

## Chapter Twenty-Four

### Recap

"I'm serious." He all but growls, bending down to my eye level, "You can run, but there will only be two outcomes. One: I'll catch you and I'll lock you in a tower, or two: they'll catch you and you'll be dead."

If it weren't for my name and the mention of death in the same sentence, I would have cracked a smile at his Rapunzel reference. Or maybe I would've wondered how he even knew about the story—but I don't waste my time on the minor details. Rather, I perk at the mention of 'they.'

"Who's they?" I demand instantly, pondering about what is going through my mind. a

He leans back and runs a hand through his hair, "Are you in or not?"

I narrow my eyes, "For the game, yes."

"Once you agree to the game, you agree to my rules."

"What type of 20 questions is this?" I mutter, more to myself than him.

If he heard that, he does a good job ignoring me. Instead, he raises an eyebrow and waits expectantly.

"Okay!" I exclaim with exasperation, "Deal."

### Chapter Twenty Four

"This is hardly twenty questions." I sco .

"Just answer the question." Travis sighs and pats his calf absentmindedly.

"Pass." I state defiantly, folding my arms across my chest as another breeze whips past me.

He lets his hand drop to the side and he leans forward. With a raised eyebrow, he flashes me an amused look.

"You're out of passes."

I bite my lip, feeling a tingling sensation at the tips of my fingers. I give him one long, hard look, trying to decide if I should tell him the truth. A erall, he has bought a few of my answers without noticing. a

"Fine" I mutter, "It was a dare."

He cocks his head, as if urging me to elaborate.

"Long story short," I stall, while trying to come up with cause and effect, "Layla is the president and someone dared me to take the keys and break in."

I pat the floor in conclusion and stare up at him with empty eyes. He scrutinizes me a moment longer, his lips in a firm line, before cracking a small smile and reaching for his back pocket.

"You're lying." He states bluntly.

I freeze momentarily and clear my throat, ears ringing.

"Pardon? I ask, arching a brow. a

As if he expected me to ask that, he grins and throws a piece of paper in front of me. He watches as I slowly move my gaze towards the paper. At first I don't recognize it, but an instant later, I realize what it is.

His records that I stole a

I trail my hand up to my jacket pocket slowly, trying to keep my face void of any emotion as I do so. My heart pounds erratically as my fingers fish around for the paper that I jammed in while making my grand exit earlier.

"Yeah!" Travis muses, "I'm guessing you're missing something." a

I clench my fist briefly before lifting my head to meet his penetrating gaze.

His jaw is set in a hard line as he observes my reaction.

When I don't respond, he chuckles and points to the paper.

"You want to rephrase your answer?"

"Look," I warn, "I told you I'd find out my own way." a

Oddly enough, instead of pressing the subject, Travis shakes his head and drops it.

"Your turn." Travis orders.

"You're not going to—"

"I said!" He interrupts, turning to glare at me, "Your turn!"

He drags his gaze away and forcefully swipes up a wine bottle. I clamp my mouth and watch in confusion as he latches onto the cork and yanks at it with all his might. Moments later, he chugs the liquid and exhales loudly.

After taking a few more swigs, Travis turns to face me with an expectant look. I blink and clear my throat.

"Why is it so important to you that I remain locked up in my cell?" I finally ask, pursing my lip.

"Because you're in danger." He answers bluntly, his eyes burning into mine.

I duck my head slightly and raise an eyebrow, "Elaborate, please?"

Travis sighs and places the bottle down. While keeping his eyes trained on me, he shifts in his seat and grazes his fingers over his bruised knuckles. My eyes flicker to his temple and I recall spotting it when I found his brother on the beach.

"We're getting to the part where once I tell you, you can't leave." He reminds me, his forehead creasing.

I nod silently and urge him to continue.

Travis shakes his head, as if to scold me for being so willing to listen to his side of the story—nonetheless, he carries on.

"You're in danger because I'm in danger." He says pointing between him and me. "I've done some things in my past that I thought I'd be behind, but apparently, I didn't clean up my mess well enough." a

"And this... mess—that's what is out for you now?" I ask so ly.

"Short version," He nods, "Yeah. But it's not a whatrather a who"

"Who?" I repeat raising my head.

"James Grenage." He states bitterly, the name rolling off his tongue as if it's toxic. "He ran things—" a

"Ran?" I swallow, "Like a...like a king or something?"

He breaks from his normal demeanor and lets out an amused laugh. I feel crimson crawl up my cheeks once those words fall out of my mouth, but I force myself to remain serious. a

"No," He says, "Try gang leader."

"So what you're saying is that you're part of a gang." I utter, suddenly starting to feel out of place and insecure. My heart rate accelerates the longer the silence lapses between the two of us. a

I exhale sharply, feeling my breath started to become ragged, "Travis—"

"Was!" He interrupts me, giving me a pointed look, "Like I said, that's not my life anymore."

His voice starts to fade as I think back to the time when I saw him bash a man's head in with a gun. The fear, the paralysis, that ran through my veins in that moment in time was so breathtakingly powerful, all I could do was scream. I remember running for my life, fearing that any moment, there would be a bullet in my back. a

Suddenly I feel as if I'm being shaken.

My eyes snap forward and I take in Travis's features a few inches before my face. Gasping, I knock his arms away from mine just as he backs off. Looking relieved as I snap back to reality, and he goes to sit farther back.

"Just listen," He orders harshly, "Okay? I was in a gang, but that's the whole point—I'm not anymore!"

I watch him cautiously, half of me pondering all that he's done, all that he's seen. So I nod, I nod because I know the only way to find out is to let him talk.

He looks around hastily before bringing his attention back to me. His shoulders drop and he brushes a hand over his face as he opens his mouth to speak. a

"James Grenage is your gang leader." I utter hoarsely, reminding him of where he belongs.

"Right—James," He nods, frowning, "Like I said, I belong. I didn't want to be apart of his schemes anymore. What he did was sick—I was never really into it in the first place."

He clenches his jaw, and I watch as a tiny muscle ripples past his line. His eyebrows curve and I start to make out a sorrow-filled mask. Quickly, he turns his head to look out into the distance. The outline of his Adam's apple moves as he swallows back whatever he must be feeling.

"They were terrible things—and everyone was so willing to do them. I never understood, and James noticed that." He explains, "As I grew older, he started sending me out on his runs. I realize now that he was trying to break me. He was trying to make me become this robot that everyone else had become." He laughs humorlessly and shakes his head. "Then one day..." a

My breath hitches, "What happened?"

He looks down, "One day I told him I couldn't. Despite how cruel his words were, he was like a father to his members. At least, that's what he told us. I was naive enough to think that I could reason my way out of it." Travis sighs and looks at me, "I was wrong as hell."

I bite my lip sadly and hug my knees to my chest.

"I was eleven and he beat the shit out of me—Broke two of my ribs, my leg, and twisted my arm." He recalls angrily, "So from that day on, I knew I had to fake my loyalty. I gained inner access on the gang, found the loopholes, it's enemies, weaknesses, strengths. I memorized the gang so that when I belong, I'd be able to bring James down piece by piece." a

"So now he's a enemy." I conclude, "Because you know his dirty secrets." a

"Exactly." Travis nods his head, "And he'll do anything to get me. He's desperate. That's why you're at risk here too, Faye. Any connections I have to anyone, he can't take the chances."

"Okay, but we don't have any 'connection'" I pronounce slowly, putting brackets around the last word.

"You know me," He states while shrugging, "That's good enough for him."

"So you're saying that because I know you, he'll kill me?" I demand, my voice turning up slightly.

"Faye," He warns, placing his finger to his lips, "Calm down."

I throw my head back and laugh, "Calm down?"

"Faye if you freak," Travis warns, "You're vulnerable—that's how James likes it. You cannot break."

"I don't—how can I not?" I exasperate, throwing my hand in the air. My mind races with intensity and I jump to my feet. Flinging my jacket over my shoulder, I fast walk towards the set of stairs, bound to get the hell away from him, "I know you and he's going to kill me for it!" a

I hear footsteps behind me and I quicken my pace, trying to suppress a squeak that threatens to escape my lips. Travis runs past me and holds his hands up, blocking my exit.

"I won't let him!" He insists, mirroring my moves, "You can't do this on your own."

"The hell I can't." I snap, shoving him out of my way. a

He grabs my arm and pulls me back.

"Look," I tear out of his grip and flick a strand of hair out of my face. With one hand I point all my fingers towards him while keeping the arms length distance between us. "There's only one thing that I'm getting out of this—we're putting each other at risk by being around each other. We could just—not, and things would—" a

"That could've been a solution a while back Faye," Travis growls, running a hand roughly through his hair, "But not anymore. It's not just James that's a enemy—it's everyone—old members, new members, people who I've dealt with and who want revenge."

I bite my lip when I feel a burning sensation at the brims of my eyes. The reality of it settles on me the longer he talks, and I realize I'm in too deep. We're in too deep and there's nothing I can do. a

When Travis notices I'm not attempting to leave anymore, he drops his defensive stance and looks around briefly.

I shake my head and ask him something I already know the answer to, "Your scars—are they from gang members?"

He nods briskly, "It's me or them."

"What difference does it make if I'm with you or not?" I ask seriously, trying to reason on my chances.

"Safety," he looks down at me, "I can keep you safe if I know you're not throwing yourself out there."

I frown, ready to throw a remark about how he phrased that, but I hold my tongue. Instead, a thought much more aggravating enters my mind and I gasp.

"What about your brother?"

His features darken as I mention him and he shakes his head, "James will not touch him. I won't let that happen."

"And if I do stay," I ask at last, "how the hell are you so sure we'll make it out alive?"

"We'll fight." He vows peering down at me, "After all, you did say you are familiar with it, right?" a

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Hiya!

So this is going to sound crazy, but from this point on, there are only ten chapters left! Wow. a

I know this is the revised version, but I feel so much better having this one up. I can sleep at night knowing I've almost fully edited an entire novel. a

Anywho, I hope you enjoyed this next chapter.

Pretty please, can I have 20 comments? Seriously, votes aside—I love comments! a

That's why my phrase (vcomment) sounds more like comment than vote, get it? (:

VCOMMENT!

xxSummerxx