

Chapter Five

Recap

Travis

He ignores my response, "Do you remember our last family reunion?"

I bite my lip and clamp my eyes shut, holding back every emotion and memory that his question ignites. The pain, it hurts more than I can remember, having pushed it away for so long.

"I think you do," James continues, "Cassie EmmonsShe was beautiful, her death was the saddest part of my day."

Unwillingly, I remember the hand that pulled the trigger that ended her life—the careless shrug that followed—all James. I pull my head away from the phone, despising the way my eyes begin to burn just at the sole mention of her name coming from his mouth. I knew that he was going to pull this card on me, though I hoped he wouldn't. The Cassie Card.

"This game—it ends when you do." His voice comes out guttural and visceral. "If you don't want a repeat of your sister's death—many repeats—I suggest you meet us all at the police station." James pauses reflectively and adds, "Alone."

I hang up the phone and toss it forcefully onto the passenger seat.

"No, James." I jam the key into the ignition and start the car, making a face as his name tumbles on my tongue. I think of Cassie, I think of the ways she made me stronger, I think of her courage and bravery, I think of her fiery spirit. Then, I think of revenge. "It's game over for you"

Chapter Five

As soon as I pushed past the station doors, I started to shout for help. I was in a panic, completely terrified that Chase was only a few seconds behind me. Mentally, I began to pray that he valued his freedom too much to run in and get himself arrested.

I glanced around, completely flabbergasted when the sheriff behind the front desk makes no move whatsoever. When I come to think of it, he didn't even flinch when I came barging in. I rush up to the counter, my breath heavy and hard, and knock forcefully and desperately on the gray surface.

"O'icer!" I barely recognize my shaken voice. "Please help me!"

No response.

I stare at the back of his head, growing angry and frustrated by the second. It's as if he can't tell I am right there, begging him to keep me safe. With a final, overwhelmingly exhausting attempt, I shout at him like a mad dog while kicking the foundation of the counter as hard as I can.

I am going insane—I can feel the hysteria slithering up my body like grapevines. As it does so, I grow unstable, imagining things I know wouldn't be there if I weren't going crazy.

As if a switch flipped, I begin to take notice in the fact that the entire station is rather quiet—too quiet. The halls are a mess, as if someone had intentionally come in and wiped everything off all of the surfaces in a rush. Chairs were lopsided, on the floor, broken.

My breath becomes shallow, I dart my eyes all around the room as an eerie sensation washes over me. Then, I dart my eyes back over to the officer facing away from me.

I really look at him.

He's sitting on a chair, his arms resting on the long, mahogany table in front of him. It's almost as if he is leaning against the seat for support—like his life depends solely on the cushioning. My eyes gradually travel down to his feet. One is propped up on the legs of the chair and the other is resting soundly on the white floor.

Something else catches my eye though—Something that has my own legs buckling at the observation.

The leg that is planted on the floor looks unsettlingly outward. His right knee is juttied out to the side, almost as if it is connected by thread.

"Oh god" I whimper aloud.

When I speak, it only makes the silence ten times more deafening. A tremor deep in my abdomen dominates my movements, traveling to my toes and to the tips of my fingers at lightening speed.

I take a small, hesitant step forward, my eyes cautiously trained on the officer. I keep thinking that he will suddenly turn around and grab me—I'm not sure if I would completely despise that idea. Based on the thoughts clustering my head, death being a possibility, I would rather have this man scare the life out of me than actually being dead.

"Hello?" I whisper even though I just know he won't answer.

I walk towards the door on the side, trying to get a better look at his face from a different angle. Just as I lean forward even more, he drops to the floor like a sack of potatoes.

I screech and throw a hand over my mouth, my eyes nearly bulging out of my sockets. I clamp my eyes shut viscerally, but that doesn't stop my mind from playing its dirty tricks on me. All sorts of emotions ripple through my veins as I continue to replay the horrific scene behind closed lids.

My heart rate goes sky high, almost as if it could jump right out of my chest. This inexplicable fear intoxicates my very breath, and I begin to feel as if I am suffocating from the inside out. I know, as it happens, that I am having another one of my panic attacks.

It is worse now—even more dramatic than the time when I heard Travis talking on the phone in his house—it pinches my every nerve, leaving me incapable of moving an inch without feeling an immense amount of pain.

I knew though, as I forced myself to open my eyes and stare at the officer sprawled across the floor, that I needed to move fast. Petrified, I advance towards him, and with each step, the waning sensation of pins and needles pokes my heels, trying to discourage me from moving. I push forward. My eyes are trained on two sleek, black guns hanging out from the dead officer's leather waist belt. I stop momentarily when I reach him, glancing at the way his pale and unnatural feature disrupts his deceiving look of serenity. As I observe him, I can't help but wonder how he died. Everything looks flawless, like he normally just happened to fall a gaping five inches to his death.

I shiver and shake my head. The guns remind myself incessantly. I stare at him a moment longer before slowly kneeling down to grab them from their reserved pouches. I make an instantaneous decision to just go for them before the paranoia settles in and clouds my determination. I reach out with both hands, yank the handles out of his belt and distance myself from his still body as fast as I possibly can.

I watch his corpse with caution before hastily checking whether both are loaded and ready. The first one has five live, and the other has been untouched. All six remain safe in their spots. I exhale shakily, briefly glancing up at his body again, and then slide the loaded gun into the back hem of my pants. Its cool touch settles on the feverishly warm skin on the arch of my back.

My grip on the other gun tightens as I hold it out in front of me. I almost laugh in my frenzied state at the irony of this entire situation. Thinking back to when Travis taught me how to even hold a gun, I remember how I told him that having the gun and using the gun were two completely different, completely insane ideas.

As soon as I lift the heavy chunk of death, all of the bullets fall out. My eyes widen in confusion as the clattering sound of three of the six bullets hit the floor in numerous pangs.

I hear Travis groan in frustration once again, "Faye I swear if shots were fired by the act of you dropping bullets on the floor, the entire world would be over by now."

"Just shut up and help me." I bite out in irritation. We were both irritated. He for the reason that I didn't know how to use a gun properly, and I for the reason that he was simply watching me and making comments about my trials. "Please."

He glares at me momentarily before pushing himself up and walking over. I stand my ground as he stops right in front of me, all the while holding my gaze with his anger-filled one. Travis snatches the gun from my hand and moves over to stand by my side.

"Watch." He orders after picking up the bullets that had landed on the floor. Travis repeats the process of loading and unloading the gun a few times before handing it over to me.

When he asks me to do the exact same thing, I do so, and with a relieving ease. I do it six times, because by the fourth time, Travis still believed I must have been getting it by luck.

"See how easy things can be when you just help me out?" I ask sarcastically.

"Travis shakes his head, "I'm not always going to be by your side to help you figure out every damn thing."

"Sorry," I snap, "It's not everyday that I train to kill another human being."

"Clearly." Travis retorts, snatching the gun from me.

I wish, in a way, that I could go back to that day—Even if it meant going back to the times when Travis and I constantly put each other down. The truth was that the idea of danger was foreign and unlikely.

Now, the idea of danger is nothing but the truth. It haunts my every thought, appears in my every dream, and follows my every move. Danger is an invisible force that drives me insane, keeps me awake, and makes me bitter.

Danger does incredibly uncharacteristic things to people. It changes and shapes us into pessimistic insomniacs. I, for one, could never have imagined being in my current position a few months ago: tiptoeing around the vacant halls with a loaded gun in my hands. Danger has made me, more or less, an impulsive wack-job

I creep around the corner of the station, pressing myself against the wall and peeking over. When I do so, I notice three bodies sprawled out across the floor.

I ram my head back against the wall and sag into it in terror. Four dead bodies. With a dry gulp, I glance at them again, feeling sick to my stomach at the sight of their still bodies.

All of them are stripped down to their boxers and briefs, unlike the officer in the front. Even their shoes are gone. I frown in confusion, questioning why it was necessary to further dehumanize the already dead individuals.

Just then, a door at the end of that hallway opens up and a man backs out of it while slowly closing it. I whip back around and hold my breath when he starts to walk up the path of dead bodies. I can literally hear him stepping around the men as he approaches the corner.

My steel grip turns to iron as I clutch it readily towards my chest. As the man gets even closer, I begin to piece the puzzle together. That man is dressed in head to toe in police attire—the same police attire that the dead men had originally been wearing. Meaning, that for every man that is on the floor, there is another impersonator taking on his position as that officer.

I see the man's shadow through the dim shadow on the opposite wall before his foot breaks into view. I point my gun in anticipation, my fingers aching to pull the trigger when he rounds the corner.

A satisfyingly cruel craving for revenge strikes my warm heart and turns it stone cold. The impersonator glances up at me in shock when he takes in my stance. I see him reach for the gun in his pocket, but I pull the trigger before he can even place a hand on it.

A loud bang bounces through the hallway and the man drops his gun, falls to the floor, and groans in agony. He is bleeding profusely in the shoulder—where I intentionally shot him. I take a menacing step towards him, and kick the gun away from his grasp, fully aware that his chances of even being able to pick that gun up are very slim.

I follow after the gun's trail and pick it up before quickly moving past the man. I check the third gun I now have in my possession and smile sinisterly at the fact that it is fully loaded.

"Nice try, James." I growl to myself.

I hold the guns in either hand and begin to shove open the doors. I point the guns in every direction once I'm inside. For once, I feel invincible, like the three weapons in my possession are really all I need to succeed. When the next two are deemed empty, I head towards the third one: come out, come out wherever you are.

I chant that phrase in my head as I shove open the next door. Only, when I do so, I falter when I narrow in on Layla staring at me from her crouched position on the floor. With her mouth sealed and her hands behind her back, she begins to shake her head and shriek inaudible sounds. She looks ghostly pale, perhaps possessed by the devil himself.

I start to run towards her, but I fall to my knees when something hard hits me. It feels like bricks, like a dozen sandbags, or ceramic pots have hit the back of my head. Whatever it is, I don't get to contemplate it any longer. Seconds later my fall, my eyes begin to droop. And as they do so, the last thing I see is Layla thrashing in her spot, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Then everything goes black.

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Hey guys! Thanks for reading and commenting as always. YES, it's a cliff hanger, but seriously guys...is this anything new? Anyways, tell me what you thought of the content of the chapter! I'm so glad I finally got to write. A bit of advice: Do not take an online sociology class over the summer. It's fast and it kicks your butt. I feel like I don't have one and my knees.

Can I get 70 comments?

Thank you lovelies!

I know I haven't been responding to everyone's comments, but just know that I read them and I recognize each and every one of you. I know who my dedicated readers are, who my new readers are, and who my old readers are. I appreciate each and every one of you!

xxSummer

Continue reading next part