

Chapter Twenty-Five

Recap

I shake my head and ask him something I already know the answer to, "Your scars—are they from gang members?"

He nods briskly, "It's me or them."

"What difference does it make if I'm with you or not?" I ask seriously, trying to reason on my chances.

"Safety," he looks down at me, "I can keep you safe if I know you're not throwing yourself out there."

I frown, ready to throw a remark about how he phrased that, but I hold my tongue. Instead, a thought much more aggravating enters my mind and I gasp.

"What about your brother?"

His features darken as I mention him and he shakes his head, "James will not touch him. I won't let that happen."

"And if I do stay," I ask at last, "how the hell are you so sure we'll make it out alive?"

"We'll fight." He vows peering down at me, "After all, you did say you are familiar with it, right?"

Chapter Twenty Five

Two weeks.

It has been two weeks since Travis last confessed about his past. And in that time, I've managed to make my life completely and utterly revolve around the Emmons household. As extraterrestrial as that sounds, it's the truth.

I recall the time Ashley had the audacity to ask which base Travis and I had gone past.

"Are you sure there isn't something going on between you and him?" She ponders, narrowing her eyes at Travis's lone figure near the cafeteria door, "I told you once that the sexual tension between you two is intense—but now it's...astronomical."

The cranberry juice I had been sipping spews out across the table in an array of red and nasty. Chase finds it amusing while Ashley leaps from her seat and stares at me with wide eyes.

"Ew!" She groans, brushing the liquid off her arms, "What on earth?"

"Sorry," I smile sheepishly, "But seriously, astronomical?"

"What's with all the space comments?" Chase muses, adjusting the pencil he slid in behind his ear, "They're out of this world."

"Chase," Ashley says, "Just no."

I chuckle to myself before propping up to get some towels. I spot a rack towards the back and head for them, but not before shooting a glance at Travis.

He's holding a phone in his hand, his black leather jacket splayed across his shoulder effortlessly. He looks bored, like his time here is a waste—probably because it is.

Travis lifts his gaze and gives me a small nod before pushing off and stalking out of the room. With a sigh, I continue on my path and grab the towels, approaching back to Ashley and Chase in no time.

Just as I sit down and join in on the conversation, my phone vibrates in my front pocket.

Pulling it out, I glance at another text from Travis:

Don't get yourself killed.

I scoot silently and look up after shoving my phone back in its place.

"Like I said," Ashley restates with a smirk, "Astronomical."

If only she knew what our supposed date night consisted of.

Aside from the endless strings of curse words and discouragement exchanged between the two of us—strangely categorized as 'flirting' in Ashley's eyes—there are the rides to the gym where his entrance key is a lock pick and where his romantic 'I love you's' translate to punch me

Yet of course, every time he knocks me to the ground, he whispers sweet nothings such as 'death' and 'bullets', a gesture in which I kindly return with eclectic exposure to profanities.

Nonetheless, the time we spend under the same roof is time well wasted. Once we established the fact that my combat skills are more or less a work in progress and once I became willing to admit that—things got better. His training sessions, though hardcore and demanding, made me feel more confident to take strides alone. While his tactics were debatable, the outcomes were starting to show.

"Hey." A finger appears in the line of my vision, blurry and close, "Faye."

Seated on the couch with a laptop on my thighs, I snap my attention to an agitated Travis. He's crouched in front of me with the too well known scowl plastered on his features.

"Hm?" I say, darting my gaze back to the computer screen.

"What are you thinking?" He asks after returning back to his seat on the opposite side of me.

"What?" I shake my head, thoroughly confused as to why he would care, "I—uh, what did you find?"

I change the subject, knowing full well by the look he gives me that he was only trying to be polite by pretending to wonder what was going on in my head.

"Well," He mutters, more to himself, "Check this out."

I get up from my seat when he motions for me to look at his screen. Intrigue burns at my fingertips and I lean against the back of the single couch he's sitting on. Travis flips screens to a black and white display.

I gawk and point to the upper right hand corner of the screen, "That's my house."

"Well done," He says sarcastically, shaking his head, "Do you see the others?"

Pointing to the remaining three screens, he explains how each is a view of portions of his house. They are basically different angles of the same thing.

"Impressive," I muse, leaning back slightly, "How did you manage to get some of my camera footage?"

He turns his head slightly to give me a look of incredulity.

"Gang benefits," He reminds me, "I wasn't just a sitting duck."

I roll my eyes, "Okay so you have security footage of my house and yours."

"Yeah," he nods, "It'll just make things a little easier."

I purse my lips and head back to my comfy abode on the opposite corner.

"Do you know how insanely creepy this all is?" I ask once I've got my laptop case up again. "Seriously, what if Layla, Laura, or my dad finds out?"

Travis arches a brow and smiles cunningly, "I can handle Layla."

"Debatable." I look up from my screen while scooting at his arrogance, "What about Laura and Dad?"

"I don't think they even suspect anything." He reasons, shrugging his shoulders with such empathy.

"Travis," I demand, "My mother tried to abduct me. He is a hawk right now."

"Look, I've got a handle of it," He snaps, shutting the cover down forcefully, "Just do your part and don't go looking for trouble."

He gets up while I gape at him in astonishment. As if completely oblivious, he stretches an arm back to scratch his head before turning his back to me. I bite my lip in irritation, trying to hold back a mouthful of anger.

"Whatever." I finally utter, glaring down at my computer again.

"I'm going to make something to eat for Mason," He continues, now glancing down at his phone, "You want anything?"

"Are you serious?" I ask, startled that he would even make such an offer.

He flashes me a grin before stalking off, "As if I would ever do that."

"Right." I grind out, clicking my tongue in the process.

Seconds later, Travis vanishes into the kitchen, leaving me to my own brewing thoughts in the room next door. I heave a sigh and glance at the time, taking note at how close I'm cutting eight in the evening.

I bolt up from my seat and slam my laptop shut. Gathering my bags, I swing it over my shoulder and walk into the kitchen to let Travis know I'm leaving.

As soon as I walk in, I catch the scent of boxed macaroni fill my nose—I nearly gag. Travis turns around and opens his mouth to say something just as his brother, Mason runs out of the store room with parmesan cheese in his hand.

"Hi Faye," he calls while running over to Travis.

"No man," Travis groans, looking down at Mason. I suppress a laugh at his reaction while Mason's features transform as he prepares for his temper tantrum. "Cheese makes you gassy enough."

"I don't care." He argues, shoving the parmesan in his face, "I want more."

Travis shakes his head and snatches the bottle from his hands, "Fine, you make your pasta."

"I would but I can't reach the top!" Mason snaps angrily, throwing his now free hands in the air.

I chuckle to myself and give the boy some credit. He's about half the stove's height, his hands barely reaching up to the counter where the heat is.

My phone vibrates just as I'm about to tell the two I'm off. Instantly, I halt and grab it, wondering if Dad had already come home from work. Much to my relief and confusion, the sender reads anonymous

He's lying, you know. He hasn't even told you the worst of what he's done. You think he actually went to jail for stealing a piece of candy? You can't trust him.

I stare at the screen for a good minute.

Then, slowly, I lift my gaze to look at Travis. He's still arguing with his brother, waving his finger around and denying him the access to cheese. I really look at him—the way the scar on his temple travels down, fading away the farther down it goes. Like a grapevine, all his bruises are connected, one way or another.

I shake my head and tuck the phone back into my pocket.

"Travis," I say, clearing my throat, "I'm going to head off."

He glances up while Mason continues to scratch at the counter for his cheese.

"Yeah," He nods before ducking and narrowing his eyes, "Be careful."

I manage to offer him an eye roll before turning around to leave. My fingers itch in my pockets as I bite my lip in puzzlement. My mind races as I go over what just happened.

"We're hitting the gym on Wednesday," Travis calls out before I exit.

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Surprise!

Another upload of Playing With Fire is up.

Just a little sidenote: I do NOT want to see comments that just tell me to 'update', because you know what? I just did. So, please, if you don't have anything to say besides that, by all means, **don't comment**. I love comments, but those just get me mad.

Now, the majority of you read my author's notes and comply, and for that, I thank you! I always appreciate those who do. I just want y'all to know that I do take notice in who is consistent and always encouraging me—that is most of you—and I always smile when I see your usernames pop up. I appreciate every ounce of support you've given to me, I would never forget that.

With that said, let's see how this goes! (:

Can I get 15 comments?

VOMMENT.

xxSummerxx