
BLUE DELTA BOOKS
JUST IN TIME
SHANNA SILVA

CHAPTER 1

IT'S TIME

Sam Cade put in one earbud and turned up his music. The heavy drumbeat was soothing. He started to unwind as he walked home. It had been a long day. Sam had taken three hard tests. All the stress had given him a headache.

"Hey, Sam! Wait up!" Tori rushed up behind him. "Dude! You tore out of the building. Are you avoiding me?"

He took out his earbud. Tori had been his best friend since first grade.

"Sorry," he said. "It's just been a long day." He winced at the sharp pain in his temples. "I have a massive headache."

"That's rough." Tori frowned. "I'm sure walking in this freezing weather doesn't help." She brightened. "Just think! I'll be driving soon. Then you can ride with me."

Tori planned to get her driver's license on her 17th birthday. That was just a few weeks away.

Sam grinned. "You? Driving? No thanks. I'll take my chances walking."

"Hey!" She laughed. "How about a movie later? There's a new horror flick out."

"Maybe. I have to check in at home first."

For Sam, home life was tough. His dad had died when Sam was a baby. Sam's mom struggled with mental health issues. His grandma was battling cancer. Whenever he could, Sam helped out. But it was a lot for him to handle.

He and Tori chatted until they reached his corner.

"Text me and let me know about tonight," Tori said. "Unless you're too scared to see a horror movie."

Sam smirked. "Yeah, right. You're the one who jumps at the scary parts."

Laughing, Tori waved goodbye.

Sam took a deep breath and entered his apartment building. In the lobby, the janitor pushed a broom. "Hi, Sam. How are you?"

Sam's head throbbed. "Hey, Jack. I'm fine," he lied.

Seeing the strain on Sam's face, Jack raised an eyebrow. Jack spoke gently. "I stopped by earlier and brought lunch."

"Thanks. You're the best." Sam was grateful for Jack's kindness.

"That's all right. I'm happy to help. I've

known your family forever. Your grandpa and I grew up together."

Sam nodded. He didn't know what to say. He'd never met his grandfather. But Sam couldn't help but think that if his grandpa were alive, life for his family would be better.

As he left, Sam grumbled. "I wish my life were different."

Jack overheard him. He knew the time had come.

CHAPTER 2

BUS STOP

Sam checked on his mom and grandma. They were both napping. He sank into the couch and watched TV. His eyes grew heavy. Within minutes, he fell asleep.

Soon, Sam was dreaming. It was the same dream he'd had many times. In it, he wandered. A presence drew him to a shed. It wanted him to go in. But he didn't know why. At that point, he always woke up.

Later, Sam sipped coffee. He was worried

about his mom. She always stayed in bed. Nothing motivated her.

His grandma worried him too. Since she'd been sick, she looked thin and weak. She acted like she wanted to give up.

His grandfather was a mystery. Carl Cade had gone to war. Then he went missing. His body was never found. The war ended. But his family's grieving didn't. Carl's absence had changed everything.

Sam's family was broken. Sometimes, the sadness was crushing. Sam felt it in his bones.

He picked up his phone and texted Tori. "I have to get out of here. Let's meet at the movies."

Tori texted back. "The next show is in an hour. I'll buy the popcorn."

Sam rushed to catch the bus. It was hot and

stuffy. He soon fell asleep against the window. When he woke, he saw that he'd missed his stop.

Quickly, Sam got off the bus. Then he realized he'd left his phone on the seat. He turned back. But it was too late. The bus was pulling away.

Sam looked around. The area was unfamiliar. Streets were vacant. No cars passed by. He walked down the empty sidewalk until the street ended. There was a dirt road in front of him that led to the woods.

He paused. *Should I turn back?*

The wind picked up and tousled Sam's hair. A sudden sureness came over him. Somehow, he knew he was supposed to be there.

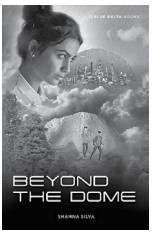
A hawk flew overhead. It circled him. The bird flew lower and lower. Soon it was close enough to touch. They looked into each other's

eyes. Sam understood. He was meant to follow it.

"Okay, bird." Sam took a deep breath. "Let's go."

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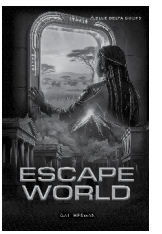
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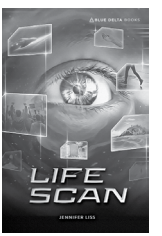
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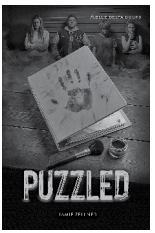
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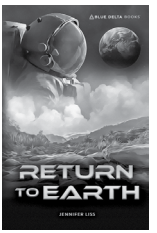
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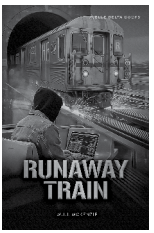
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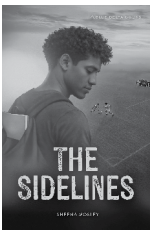
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SCIENCE FICTION

JUST IN TIME

Sam often wonders what his life would have been like if his grandpa had survived the war. After all, that was the moment when his family started to fall apart. But what if there is still a way to change everything? When Sam gets a rare opportunity to alter the past, will his decision reshape the future for better or worse?

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BLUE DELTA BOOKS
COMPROMISED
NICO WATERS

CHAPTER 1

THE HOME

The loudspeaker over June's bed beeped. A voice jolted her awake. "Hello, residents. It's another great day at the Home. Remember our motto at the Home for Compromised Children. Health and safety are number one."

June groaned. "No. *Boredom* is number one."

The twin bed squeaked as she got up. Her gray Home uniform hung in the closet. June put it on. Next, she printed her sleep report.

Other residents were in the hall. About 60 teens walked in neat rows. June joined them.

"What's for breakfast today?" a girl asked. She spoke to no one in particular.

June sniffed the air. Her stomach growled. A smile tilted her lips. "Bacon."

"How can you tell?" the girl asked. "The dining hall is across the building."

June shrugged. "I can smell it."

At least her nose worked well. The rest of her body did not. That went for everybody at the Home. They all had a rare condition. It was called Gliff disease. Their health was as fragile as a rose petal. The Home helped keep them alive.

June walked into the medical hall. Everyone had a med check before breakfast.

A resident advisor waved her to his table. His name was Ian. He was lucky. Ian didn't have Gliff. Like everyone who worked at the Home, Ian was healthy.

June sat at his table. She gave him her sleep report.

Ian stared at her. It seemed like he was studying her. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. Please don’t stare at me like that. Just treat me like everyone else.”

Ian’s eyebrows rose. “But you’re *not* everyone else. You’re Dr. Ash’s daughter.”

He didn’t need to remind her. She knew exactly who her father was. He ran the Home.

Ian opened her sleep report. “Our dads are best friends. You and I have known each other forever.”

“I know. But I’m 17. I don’t need you to act like my babysitter.”

Ian checked her report. “You slept well. This looks uneventful.”

“Uneventful,” June repeated. “The story of my life.”

She stretched out her arm. June had her blood tested every morning. All the residents did. Ian slid her wrist into a cuff. Tiny needles pricked her veins. She winced.

The loudspeaker in the room beeped. A voice spoke. “Please listen to this weather and health news. It will be 91 degrees today. The sun radiation level is high. Exposure may burn your skin. Please stay inside.”

June shuddered at the warning.

The announcer had more news. “There’s a new virus in the world. It’s highly contagious. Do *not* interact with people outside the Home. It could be a health danger.”

A hush swept through the room. Worry washed over the teens’ faces.

The cuff released June.

Ian bandaged her wrist. “This virus is bad,” he said. “There will be a worldwide lockdown. It

starts at midnight. No one will be able to leave their homes." He frowned. "The world is going to change."

June rubbed her sore wrist. "Every day is lockdown in here."

Ian shot her a look. "Don't say that. Your father made the Home to protect all of you. Dr. Ash is a pioneer."

June rolled her eyes. "Yeah. I know."

"Then what's wrong?"

June sighed. "I've been at the Home for three years. I'm starting to forget what normal life is like." She never wanted to forget.

Ian met her gaze. "Didn't you hear the announcement? Soon, normal won't exist anymore."

CHAPTER 2

VIRTUAL

It was 3:00 p.m. now. School was done for the day. Boredom hung over June like a dark cloud.

Perhaps she should go into virtual reality. That might be fun.

June went to the VR room. On the way, she passed the main lab. The words Top Personnel Only were on the door. June had never seen anyone go inside. Often, she wondered who had access. She would love to know what was in there.

All the pods in the VR room were taken. One

finally opened. The smell of berries hit June. That was Kit's scent.

Sure enough, Kit stepped out of the pod. She had cut holes in her pants, which stood out almost as much as her purple hair. Kit was always breaking the dress code. But she didn't seem to care about rules.

June *always* thought about the rules. *Would I be different if my dad didn't run the Home?*

Kit glanced at her. "What's up, June Ash?"

"Hi," June said as Kit walked away.

The scent of berries lingered in the pod. June took a seat. Doors slid shut behind her. Then the virtual reality session turned on. Two options floated in front of her.

Sign out?

Replay recent sessions?

Kit had forgotten to sign out of her account. June started to do it for her. Then she stopped.

What does Kit do in virtual reality?

June was curious. She tapped the Replay button. This was breaking the rules. But she felt daring.

Kit's VR session filled the pod. Five kids appeared. They sat in a circle. All of them had wild hair. Their clothes looked trendy.

No way do they live at the Home, June thought.

One of the girls spoke. "Did you all hear about the virus?"

A boy nodded. "Yep. Lockdown starts at midnight."

The group groaned.

Kit looked at her friends. "Hey! Let's all meet up tonight. It may be my last chance to get a break from this place."

June gasped at Kit's boldness. But she was also jealous.

The others nodded at Kit's idea. They agreed to meet at the Underground.

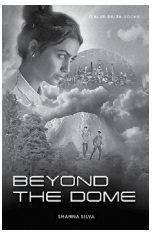
June sat back. Her thoughts raced.

Kit was planning to sneak out. But how?

June's throat went dry. Part of her wanted to stop Kit. But another part wanted to follow her.

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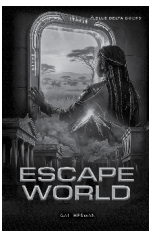
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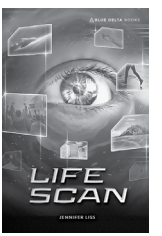
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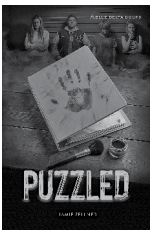
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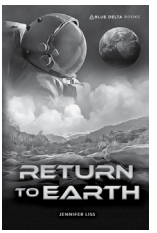
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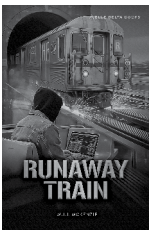
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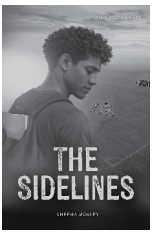
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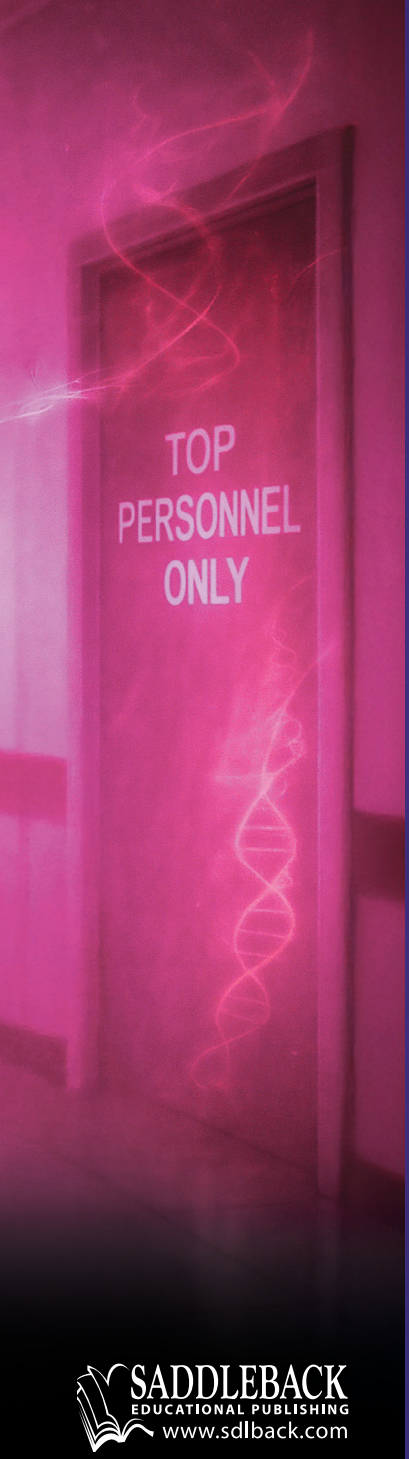


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SCIENCE FICTION

COMPROMISED

Suffering from a rare disease, June is confined to the Home for Compromised Children. Constant supervision ensures her safety, but June finds it stifling. When an unexpected opportunity arises for June to have a night beyond the Home's walls, she faces a difficult choice. Will she seize this fleeting taste of freedom? And if she does, is she prepared for the consequences?

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