

Chapter Forty

Recap

Considering the fact that I had been expecting much worse news, I hesitate to gather the correct reaction—well, the reaction that Layla is expecting. As an ironic sense of relief washes over me, I look down at the carpeted floor while I gather the appropriate emotions. Instead, it feels as if one heavy burden has been released from my shoulders.

“Oh...” are the brilliant, emotionally captivating words that escape my lips when I glance back up at Layla.

She falters and raises an eyebrow, “Oh?”

I frown, “Yes?”

“Mood kill,” She shakes her head and mutters in exasperation, “I’m going to get some water.”

“Okay.” I reply as she moves to get on the bed and past me towards the door. She takes her phone with her and then disappears in a few moments time.

The instant she’s gone, the hopeful atmosphere I had managed to create drastically drops to a level of none. The small smile that I held in Layla’s presence vanishes and is replaced with an intense frown that I had been fighting the entire time.

In no time, I pick myself up off the floor and make my way out of the guest room. With my sight trained on Travis’s slightly ajar door, I walk towards it, completely intent on sorting this entire situation out right then and there.

“Travis.” I call as I push past the door, “We seriously need to talk.”

Only, when I turn around after shutting the door closed behind me, I catch sight of his mom sprawled across his bed—completely and utterly wasted.

Chapter Forty

My heart lurches in my chest as I stare stupidously at the woman before me. Oblivious and shaking with heavy snores, his mother sits in her position, rolling towards the center of the bed.

I take a cautious step back, wondering if Travis even knows that she’s here—in this house. As she shuffles around again, making a guttural sound in the back of her throat, I think of my own mother.

Did this dormant woman, harmless and clueless in appearance, turn violent when intoxicated? Travis had mentioned before how his father had a habit of meeting several women in one night. Perhaps there is an anger building in her system, begging for release in the same deadly way as my own.

What about Mason—is he okay?

Is this the reason why Travis and him got thrown into a spiral of gang related activity in the first place?

There are so many questions floating in my head as I stare, that I nearly fall backwards when my foot hits the door. A dull thud echoes within the room, and I clench my eyes shut, my fists following suite.

Silently, I pray that she doesn’t stir. I turn quickly, realizing that she has moved a hand up, to slip out as quickly as I had entered. My hand twists the knob with a slightly excessive and urgent force. Perhaps the sensation of intrusion encourages me to fumble with my movements.

“Cassie, baby?” I freeze in my spot as she calls out in a raspy voice, “You’re here?”

As I remain facing the door, my palms begin to sweat as confusion infused with an unknown sense of sympathy enters my system at the sound of her hopeless tone. I hear shuffling behind me, and a little bit of increased breathing in the process.

“Come here,” She calls out, her voice coming closer, but still holding the haziness to it. “I’ve missed you so much.”

My fingers twitch indecisively around the base of the knob, and I consider walking out before she can officially come to the right state of mind.

“Please don’t leave us again...” Her voice comes out strained and heartbroken, as if all signs of intoxication have vanished.

At the sound of her broken voice, I instinctively release my hold. There is no way I have it in me to walk out after that. So, I turn around gently, feeling how sluggishly my blood works to pump near my ears.

Travis is going to kill me.

I glance up at the vulnerably frail woman and take the time to observe the pale brown bird’s nest residing on her head. Her lips are chapped from dehydration and even half way across the room, she reeks of alcohol.

I come a little closer as she beckons for me. She squints her eyes—the same pair of eden green eyes—and I feel the familiar sensation of light nervousness press against my lower abdomen.

Her drunken state is confirmed when she smiles in satisfaction and calls me Cassie once again.

Once I am nearly at her side, she reaches forward and grabs my idle hand. I stiffen and remain still as she traces her clammy fingers along the outlines of my knuckles. After a few moments of stillness and stability, she startles me by beginning to hum a soft tune.

All silence engulfs us—except for the sound of her murmuring voice. The tune begins to sound familiar, rounding at the same notes as I expect, dying down at the right time, growing at its own pace.

I listen for a moment longer, awestruck and all the more confused. When she repeats the tune over again, I frown my brows and glance down at her in wonder. She is ultimately lost in her own world, tracing motherly and smooth figures on the face of my skin. Her face addresses a point of utmost relaxation and peace as she does so.

It’s a Russian lullaby. She hums the same lullaby that my own mom used to sing me to sleep with every night as a child. I close my eyes as the woman’s humming repeats, and I imagine being in the arms of a rare and loving mom. She rocks me back and forth, cradling my head as if letting go would be a deadly sin.

I stand on to the side of my room back in Boston and watch the younger version of myself fade into a serenade of blissful slumber. Mom stares down at me, her eyes so kind and swept. Occasionally, my round, beady eyes flutter open, and I reach my tiny hands forward to latch onto her button up blouse.

As she smiles and whispers something sweet, my hand eases its grip and eventually falls back by my side. My cheeks pulse in contentment and my eyes begin to droop uncontrollably. All elements combined—the soft Russian lullaby, mom’s soothing voice, the rocking—cascade a curtain of dreams and passionate rest over my eyelids.

Then, the song comes to an end.

Almost too soon.

For, suddenly, I am ripped out of my daydream and placed back in the present—one that no longer contains the same security or mom. My eyes fly open when reality comes back to me.

To my surprise, I feel the dreaded burning sensation at the brims of my eyes. Hastily, I remove my hand from her grip and make a move to swipe away a tear that begins to crawl down my cheek.

She notices it before I can wipe it away, recognition and understanding crossing her features. Her hand slides back under the covers of the bed while I take one slow step backwards.

“I should go...” I murmur, more to myself than to her.

I spin on my heels and nearly rush towards the door, more than eager to get out of the nostalgic room. I slip out, thankful she doesn’t protest as I do so, my heart feeling heavy and exhausted.

I gently tug the door shut behind me and then press my back momentarily against the wall next to it. With a solemn sigh, I push on my only support and make my way towards the guest bedroom.

“What are you doing?” says the last person I would like to confront at this moment.

I glance up at Travis, noticing his cold stance at the center of the hallway.

I shake my head and continue to walk towards the guest room, “Nothing, I am just going to sleep.”

“It’s two thirty.” He replies curtly, throwing my reason out the door.

“I’m tired.” I state, sliding past him.

He shakes his head and shoots an arm out to block me from moving forward. I stand awkwardly and stubbornly while refusing to show my swollen eyes to him.

I feel his stare on me as he rephrases, “I mean what were you doing in my room?”

“I’m sorry,” I repress a groan, “Your door was open so I went in to talk to you.”

He exhales sharply and situates himself directly in front of me—blocking my view to the other side. “You didn’t bother to knock?”

“Look, I said I was sorry.” I raise one hand up, my voice deflated and entirely ready to just submit and move on.

“Well sorry doesn’t cut it.”

“Okay.” I agree, wondering if my answer will be satisfaction enough to let the situation slide.

He looks taken aback, but doesn’t challenge my answer, “What did she say?”

I know his question has something to do with his mom mentioning the name ‘Cassie’, so I decide to give the both of us a decent night of sleep.

“Nothing really—she’s tired.” I answer back, moving to step around him.

He doesn’t reply but I can tell he’s not satisfied with my answer. I maneuver to the corner and just about make it a few feet away from where I was originally standing before Travis walks ahead of me and pulls my arm back with him.

He bends his knees and ducks his head so that his eyes are at my level. Instead of fighting it, I let him see, hoping that with his worn sight, he’ll let me go. However, rather than doing so, I watch his eden eyes grow so kind and lush.

The tenderness in his gaze is so light that I begin to feel my eyes burn again. I look away and bite my lip, frustrated with my lack of control. Wordlessly, Travis sighs and pulls me forward into his chest.

His arms come around my waist, latching onto the polyester feel of my jacket. I remain frozen in that very moment—even my tears halt in their downpour—as he tucks me into his warmth and rests his face on the nape of my neck.

I wait, figuring that he would let go eventually and go on a rampage that would disconnect the feeling that was forming between us. A few moments of silence pass by—mainly with me trying to understand his sudden shift in mood. When nothing changes, I start to relax, subconsciously melting into his firm hold on me like it is the only thing keeping me up.

A tear I didn’t know had fallen slips past the curve on my cheek and slides down my chin. I clamp my eyes shut, willing the tears to stop forming, and fist a handful of his hair in my hands.

As if he can feel the tears dropping on his shirt, Travis begins to rub soothing circles along the small of my back while tucking me, impossibly closer into his body. Likewise, I pull him closer to me, hoping that the human interaction will dim the dull pain my mom has forever imprinted in my heart.

His lips graze my collarbone before finally pressing a barely noticeable kiss.

“I’m sorry,” He whispers against my skin.

And in that moment, despite my confusion, I forgive him for anything.

∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞

First of all, Happy New Year lovelies! I hope everyone celebrated and had a lot of food haha. I’m back from my trip—I’m completely jet lagged. I’m going to let y’all in on a secret: when I left, I was so convinced I was going to hate it...but I surprised myself when I found myself enjoying my vacation so much. I mean yeah, I went to visit a medical school, but...I actually LIKED it. I love it.

So yeah, I think I’ll be going to medical school once I graduate from high school—which is super nerve-racking and exciting at the same time. (:

Anywho, While I was there, I think there was a malfunction with the internet or connection to my laptop because I couldn’t update a new chapter. So, here it is now!

Happy 2015 and reading!

Can I get 60 comments?

xxSummerxx