

The background of the entire page is a dramatic, high-contrast image of a stormy sea. The water is a deep, dark green, with white foam and spray from a massive wave crashing down. In the lower center, a human hand is seen reaching up from the water, palm facing up, as if struggling or calling for help. The sky is dark and filled with swirling clouds, with a few birds visible in the distance. The overall mood is one of intense action and survival.

MATT DE LA PEÑA

"THERE'S NO WAY TO CLASSIFY *THE LIVING*. IT'S EVERYTHING I LOVE MIXED INTO ONE FANTASTIC, RELENTLESS, ACTION-PACKED STORY. AS ALWAYS WITH MATT, THE CHARACTERS ARE THE BEST PART. SO REAL. I LOVED THIS BOOK."

—JAMES DASHNER, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE MAZE RUNNER SERIES AND *THE EYE OF MINDS*

THE LIVING

THE FIGHT BEGINS
WHEN YOU SURVIVE.

CHAPTER SAMPLER

THE LIVING

Matt de la Peña

DELACORTE PRESS

Keep Reading for a Sneak Peek . . .

Shy stands alone on the Honeymoon Deck. Cooler full of ice-cold water bottles strapped across his chest.

Waiting.

It's day six of his first voyage as a summer employee of Paradise Cruise Lines. Towel Boy at the Lido Deck pool by day. Water Boy at night. But the money's good. Like, game-changing good. He calculates again how much he'll have pulled by the time school starts back up. Three eight-day voyages, plus tips, minus taxes. Be enough to help his mom out and still score some new gear and a pair of kicks, maybe take a female out to dinner.

Shy moves to the railing, picturing that last part.

Him with a girl on an actual date.

He'd get a reservation at a nice spot, too. Cloth napkins. Some fine girl sitting across from him in the classy-ass booth. Maybe Jessica from the volleyball squad. Or Maria from down the street. All eyelashy smiles as whatever girl glances at him over her menu.

"Get whatever you want," he'd tell her. "You ever had surf 'n' turf? For real, I got you."

Yeah, he'd play it smooth like that.

When it's overcast at night, the moon above the cruise ship is a blurry dot. The ocean is black felt. Can hardly tell where the air ends and the water starts up.

You can hear it, though.

That's another thing Shy never would have thought before he landed this luxury cruise gig. The ocean talks to you. Especially at night. Whispering voices that never let up, not even when you sleep.

It can start to mess with your head.

Shy spots a passenger stepping out of the Luxury Lounge. The thick glass doors motor open long enough to let out a few notes from the live orchestra. Inside there's a formal event going on called the Beacon Ball. Harps and violins and all that. Hundreds of dressed-up rich folks drinking champagne and socializing. Shy's job tonight is to offer water to anyone who steps outside for air.

Like this dude. Middle-aged and balding, dressed in a suit two sizes too small.

Shy moves in quick with his cooler, asking: "Ice-cold bottle of water, sir?"

The man looks at the sweating bottle for a few seconds, like it confuses him. Then a grin comes over his face and he digs into his wallet. Holds a folded bill toward Shy between two veiny white fingers.

"Sorry, sir," Shy tells him. "We're not supposed to—"

"Says who?" the man interrupts. "Take it, kid."

After a short pause, for show, Shy snatches the bill and buries it deep inside his uniform pocket. Like he always does.

The man uncaps the water bottle, takes a long swig, wipes his mouth with the arm of his suit jacket. "Spent my entire life trying to get to this place," he says without eye contact. "Top scientist in my field. Cofounder of my own business." He looks at Shy. "Enough money to buy vacation homes in three different countries."

“Congratulations, sir—”

“Don’t!” the man snaps.

Shy stares at him for a few seconds. “Don’t what?”

“Don’t tell me what you think I want to hear.” He shakes his head in disgust. “Say something real instead. Tell me I’m fat.”

Shy glances at the ocean, confused.

The guy’s definitely fat, but if Shy’s learned anything during his first six days on the job, it’s that luxury cruise passengers don’t want anything to do with real. They want a pat on the back. “Tell a dude how great he is and get paid.” That’s his roommate Rodney’s motto. But this guy isn’t fitting the formula.

The man sighs, asks Shy: “Where you from, anyway, kid?”

“San Diego.”

“Yeah? What part?”

Shy shifts the cooler from his left side to his right. “You probably never heard of it, sir. Little place called Otay Mesa.”

The man laughs awkwardly, like it pains him. “And you’re trying to *congratulate* me?” He shakes his head. “How’s that for irony?”

“Excuse me?”

He waves Shy off and re-caps his bottle. “Trust me, I know Otay Mesa. Right down there by the border.”

Shy nods. He has no idea what the guy’s getting at, but Rodney warned him about this, too. How eccentric luxury cruise passengers can be. Especially the ones whose front teeth have already turned pink from too much red wine.

It’s quiet for a few seconds, Shy readying himself for his exit, but the man turns suddenly and points a finger in Shy’s face. “Do me a favor, kid.”

“Of course, sir.”

“Remember this cowardly face.” The man taps his own temple. “It’s what corruption looks like.”

Shy frowns, trying to find the logic.

“This is the face of your betrayer. Me, David Williamson. Don’t you ever forget that! It’s all in the letter I left in the cave.”

“Not sure I’m following, sir.”

“Of course you’re not following.” The man uncaps his water bottle again and turns to the ocean. He doesn’t drink. “I’ve made a career out of hiding from people like you. But tell me this, kid: how am I supposed to go on living with all this blood on my hands?”

Shy abandons his search for meaning and focuses on the guy’s comb-over. It’s one of the more aggressive efforts he’s ever seen. The part starts less than an inch above the left ear and dude’s expecting a few wiry strands to cover a serious amount of real estate.

Maybe that’s what he means by “hiding.” Down to three defiant hairs and still believing he has that shiny-ass dome fully camouflaged. It reminds Shy of little-kid logic in a game of hide-and-seek. How his nephew Miguel used to bury his face in a couch cushion, thinking if he couldn’t see you, you couldn’t see him either.

Shy hears flutes and harps again and turns his attention to two older women who’ve just come out of the lounge in sparkling party dresses. They’re both laughing and holding their high heels in their hands.

“Hello, ladies,” he says, moving toward them. “Care for an ice-cold bottle of water?”

“Oh yes!”

“Honey, that sounds marvelous!”

He hands over two bottles, amazed that wealthy women can get so worked up over free water.

“Thank you,” the taller one says, leaning in to read his name tag. “Shy?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Now, that’s a curious name,” the other woman says.

“Well, my old man’s a curious guy.”

They all laugh a little and the women open their waters and take well-mannered sips.

After the Paradise-recommended amount of small talk, Shy steps away from the women and goes back to looking at the dark sea that surrounds them. Thousands of miles of mysterious salt water. Home to who knows what. Big-cheeked bottom dwellers and slithering electric eels, whales the size of apartment buildings that swim around all pissed off they don't have real teeth.

And here's Shy, on the top deck of this sparkling white megaship. Two hundred thousand tons and the length of a sports arena, yet somehow still floating.

He remembers his grandma's reaction when she first learned he was applying for a summer job on a cruise ship—two weeks before she got sick. She ducked into her room, came out seconds later with one of her scrapbooks. Turned to several articles about the rise in shark attacks over the past decade.

Shy had to take her to the local library and pull up an image of a Paradise cruise liner on the Internet.

"Oh, *mijo*," she breathed, all excited. "It's the biggest boat I've ever seen."

"See, Grandma? There's no way a shark could mess with one of these things, right?"

"I don't see how." She looked at the screen and then looked back at Shy. "I have pictures of their teeth, though, *mijo*. They have rows and rows. You don't think they could chew right through the bottom?"

"Not when the bottom's like eighteen feet thick and made of pure steel."

Shy is staring blankly at the ocean like this, remembering his grandma, when out of the corner of his eye he sees a blur climbing the railing.

He spins around.

The comb-over man.

“Sir!” he shouts, but the guy doesn’t even look up.

Shy cups his hands around his mouth and shouts it louder this time: “Sir!”

Nothing.

The two older women now see what’s going on, too. Neither moves or says a word.

Shy rips off the cooler and sprints across the width of the deck. Gets there just as the man lowers himself over the other side of the railing and goes to jump.

Shy reaches out quick, snatches an arm. Grabs for the man’s collar with his other hand and balls the material into his fist. Holds him there, suspended against the ship.

Everything happening so fast.

No time to think.

This man dangling over the edge, twenty-something stories up from the darkness and too heavy for one person, slipping through Shy’s fingers.

He hooks his right leg through the railing for leverage so he won’t get pulled over, too, and shouts over his shoulder: “Get help!”

One of the women hurries toward the lounge, through the glass doors. The other is shouting in Shy’s ear: “Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God!”

The comb-over man locks eyes with Shy. Shifty and bugged. Up to this point his hand has been gripping Shy’s forearm. But now he lets go.

“What are you doing!” Shy shouts at him. “Grab on!”

The man only looks below him.

Shy tightens his grip. Grits his teeth and tries pulling the man up. But it’s impossible. He’s not strong enough. Their positioning is too awkward.

He looks over his shoulder again, yells: "Somebody help!"

The second woman shuffles backward, toward the lounge. Hand over her mouth. The water bottles from Shy's cooler rolling around the deck behind her.

Shy can feel the man's elbow starting to slip through his fingers. He has to do something. Now. But what?

Several seconds pass.

He lets go of the collar long enough to clamp on to the man's arm with his left hand, too. Just below the elbow. Both of his hands in a circle now. Fingers linked. Shy's whole body shaking as he holds on. Sweat running down his forehead, into his eyes.

His leg in the railing beginning to cramp.

A few more seconds and then he hears a ripping sound. The man's suit coming undone at the arm. He watches helplessly as the seams pull apart right in front of his eyes. Slow-motion-style. Black threads breaking, dangling there like tiny worms.

Then a loud tear of material and the man drops, screaming. Eyes wild as he falls backward. Arms and legs flailing.

He disappears into the darkness below with hardly a splash.

Shy! someone calls out.

But Shy's still staring over the railing, into the darkness. Trying to catch his breath. Trying to think.

Shy, I know you can hear me.

Other passengers moving out onto the deck now. The hum of hushed conversations. A spotlight snapping on above him, its bright beam of light creeping along the surface of the water. Revealing nothing.

Stop playing, bro. We need to hurry and get to Southside.

The ocean still whispering, same as before. Like nothing whatsoever has happened, and nothing will.

Shy glances down at his hands.

He's still gripping the man's empty sleeve.

THE LIVING

Day 1

1

Rodney

“Seriously, Shy. Get up.”

Shy rolled over on his cot.

“Don’t make me smack you upside the head.”

Shy cracked open his eyes.

Big Rodney was standing over him, hands on hips.

Shy looked around their small cabin as reality came flooding back: no sleeve in his hands. This, a completely different voyage—bound for Hawaii, not Mexico. The man jumped six days ago, meaning it’d been almost a full week now.

“I know you didn’t forget, right?” Rodney said.

“Forget what?” Shy sat up and rubbed his eyes. He knew this answer would stress Rodney out, though—because everything stressed

Rodney out—so he smiled and told the guy: “I’m playing, man. Of course I didn’t forget. You see I’m already dressed, right?”

“I was gonna say.” Rodney ducked into the bathroom, came back out with an electric toothbrush buzzing over his teeth, mumbling something impossible to make out.

Shy got out of bed and went to his dresser, pulled a brown paper bag from behind the safe he never bothered using.

Tonight was Rodney’s nineteenth birthday. A bunch of people were supposed to celebrate on the crew deck outside of Southside Lounge. When Shy’s shift at the pool ended at nine he’d come down to his and Rodney’s cabin to shower and change, but he wound up crashing hard. This was a minor miracle considering he’d hardly slept the night before. Or the night before that. Or the night before . . .

He peeped the clock: already after eleven.

Rodney ducked back into the bathroom to spit, came out wiping his mouth with a hand towel. Guy was surprisingly nimble for an offensive lineman. “I said, you were thrashing around in your sleep, bro. You dreaming about the jumper again?”

“I was dreaming about your mom,” Shy told him.

“Oh, I see how it is. We got a second comedian on the ship.”

The suicide might have happened six days ago, on a completely different voyage, but every time Shy had closed his eyes since . . . there was the comb-over man. Sipping from his water bottle or talking about corruption or climbing his ass over the railing—guy’s meaty arm slowly slipping through Shy’s sissy grip.

Even worse, halfway through the dream the man’s face would sometimes morph into Shy’s *grandma’s* face. Her eyes slowly filling with blood from her freakish disease.

Shy tossed the paper bag to Rodney.

“Bro, you got me a present?” Rodney said. “What is it?”

“What do you want it to be?”

Rodney studied the ceiling and tapped his temple, like he was thinking. Then he pointed at Shy, told him: “How about a beautiful woman in lingerie?”

Shy gave an exaggerated laugh. “What, you think I’m some kind of miracle worker?”

“I’m playing, bro,” Rodney said. “She doesn’t have to be beautiful. You know I’m not picky.”

Shy pointed at the bag. “Just open it.”

Rodney unfolded the top and pulled out the book Shy got him: *Daisy Cooks! Latin Flavors That Will Rock Your World*.

“They had it in the gift shop,” Shy told him.

Rodney flipped it over to look at the back.

“If you’re gonna be a famous chef,” Shy added, “you need to know how to do tamales and empanadas. Me and Carmen could be like your test audience.”

Rodney looked up at Shy with glassy eyes.

The gift proved Shy remembered their first conversation on their first voyage together. When Rodney mentioned his dream of becoming a New York City chef.

But tears?

Really?

“Come on over here, bro,” Rodney said, holding out his arms.

“Nah, I’m good,” Shy told him, moving toward the door. Rodney was an enthusiastic hugger who didn’t understand his own strength. And Shy wasn’t the touchy-feely type.

“I mean it, Shy. Come give your boy some love.”

Shy went for the door handle instead, saying: “We need to hurry and get you to your party—”

Too late.

Rodney grabbed him by the arm and reeled him in for a bear hug. Shy imagined this was what it might feel like to be squeezed to death by a Burmese python.

“You’re a good friend,” Rodney said, his voice cracking with emotion. “I mean it, Shy. When I become a world-famous chef and they put me on one of those morning TV shows to do a demonstration . . . Watch, I’m gonna name a dish after my Mexican compadre. How about the Shy Soufflé?”

Shy would’ve come up with some crack about Rodney having more of a face for radio, but he couldn’t think straight. Rodney was cutting off all the oxygen to his brain.

2

Crew Within a Crew

Shy and Rodney sat down at a table on the crowded balcony where Carmen, Kevin and Marcus were guarding a stack of steaming pizza boxes.

“Took you long enough,” Marcus said.

Rodney pointed at Shy. “Talk to him. He was having another nightmare about that guy he saw jump.”

Shy stared at Rodney. Guy was crying over a cookbook not fifteen minutes ago. Now he wanted to call people out for nightmares?

Carmen opened the top box, said: “They just dropped these off for you, Rod. Happy birthday, big boy.”

“Happy birthday,” they all echoed.

Rodney thanked everyone with an over-the-table hug and slid the first slice onto his paper plate. Then he took a second and third.

The smell of pepperoni and cheese hit Shy so hard he barely had time to drool over Carmen. His stomach growled as he reached into the box with everyone else. He dotted off the extra grease with a napkin, folded the thick slice as best he could and took a sideways bite.

There were two crew lounges on board, one on each end of the ship, but this was their favorite. The Southside Lounge.

Paying passengers had every amenity imaginable. Luxury spas and pools. Multiple full-service casinos. Five-star restaurants. Dance clubs. Theaters. Gourmet food stations that stayed open all night. But the real action was down here on the crew level. At around midnight, once most of the work shifts had ended, there were parties up and down the halls, in the bars, spilling out of the lounges. A mix of good-looking young folks from all over the globe.

It was especially crowded tonight because it was the beginning of a brand-new voyage. No one was burned out yet, and there were plenty of fresh female faces to scope out—Shy's favorite pastime. The tables were all overflowing. Everyone drinking and talking and laughing. Playing poker. A group of Japanese girls were at the bar doing shots. A few Brazilians moved their sweet hips to the reggae beat against the far wall.

An older black man Shy remembered from his first voyage sat by himself near the railing, writing in a leather notebook. Hair gray and wild. Braided chin beard. He looked like some kind of black Einstein, or a terrorist—but all he did on the ship was shine shoes.

It was kind of weird having some old dude on the crew, but Shy doubted kids his own age had the shoe-shining skill set.

Two Thousand Dollars Richer

As everyone else discussed their few days away from the ship, Shy thought about one of his own recent birthdays. Couple years back his mom and sis and grandma had taken him to a college hoop

game. At halftime they called out three seat numbers, asked the people sitting in those seats to proceed down to the court level for a chance to win prizes. Shy couldn't believe it when his sis pointed out he was sitting in one of the lucky spots.

He made his way down to the hardwood with the two other contestants, stood in front of the packed arena as the emcee explained the rules. Each of them would shoot a layup, a free throw, a three-pointer and a half-court shot. If you made one shot you got a gift certificate for Pizza Hut. Two shots got you free tickets to the next home game. Three, a suite for you and five guests. If you made all four shots, including the one from half-court, you got a two-thousand-dollar savings bond from the bank that sponsored the arena.

The first shooter was an old dude with tufts of gray hair popping out of his ears. He missed every shot.

The second shooter was a short-haired mannish-looking chick in Timberlands. She made the layup and the free throw.

Then it was Shy's turn.

He laid the ball in off the glass and then buried the free throw with quickness. He sank the three, all net, and listened to the crowd begin to stir. As Shy dribbled out to half-court, the emcee announced: "If this young man can make one last shot from half-court, ladies and gentlemen, he'll go home tonight two thousand dollars richer!"

Shy stood a few steps behind the half-court line, looking up into the crowd. A bunch of folks were on their feet, cheering. A rush like no other. He spotted his mom and sis clapping, his grams leaning over the railing, snapping photos he knew would end up in one of her famous scrapbooks. He pulled in a deep breath, then turned to the distant hoop, took a dribble and a couple quick strides and heaved the ball from down near his waist.

He watched the rock sail through the air in super slo-mo. Watched it smack off the backboard and go straight through.

The crowd erupted.

The bank sponsor came out to half-court and presented Shy with an oversized check. Two Gs. Shy held it up, almost laughing. Because nothing like this was supposed to happen to some anonymous kid like him. He was just a dude from down by the border. Didn't they know?

Shy reached for a second slice, still buzzing off the memory. He wondered how long before his laughter might make a comeback. He'd never admit it to anyone, but seeing a guy fall from the ship had sort of messed something up in his head. Shit was hard to process.

He took a bite and decided he should scan the balcony again, see if there were any new females as fine as Carmen. It was a little game he sometimes played. He was only half finished when he realized Kevin was staring at him from across the table.

"What's up?" Shy asked.

"We need to talk," Kevin said in his subtle Australian accent. "Soon as you're done eating."

"I still gotta close down Lido," Shy told him. The pool area was his final responsibility for the night.

"I'll close it with you, then."

Shy shrugged and took another bite of pizza. It was strange to see Kevin so eager to talk. They didn't work together, though, so Shy didn't see how he could be in trouble.

He watched Rodney hold up a fresh slice and say: "You know who made this for us, right?" He pointed a thumb back at himself. "Head chef comes to me right as I'm clocking out, says, 'Oh, I'm sorry, Rodney. We just got an order for four pies. It'd really help out if you could get them in the oven before you leave.' Bro, I had my apron off and everything."

"And you actually did it?" Marcus said.

Rodney shrugged. "No choice."

"Damn," Carmen said, looking to Shy. "They had your boy prepare his own birthday dinner."

"Wish they had him deliver it, too," Shy said. "Then we could've stiffed his ass on the tip."

They all cracked up some, even Rodney, who said: "Speaking of tips, tell everyone what the jumper slipped you before he hopped in the soup."

Shy reached into his uniform pocket, held up a hundred-dollar bill. "Forgot all about it till we boarded today."

Rodney shook his head and pulled another slice. "I was like, what'd you do, bro? Give the guy a happy ending?"

"Just a bottle of water," Shy said, staring at the comb-over man's money. Technically, the crew wasn't supposed to accept tips. But that never stopped anyone. This tip seemed different, though. Like it'd be messed up to spend it on some dumb shit.

Carmen held out an open palm, told him: "Might as well hand it over, *vato*. That's exactly how much you owe me for being your friend."

Shy made like he was placing the money in her hand, but the second her manicured fingers started curling around the bill, he snatched it back and shoved it in his pocket. "Gotta be quick," he told her.

Carmen made a face and pinched the back of his arm.

Shy felt better when he noticed Kevin laughing with everyone else. Whatever he wanted to talk about couldn't be *that* big a deal.

"Lemme get this straight," Marcus said, wiping his hands on a paper towel. "If you would've just peeped the tip right away, you could've saved this cat's life?"

"How you figure that?" Shy asked.

"I'm saying, someone slips *me* a Franklin, my ass goes on high alert."

"Maybe I'm just good at what I do." Shy shot him a sarcastic grin.

“Not,” Carmen said.

“Yeah, okay.” Marcus laughed and bit into his pizza slice.

“Some passengers just like to tip like that,” Kevin said. “They wanna impress everybody.”

“I got tipped fifty for adjusting a karaoke mike,” Carmen said. “Two voyages ago.”

“Man or woman?” Rodney said.

“Man. Why?”

“You know all these rich white dudes got a warm spot for you, Carm. You’re like their jalapeño *chalupa* fantasy.”

Carmen reached across Shy and slugged Rodney in the shoulder. It was impossible for Shy not to stare at her shirt riding up her beautiful brown back.

“Shoot,” Marcus said, “fifty seems kind of high for the Mexican platter.”

Carmen grabbed a piece of crust out of the half-empty pizza box and heaved it at his head. Marcus ducked in time, though, and the crust went sailing over the railing, into the Pacific. “I guess chicken and waffles are supposed to be fine dining,” she said.

“Compared to a bowl of wack taco salad?”

Everybody was cracking up now, including, Shy noticed, the group of Swedish crew members at the next table over.

“For the record,” Rodney said, “everyone here is the fine-dining version. Look around you, bro. Paradise only hires attractive people.”

Shy watched them all sort of glance around the table at each other. They didn’t need to, though. Rodney had it right. Pretty much everyone on the crew was attractive, especially the group Shy kicked it with.

Kevin was a rugged, outdoorsy Australian. Messy blond hair and three-day stubble. At twenty-two he was the oldest and most worldly at the table. When he wasn’t mixing martinis on a Paradise

cruise ship, he was posing for pictures all over Europe as an underwear model.

Marcus was the ship's resident hip-hop dancer. A pretty-boy black kid from Crenshaw who was a secret tech head. He was all cut up from popping and locking, contorting his body in ways that didn't seem possible. Whenever Marcus dropped his uniform top on the pool's main stage, during a scheduled dance demonstration, Shy would watch everyone stare at his abs without blinking. Even skeletal old white ladies from Confederate states.

Carmen was the only female in their group. She was eighteen and half Mexican like Shy, from a town not far from Otay Mesa called National City. She hosted karaoke every night and sang in some of the shows. First time Shy met her, he could barely speak. She had to wave a hand all in front of his face, laughing, and ask Rodney if he was mute.

Only problem with Carmen was she had a fiancé back home. Some wealthy white kid in law school. She left the diamond in her cabin, she claimed, because wedding rings work like kryptonite on tips.

Eventually their eyes all settled on Rodney.

He lowered a half-eaten sausage slice, said: "What?"

A table full of grins.

"Bro, I don't count," he said. "There's a reason they keep my big ass locked up in a kitchen."

Everyone laughed.

Rodney was a six-four farm boy with a bad flat top. Crooked teeth. A few months ago he'd moved from Iowa to Irvine to try and play college football for the Anteaters. His strength coach hooked him up with a job on the ship assisting the head chef in the Destiny Dining Room. In his free time, Rodney read romance novels and ate Costco-sized bags of gummy bears and listened to Christina Aguilera on oversized headphones.

As everyone finished eating, Shy thought about how he fit into the equation. He wasn't an underwear model like Kevin, he knew that. But he was tall for being half Mexican. And he played ball. The girls back home called him "pretty boy" and said he was a catch—though a catch in Otay Mesa was probably different from a catch on a Paradise cruise ship.

Shy was still kicking this around as he weaved through the balcony crowd to toss his greasy paper plate into the trash by the bar. When he turned back around, he found Kevin standing there. "Ready?"

"Sure," Shy told him. "But what's going on?"

"Overheard something earlier." Kevin threw away his plate, too. "Figured you should be properly warned."

Warned? A wave of nerves passed through Shy's middle.

"Lido Deck, right?" Kevin said.

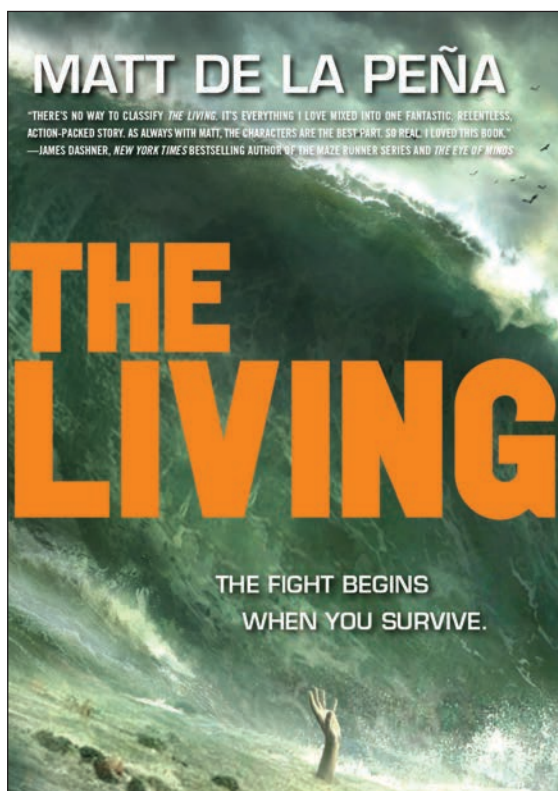
Shy nodded. As he followed Kevin through the crowded balcony tables, toward the exit, he looked over his shoulder at Carmen.

You okay? she mouthed.

Shy shrugged and went through the door.

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