

We should have enacted Plan B.

I knew Asa was in charge, but Gabe's words kept playing in my head: "Alice, this isn't the way. You're better than this."

The trees blurred as we sped down the road. Was I better than this? After what happened back there, I didn't think so. I picked at the soot beneath my fingernails.

Asa said the farmer was part of the problem. The farmer had a choice. He didn't have to work the fields. He chose to plant and harvest that poison. Asa said it wasn't my fault.

My mind reeled. The clock read 4:07.

"Try to get some sleep." Asa flipped on the wipers.

I couldn't. When I closed my eyes, a black sky and a tsunami of flames thundered above me, below me, around me — it engulfed me.

I tried to separate the trees. I tried to focus on just one. I gripped my seat. I wanted out. I needed out. I yanked at my seatbelt. Asa flipped the wipers. The blades screamed.

I'd struck that match. I'd ignited the phosphorous. I'd hurled that burning stick into his field.

I pulled my shirt up over my face and breathed in hours-old-smoke and burning hair. I gripped the tiny pearl around my neck. Dad, help me.

I never thought it would catch so quickly. The fields turned to mountains of flame all before I could get away. My eyes burned.

The farmer couldn't have known. He just wanted to save his land.

I put down my window. The wind whipped through my hair. I unbuckled. "Pull over."

"What?" Asa touched my leg. "Babe, you all right?"

I jerked away. "Pull over." I clenched my knees and rocked back and forth. The pearl bounced against my body. "I'm going to be sick."