

Our society values courage above all else.

We believe in everyday bravery, that everyone can be brave. That everyone is brave, even if others don't see it.

We believe that true courage isn't the absence of fear. It's doing things even though you're afraid.

They disagree.

They believe in a brutal form of bravery, where the strong rule over the weak. Where might equals right.

They killed our ways. They corrupted our people. They made it so that no one worshiped the old ways. No one remembered the old ways.

Or so they thought.

Because we survived. We remember. And, for the first time, we are ready to fight.

Join us. We are Regency.

Kae read the email she'd just received and sighed. *Regency propaganda ... again*, she thought. She knew that the design team working on the message had worked long and hard on that project, but it just seemed so pointless. After all, it wasn't like the email would be read by anyone outside of Regency. After being driven out by the Regime, the 'they' in the message, the people who would later form Regency had hidden themselves, knowing that if the Regime even heard the softest whisper that some had survived, they would come back and finish the job. And, contrary to what the email said, Regency wasn't ready for a full-on fight against the Regime. That was why Regency had become a military group, training generation after generation to prepare to fight back. That was why all children took an aptitude test at the age of seven, when their strengths were determined, and they were placed accordingly. That was why Kae had been training, for the past nine years of her life, to be a Regency spy.

*I used to take
my heroes for granted.*

*Until the day
they weren't there.*

I used to soak

up their encouragement.

*Until the day
it wasn't there.*

*I used to believe
they would always be there for me
always support me
always love me.
Until the day
they didn't.*

*I guess I never thought
they would abandon me
they would ridicule me
they would despise me.
If I'd looked more closely
I might have seen
how it had started
long ago.*

*But I used to think
my heroes understood me.*

*Until the day
I realized
they didn't.*

But once I realized that,

*once I knew
I was all alone
I began to realize
how I didn't need them.*

*I began to realize
that I could be strong
all on my own.*

*I began to realize
that I could be
my own hero.*

*And what's more,
now I know.*

My heroes do love me.

My heroes do support me.

My heroes are there for me.

But my heroes don't understand me.

Because no one understands each other.

No one possibly could.

But now I know

that that's okay.

Chris typed on his computer quietly, knowing the consequences should his father wake up. He wasn't supposed to be writing. He wasn't supposed to be up late on his computer. And, most of all, he wasn't supposed to be wasting time on meaningless activities.

Chris wasn't even sure if it was worth it. He wasn't sure if he believed what he had been typing. Who were his heroes? Was it really okay? But, somewhere deep inside him, Chris wanted to write. Even though it was forbidden. Maybe even because it was forbidden. Maybe because he knew that his father would never let him write.

After all, Chris was the son of Rian, leader of the Regime. He was powerful. He was important. He definitely couldn't be a writer.

Yet, Chris wanted, more than anything, to write. He had discovered writing years ago, as an activity even better than reading (which he also loved). Through writing, Chris could say what he didn't dare say out loud. He could create new worlds, where things were different. Where events that had happened, hadn't happened.

Where his sister, Selene, was still alive.

Chris's heart ached whenever he thought of her, though it had been thirteen years since she had disappeared from his life, presumed dead in a rebel attack. Thirteen years since he'd seen her beautiful face, her heart-wrenching smile.

No one liked to talk about Selene. But she was the reason why Chris did everything he did. Why he wrote. Why he supported his father. Why he hated, beyond all else, the rebels who opposed the Regime.