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Surprise again!
I was just too excited. I was going to post it tomorrow, but I couldn't
wait any longer.
I'm sorry for any mistakes in advance. I'm literally shaking from my
furious typing. And on top of that, mother nature hasn't been the
nicest to me today.
On another note, I hope you enjoy!
And please please--I'm literally begging for comments! How
o en is it that you have someone ask for feedback over votes? o:
VOMMENT!
                     Recap
    My eyes dart their way around and then freeze as they take in a
familiar figure. Not Layla, but Travis the devil himself. As I observe
him walking across the backs of cars, a phone attached to his ear, he
gru ly readjusts the leather jacket on his body. I start to flush at the
thought of him tapping into the conversation Ashley and I had today,
until I remember the reality of this entire situation. He didn't show up
to school for the past week—and he's been here the entire time.
      I grit my teeth, willing myself to get over my fear, and look over
at Ashley who is looking at Travis too. When she notices me staring,
she jots her head in his direction and smirks.
      "Speak of the devil," She comments, raising an eyebrow and
folding her arms, "Looks like he ding dong ditched you."
      I sco and turn my back in Travis's direction, aiming to walk
backwards while taking to Ashley.
      She calls out, "If you change your mind—"
      "—Which I won't—" I assure her before she can even complete
her sentence.
      "Come find me." She concludes that statement with a cheeky
grin.
      I shake my head visibly in her direction before whirling around
and searching for my wrath victim.
                     Chapter Fi een
                   TRAVIS: An Hour Before
      James Grenage.
      The only name I have found that is equivalent to the wrath of
 hell.
      He shatters humanity, maliciously tearing the life out of his
victims.
       I've seen it.
       The monster that resides in him is worse than anything I've
witnessed.
When I looked at him, through childish and hopeless eyes, I saw a
man of power, of wealth. Star struck by the idea, I forgot the sins he
committed—the sins that made him—and began to imagine a life like
his. He was the one man I was born to obey and raised to fear. And I
did fear him. I did, when I was younger, believe that everything he
said made him divine.
       So did the rest of us.
       But you see, that's the thing: I did.
      There came a moment, like a breakeven through ice, that
crashed on me—thrashing my world. His power, his money, it all
came from my blood—my labored breathing. The only dierence
 between me and the rest of them, was that I chose to rebel.
      I grabbed all that I could and ran.
      And since then, I've been on the run.
But something has changed since the last time James had a firm grip
on me; I'm not the boy who looks at him and sees all that I could be.
No longer do I blindly sin to support his dreams. Most importantly,
I'm not weak. As I le, so did that submissive, rugged boy.
Each time I fight, I fight for that lost soul who didn't know any better.
The fear is overruled by anger—and that's why I always win.
I am my own defense.
And to be invincible, I have to be alone.
"Excuse me?" A distant yet loud voice penetrates my thin veil of
thoughts.
At the sound of approaching footsteps, I tear my gaze away from the
poster sloppily taped onto the outside of the café. My eyes wander
over an overly dressed man, a grey trench coat wrapped around his
body as if it were ninety degrees below zero rather than above.
I place my co ee on a table nearby and straighten out, "Can I help
you?"
The man nods and removes the hat from his head, revealing
disheveled hair. "Yes, I think I'm lost?"
"Oh." I raise an eyebrow and attempt to suppress a smile at his
confusion, "Where to sir?"
"I recently moved here and I've been o ered a job at The Crane" He
explains, using gestures, "The only problem is that I can't find where
it's located."
"I didn't know they were o ering jobs," I muse, pointing to the café
advertisement in comparison.
When he doesn't respond, I shi my feet and look to the right. "Lucky
for you, it's not far from here."
"Oh!" He throws his head back and lets out a gaudy laugh, one that
shows age, "Thank goodness."
I smile but it falters as I catch a glint of an object from his lower le
hand pocket. I squint slightly as if to uncover what is behind the
cloth, but the man recovers from his fit before I can.
      Only, when he straightens out again, he catches me staring at
that spot. His expression shi s from lightness to a sudden guarded
look. But before I can make any more out of it, it vanishes as quickly
as it came.
      As I give him one more glance, the way he continues to stare at
me, I know he's not here to work at The Crane I slide one hand into
my pocket and gesture the other towards the building.
      "Why don't I lead you there?" I ask, plastering a smile on my
face.
      The man beams, something more than just an achievement of
obtaining guidance, "I would appreciate that."
     I wait for him to fall into step with me before walking farther. My
heart begins to race in anticipation and I find it hard to hear what he
is saying. All I can think about is what is going to happen in a few
seconds.
      As we pass the crosswalk and inch toward the restaurant, I grip
something hard in my pocket as I speak.
      "So," I begin lightly, "I didn't get your name."
      The man laughs, a forced one, and nods, "Likewise."
      I look forward, knowing there's no way he doesn't know who I
am. When he sees that I have chosen to not respond, he heaves a sigh
and looks forward like me.
      "Xavier Lowes," He states, bringing his gaze to meet mine.
      Just then, he starts to slow down, and I observe that we are a
few steps away from the building. I have this place memorized—and
looks he does too. Moments before The Cranethere is an alleyway.
      Xavier reaches for his coat with a smile as I calculate my moves
in the split second I have. With my eyes still glued to his, I reach
forward and yank him harshly into the alley.
      Xavier lets out a ragged breath before stumbling in a er me. He
grunts, probably frustrated that I've figured it all out, and roughly rips
his arm out of my grip. I try to latch on, but he manages to nudge my
cheekbone with his elbow. Pain snaps through my face like a
lightening bolt; there is no way I can let him pummel me with one
blow.
      Reluctantly, My hand slips, but I refuse to waste a second of
precious time. I lunge forward, just as he does the same and he
reaches for my neck. I duck, just in time, hurling his body against the
brick wall seconds a er he throws a hand. He pounds on my back
using something besides his fist and I feel slight nausea endorse my
stomach in a churning sensation.
     My throat immediately dries up as my breath becomes thick
and arduous. I clamp my eyes shut and push back even harder,
feeling my heart rate start to pick up in utter panic. Then, with all my
might, I wrench out of his seize and throw my first punch in his
direction. He grabs onto my fist moments before it reaches his face,
and I immediately release my second arm with success. The impact of
flesh on flesh upli s my brain as I swing at him again. His head
rebounds o the brick wall and I can tell he's losing it.
      With one final attempt to fight back, he clumsily latches onto
my neck. I flinch away and respond with a resounding blow to the
side of his head—right where the temple meets the edge of the eye.
      He freezes as I hit a nerve and then gradually falls to the floor.
As he does so, I am nearly dragged down with him. His hand, which is
still locked somewhat around the back of my shirt, gives up half way
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I glaze over a piece of paper, seeing that it is blank with only a few words imprinted on it. Find him, dead or alive. I clench my jaw and flip it over to see a recent picture of me. The same etched features as the ones before—except this time, I'm frowning down at someone. Who—I can't exactly tell. I grit my teeth and hastily tear the picture to shreds. I know I'm being tracked—but who knows exactlywhere I live? This picture surely isn't the only one of all of them. I let the pieces of paper fall to the floor like feathers. The lump in Xavier's pocket reveals one more object waiting to be found. Promptly, I sweep my hand across and pull out none other than a glinting knife. Holding it up, I gulp at the thought and observe it with nostalgia. As quickly as I dug it out, I chuck it away with disgust. I bring my

gaze back to Xavier and see him as nothing better than James

ice cold trail of fiery shivers.

you are there..."

had started o at.

Palm Beach High.

impatient students.

humidity as if it is fog.

slamming the phone to my ear.

into my head and my heart drops.

I can't let that happen.

reach for the first thing in my pocket.

prevents me from unleashing my rage.

the uppercuts I'm used to experiencing.

crossly.

in the air.

my face."

out of my life."

not coming from me, but rather the other line.

Grenage himself. A billow of repulse flits through my body, leaving an

I open my mouth to speak again; however, a rattle at the

backdoor of The Cranehas me up and hastily dropping my gaze from

As I run, a sense of dejavu overwhelms me. The co ee I had le

Instead, I push on, letting my feet lead the way. I continue to

push past people, gaining angry stares and demanding faces as I do

so. A er a while, I round a corner and dodge out of downtown. With

my mind set on running a short distance further, I decide to head for

heavily in the slit of my leather jacket. Cursing at the timing, I yank it

out while dashing across the street, earning a few honks from the

Absentmindedly, I show them my finger and glare while

"What." I stipulate, my scru y voice perforating the Miami

At first, when I hear strenuous breathing, I believe that it is my

own. However, as I clamp my mouth to swallow, I realize the sound is

Compulsively, I restrain my igneous curiosity and thrust the

'end' button. Moments later, I reach the campus and continue to walk

Just as I start to see the blocks of the school, my phone vibrates

Xavier. Within an instant, I sprint out of the alley and past the café I

on the table earlier—the one I forgot about—remains in its spot. If I

weren't so tense, I would have stopped to make my money

worthwhile, but at this moment, I don't care.

"Xavier Lowes..." I mutter, taking in his features, "How many of

through the drop and I stumble to regain my balance.

down, are alive—and so am I.

Nothing.

I take a few steps back and observe the mess we created amidst

our combat. As startled as I am, I feel pride swell up in my chest at the

thought of another victory. My back and throat, though battered and

I let out a breathy laugh, finding no humor but hysteria, and

stare at the fantastically gruesome man before me. Hesitantly, I take a

few steps forward and nudge his arm with my foot. When he doesn't

A burning sensation of regret circulates my system and I

way. To fuel my fire, I reach into his pocket, the one I had caught

earlier, and grab whatever my hands capture.

swallow, trying not to view him as a man, but rather something in my

respond, I bend down and place two fingers on his neck pulse.

across the parking lot as the students endlessly file out of the front doors. I pick up my pace halfway through and press the phone harder against my ear. Although no one is on the other line, it makes me appear occupied—as antisocial as it appears. My mind gravitates back to the alleyway. The fight, the knife, the picture...all of it.

As if to torture my memory some more, an image of my brother pops

My despair swi ly transforms into that of defense as a sharp

jerk on the sleeve of my jacket sends me staggering backwards.

Vexation courses through my adrenaline driven state and my vision

turns to a deathly shade of red. I clench my fist, ready to put an end

to this as my vision begins to blur. Subsequently, I stalk forward and

A shrill "Travis!" followed a er a sharp, reverberating strike

The slap, though strong, seemed rather innocuous compared to

I halt in my position and shake my head, thoroughly confused

"What. The. Hell." She spits ferociously, folding her petite arms

to see none other than Faye Williams fuming in front of me.

across her chest. Relief drowns me as I struggle to find the right words to say. As I continue to stare at her stupidly, I feel my rage sluggishly sedate into that of exasperation. I could have downright killed her. To guard myself, I imitate her and fold my arms across my chest

Faye raises and eyebrow, her face gradually glowing to match

"Where have you been?" She nearly hisses, throwing her hands

I hold a hand up and clench my teeth in frustration, "Get out of

"What do you want?" I dictate lowly.

the deep red color of her shirt.

"Excuseme?" She asserts, skepticism deeply intertwined with incredulity. "Are you short of hearing?" I command sarcastically, thrusting a hand into my hair roughly. "I should have le you on the beach." The moment I say that, I regret it. Of course I don't mean it, but at that moment in time, it was true enough to say aloud.

She unfolds her arms and looks out at the road of passing cars. A

she's letting on, and I watch with a burning anguish.

humorless smile forms on her lips, as if she knows more than when

"And I should've gone to the police." She most nearly snarls.

"Whatever." I growl, stepping towards her, "Just stay the hell

Before she can say anything more to make me crash and burn, I

Faye retreats back, her expression turning void, hard, and stoic.

retreat back and turn on my heel. I leave her speechless, knowing full well that to have her hate me is the best I can do.

Continue reading next part \Box