

SHE'S ABOUT TO FACE HER GREATEST ENEMY:  
HER FUTURE SELF.

# BROKEN SHARDS of TIME



NYAH NICHOL

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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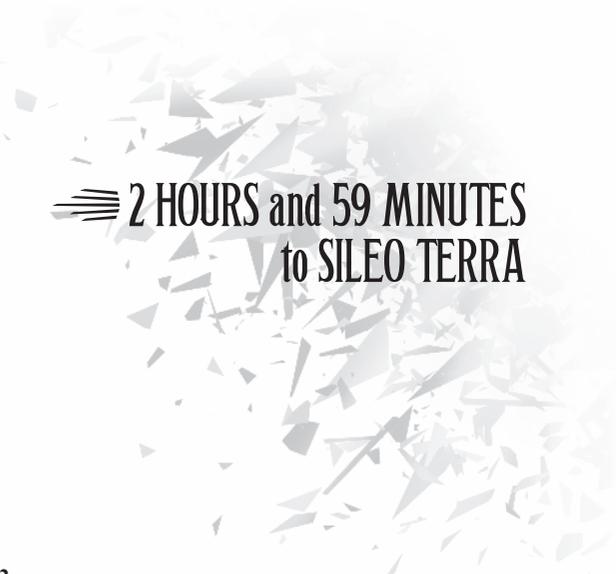
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*This book is dedicated to*

*Mom and Dad, the most amazing parents ever;  
Silas, my brother and bestie;  
Everett, my sister and proud owner of two hermit crabs,  
Hermie and Hermie 2.0;  
Grace, my godmother, who is a writer like me;  
and Titus, my crazy little brother, who sometimes  
wears two pairs of underwear.*

≡ PART ONE ≡  
**WREN DERECHO**





≡ 2 HOURS and 59 MINUTES  
to SILEO TERRA

May 27, 2070, 9:01 pm...

I didn't think it would come to this.

I never intended to be against the world.

Now I was about to face my greatest enemy: myself.

One of us had to win.

One of us had to fight harder.

One of us had to be stronger.

I chose what was right, yet somehow it was wrong.

I tried to write my own destiny, but my story was engraved in stone.

The past had moulded me, but I refused to let it define me.

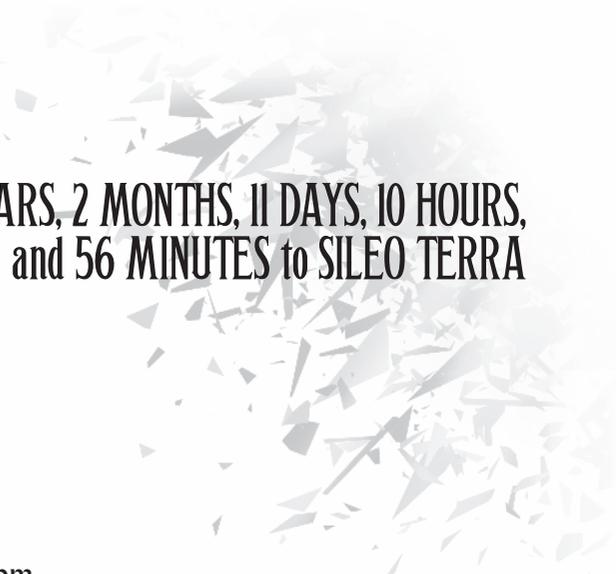
I followed the path I had carved out, yet I was unfamiliar with where I ended up.

I selected the best option but wound up with the worst outcome.

The future seemed like an endless maze, yet too suddenly, it passed.

That was how I ended up here.

I had gotten myself into this crazy upside-down catastrophe, and now I had to find my way out of it.



≡ 18 YEARS, 2 MONTHS, 11 DAYS, 10 HOURS,  
and 56 MINUTES to SILEO TERRA

March 16, 2052, 1:04 pm...

“Stormy, can you get in the car?” Mom asked impatiently as she popped her head into my room. Her cropped hair, styled in a pixie cut, was a darker auburn than mine. I studied the freckles sprinkled across her face. I liked how they softened her stern expression. She spun around and disappeared down the hall.

“Yeah, yeah,” I muttered. My name wasn’t Stormy, but my parents liked to call me that because when I got angry, I resembled a storm. My real name was Wren Derecho.

Annoyed, I reluctantly put the book down on my nightstand. I always read to calm my mind. After an argument I’d had with my mom earlier that day, it had felt soothing to dive into another world. My mom’s disruption yanked me unwillingly from the story I was engulfed in. I’d been irritated because Dad had said he was leaving again for “an extended period of time” after we visited my uncle. He always left with barely a day’s warning, and my mom just went along with it, cancelling appointments and postponing plans with friends and family. It made my blood boil. I’d told my mom it wasn’t fair that our schedules always had to revolve around Dad and his work, but deep down, I was just upset he wouldn’t be around again.

Still sulking a little, I trudged down the winding staircase and through the short hallway to the garage door. My uncle, William Derecho, wanted to show my father something he had been working

on. Naturally, I too was curious. Uncle William was a skilled and talented inventor, a scientist of sorts who worked for a government organization called the Department of Advanced Innovation and Research, but my father and his associates just referred to it as DAIR. My uncle was everything I wanted to be when I grew up. I loved spending time with him, working on our special experiments. The last time I saw him, he let me help him build a fully functional miniature-sized rocket outside the government facility. He even let me attach the nose cone all by myself.

I slammed our sedan's door shut and waited in the backseat, staring out the window and absentmindedly twisting a piece of my red hair around my finger. My dad's voice startled me, and I turned to see him staring at his phone in the shadows of the garage. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, his familiar square frame leaning against the workbench became more visible. I noticed the salt and pepper patches that had just recently started appearing on the sides of his clean-cut brown hair made him look more sophisticated.

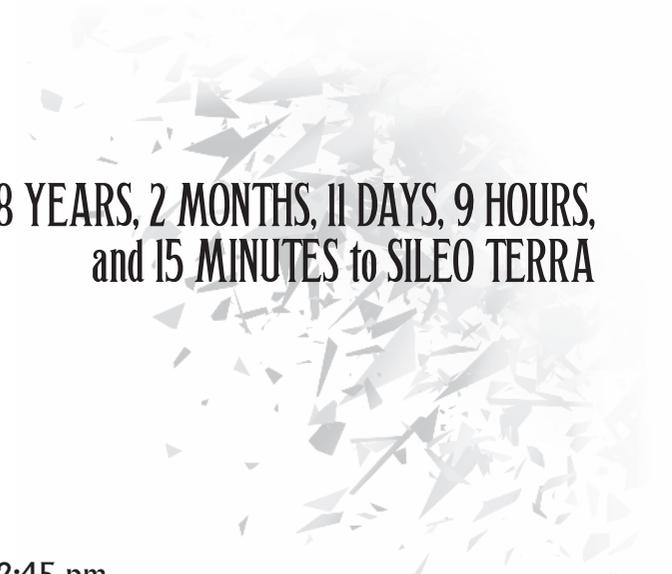
"Looks like they're starting early," he mumbled, pulling at his bottom lip with his thumb and index finger. He always did that when he was nervous. My dad worked for the same obscure organization as my uncle. However, he spent most of his days travelling instead of working at the large government headquarters, even though a lot of the projects he helped with were stored there. He was secretive about his work and rarely said a word about it to anyone. All I knew was that he specialized in sourcing out uncommon materials. Dad had once told me there were secrets stored within the drab walls and cracked bricks of the large building—secrets containing ancient and modern-day breakthroughs. Uncle William said that one day, those secrets would ultimately save the world.

Dad slid into the passenger seat. "Stormy, you need to remember to be careful and to stay out of the way. The work they're doing is dangerous..." I stopped listening as he rambled on about all the rules I had to follow. Sometimes I thought Dad forgot I was ten years old now.

It was going to be a long car ride but so worth it. I couldn't wait to see Uncle William because I knew he would set up a fun experiment to do with me.

As soon as Mom jumped into the driver's seat, we hit the road. I drummed my fingers on the armrest and gazed out the window. After more than an hour of riding in silence, I noticed dark clouds beginning to gather above us while Dad made yet another phone call. He was pretty much on it for work all the time. That's why Mom usually drove.

"Is it just me, or is it getting darker out?" I asked. My eyes scanned and searched the sky. Suddenly, a great crash of thunder shook the whole car, shattering our peaceful drive. The thunder was followed quickly by a blinding flash of lightning. My mom slammed on the brakes, and my heart began pounding so hard, I thought it would burst out of my chest.



≡ 18 YEARS, 2 MONTHS, 11 DAYS, 9 HOURS,  
and 15 MINUTES to SILEO TERRA

March 16, 2052, 2:45 pm...

**B**lurred lights flashed continuously, just like the searing pain coursing through my body. My parents had been here a second ago. It didn't make any sense. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to feel. I didn't know what to think.

The skeleton of the sedan still surrounded me, and I was aware of my seatbelt holding me in tightly. Lightning and thunder encircled me, drawing my attention to the storm outside.

"HELP ME, PLEASE!" I tried to force out the words gurgling in the back of my throat but failed miserably. With every agonizing second that passed, I felt myself fading away.

Seconds felt like hours. So much pain. And then darkness.

Time passed. I drifted in and out of consciousness, but I was dimly aware I wasn't trapped in the car anymore. The next thing I knew, I heard voices that seemed distant, yet somehow, I knew they were not. My ears struggled to work properly.

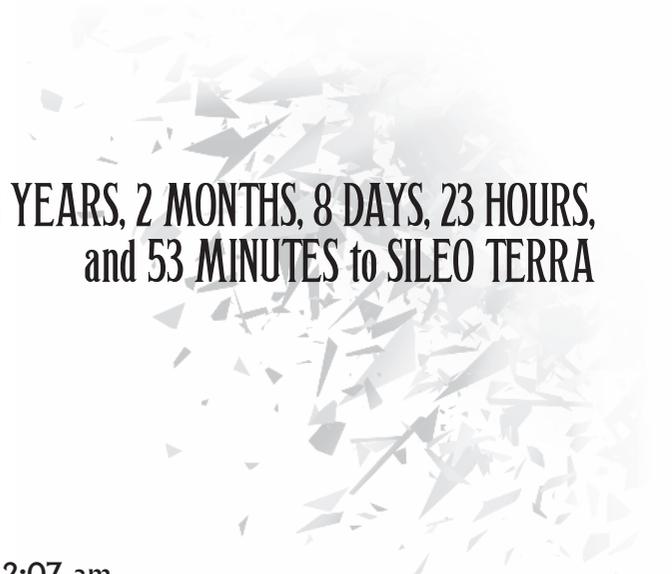
"She will die."

A few faint words in the ever-spreading darkness squirmed their way into my mind. I felt a thin sheet that had been loosely laid over my body being pulled up to my chin.

"We haven't tested it on humans yet."

The voices were so familiar, yet I could not recognize them.

"It's the only thing that can save her."



≡ 18 YEARS, 2 MONTHS, 8 DAYS, 23 HOURS,  
and 53 MINUTES to SILEO TERRA

March 19, 2052, 12:07 am...

**A**ching all over, I rolled onto my side. My body felt stiff, and my eyes flickered open to see I was in a room with dazzling lights and walls that felt like they were about to close in on me. My eyes hurt from the bright lights, so I closed them again. I struggled to lift my hand to brush away the matted auburn tresses from my face, but it was just too hard, so I gave up.

As I tried opening my eyes again, something flashed, reflecting the artificial light, but I couldn't recognize it. Icy pain covered my forehead. Something was wrong. I opened and closed my mouth, trying to produce moisture for my tongue and throat. My heart started to race. Finally, I managed to raise my arm, and I heard a soft clink when my fingers reached my cheek. A slow, dreadful chill crept throughout my body. Panic filled me as I realized the flash of light had come from my hand. Both my hands felt so heavy. I painfully leaned over the side of the bed and saw a distorted reflection of my face in the shiny tile floor. A hoarse cry escaped from my mouth as I stared at the smooth, hard substance spread across one side of my face. It was the same material as the metal around my fingers. Metal. METAL?!

Uncle William entered the room then and ran over to me. "Wren, it's okay. You're okay. You're safe. I'm here."

He leaned over and pulled me close. I slowly wrapped my arms around him, thankful to see someone familiar. Tears collected in my

eyes as I looked up at him. He gently helped me lie back down on the bed and perched on the edge of the bed close to me.

I croaked, "Where am I? How long have I been here? Where a-are Mom and Dad?" My voice trembled; I was terrified of the answers about to tumble out of his mouth.

Uncle William didn't cry very often, so I was shocked to see his eyes so red and puffy, with dark pits circling his deep eye sockets. Uncle William bowed his head low, avoiding my urgent, pleading eyes, and pushed back his straw-like blonde hair.

"We couldn't...they were...they didn't make it," he gulped, choking back tears.

No, he must have been mistaken. My face grew hot as fury and anguish battled for supremacy. It didn't make sense. This kind of stuff wasn't supposed to happen. Not to me.

"Three days." I barely heard his hushed voice. "It's been three days since the accident. I'm sorry...I'm so sorry."

His eyes finally met mine again, but we had nothing to say. My face was expressionless as my brain tried to process his words. I stared around blankly at my surroundings, at me. The metal, there was so much metal. And it hurt, like the ghost of my former flesh haunting me and dragging me into its icy tomb. It itched at the seams. I silently dragged five heavy metal fingers across the blanket spread over my lower body, careful not to snag the IV implanted in my forearm.

With all my strength, I started to force myself out of the bed, and immediately my body gave out as if my muscles were made of jelly. Uncle William jumped up to catch me and helped me lie down again. The weight of the fury coursing through my veins came crashing down, and the only way I knew how to deal with it was to slam my fist into the bed rail. It groaned and screeched as it contorted, and the sounds echoed eerily off the walls.

I screamed in pain and felt tears running down my face. I shrieked, "What did you do to me?!"

Gloom and exhaustion had taken its toll on my uncle. His eyes were filled with sorrow as he tried to control the quiver in his lip. Finally, he sighed, "Wren, you were badly hurt, and you wouldn't have made it.

Your body was so damaged that our only hope to save you was to operate and give you robotic parts, but you're okay now. Remember the robotics I've been working on for a while, something to combine humans and robots?"

"I thought it wasn't ready," I retorted, squinting my eyes accusingly. My breathing slowed and my throat constricted as I realized I was the guinea pig.

"We had no choice." He quickly dug into his shirt pocket for a small mirror and handed it to me, "Look."

The mirror showed my right cheek glazed with sleek metal. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I already knew my hands had been replaced, but then he showed me the long thin line of metal that crept down my spine and snaked down my legs, ending at my kneecaps. It curled around my legs like leg braces, as opposed to the implanted metal on my face and hands.

I was speechless.

My uncle held out his hand and waited until I placed my metal fingers in his grasp. "It'll be okay," he repeated, "I'm here. I'll take care of you."

I took a few deep breaths.

"Let's just take this one day at a time, okay?" Uncle William sat down close to me.

I shuffled over to lean into his chest, noticing the nerves in my legs were still intact.

After sitting in silence for some time, Uncle William spoke up. "Wren, I found this at the scene." He pulled a glowing object out of his pocket, and his fingers tightened around the strange item for a moment before he opened his hand. It was easy to see he was mesmerized by its beauty. "I'm not sure what it is, but...well..." he whispered, "I don't think it's from this world."

I stared at the tiny blue marble glowing softly in his palm. It looked like the ocean reflecting the sun, shimmering with a million fragments of light. I couldn't look away.

A figure slipped into the room, and out of the corner of my eye, I noticed his smooth golden brown skin and the glare off his glasses that

came from the orb's luminescence; however, my focus was locked on the beautiful, mysterious object.

"She's awake." His deep voice was hesitant.

Uncle William discreetly pocketed the orb.

"Have you told her?" the man questioned grimly.

Uncle William responded, "Only what I needed to, Mallick." He then turned to face me. "Wren, this is Rob Mallick. You can call him Mr. Rob. He worked very closely with your father and I...he was a good friend of your father's."

I immediately dropped my gaze at the mention of my dad. I closed my eyes, desperately trying to catch the tears that streamed down my face. My father. My mother. I tried not to think of that day, that day when everything went wrong. But it was too late. I could still hear the screams and the crash of thunder and see the flash of lightning across the sky, and for a moment, I wished I could turn back time.