

A World Without Blue



By Monika Davies

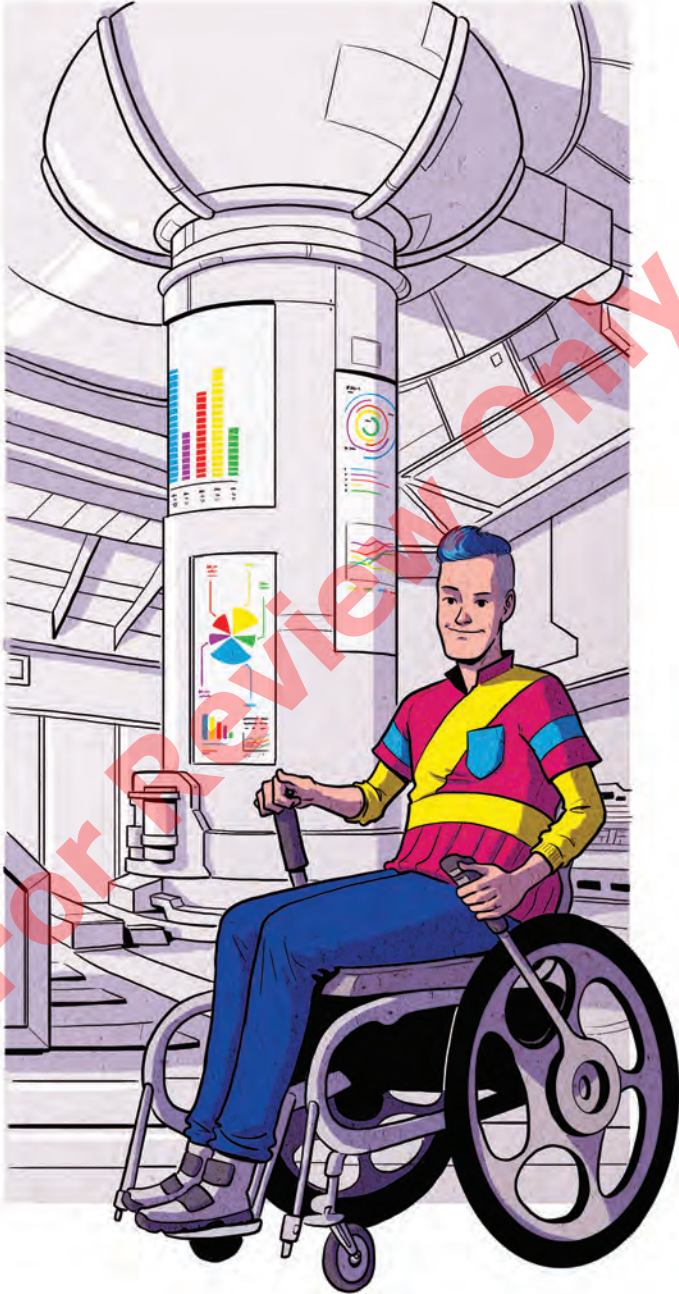
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CHAPTER ONE



Taj and Tessa

Look—when Tessa and I first moved to Antarctica to work at the world's only Color Laboratory, I knew we were in for a wild ride.

First of all, when we were hired, the head honchos flew us from our home in Portland all the way to Antarctica. And it was door-to-door service. They chose

this laser-fast jet to shuttle us to our new home.

(I mean, okay, it wasn't exactly "laser" fast. Tessa would say I was massively exaggerating with that adjective, but hey—I'm allowed my quirks.)

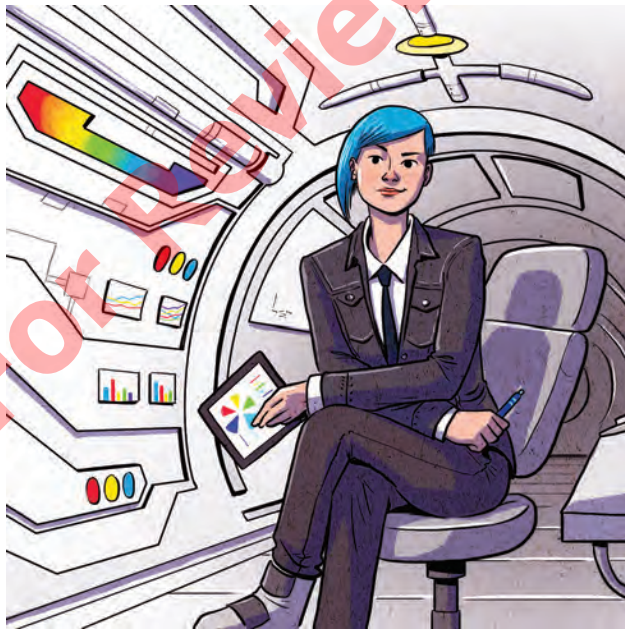
Tessa is my younger sister, by the way. She's 16. She calls me her "antiquated" older brother, but I'm only 20. We come from a long line of Tendersons. That probably doesn't mean anything to you. But if you were from Portland, Oregon, you'd know. The Tendersons are known for their artistic talent. We come from a long line of artists of every type. Furniture designers, sculptors, book illustrators—you name it, there's a Tenderson who's done it.

Tessa and I have always known how to create mood with color. I was studying art history in college when the Color Mixers recruited me. Tessa was still in high school when she was brought in. She was only supposed to intern at the laboratory, but it was soon

clear that they'd like her to stay longer. And, frankly—I'd love it if she stayed. Antarctica is a lonely place.



Fact: Taj follows me for direction about how to do things. This is because I, Tessa Tenderson, am very good at providing direction. I'm like a traffic light that makes sure you wait your turn in line. I keep everyone in my life headed in a smooth, straight line.



Fact: Taj and I are the newest, and now the only, Color Mixers in the world. Originally, I was supposed to be an intern at the laboratory. However, it took me just three weeks to prove I could handle being a top Mixer—and I don't say that to brag.

Taj and I complement each other exceedingly well. People say Taj is the dreamer, while I'm firmly the planner. People say we make a terrific—and occasionally terrifying—team.

As you know, people say a lot of things.

As Color Mixers, we work in the world's only Color Laboratory. It's in Antarctica. Yes, you read that right. Taj and I work on the continent where pretty much no humans live. But don't worry, because we are completely, totally, and absolutely fine with that fact.

Anyone around the world can send in a color request to the lab. Yes, even you.

CHAPTER TWO



Deleted!

Fact: It is a Tuesday at exactly 2:32:48 p.m. when I accidentally delete blue.

My watch has a second hand. So I'm being very exact when I say 2:32:48 p.m. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you about my day up to that point.

It was shaping up to be a very regular Tuesday. I drank an espresso. I set Taj's

clock on his desk to be five minutes fast so he'd finish his work on time. I dusted the laboratory's color wheel three times.

I should also tell you: Taj and I have different approaches to color. He takes his color ideas and paints them into being—literally. He comes up with a new color or scheme using his tried-and-true blue paintbrush. He also has his wooden palette splashed with the main colors of the rainbow. He likes going the traditional route with color.

I—on the other hand—use pixels. I've been fascinated with computers since I played around with my first keyboard. I use technology to make my color magic happen.

I was already on my 13th color request that day. Everything was routine.

Just like every day before, Taj and I worked to color everything in the world. We've colored blades of grass in a football stadium and red lanterns for Chinese New Year. Last week, we