Just Alice

The first thing I heard was the rolling of wheels. The room was bare except for a few beds pushed against the wall in a corner. I was the only one in sight. Then the door creaked open. A bunch of people in surgical masks and lab coats entered. They all clustered around me, then one of them leaned back and gave a nod at something higher up, which I couldn't see. "We're ready to begin activation", he said.

Activation? I didn't know what activation meant yet. What was he going to begin? Suddenly, the whirring sound of machines starting up, filled the room. A mask was put over my nose and mouth. All I could focus on was a long metal tube, holding a rectangular sized piece in it's robotic "hand" which was slowly lowering down towards me. I felt someone cut my arm, I flinched. The chip was lowering toward the now fresh opening in my arm and the metal corners slowly grazed it, the chip vanished. Then I felt it. Pain coursing through my veins, my head, my heart, my blood and slowly making it's way to my brain. I screamed. Everything went black.

13 years later.

Ughh, school again. I hate waking up early, at least it was friday. I could do whatever I wanted tomorrow. "Alice!", I heard Mom calling from downstairs.

"Coming," I shouted back.

That's when I heard the school bus honking, uh oh, I was late again. I grabbed my bag and rushed downstairs and out the door, without even eating breakfast. "Good Morning", I said to the bus driver.

"Late again", he replied back, smiling.

I walked down the aisle to the very back, and sat in my usual seat by the window. My best friend Scarlett usually sits next to me, but she gets on after me. As the bus neared to a stop at Scarlett's house, she was already waiting at the window. Scarlett's always on time and today was no exception. The thing that I loved about school, was that it made me feel normal, even though I wasn't. I was anything but normal, more like an alien robot, but only I knew that and of course my adopted parents. My mom Kate and my dad Tom are scientists. They were the ones who invented the chip that was permanently implanted in my arm. "Hey Alice", Scarlett's cheerful greeting, jolted me back to reality.

"Hey", I said back.

"So what's up, are you going to Zoe's party tonight?", she asked.

"No, I didn't even know she was having one, are you going?", I replied, totally uninterested.

"I'm not invited", Scarlett said, genuinely upset.

I wasn't one for parties. People call me antisocial, I guess I am. I'm very secretive, probably because I didn't want anyone to find out my secret. I remember once when I was at a party when I was 10, and it was probably my last party. Someone's hand accidentally struck mine and I felt a sharp stab of pain. That person asked if I was okay and I just got up and ran straight out of the room. It was one of the most embarrassing moments for me. It wasn't a very easy one to keep. The rest of the bus ride passed in silence. I looked out the window, and watched the rows of houses vanish past.

Our bus arrived at school 5 mins before school started, so it was a rush. Scarlett and me had science first. I guess I was good at it, but I didn't particularly enjoy it, maybe because it

played such an important part in my life. Our science teacher Ms. Benson had changed our seating arrangement, so for now I was stuck sitting next to Jake Pierce. I got along okay with him, we never spoke much, but we'd finish assignments quickly. Jake wasn't so bad, he was actually pretty nice. I could trust him at least. His parents had helped my parents in creating the chip, but he didn't know that it even existed and that it was inside me.

Today science was as boring as any other day, and for a friday lessons seemed to drag on. When the clock finally struck 3pm and the bell rang, I was dying to get home and just go to sleep. I walked down the school driveway with Scarlett, who was happily chatting away about finally getting an invitation from Zoe Harper to her party, and kept going on about what to wear.

That's when it all happened. The first time my super quick reflexes were put into action. Scarlett ran into the street and the the traffic light was still red. A van came speeding towards her and it was about to hit her. She screamed and I ran and pushed her out of the way. The van stopped and a crowd began to form around us. I didn't want anyone to know that I had saved her, this was the perfect time to make a quick getaway. I pushed through the crowd and started running down Apple Street, almost at my house. I bumped into quite a few people and I heard angry shouts behind me, none of that mattered, all I needed to do was get home and hide. I threw open the front gate, of my house and slammed the front door. I rushed up to my room and threw myself on the bed,and I have no idea why I did, but I started to cry. I never, never cry, but it would be so hard to keep my secret now, would people treat me the same way as before, or differently. I didn't know, and I didn't want to find out.

All I did that weekend was hide myself in my room. Scarlett called me millions of times, but I never picked up. By the time Monday morning rolled around I was back to my old sarcastic self. When I walked onto the school bus all eyes were on me, I proceeded quietly to the back of the bus and watched the scenery pass by. The bus didn't stop at Scarlett's house. She must have told her parents about me saving her, I hope she didn't say too much. Classes passed pretty much as normal, except I seemed to have 20 pairs of eyes staring at the back of my head all the time. At lunch I was putting my books inside my locker, when I heard footsteps coming from farther down the hallway, I was the only one here, so I wondered who it could be. Then I saw. Scarlett and Jake were walking down the hall together. Uh oh, this meant trouble. Why did she have to go and get him involved in it?

They stopped in front of my locker. There was silence for a few minutes. I decided I'd had enough,there eyes were burning holes in my skin. "What do you want from me?", I demanded, trying to sound as confident as ever.
"Why did you save me Alice, I mean how did you save me? You were standing on the other side of the road", she asked.
"No, I wasn't, I was right next to you, you've got it all wrong", I said shakily and turned away, as if to leave.
Jake's hand flashed over and grabbed my shoulder.
"Let go of me!", I yelled.
"Alice, we just want to help, you can tell us, I promise we can keep secrets, you saved my life after all, I should be thankful", Scarlett said gently.
In my mind I ran over all the consequences of telling them my secret, maybe they would think I was weird, and they could just walk away without believing me. I wouldn't be so surprised if they did. I could tell Scarlett, but why would I tell Jake. Could I trust him? Then

I remembered science class on friday, how he tried to be nice to me. How since I knew him, he'd been friendly towards me. Even before I met Scarlett. I could trust him.

Then it all came out, the whole story. I told them everything from beginning to end, and surprisingly enough, they believed me and having other people know made me feel so much better and lighter somehow, like there wasn't a weight on my shoulders anymore. Scarlett and Jake kept their promises, and they didn't tell anyone.

Then one day, out of the blue, my parents told me that I could have the chip removed. I was overjoyed, of course. No more weird feelings, just plain me.

2 months later, I lie in a hospital bed. In the same room I was in 13 years ago. Except there is a difference, there is no chip inside me, I'm just me. Normal and free. Just like I've always wanted to be. Just Alice.