

Chapter Ten

Sorry for the cheesy-ish ending.

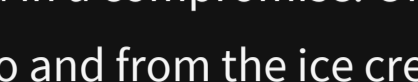
I've been a little slow on updates because something has happened to my dog. Doctors have said he has hip displacia and I've just been trying to spend most of my time with him. Purebred Labs are known to his this problem, and unfortunately, he probably has it. My family has to choose to whether to put him through a surgery that may not be successful, or to put him to sleep. So, clearly, I'm in a major twist!

With that said, please tolerate any mistakes I made in this chapter.

Can I get 80 votes and 15 comments?

VOMMENT.

xxSummerxx



Chapter Ten

The following day, I had asked dad if I could spend some time with Ashley and Chase, but he avidly refused to let me 'wander'—as he called it—along the streets alone. Although the statement had me caught in a whirlwind of emotions ranging from understanding to frustration, I pitched in a compromise. Only under one condition, that he would drive me to and from the ice cream parlor where Ashley, Chase and I wanted to meet, would he let me go.

I had quickly agreed, realizing I'd appreciate the company myself. Despite being torn between independence and orders, I knew the only way I would prevent trouble would be to take the safe path all the time.

It had been two days since mom called.

Two complete, eerie days where no signs of her existence had risen.

The fact that mom hadn't called or bothered to harass me now that she has full access to my number made me worry with dreaded anticipation. However, I had told myself to stay positive, to think clearly and look forward.

I could say I'm failing, considering that's all I can think about now.

"Yoohoo," Ashley shoves her face in my vision and I blink, "Earth to Faye."

I shake my head, "Sorry."

"No problem," Ashley replies, taking a spoonful of her strawberry ice cream, "What's going on in that crazy mind of yours."

I feel myself tense and grimace.

She removes the spoon from her mouth and frowns, "What?"

"I'm just wondering how you like strawberry ice cream." I lie through my teeth, making my voice sound playful and mocking.

"Strawberry ice cream is the best, thank you very much." Ashley scoos, "You're just jealous they ran out of your cookies and cream."

I roll my eyes and smile, looking down at my cup, "Cake batter is just as good."

"Debatable." She deadpans, just as Chase slides into the booth seat next to Ashley.

He slips his money into his pocket and gives us a look before grabbing his ice cream, "Double chocolate beats both of yours."

"Hell no." I argue, raising an eyebrow, "Cake batter all the way."

Ashley opens her mouth to speak but Chase beats her to it, "How did I not see that?"

"Why, are you wishing you got this instead?" I smirk, sending a knowing wink in a gloating Ashley's direction.

"No," He confirms, grinning, "But I do want to try it."

I tilt my bowl forward for him to get better access with his spoon. As he does so, his sleeve rolls up slightly and my eyes trail to a brutal purpled bruise around his wrist. I don't get much time to analyze it before he pulls back and goes for a taste.

"Chase, what happened to your wrist?" I ask abruptly as he continues swallow the ice cream with his eyes closed.

He stops chewing momentarily and looks down at what I was previously trying to figure out. He shrugs and gulps the last of cake batter ice cream down.

"I didn't see it before," He states, "But it's probably from lacrosse practice."

"Ouch," Ashley pitches in, her eyes delved onto the bruise appearing to be laced with pain.

"Wow, so if they can't get the ball, they hit you?" I ask, furrowing my brows.

He nods, "Pretty much. It's a contact sport so whatever comes, goes."

"You're entire wrist is swollen though, Chase." Ashley interrupts, grabbing his arm in the process.

My eyes dart to his hand, and sure enough, there is more swelling all around the bottom of his wrist as well.

"Someone must have grabbed it while I was running," Chase concludes, showing another spoon of his ice cream down his mouth.

"How do you not notice these things?" Ashley takes the words out of my mouth, "You need to be more careful!"

Chase shoots her a smug look, "Yes mother"

"Parent-zoned," Ashley chuckles, raising her hands above her head in a joking manner.

Just as I am about to comment, my phone rings. Instantly, I jump, my heart nearly dashing out of my chest in the process.

All I can think about is mom, but I'm awfully relieved when I see that the ID clearly states Dad.

A hand flies to my chest and I shoot Ashley and Chase a look before picking up the phone and pressing it to my ear.

"Hello?" I answer, nudging the ice cream away from my body.

"Hey sweetie," Dad answers, "I'm waiting outside the parlor right now."

I scramble up, "Now?"

I hear him laugh quietly, "Yeah, sorry. We have new neighbors at home and I want you to meet them."

I send Ashley and Chase an apologetic look as he speaks and they both return it with a shrug.

"Oh—" I jerk the phone from my ear and grab my ice cream away from Chase's mouth, "I'll be right out."

"Okay great, see you."

"Yeah." I say before ending the call.

I give Chase a glare when he gives me an innocent look and I send a disappointed expression towards Ashley.

"Sorry guys," I say as I start to get up, "Apparently we have visitors at home."

"It's cool," Ashley grins, wiggling her eyebrows at Chase.

"Oh god no," Chase feigns groans while I chuckle.

"I'll be there for your funeral," I joke to Chase and send a wink in Ashley's direction, "See you later."

With that, I push for the door and walk out to an er dumping the empty bowl of ice cream in the trash can next to it.

I catch sight of dad, sitting in his shiny beemer a few inches away from the curb. He smiles when he sees me and waves as if he is prodding me to hurry.

I quicken my pace and get in the car in no time. Once in the car, I fasten my seatbelt and relax as he accelerates back onto the road home.

The ride is short but filled with a comfortable silence. As usual, I'm staring out the window while dad hums to himself.

When we approach our street, I turn to him with a grin on my face.

"The Beatles?" I guess, referring to the tune he has been repetitively humming for the past five minutes.

He shoots me a quick, surprised glance before straightening in his seat, "Let it Be" He elaborates, "I didn't know you listened to the Beatles."

I snort and smile, an odd combination, "They're old, not ancient! I like most of their songs."

"Yeah?" He chuckles as we roll up to our house, "What's your favorite?"

"Blackbird" A smile crosses my face as I remember the tune, "I can relate."

"Ahh," Dad nods, pleased, "That one's a classic."

Our conversation comes to a peaceful end when he parks and pulls the keys out of the ignition. We both get out of the car in silence and shut the doors one after another. I wait patiently behind him as he jingles the home keys in his fingers and opens the door at last.

When we enter inside, Laura comes out of the kitchen, barefoot, with a big smile plastered on her face. She readjusts the pastel, knee length dress and reaches her hands out for both Dad and I.

"C'mon," She prods, looking mostly at me, "I've invited them to stay for some snacks."

I let her tug me into the room, her grip not allowing me any other choice. However, it is a gesture that I don't mind at the moment.

When we enter the kitchen, I gaze around and catch Layla sitting across from the new neighbors. She sends me a suggestive wink, making me burrow my eyebrows in confusion.

I continue to sweep my eyes across the newcomers, and Laura lets our hands go and hurries back over to the stove, where she has set a pot with boiling water.

A petite, blonde woman, probably in her mid thirties, sits next to who I assume to be her husband. The man, tall and covered with faint streaks of white in his brown hair, sits just as uneasily as his wife. Next, I shift my study to a younger looking man besides the husband. He has a combination of his father's brown hair blended with a bare hazelnut glaze. I meet his stare and observe the same chestnut colored eyes of his mother.

"Faye," Layla's voice calls to me amidst my ogling adventures, "Come sit."

As if pricks had just traveled their way up my arms, I jerk my head and turn towards a sniggering Layla.

I repress an urge to shoot her an eye roll as I urge my feet to heed in the direction of the open seat beside Layla. Once I'm settled, I feel all three pairs of eyes on me.

Their stares make me want to cringe, but Layla nudges my leg once.

I don't notice that I'm slightly nervous until I feel my heart rate slow as Layla places an arm around my shoulder coolly. I look at her hand with a smile before re-straightening my posture and giving the three my best grin.

"This is my sister, "Layla introduces me, "Faye Williams."

"Welcome to the neighborhood." I nod with as much enthusiasm as I can plaster.

"Thank you, I'm Martha Hayden," The mother smiles a one-dimensional smile and then points to her husband, "This is my husband Jeremy—"

"And I'm Wes Hayden." The boy next to Jeremy finishes, a cheeky smile on his face.

Layla and I nod and I say, "Well, it's nice to meet you all."

Just then, dad winks over to Martha and Jeremy, "Laura has set the table for iced tea, why don't we leave the kids to themselves?"

All three of us watch as the Wes's parents nod and fumble to get out of their seats. Once they do, the couple rounds the corner and the clattering of chairs can be heard as they take their new seats at the other table.

"So," Layla says, drawing my attention back to where I am now, "Where are you from?"

Wes leans back in his chair and grins, "I've lived in many places. We just le Africa."

My eyes widen and Layla gawks, " Africa?"

He nods and chuckles, "My parents are wildlife junkies."

"Wow," I pitch in, not being able to suppress the surprise in my tone, "So, what about school?"

"I was homeschooled," He answers with a shrug, "But I should be a senior in public schools."

A pang rushes through me and I blink at the unknown feeling. I don't know why, but I feel slightly annoyed.

Layla fist pumps, her face turning flushed, "Well, senior power then!"

She reaches out a palm, a gesture for a high five, and Wes hits her hand with a boyish grin.

"Are you both seniors?" He asks, looking between the two of us.

"No," I roll my eyes when Layla snorts and attempts to rule my hair like a baby, "I'm one year younger."

"Too bad I won't be seeing you guys around," Wes says sadly, "Mom wants me to go to the other school in this district."

I frown as Layla speaks my mind, "No, no. Tell your mom this—"

Wes laughs the sound of bells and folds his arms in anticipation as Layla prepares to count the school's achievements.

"First o," She begins, "Can you name any other school here that has a band that has won first place for the past seven years?"

Wes starts to shrug his shoulders but Layla interrupts.

"—No," She confirms quickly, leaving no room for argument, "Second, our lacrosse team kicks everyone's ass—"

"You guys have lacrosse here?" This time, Wes interrupts with an excited look.

I nod, thinking back to Chase, "Yeah, we have a great team. I've heard that it's extremely hard to make the cuts though."

Wes smirks and then smiles, "I'd like a challenge."

"Do you play?" Layla asks with a grin on her face.

Wes nods his head, "Hell yeah! I play. That was my life in Africa."

"Well," Layla says to stick a smug look on her face, "I think that's all the more reason to stick with Palm Beach High and not Lowtide."

"For sure," He agrees, still looking ecstatic, "Something tells me this is going to be a pretty damn good year."