

Void Academy
By Josie DeBord

“Hera, get going!” Steve’s deep, loud voice echoed through the halls. Hera grimaced as she faced the alarm clock that now read 6:30 am.

“You were supposed to be up hours ago!”

“I get it, Dad!” She yelled, brushing her messy, brown hair out of her face. Hera swore she could almost hear her father’s sigh.

As Hera trotted down three flights of stairs, her stomach growled. Her dad saw her and motioned for her to meet at the table. “What’s for breakfast?” She salivated, as her dad was fooling around with pots and pans.

“A doughnut.” He smiled sheepishly, while making a chocolate doughnut appear out of thin air. At least, that’s what it looked like to Hera. The hungry girl snatched it from his hand and ate it rather quickly. Steve cleared his throat.

“Go get ready. Today is your first day at the Void Institute.”

She grabbed her bags and half-sprinted down the stairs, to a room she was only allowed in once a year. The portal room.

Her father brought the materials, violet colored stones and matches, and arranged the rocks in a circular pattern. He then took the match and set each individual rock ablaze. After every stone was set on fire (which was kind of dangerous if you asked Hera), a strange purple pool of water filled the space.

“All you have to do is jump through, and you reappear in front of the school,” Steve explained, motioning to the strange liquid. Hera didn’t question it as she waved to her father and jumped into the portal.

Hera took in the majestic sight before her: a massive college with a royal purple exterior and cream-colored embellishes. She crossed a large bridge, the color of obsidian, and scouted for familiar faces. The Void Institute was a school for the snobby, smart kids; at least that’s what Hera had heard. She had barely gotten a good look at the great structure in front of her before a deafening explosion shook the ground. All the lights went out and the area became eerily dark. The ground started to crumble and shake, and then Hera felt something grab her shoulder. She whirled around, prepared to attack this mysterious being.

“Hey, chill. It’s just me,” a boy said.

“I can’t see you.”

“You don’t recognise my voice?” Hera realized right then who was speaking to her. Elijah. The semi-cute boy from her English class last year. Hera didn’t like-like him (well, maybe she did, just a little), but they were very good friends. Hera was about to ask what he was doing here when a red blob resembling lava exploded from inside the school, sending debris everywhere. The red liquid seemed to multiply by the second, and Hera and Elijah both noticed at the same time. He grabbed her hand and they ducked into a skyscraper’s empty lobby. At least they were still on campus.

“Why don’t we leave?” Hera asked.

“Well I, for one, I don’t see any magic portal.” He had a point; Hera had nearly forgotten that they came to this peculiar place through a portal made from violet colored rocks and swirling purple water. A blood-curdling scream interrupted her thoughts. The two darted to the window, and saw a person who appeared to be frozen in ice. The lava-like substance enveloped them, and when it dissipated, it was like the person never existed. Hera and Elijah darted up the tower’s stairs because the lava was spreading fast.

It might’ve been chance, or maybe pure determination, but Hera’s vision suddenly went blurry and she seemed to be running at twice the speed. However, the lava appeared to be following them too. Elijah panicked. Hera nearly slapped herself. Elijah! She grabbed his hand, though he looked hesitant.

“Your eyes...” he mumbled, “they’re completely blank.”

“That...uh, happens sometimes,” Hera lied. It had only happened once before, when she was in danger. She channeled her mental energy, and with a nails-on-chalkboard sound, they appeared at the top of the building. Elijah looked terrified.

“What the--” Hera cut him off before he could swear.

“I know it’s freaky, but we’re alive.”

“Nope.” He tensed, looking over the edge of the building. The lava was climbing up the walls!

“I’m out of ideas,” Hera mumbled, defeated. The lava surfaced and spread towards them.

“If we die, there’s one thing I wanted to tell you,” Elijah admitted. “I’m the one who hijacked that one English test.”

“YOU sounded the fire alarm?! I have something to tell you too.”

“What’s that?”

“I’m the one who hid your binder. In the wood chipper.” She smirked.

Elijah rolled his eyes. “On three.” She motioned, as the lava flowed faster towards them. “One, two, three!” They both slammed their feet into the lava, freezing on contact. The lava covered them, and everything went black.

Hera woke up in a room lit with eerie, red lights. A man was sitting in a chair facing the opposite direction, and he started to speak to her, even though Hera wasn’t sure if she could listen. She was still in shock.

“Ah. Miss Hera. You passed the first test, called the rubrem mors, which translates to red death.” He continued when she nodded. His voice sounded strangely familiar. “Can you pass the next test? Well, you see, that’s for me to know and you to find out.” He laughed, a dark, evil sound. Hera struggled to stand up.

“Who are you? Where’s Elijah?” She asked, secretly hoping Elijah wasn’t dead. If she survived, he should’ve too. Right?

“Oh, the boy. He’s testing right now.”

“Testing. How boring.”

“I believe you’ll think quite the opposite when you begin.”

“When exactly do I begin?” Hera pressed, frantically searching her mind for who this mysterious person could be. The man swiveled around in his chair. Hera gasped.

“You’re in the Void Institute, Hera. Your testing has already begun.”

He grinned. Hera stumbled back.

“I-it’s you!”