *really* going to be at risk? And then, once the dogs were sick, they breathed on all sorts

of other animals, raccoons and cats and other dogs and even people. People couldn't make each other sick by breathing on them, but they could scratch, and bite, and spit, and that was enough. We thought we understood what rabies looked like. We thought it was all drooling and snarling and immediate, obvious rage. We thought it would stay far away, in Arizona, in someone else's house, in someone else's life. Shows what we knew.

They're not zombies. They're not monsters. They're just people with a disease attacking their brains, a disease that makes them want to hurt the people they used to love. A disease that drives them away from the light and into the shadows, until it starts burning out their synapses. The late stages of the infection include coma, spasms, and eventually death, as everything gives way under the pressure of the viral load.

The last thing I remember from the radio before it went dead was a voice saying that we can wait them out, if we don't get caught, and don't get infected, and don't get breathed on by anything that's already sick. That voice...

It was a grownup voice, and I guess that's how it could be so wrong. Grownups get used to things staying the same. They believe in the status quo, and the status quo says that sometimes there's an outbreak, but it always goes away, and everything always goes back to normal.

It doesn't say that rats can carry rabies. Rats and squirrels and bats and a million small, furry bodies that move through the world unseen and unencumbered and unaware that everything has changed, is changing, will not change back. We're not going to have movie nights and taco nights and family nights anymore. We're going to have empty stores with broken windows and strangers watching us warily, wondering whether we have anything worth stealing.

We're going to have the end of the world.

The strange girl looks at me patiently, waiting for me to agree with her. And part of me, the part that used to pick fights with my brother for the sake of winning, almost does. Danny wouldn't want to live like this, it argues. Danny was always so gentle, so kind, and the last time I saw him, he nearly crushed my skull with Mom's old cast iron pan. This isn't him. I'd be setting him free. I'd be granting him peace.

The rest of me recognizes this for ableist bullshit. Danny doesn't want to be at peace. Danny didn't ask to get sick, but he's smart,

and if he wanted this to be over, it would be. This strain of rabies makes people violent and paranoid. It doesn't make them incapable of committing suicide. Danny could end this any time he wanted to.

"My brother is in that house," I say. "I'm not going to hurt him."
 "Why not? He'd hurt you. He wouldn't even stop to think about it." The girl scowls at me. "They're not *people* anymore. They're the walking dead."

"They're not," I say. "That would be too easy. They aren't zombies, they aren't monsters, they aren't invaders from space. They're people who got sick."

She pushes me, so suddenly that it catches me by surprise. I stagger a few feet back, toward the store with its broken windows and unknown, shadow-snarled dangers.

"They're people who think *killing* us is just fine because *we're* not sick," she snaps. "They're people who take everything and leave us with nothing. It'll be winter soon. What are we going to do when we're outside and it's snowing and we don't have any roofs over our heads or food in our stomachs or sunlight to keep us safe? We're all going to die out here. Exposure is something you die of."

"So find a different house," I say. "Find a house where the owners are already dead." Of rabies, or rabid people, or anything. Why you die doesn't matter. Only that you do.

"Other houses aren't safe. You can't know if someone's there until you check."

But a house with living people in it—living infected people, who would kill to defend what they'd claimed—was safe, as long as we knew how many people and where they were likely to be. Dad is probably late-stage, and Danny's just a kid. We could take him. We could take him, and I hate myself for even thinking about it.

He deserves to be comfortable for the last few months of his life. He deserves to have his own bed and his own things and to know that he's safe.

But I deserve those things too. It's not my fault he got sick and I didn't. It's not my fault the rabies is in him, changing him, making him hate me when he used to love me. The Danny from before wouldn't want me to be cold and hungry and afraid. I know he wouldn't.

The stranger touches my arm. Her face is understanding. It's

probably a lie, but I want to be lied to right now. I want someone to tell me that it's all going to be all right.

"We can do it fast," she says. "He's just one kid. He'll go down easy, and you can bury him in the sunlight, and we can be safe for the whole winter. Don't you want to be safe?"

I look at her solemnly, and I think about all the times I didn't listen, and I nod.

I want to be safe.

I want that more than anything in the world.

Her name is Tess; she comes from farther away than I thought. She's been walking for weeks, sleeping where she can, always moving during the day, scavenging from abandoned gardens and unprotected fruit trees. She's tough and she's smart and she's not quite fearless, but she's fatalistic, which is practically the same. She's too good to be true.

I don't trust her.

There are a lot of dogs between here and Hillsdale. A lot of coyotes, a lot of houses. Even if she wasn't infected, she should have run into trouble somewhere—the kind of trouble that leads to open wounds and an increased chance of getting sick. There's no way she made it this far without sickening. It doesn't make sense.

I watch her out of the corner of my eye as we walk. The sun is too bright for me to make out the fine details of her face, but I think she's watching me, too. Measuring me. Trying to figure out whether I'm leading her into a trap.

Honestly, I feel like there's definitely a trap, but I don't know who's leading who. Danny is in the house. Danny, who wasn't that sick the last time I saw him. Sure, he tried to kill me, but he apologized while he was doing it, and I've always known, deep down, that he'd let me in if I came home. He can't make me sick with a sneeze the way a dog could, but he could bury his teeth in my shoulder, he could taste my blood and drip his sickness into the wound, and we could be a family again. He'd accept me once he smelled the sickness on my skin, the same way he and Dad accepted each other. He'd love me again.

My head hurts *so bad*. I put my hand briefly to my temple, and watch as Tess stiffens. She has a weapon, a baseball bat with a nail driven through it like the tooth of some great, terrible beast.

It should look silly, like a prop stolen from somebody's *Walking Dead* LARP. A lot of things that should look silly don't, anymore. "Something wrong?" she asks. "Sun in your eyes?"

"I haven't been able to find clean water for a few weeks," I say. "I've been making do with Pepsi, but it ran out yesterday. I have a caffeine headache." The lie is easy to tell, and beautifully believable. Humans don't do well without water.

Tess accepts my words at face value. She relaxes, slightly, and offers me a small, understanding smile.

"I spent a week drinking nothing but the syrup they pack peaches in."

I blink. "How did you get that many peaches?"

"My grandmother used to buy them from Costco. By the case. I was hiding in the shed in our backyard, going through her emergency supplies."

That sounds like heaven. A roof, four walls, food... "Why did you leave?"

"My grandmother found me."

There's a story in that sentence, something dark and cruel and worst of all, familiar. Remember that they have to win only once, and they've been winning once, over and over again, since this nightmare began. "I'm sorry," I say, and the words are worthless, the words are desert-dry and empty.

Tess shakes her head. "She had this dog. A little Bichon Frise. I guess his rabies shots weren't up to date. Why would they be? He was always with her, he was never at risk, until the day he *was*. No one realized he was sick until it was too late and he started biting. No one..." She stops, gaze going distant, and just walks.

The houses around us look like they've aged a decade in a single summer. The infected don't care about mowing lawns or fixing broken windows, and at least in the beginning, the uninfected were all about throwing rocks at houses in the middle of the day, shattering glass and letting the light in. It was like we thought rabies was a form of vampirism, like we could turn the monsters who had

replaced our families into ash and memory.

We forgot the infected were as smart as they'd been before they got sick. They painted the rocks nearest the houses with their own saliva, and the rock-throwers unlucky enough to scrape their palms found themselves in the early stages of rabies before they realized the rules had changed again. Dizziness; thirstiness; headaches; increasing photosensitivity; paranoia; and finally, hydrophobia and irrational violence, rages against nothing, and the urge to kill, to kill, to kill anyone who wasn't already sick.

We lost half our number in a weekend, and we adapted. So did they.

"Remember that I have to win..." I whisper, and stop. There is no comfort there.

We stop in front of the house where I grew up. The welcome mat is still on the porch, still inviting us inside. The windows have been boarded up. Danny's doing, probably. It keeps the light out, and the wind, and everything else. Dad could never have figured out what needed to be done. He's not handy.

He's probably not anything, by now. Rabies is a cruel mistress.

"This the house?" asks Tess.

I nod.

"You're sure your brother is alone in there?"

"My dad could still be alive." But I don't think so.

Tess nods. "We can take him."

This is all happening so *fast*. It's not the worst idea, I guess—winter really is on the way—but that doesn't mean it should be happening like this. We should have more people. A better plan.

More risks. More mouths to eat whatever food is still in the cupboards. God, I'm hungry. I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand. I'm hungry enough to start drooling at the thought of a bowl of cereal.

Tess lifts her bat.

I step forward and open the door.

The house is dark and smells like rot, like backed-up plumbing and food left on counters and something sweeter, poisonously so, something that makes my nose itch and my stomach rebel. I step inside anyway, and Tess is right behind me.

SEANAN MCGUIRE

"Danny?" I call. "It's Stacy. I came home. I missed you, and I came home."

Nothing moves. Nothing breathes. I let my feet guide me to the dining room, and there they are, Dad and Danny both, waiting for me. Neither of them turns. Behind me, Tess gasps. I don't care. It's so good to see my family again. I missed them so much.

My head hurts.

"Stacy," says Tess, joy and horror mingled in her voice, "they're dead. They're dead! All we have to do is push them outside and close the door and the house is ours! We can—"

She has a bat. I have a chair. I also have the element of surprise, and when the chair smashes against her face, down she goes, not even able to scream. I hit her again, and again, and again, until she stops moving, until she stops trying to get up.

When I'm done, when my hands are raw and bloody, I drop the chair on her body and stand where I am, panting. The dimness in the house is so nice. The sun was so bright. It's better in here. My head hurts less.

Dimly, I start to understand what my body has been telling me all day. What happened, and how, I may never know, just like I never knew what happened to Danny. A coyote, maybe, too far to bite, but close enough to sneeze, or a bat, with its sharp, sharp teeth, or touching something that had been touched by something else, contagion clinging to a seemingly safe surface. What does it matter? This is the end of the world. But I'm home now, and my family is here, and I'm safe, for now.

There's a box of cereal open on the table. It's stale, it's old, but I don't mind. I sit down in the chair that's always been mine, and I stick my hand in the box, and I crunch down a mouthful of sugary flakes.

"Remember that I have to win only once," I say, and I laugh, and the ghosts of the lost laugh with me, their teeth so sharp, their eyes so bright, their inevitable end so final.

BURN 3

KAMI GARCIA

Kami Garcia is the #1 *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and international bestselling coauthor of the *Beautiful Creatures* and *Dangerous Creatures* novels. *Beautiful Creatures* has been published in fifty countries and translated into thirty-nine languages, and the film *Beautiful Creatures* was released in theaters in 2013 from Warner Brothers. Kami's solo series, *The Legion*, includes the instant *New York Times* bestseller *Unbreakable*, and the sequel *Unmarked*, both of which were nominated for Bram Stoker Awards. Her other works include *The X-Files Origins: Agent of Chaos* and the YA contemporary novels *The Lovely Reckless* and *Broken Beautiful Hearts*. Kami was a teacher for seventeen years before co-authoring her first novel on a dare from seven of her students. She lives in Maryland with her family, and their dogs Spike and Oz. Visit Kami at KamiGarcia.com.

The faces of missing children flash across three vid screens above our heads, forming a gargantuan triangle that looms over the street. Children have been disappearing for weeks now. Protectorate officers claim they're runaways, but there's nowhere to go inside the Dome. The truth is no one cares about a bunch of poor kids from Burn 3.

I glance at the screen again and squeeze my little sister's hand tighter, dragging her through the filthy alley.

"Why are we running?" Sky asks.