

Chapter Thirty-Two

Recap

“Did the police inform them or did you?” I ask, wondering how anxious they must be feeling.

“I did, and the police confirmed it.” Layla states, taking a quick glance at the officers.

I follow her gaze and watch as the caution tape comes out and travels around the perimeter of our house. A few officers on the side are huddled together, talking about something urgent in solitude.

“You two should stay at my place.” Travis suddenly pitches in, stepping forward and motioning towards the house right across from ours.

My heart jumps at the suggestion, for I know that safety won't be an issue if we're with him.

“Uh,” Layla looks doubtful, but takes repeated glances between the two of us. When she sees that I haven't resisted the idea, something registers across her features. She takes one final glance at me before shifting her gaze back to Travis. “Are you sure you're parents will be okay with that?”

I watch Travis reply unfazed, “They're not home at the moment, but I'm sure they'd be fine with it.”

Despite this whole situation, I still wonder what part of that sentence—if any—holds any truth to it. If I didn't know his story, however, I would've believed every word as easily as Layla buys his answer.

Nonetheless, it works, and Layla smiles slightly.

“Alright,” She agrees, “Thank you Travis.”

She turns around to observe what the police officers are doing now, and I take the opportunity to glance up at Travis so that I can thank him myself. He looks back down at me, and his gaze instantly softens.

Before I can even mutter the words, he shakes his head and says, “I know.”

Chapter Thirty Two

Travis had just led Layla and I into a guest bedroom. It was three doors down from his room—yet completely on the other side of the stairs rounding the corner. He left moments later, giving me one, lasting glance before grabbing the doorknob and leaving us to bask in our privacy.

I spin around slowly, still stunned about everything that had just happened. But it appears that each time I think about the recent event, I get even more overwhelmed about what happened far before that.

I reach a hand out and rub it over my face in an attempt to wipe away the gnawing frustration.

Layla puts a hand on her head and slumps down onto the plush covers of the queen size bed. We both stare at each other wordlessly, as if to confirm the fuzzy reality.

“Damn, that really happened.” She groans, throwing herself back on the bed.

I drop my hand and sigh. “Imagine what Laura and dad must be feeling.”

“They must be sick to their stomachs,” She agrees, worry consuming her voice in the same way a snake coils around its prey.

The guilt and anxiety is inescapable.

Silence engulfs again, and I begin to remember bits and pieces of our scattered conversation over the phone. Despite this, my cheeks flush when I remember what exactly was happening before hand. I clear my throat, snapping myself physically out of my daze. A hand flies to my tingling lips before I furrow my brows.

“Something you said has eating at me since forever.” I state suddenly, sinking down against the wall and folding my feet when my thighs hit the carpet.

Layla props up from her sprawled position and stares down at me, wary yet eager for me to continue.

“When you were on the phone,” I continue, taking a careful glance at her, “You said that nothing was stolen.”

Her features turn dark, ghostly even. I watch as brightness drains from her eyes. Filling in its place is a vast ocean of concern and fear.

She nods her head, “Nothing.”

“Are you sure?” I mutter, even though I don't doubt her answer.

The fact of the matter is that I don't want to believe otherwise. After everything that's happened, the possibility that James is behind this is not out of the question. And as I feared—if he is responsible for this—he's got my whole family involved.

“Faye,” Layla's voice is slightly irritated, “My car keys, laptop, and credit card were in plain sight on the counter.”

My heart drops.

“If the person wanted to steal, they had all the goodies right in front of them.” She reasons, lifting her palms up, “But it's all there. Untouched.”

I swallow a lump that formed at the base of my throat. I feel a waning throb at the root of my stomach, as if Campbell's Guilt Soup is boiling in my gut, about to overspill.

“Whoever that person was—” Her voice is now a mere whisper, “clearly wasn't looking for something.” She lifts her eyes to meet mine. Every ounce of life in her usually vibrant blue eyes has vanished. “I think they were looking for some one”

I force a bitter laugh, “Don't be ridiculous. This isn't some Murder House Mystery.”

Layla shoots me a glare. “I'm being serious.”

Just then, a faint knock on the door stops our conversation in its tracks. We both dart our gazes to the door.

“Sorry,” a small voice calls out, “Is it okay to come in?”

We give each other odd looks before shrugging. Layla looks away while I give the okay to enter.

The door opens, and to my surprise, Mason stumbles in—red in the face. When he catches my eyes, he shoots me a cheeky grin. A smile instantly spreads across my lips in response.

Mason walks towards me, dressed from head to toe in a ninja turtle onesie. I raise an eyebrow and open my mouth to speak.

“Mason,” I say in a light tone, “Aren't you supposed to be in bed?”

He throws a hand to his mouth, his eyes growing wide. I watch in amusement as he shakes his head incredulously.

“Then why are you in your pajamas?” I challenge.

He giggles, a small sound escaping his lips before he can cover his mouth. In the spur of the moment, his eyes flicker to where Layla is sitting. Then, he glances back down at me, a furrow transfixing his now perplexed features.

“Who is that?” He asks, taking another peak at her.

Before I can answer, she pitches in, her voice sounding a lot more upbeat and lively when she introduces herself.

“Hi Mason!” She says warmly, “I'm Layla, Faye's sister.”

“Oh! Layla rhymes with—” He smiles again, “it rhymes with...”

Seconds of tense silence tick by before the same frown captures his expression, completely sweeping him off his feet. He looks completely stumped—puzzled—as he attempts to find a word that rhymes with Layla.

“I can't like you.” He stomps his foot, truly agitated “Layla doesn't rhyme with anything!”

I suppress a laugh and Layla decides to play along.

“Well, can't you just make an exception?” She draws, her lips forming a pout.

Mason is adamant. He shakes his head in rejection of that idea and places his hands on his hips.

“No.” He answers, a bit of hysteria and reasoning laced into his tone. “That's not how it works.”

“Usually!” A sudden voice pops up from behind the door, and I identify it without taking a glance as Travis's. Mason's mouth forms an 'o' shape as Travis takes a step into the room and kneels down to his level. “When I tell you it's bed time, you go to bed. That's how it works.”

Both Layla and I observe the way the two interact. Mason folds his arms in defiance and pushes his bottom lip out while Travis narrows his eyes.

“You're not the boss of me.” He argues childishly.

“You're right.” Travis agrees raising his eyebrow, “but you know who I am the boss of?”

He doesn't wait for Mason to reply.

“You know those monsters in your closet?”

Mason's eyes bulge, and I wonder how they managed to stay firm in their sockets. He covers his ears and starts to run past Travis with a panicked and defeated look.

“Okay!” He wails in surrender, “I'm going—just don't bring them out.”

The door shuts moments later and Travis, who was staring at the carpet and listening to his brother, smirks in a celebration in his small victory.

“That's cruel.” Layla jokes, trying to break the awkwardness before it even builds. “I like it—teach me your ways.”

Travis glances up to look at her. He shoots me a knowing glance, his eyes filled with such an indescribable amount of humor.

I can almost feel the hidden sarcasm when he replies with, “Maybe someday.”

Then, before either of us can say anything, he shoots me a solid glance before stalking out the door. We follow his movements until he's out of sight. Once he's gone, I bring my already crimson gaze to Layla.

However, she's already staring at me with a strange look on her face. She raises an eyebrow and motions towards the direction he left in which he left.

“What was that about?” She inquires, clearly having noticed some type of double meaning in his reply.

I shrug my shoulders immediately, pursing my lip as the truth burns the tip of my tongue. As if a light bulb has gone off, I suddenly understand why his eyes held such mockery and humor when she commented on his techniques. She considered that cruel, but Layla really had no idea the depth of cruelty he has seen and taken part in.

If only she knew.

Again, I shake my head, “I have no idea.”

00 00 00 00 00 00 00

Yay! Another update. I decided to give y'all a break and not leave this chapter as a cliffy for three reasons.

1.) I feel sorry for your sanity when y'all threaten to hunt me down for leaving a cliffy.

2.) Y'all are horny af. And I don't think I'm in the mood to dissatisfy any lustful teens. (no offense! understandable b/c...well it's Travis)

3.) I feel nice today.

Consider it my way of saying THANKS in honor of thanksgiving (;

Anywho, Thanks for voting and commenting (OHMYGOD...) so flipping much. It makes me so happy. I literally squeal everytime I see comments related to the story. And NO, that does include the ones where people tell me to update 'fast'.

Sassy Sidenote: I'm sure many of you are writers on here yourselves. Take it from me and others, when you post saying 'update' quick, there's a thought that goes on in all our heads saying...hmm. maybe I won't now. AHEM. (;

I know this isn't the most action packed chapter, but please don't stop you from commenting! I hope the lack of Favis moments won't deter y'all from commenting...

QOC: If you could go on a date with Travis, what would you expect?

Can I get 50 comments?

COMMENT.

xxSummerxx