

CHAPTER ONE

I AWOKE IN MY bed, blinking rapidly and sweating, and realized I was naked.

Or almost naked; a quick pat down below showed me that I was wearing my boxers, at least. It felt odd at first until I remembered that I always slept in my boxers. Why, then, did I feel so surprised about it?

I didn't. Or shouldn't, at any rate. Maybe I'd just had a really bad dream the night before. That would make sense. In fact, I'd been having a lot of bad dreams recently. I once dreamed about a planet exploding, for one, which I was still trying to understand. Maybe I shouldn't have pizza before I go to bed every night.

I sat up in my bed, rubbing the back of my head, and looked around my room. It was a pretty simple, plain room, with old wood paneling on the walls, a simple light fixture above my bed, and a small flat screen TV in one corner of the room, next to the desk with my laptop and tablet. A large dresser, which had my clothes, stood on the opposite side of the room away from my desk. Even though I was alone, I thought I had heard someone else nearby, but maybe it was just a dream.

Then the door to my room suddenly opened and in walked the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my whole life. She had a nice form and figure, with flowing blonde hair that looked like something a master artist would draw. She wore a simple blue shirt and black jeans, but even with that, she looked amazing. She carried a tray with a bowl of cereal, milk, and eggs on it and kicked the door closed behind her when she entered. And when she looked me in the eyes with her violet eyes, I almost melted.

But then I realized I was half-naked and I pulled my covers up over my chest.

The girl just giggled when she saw me do that. "What's the matter, Kevin? You've never been that modest before."

"Kevin?" I said. "Is that my name?"

"Yes," said the girl, nodding. "Kevin Jake Jason. That's your full name."

Yes ... yes, it was already coming back to me. She was right. "Right. I guess I must have forgotten. My memory has been weird recently and I don't remember much."

"Oh, no surprise there," said the girl. "You hit your head recently, poor thing, so that probably affected your memory. But I'm sure it will all come back in time."

"I did?" I said. Instantly, the back of my head started hurting, causing me to grab it. "Ow!"

"Yes, you slipped on some water and cracked the back of your head," said the girl. "You survived, but we were worried it might have hurt your memory. It looks like it did."

The pain in the back of my head began to subside, so I lowered my hand and looked at the girl again. "Okay, then who are you? I would definitely remember a girl as beautiful as you."

"Well, I'm your girlfriend, of course," said the girl. "I'm a little disappointed you don't remember me, but I guess that's just part of amnesia."

"I have a girlfriend?" I said. I eyed her suspiciously. "Where's your proof?"

"Well, I did volunteer to bring you breakfast this morning," said the girl, raising the tray to indicate it. "That is something girlfriends occasionally do for their boyfriends, you know."

I couldn't argue with that. "Okay. Let's say you're my girlfriend. I don't remember your name."

"It's Regina," said the girl. "Regina Welling. Does that bring back any memories?"

At first, the name just drew a complete blank. But then, all of a sudden, memories started flowing into my mind. I saw myself in a high school—my first day, based on how nervous I felt—and catching furtive glances at Regina, who sat in front of me in class. I saw another memory of myself asking her out for prom, and then another with me and her holding hands and walking through what looked like the Christmas lights at a local park. I even saw our first kiss under the moonlight, which was so perfect that it looked almost like a picture or maybe a scene from a movie.

I nodded. "Yeah, yeah, it's all coming back to me. We met in high school, right?"

"Yes," said Regina. "John Smith High School. First day. You were really nervous when you first met me, which was really cute."

"Yeah, I remember," I said. I suddenly looked around. "Wait, where are we now, then? Did we graduate? Are we sharing an apartment together? I mean, not that I'm opposed to that, but—"

Regina suddenly frowned, as if I had just said something depressing. "No, we're not, though that would be nice. We're not even in good graces with the law."

I looked at Regina in worry. "Are we wanted criminals? Did we rob a bank or kill someone or jay-walked?"

"It's ... more complicated than that," said Regina. "And it isn't just us. We're part of a much larger group—almost a movement, really—dedicated to bringing true equality to the world. But we're opposed by others because they hate equality."

"Hate equality?" I said. "Who hates equality?"

Regina walked over to me, and I had to admit that I liked the way she walked. She placed the tray on my lap and then sat down on the bed at my feet, her serious violet eyes looking at me.

"The bad people," said Regina. "The bigots. The people who look backwards to the past, instead of forwards to the future. And because they are afraid of change, they hunt us down like deer and do everything in their power to harm our goals."

"That sounds awful," I said. I grabbed the spoon on the tray and ate some of the cereal, because I was ferociously hungry. Regina didn't seem to mind; if anything, I think she thought I looked cute. "But, I don't know, maybe it was the fall, but who, exactly, *are* we and what equality are we fighting for?"

Regina looked even more serious. She leaned toward me, allowing me to smell her lilac perfume, and said, in the most sincere voice I had ever heard her speak, "We are Vision. And we are fighting for equality between normal humans and superhumans."