

## Chapter Thirty-Five

### Recap

Travis hits the keypad and the screen pauses. Frantically, I lean forward, inching my head closer towards the screen as if to help myself get a better view.

There is something familiar.

I look back at Travis in hopes that he can help me, but he himself has no clue.

“Do you recognize anything?” I ask nonetheless.

He pushes closer as well but eventually folds his lips towards his mouth.

Shaking his head, he mumbles in defeat, “No.”

I sigh, “It’s fine, just resume it. Maybe I will remember.”

He rolls the tapes and I focus my sole attention on the current figure. The outline approaches the camera, inching closer and closer. And the closer it gets, the more I realize that the moves are intentional.

“Turn around...” I growl in agitation, gripping the blanket as a direct outlet.

Surely, the figure whirls around.

My heart flips, my breath turns heavy and I get increasingly eager to identify the suspect. Only, the instant the outline turns, the cameras turn black.

I jerk back, my eyes wide in panic.

First the one at the top left corner, then the top middle, then the top right...soon enough, all the screens are screechy and black.

“Dammit!” Travis grunts, slamming the laptop shut.

I groan at the same time and throw my head back against the couch.

“Dammit.” I repeat in a much softer, underlying tone.

With my heart still racing a mile a minute, I mentally churn over the one thought that repeats through my head—that as I was watching, I felt something strange—a prickling sensation. Not because I was witnessing a break in into my house, but because while looking for answers through these evidently accessible tapes, I only stumbled across more questions.

What was I so close to uncovering?

### Chapter Thirty Five

The night before, we had fallen asleep drowned in our own sorrows and frustrations. No matter how many times we repeated the tapes, there was not enough time to figure out what was going on and who it was.

So, when I wake up in the morning, the laptop tucked under my right shoulder and my head resting on Travis’s rising chest, I nearly have a panic attack. Subtly, I attempt to wane myself away from his body heat and grip. Though, it is extremely hard, considering one of his arms is laced with my own.

I untangle myself, trying not to fall flat on my face in honor of my morning status. When I’m finally able to set his arm to the side, I shift my weight and land my feet on the wooden floor below. With the slightest touch, I manage to gently release the pressure of him as if it were never there. I stand up, slightly proud of my accomplishment, and then place the laptop on where I was sitting last night—right next to his feet but tucked against the couch so that it won’t fall.

I take one final glance at Travis, observing the peace and vacancy on his unaware features, before spinning on my heel and tiptoeing up the steps towards the guest room.

When I enter, Layla is sitting up in bed while looking down at her phone. She notices that I’ve entered and looks up to give me a suspicious look.

“You two looked comfy.” She states bluntly.

I feel crimson crawl up my skin, “Yeah...”

“So,” She drawls, throwing the covers off her legs and leaning forward with renewed energy. “Are you two dating?”

I fidget awkwardly with my fingers—I didn’t like how I didn’t know the answer to that. Are we?

I never really had much time to process the kiss earlier—but did it mean something?

I purse my lip and shrug, “I’m not sure.”

“Wait,” A moment, recognition crosses her features, “You guys kissed?”

As if my cheeks weren’t already scathing in embarrassment, they begin to ache under the amount of blood rushing to my face.

“I never said that.” I argue instantly, my entire body tingling at this whole awkward situation.

“It’s written all over your face.” She narrows her eyes, “Not very hard to figure it out.”

“Ugh.” Is all I can say.

“And you’re not sure if you’re together?” She utters slowly.

I begin to speak, “It’s—”

“—not complicated at all.” Then she hesitates, a grimace embracing her lips “Unless, you two are—you know...”

I stare at her in confusion, my brows furrowing, “We are?”

“Friends with benefits?” She spits out as fast as she can, her own face turning red.

I feel my jaw drop, “Ew—What!”

She throws her hands up, “I had to ask!”

“No!” I argue, feeling light hysteria slither up my throat, “No you didn’t have to!”

I shudder just as she asks, “So are you?”

“No!” I groan, throwing my head back in disbelief.

“Enemies with—”

“Oh my god no.” I interrupt before she can even finish that sentence, “Can you just drop it?”

She raises an eyebrow, “Acquaintances?”

“Layla!” I nearly hiss, throwing down my fists in a full on tantrum.

She rolls her eyes before walking around the bed to gather her belongings, “Okay! Okay.”

I sigh in relief and grumble, “Thank you.”

While she grabs her jacket, I hear her mumble barely audible words, “Just use protection.”

I stomp my foot, ignorant to my childishness, “I swear to your peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—”

“What’s going on here?”

I stop talking abruptly and spin around to face a slightly awake Travis. His eyes are a lighter shade of eden today—still elusive enough to capture someone’s attention.

When we meet, he raises a brow and I motion towards Layla.

“I’m going to school.” She says, filling in for me when I had nothing to say.

I turn back to face her, astonished that she’s still want to go after everything that has happened.

“Seriously?” I ask, “Why don’t you stay home today?”

She flashes a longing smile, “Is that what you’re doing?”

I nod and she shakes her head in irritation.

“Lucky—there’s a board meeting today and I have to be there.” She replies in a bitter tone.

“Oh.” I reply, wondering if I, myself, should go, “Maybe I’ll go as well then.”

Layla smiles in response while Travis, on the other hand, says, “Absolutely not.”

I face him again after exhaling deeply, “Why not?”

“I think it’s best to wait for your parents to come home.” He reasons, his eyes flashing towards where Layla is standing.

Somehow, she gets his subtle message, and clears her throat.

“Okay, well I’ll be waiting downstairs when you two are done.”

I shift my gaze to the empty space by the door and watch her back as she walks past us and through the arch. She takes one meaningful glance at me before fulfilling her promise and heading downstairs.

Once she’s out of sight, I shift my gaze back to Travis’s, and he pushes the door close gently behind him.

“Travis it’s probably better if I went to school right now.” I skip straight to the point.

“No.” He shakes his head and folds his arms across his chest, “You should lie low—for all we know, James could be on this.”

The suggestion doesn’t surprise me, for I’ve heavily considered the possibility myself. Hell, Layla—who doesn’t know a clue about what is going on—even implied it.

I nod in understanding and then step forward to place two reassuring hands on either side of his shoulders.

“Look,” I say calmly, “if I stay here, then they could easily target us right here, right now, if James felt like it.”

His hard gaze falters as I point that out.

I continue to speak, “And it’s not just you and me, there’s Mason too—and your parents.”

Understanding flickers across his face, “they’re barely able to hold themselves up right now.”

“Exactly,” I state, look up at him, “That’s why I think we both should go to school just to be safe.”

“What he has people there?” He challenges, relentless but not as persistent as he was a few moments ago.

“So what?” I shake my head, “What can they do? We’ll be surrounded by people, administration, help.”

Under my palms, I feel his shoulders sag in a small defeat. Despite this, I don’t feel a victory—because behind my reasoning, there still lies doubt and terror.

There still is a possibility that James could have back up right in school, waiting, just aching, to see one of us alone or vulnerable. If that’s the case, then my reassuring worries that they wouldn’t attack us in public holds completely null, dissatisfying, and void.

Nonetheless, Travis sighs and nods his head. “Okay, fine”

I smile at him, glad that we were finally able to come to some sort of agreement.

“One condition.” He demands, suddenly, holding his finger up.

I drop my hands from his shoulders and let them hang, “What is it?”

“I’m taking you both to and from school.” Travis states without room for disagreement.

As if I’d disagree to that.

“On your motorbike?” I reply, genuinely curious.

“No.” He gives me an incredulous look, “There’s an Impala in the garage.”

“I see,” I nod my head to emphasize my point. Clearly, our conversation is coming to an end.

“Okay.” Travis says awkwardly while I look down and pat my pockets, “I’m going to change.”

I look up and watch him go, but then he suddenly halts I his position. Suddenly, he turns around as quick as he had done on his way out, and he takes two large strides towards me. He ducks his head and I remain frozen as he nudges my hair to the side. Within seconds, I feel his lips pull on the skin of my neck, a warm-cool sensation tickling my nerves.

And then, he’s gone. He distances himself again, allowing the cold air to rush to my exposed skin. When I open my dazed eyes, Travis is staring at my neck.

“Good luck explaining that one to Layla.” He winks, managing to catch me off guard.

A hand flies to the subdued sting on my neck, and I silently curse when I feel the tender skin underneath my fingers.

“Oh hell!” I hiss just as he saunters out the door, “A hickey?”

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I feel like I needed to release the knots of tension formed in the previous chapters. So, this one is a little bit lighter with the big news. I hope y’all saw a new side of Layla and Fayette!

Anywho, MAN, I’m getting so busy, I don’t even know how I found the time to update today. And on top of that, HOW is my story still on the first page of Action—Incredible! Thank you!

I’m so so pleased with all the comments I’ve been receiving lately. I just—they truly inspire me to write. I don’t think many people realize that when they show excitement through their comments, the authors get excited to write. I pretty much feed off your energy WOoh. So keep that in mind ;)

I’m keeping this short because I’m tired.

Can I get 55 comments?

VOMMENT ...in a trash can.

xxSummerxx

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