

Chapter Thirty-Three

Recap

“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 in which he le .

“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 o , I suddenly understand why his eyes held such mockery and humor when she commented on his techniques. She considered thatcruel, 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.”

Chapter Thirty Three

It’s pitch black. With hazy, grubby vision, I wiggle my sleepy fingers in an attempt to exercise the sharp pins and needles in my skin. Sometime last night, Layla and I had fallen asleep in the same clothes we came in.

My shoulder is tucked under the somewhat earthy carpeted floor while Layla’s so snores indicate towards the queen sized bed meant for the two of us. As my eyesight begins to adjust to the darkness of the room, I gradually notice figures of objects.

Through the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of a dimly light red beam light that agitates my temples. Despite this, my gaze follows the light and lands on bland alarm clock which reads 3:02 AM

Restlessness seeps into my bones as I stare up at the ceiling. The gentle lullaby of Layla’s rem breath is rather loud within the overwhelming silence. So, I give up on the thought of going back to sleep, for my mind is still racing over the the less robbery.

With a suppressed sigh, I slowly roll forward, arching my back until I’m sitting up. Now, I can see clearly. As I stand, careful not to disturb Layla, I chuckle at her sprawled position. A so smile forms across my features when I observe how each foot is attached to opposite corners of the mattress. Her right hand droops o the edge of the bed while her le is awkwardly twisted behind her back. Her face is nonexistent, for her disheveled, blonde streaks of hair cover it.

I step back, wondering how in hell she finds that position comfortable to sleep in at all.

Nonetheless, I envy her slightly for being able to sleep so soundlessly—snores and all. With a final glance, I turn around and saunter out of the room, intent on getting myself a glass of water.

I know the contours of this house as well as the contours of Travis’s features. Even as I slump down the marble stairs, I feel the familiarity of the cold, o en slippery surface. And the corners of the wall that meet the floor of the stairs transform into a shade of mahogany as I enter the main hall. The spacious width, large enough for an echo to lose its way, allows plenty room to twirl—or in my case, stumble—around.

I pass the main room, where a fire pit resides across from a set of bleach white couches. The wooden floor caresses my toes as I switch from marble cold to polished neutrality.

Finally, I arrive in the kitchen and silently appreciate the natural light of the moon flooding through the window. That path of light guides me safely to the sink where I then help myself to a glass of cool water.

I swallow and lean back against the counter, looking out the window. I bring the glass up to my lips again and swallow before setting it down beside me and staring at our dauntingly isolated house across the road. The long set of caution tape that runs from one end to the other ripples in the wind. As if that breeze has hit me, I shudder and force myself to look away.

Heading back the direction I came, I rub my face of the agonizing sensation that has been eating at me since the moment yesterday began. Just as I cross the main room, I hear shu ling in that direction.

“Faye?” The familiar, but weary voice whispers my name.

I freeze and turn back around, confused when I see Travis propped up on the couch with a blanket over his legs and the hood of his navy blue sweatshirt over his head.

Had I completely missed him the first time?

He scratches his head, the dark hair ru ling and sticking out in odd directions.

“Travis.” I state quietly, walking back towards him. “What are you doing?”

“Sleeping.” He manages to lace a little sarcasm into his raspy tone.

I roll my eyes and sit on the opposite corner when I reach it.

“I mean, why on the couch?” I clarify, raising an eyebrow.

He shrugs, “I’m waiting for my mom to come home.”

“Is she usually this late?” I inquire. I know I’m poking around some invisible barrier, but I can’t help it as the curiosity brims and slips out interlaced in my voice.

While I speak, he surprises me by grabbing my calves and stretching them out across the couch. He li s his blanket and places it over my feet so that I’m now a mirror image of his position.

“Yes, it’s normal.” He muses in what I can detect as repulsion. Though I ache to press him more about her whereabouts, I bite my lip and hold back. I nod my head.

He leans back against the armrest and stares at me in silence, probably expecting me to ask him more questions. So when none come out, we simply stare. I re-memorize every curve and dent in his expression.

He’s wearing a solemn one this time.

His lips are dressed in a straight, blunt line and his eyes lack the energy they usually do. The show is over and the curtains have closed.

His guards are down, his gun unloaded.

He has peeled o his fearless and warrior-like mask, and for the first time, I see him for who he really is.

Broken.

I never saw it before—the raw emotion. It leaves me breathless and bittersweet all at once. For it has always been a secret motivation to fix him. Yet, a er all this time, when I see him now, I realize that what I see in him is exactly what he must see in me.

“How are you holding up?” He breaks the tranquil ambiance with a barely audible undertone.

“I don’t know.” I mumble honestly, clutching the blanket in my fists. “None of this feels real.”

He chuckles darkly, “I warned you that things could get really messy.”

“I know.” I agree slowly, watching his brows knit in confusion. Perhaps this is the first time we’ve ever agreed on something. “...I don’t care.”

“You don’t care?” He repeats incredulously, outrage brimming furiously at the edge of his voice.

“No.” I repeat with terrifying sincerity. I watch cautiously as astonishment occupies his previously vacant expression. “I don’t.”

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Hey!

So, my thanksgiving break is over—sadly. Bad news is that I am approaching the senior year finals. I have an AP final coming up soon as well so I’ve got to start hitting the books instead of writing them haha. This means that my updates will slow down. Good news is that I’ve got a good handle on my college applications and progress is underway.

BY THE WAY! I HAVE ENTERED THIS STORY INTO WATTY AWARDS THIS YEAR so vote if you feel like this book deserves it!

Thanks a million times for your support, I always appreciate it. I especially love how some of you actually reply to my QOCs! It makes me so happy!

Thank for all the comments you give me. I just can't even imagine sometimes.

Can I get 55 comments?

VOMMENT.

xxSummerxx

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