

Chapter Seventeen

Heyyoo!

So, unfortunately, my school is going to start up again this monday. That means I wont be able to upload until the weekends. BUT I will try my best to get a few in before then. I have this amazing plot going and I don't want to go to school.

I just want to stay home, sit on my butt, and write the whole damn thing until my fingers are aching.

But I can't.

With that happy news, I hope you enjoy this chapter as much as I enjoyed writing it!

For those who really hate Faye; is there any chance that you think you could sympathize with her? ;)

At least, a er this chapter?

Alright, 'nu said.

Can I get comments?

VOMMENT.

Recap

I look down briefly before staring at the picture. Posing in a cardigan and high boots, the girls auburn hair cascades down her shoulders. The slender highlights glide past her hazel eyes that appear brighter under the sun rays. I stare in awe until I bring my gaze up to James.

"Faye Williams," I state confidently, before adding in, "She seems to dislike him."

"Does she now?" James repeats, his eyes traveling back to gaze at her.

I nod, "They are always arguing."

"Would you classify her as Travis's enemy?" James presses, slowly sitting down in his leather chair.

I inhale a shaky breath and nod. Anything to make him relax completely.

"Good," He mutters, twirling the photo in his hands, "The enemy of our enemy is a friend."

He brings his gaze up to meet mine with a devious passion. Despite my anxiety, I manage to match his expression.

"That's clever thinking," I praise, earning a beam from James.

"Indeed," He muses, "Can I ask you of a favor?"

Eagerly I nod my head, "Yes."

"Can I expect you to do it right?" He implores, raising an eyebrow.

I nod again, "I promise James. I won't mess up."

He leans back in his chair, his face showing signs of satisfaction. He brings the file to his hands and stares at it in wonder.

"Find the missing page," He begins, tracing his nail across the edge of the file, "And bring the girl to me."

Chapter Seventeen

The cool breeze, though contradictory to my flaming heart, clashes with a soothing ect against my bloodrushed skin. With my back touching the white sand that spreads to the ocean shore, relaxation courses through my veins without a struggle.

Despite my irritation that has carried on from my confrontation with Travis a few days ago, the humidity layers my body like a cake—normally, I hate the sticky, hot feeling; however, it feels like an endless shower as I find myself enjoying it.

Tranquility, followed by a relief that Friday evening has finally arrived, settles in hard as I rest with my eyes peacefully closed. The only sounds I can make out are the dull crashes of waves hitting the shore.

Unlike the last time I heard the peaceful violence, the waves sound more lulling than luring. Occasionally, in the last hour, I've found myself dozing o—only, when I wake, my head has lopped to the side, or a small, white sand crab has been crawling up my leg.

Only, this time, when I wake up, it's not to the sound of the waves, to the sensation of crawling bugs, or to the crash of my head. Rather, it is the sound of heavy breathing, similar to the way I was panting at the further end the beach.

My eyes flutter open, immediately squinting as they reach the view of sunlight. Every time a wave relapses, I can hear the labored breathing in between the silence.

A little whimper followed by a shaky sob captures my cautious attention the most. I sit up straight, arduously pushing past the blood rush that leaves me dizzy and nauseated.

As I look around, I spot the source a few yards away. Back facing me, a young boy, about a fourth my size, has his hands braced on his knees. Recognition shudders through me, and I shoot up from my rooted spot.

My head pounds at the abrupt movement, but suddenly, it doesn't matter anymore.

I jog towards the boy, who is now placing a trembling hand on his neck. When I reach him, he doesn't acknowledge my presence at first. It's only when I place a firm hand on his puny shoulder that he fights to sneak a glance.

To my dismay, my appearance confuses him even more and he begins to breathe even harder. I quickly remove my hand from its position and kneel down so that I'm looking directly at him.

"Hey," I say so ly, raising a hand, "Focus on my breathing."

Similar to the way Travis helped me, I demonstrate a slow, deep breath. With my free hand, I draw my fingers up in an inhale, and let them fall gradually for the exhale.

The boy watches my movements and attempts to follow my lead. With a crinkled grimace, he painfully does so, taking mini shaky breathes to gain stability. Slowly, as we continue to do this, I watch as the green drains from his face and is replaced with the peachy flesh color of his hands.

Finally, he takes a gentle step back and cautiously straightens from his fetal position. I put my hands out carefully, wondering if he's stabilized enough to walk—but he seems just fine.

Moments tick by as he simply stares at me with his round, blue eyes. Deciding to try again, I smile but keep my hands to myself.

"Are you okay?" I press so ly.

He shakes his head, his lower lip trembling. "I'm lost."

My heart reaches out to him, as his statement ironically fits my entire life status at the moment. At the comparison, I let out an amused 'hmpf' before taking a baby step on my knee, towards him.

"Okay," I state, trying to remain calm for his sake, "Who were you with?"

"Big tee..." He trails, putting extra emphasis on 'tee', "But he's gone!"

Despite the seriousness of this situation, I can't help but release a smile at the boy's obliviousness. He shrugs both of his shoulders as if the panic attack he had a few minutes ago never happened. I stare at him inquisitively before speaking again.

"Okay, we'll find find him." I assure the boy, putting a hand out, "But can you tell me your name?"

The boy nods eagerly and bends down slightly before jumping to follow my lead. He gives me a small, curvy pout before reaching forward himself.

"Mason." He claims, finally answering my long awaited question.

I o er him a sweet smile, "Well I'm Faye."

"Faye rhymes with May!" He muses, his eyes twinkling, "May is my favorite month...so I have to like you too."

He furrows his brows, the edges li ing to form a crescent like shape. The confusion is nettled into his features, molding to form that of an empty puzzle piece.

"Mason!" A deep, familiar voice vociferates.

Tingles and dread, two completely contradictory and unwelcomed sensations, rush through my spine. Again, I shudder but manage to spin around to face the voice.

Travis, running with his polo shirt half open, brushes a hand through his disheveled hair in anguish.

"Big Tee..." Mason utters, reaching a hand out for Travis as he approaches our standing figures.

I look between the two and nearly burst out laughing despite the tension already present between Travis and I. I only hold it back as he gives me a hard death glare—one that could silence garrulous social butterflies for years.

"Is that him?" I ask Mason, though I already know the answer.

He nods his head and looks up at me with a smile. "Yep."

As he speaks, Travis bends down and scoops Mason in his arms. In one motion, he gathers his body and supports him by placing his le arm beneath his bottom as a chair. Mason wraps a head around Travis's neck and flashes him an innocent, toothy grin. In return, Travis o ers him a glare—one of which is meant to mentally scold him for running away.

"I told you to stay by my side." He says grly, pressing his forehead to Mason's to lighten the mood slightly.

As I stand there awkwardly, fidgeting mindlessly with my fingers without taking a glance at them, I notice a greenish blemish on the side of Travis's neck. Instantly, I step closer, trying to scrutinize it, and he notices.

"What are you doing?" He demands, readjusting Mason with his knee.

My eyes flicker to his, curiosity and something else consuming my thoughts. Before I can control myself, I ask, "What happened to you?"

He sti ens and looks around. Within that time, he manages to plaster his thick walls—isolating me from his emotions. Any chance of reading his expression vanishing the moment he turns back around.

"I don't know what you mean." He responds bluntly. The look he gives me, chilling and challenging, almost convinces me that I'm seeing things a er all. The incredulity on his face nearly makes me believe that there truly isn't anything to see.

Almost

It's the fact that when Mason reaches out to touch the exact spot I was staring at earlier that I know it's there. Especially when Travis flinches ever so slightly—I know it exists. For, if it can exist enough to hurt him, it's nothing more than real.

I raise an eyebrow, countering his challenging look. "That mark on your neck."

I watch carefully for any signs of dishonesty—suspicion even—but he remains void of any emotion as a few seconds tick by.

"Oh," He delivers at last, "I don't know."

I nod, not believing a word he just said, and look around as he does the same. When he returns his gaze to mine, I gather the courage to ask him the same question I have always been wondering.

"So," I begin, "Where have you been?"

"Why does it matter to you?" He counters defensively.

I fold my arms across my chest, my eyes flickering to a resting Mason, before bringing my gaze back to Travis's piercing glare. With a sigh, I raise a hand, not exactly in the mood to fight with him.

"It doesn't." I reply as calmly as I can, "I was just wondering."

"Well stop wondering. He retorts, backing away, "I thought I told you to stay the hell away."

With that, he turns around and stalks o , leaving me sputtering and fuming in fume. Even the one time I try not to get in a fight with him, he starts one of his own.

As I continue to glare at his retreating figure, something dawns on me. For the past few times I've seen Travis, he has always walked away as the winner. It has frustrated me to no end, and no matter how hard I try, I can't stop thinking about him.

Not out of love, but out of a peaking interest.

I turn my back to Travis and run over to where I had been resting before Mason came. Dropping to the floor, I sweep my hand nervously across the sand, searching for my phone.

When my hand hits it, I pull it out and brush the sand o the screen. With shaky fingers, I dial Ashley's number and press it hastily to my ear.

A couple rings go by and I chant for her to pick up. Sure enough, I hear a click on the other line followed by the sound of Ashley's sheer voice.

"Hello?" She answers uncertainly.

I frown, wondering why she sounds so tentative, "Hey, it's Faye."

"Oh hey!" She responds, her insecure voice fading as soon as I mention my name, "What's up?"

I take a huge breath and snap my head to take a final look behind me. With no one in sight, I put the phone back to my ear and squeeze my eyes shut.

"Does the o er still stand?" I ask slowly, knowing full well she knows what I'm referring too.

I hear her quiet laughter from the other line, "I knew you'd come around."

"So is that a yes?" I press, not able to conceal my eagerness.

I can almost see her smirking as I ask her those words.

"That depends," She responds coolly, "Are you free Monday?"

Without hesitation, I respond, "Absolutely."

"Great," She chirps, "Meet me at the Lacrosse game by the bleachers."

"Sweet," I agree, turning around to take one more glance for any sign of Travis.

I'm about to hang up when Ashley's voice prevents me from doing so.

"Hey Faye?" She asks, her voice deathly curious. I don't respond and instead pause, wating for her to ask her question. When she notices that I'm still there, she asks, "What made you change your mind?"

I heave a sigh and shake my head; the question sounds so simple, yet it's really much more complicated than that.

At first, I just wanted to mend Travis to fix myself. Now although a part of me still wants to do that, I feel there is no way he'd ever let me. The only time I got close enough to finding out was when he was drunk. Even then, he wasn't topped enough to pour his guts out without realizing it.

Finally, I smile a humorless curve, then smirk, "Well, someone has to play with fire."