# **Chapter Fi y-Four**

## Recap

"Dad, I have to go get him." I speak amidst my tears, struggling unsuccessfully to break free, "I have to—I just cant."

"Honey, absolutely not." His grip on my shoulder tightens and he brings me into him, "I lost you once—I will notlose you again."

I cry out in frustration, sadness and defeat, and finally feel my body lie limp in his arms. For what seems like eternity, they all huddle around me as I whimper in agony.

I fear so much, for my life, but moreover, I fear for his.

It's if someone had plunged their hand into my chest and wrenched out the very blood vessels that gave me oxygen. Without it, without him, I am le gasping for air.

I am unequivocally, irreversibly in lovewith Travis Emmons.

And I would walk through fire for him.

I take a deep breathe, and I feel my lungs shake and shiver as I do so. My body tingles and my arms begin to send jitters all the way down to my toes.

### Adrenaline

"Dad," I regain my voice and try to mask the guilt I feel as I do what I know has to be done. I push him back gently and place both my arms on his shoulders, "You never lost me. I love you so somuch." Then, looking to Laura and Layla, I smile and say, "You guys have been nothing but warm and welcoming to me, and I love allof you so much."

They walk to face me, and place their hands on top of dad's. My heart clenches, but I savor the moment, for I truly mean it—every single word.

In the back of my mind, I take note of the newly available path towards the door. With Laura, Layla and Dad all on the same side, I have the space and ability to now make my move. Without further hesitation, I act quickly on my chance by slipping through their fingers. Before any of them can have the opportunity to stop me, I lunge towards the door, "But I love Travis too, and I can't lose him"

#### The Final Chapter

I was terrified--absolutely terrified when Travis vanished behind the door, but more than that, I was angry Angry enough to feel invincible, angry enough to think beyond reason, but most importantly, I was angry enough to walk through that door and chase a er him.

Even now, as I lock the door that has my family in it, I can feel the rage coursing through my veins. I had known as I did it that my dad would be livid--I could practically hear him shouting across barrier to "open the damn door." I have every intention of letting them out, as soon as I make sure that whoever is out here--at least whoever was dressed in the attire of the dead o icers littering the floor--is dead.

A small part of me had considered dragging Wes's ass out of the room to face these horrible men with me as some sort of cruel punishment, but with all the sudden revelations about his true intentions, I didn't trust him one bit. I wouldn't put it past him to double-cross me now like he had done so many times before. I would deal with him later. When I made it out alive, when my family made it out alive and when Travis would be by side to see him get what he deserves.

Because this is what it had come down to. All this running and training with Travis, it had ultimately been for this one, inevitable moment. Now the fact that every single thing that could have gone wrong did go wrong, is just the cherry on top.

I grab my gun from under my jacket and take a final glance to make sure it is fully loaded before securing it in my hands. I hear struggling just around the bend of the hallway and my heart lurches in my chest. Travis.

I want to run, but my instincts, whatever bit is le of it that wouldn't leave me dead in an instant, reign me in. I have to wait, I'm sure there are more coming. In the room, Travis had mentioned while I was untying him that there were about five more of James's men lurking, maybe more. I reached for my coat pocket and pull out the pepper spray Travis had thankfully given me before we had parted ways several hours back. I wonder if he had known, maybe even subconsciously, that this was going to happen. I'm sure he knew this moment, the moment where James would finally end the games and hunt him down once and for all, was going to come sooner rather than later.

The pepper spray wouldn't do much, not when guns and fists were at play here, but it would give me something, if heaven forbid my bullets run out before then.

Down the hall, I hear a punch being thrown and flinch as the sound of a fist hitting skin and bone echoes. My hands clench at the thought of those fists hitting Travis, and I spring into action. I make it two feet away from the corner before I feel harsh hands snatch my hair and yank me back, nearly pulling the roots from my scalp.

I yelp and stagger back, gritting my teeth in pain as my neck jerks backwards, hard. Those same hands continue to drag me by the hair, further and further down the hallway, and all I can do is follow, both enraged and hysterical at the throbbing sensation traveling down my spine. Just when I began to feel that I couldn't take the pain anymore, it stopped. The hands release my hair, but as quickly as they vanished, they shove me against a wall and reappear around my neck.

"I can't tell you the number of times I've wanted to do this." Chase drawls, humor and satisfaction drizzling his smug voice. I didn't have to meet his eyes to know it was him. I could hear it in his voice, the familiarity of all those times we used to talk, all those times that I was blind to his true colors. But when I do drag my gaze up to look at him, to see if there was ever anything that was real about him, I meet his cold, unfaltering stare and growl.

I had half expected myself to grovel, to beg for my life, to perhaps ask him why he was doing this--but instead, all I feel is pure, unfiltered animosity. I did not care that his hands were menacingly coiled around my throat, that he probably had every intention of killing me right here, right now.

"You disgust me." I spit out, my voice jagged and hard. I was beginning to see red, to feelred. From the moment I stepped into Miami, there had been people out to get me. First, my mother and her shit-show of a plan, then this. All of the manipulation, the lies--I am done.

"Do you want to know what excites me even more?" Chase's hands tighten around me and my breath hitches, "The fact that--"

Before he can even finish his sentence, I bring the pepper spray up to his face and press down on it as hard as I can while practically snarling, "I don't give a damn, Chase"

Instantly, he releases my neck and stumbles backwards, his hands now flying to his burning eyes while he shouts. As he trips over his own feet, cursing and still fumbling for what I can only imagine to be a weapon of some sort, I roll my eyes.

"You're joking, right?" I muse, but there is no humor in my voice. I debate watching him look for his gun--or anything, really--to fight me, but with his eyes unable to open from the pain, it's hopeless. "Tell me you're joking."

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot a figure moving in towards me. If I had still been pressed against the wall, I wouldn't have been able to see the man gaining ground on me, but that was not the case. I had to think fast--he had a gun ready, and while I did too, the chances of me being able to raise it and shoot at him were very slim, especially considering the fact that he was already poised and ready to pull the trigger.

So I did the next best thing.

In the blink of an eye, I grabbed Chase as he pathetically continued to fight the e ects of the spray and pulled him into my chest, hisneck now secured in the crook of my elbow. In that split second that I had, he struggled avidly against me, but I held tightly, promising him a slow and painful death with each thrashing movement he made against me. At the same time that the man fired, I had managed to slip my gun by Chase's side and fire back. With Chase as my shield, the gun shot that came hit him rather than me, his body ricocheting upon the impact. Both men dropped to the floor.

I felt nothing as I watched Chase moan and slump forward. Even as he looked at me, his eyes filled with untamed hatred and violence, I didn't feel remorse. Maybe it was the ringing in my ears or the shaking of my hands or the pure adrenaline coursing through my body that allowed me to push forward, but I didn't dare attempt to

process any feelings beyond the numbress that comforted me. Instead, I reached for the gun that had been tucked in Chase's pocket, the gun he had been so desperately searching for--the gun he would have used on me if I hadn't gotten to him first--and kicked it towards the locked door a few steps down. Wordlessly, autonomously, I did the same with the other man, emptying his weapons. I picked up his gun and pocket knife and ran to unlock the door with my family behind it.

My dad came rushing out, his eyes filled with anger, disbelief and worry. He looked down quickly and noticed the gun at the entrance of the door. "Don't you everdo that again."

"You can yell at me all you want," I hastily reach for his hand and set the weapons I collected into them, closing his fingers around them tightly. "but right now, I need you to keep themsafe." I was referring to Laura and Layla in the background, peering over his shoulder with equally as perturbed expressions on their faces.

Before he could tell me no, I back up and start running toward the end of the hallway, "I'm going back out!"

I don't give him a chance to argue with me, and I don't give myself the chance to be in his vicinity to hear what he has to say to that. I'm sure it isn't anything pleasant or comforting. Instead, I focus on what is ahead of me. As I round the corner at least, I don't know what to expect. I could only hope and pray that James hadn't gotten to Travis, or worse, killed him on the spot.

"Faye!" The sound of his voice--raspy, but alive--makes my breath catch, and I gasp in relief.

There, in front of me, Travis stood, completely and utterly alive. The sound of fists hitting flesh and bone had indeed come from him. While his face was battered and bruised, every inch of skin trailing down covered in bruises and scratches as well, none of the blood that splattered his clothes belonged to him. It had been the blood of James's men, who were lifelessly scattered on the floor by his feet.

Travis's stare follows mine, and he too briefly glances down at the bodies before snapping his gaze back to me.

I swallow, "James?"

Is he dead?

It was a simple question, one that entailed so much information with just a single name. I didn't even have to utter the words aloud for Travis to understand immediately what I was implying. He nods his head. Yes

Dead. James is dead.

"Show me." The disbelief that outweighed my optimism is prevalent in my order. I needed to see it to believe it. To accept that James is dead would mean that this is all truly over, that I no longer had to look over my shoulder every minute. It would mean that Travis wouldn't have to live in fear--that he could finally start over and that we could actually be together.

Travis steps towards me hesitantly, both of us still strumming with nerves. Without much of a thought, I reach my hand out to grab his, somehow feeling as if holding it would make me feel something other than nausea and uncertainty. He squeezes it and pulls me in closer to his side as he looks around the room, apparently searching for James's body.

When he at last points to it, I follow his finger and survey the bloodbath. His eyes were shut, thankfully, but there were remnants of his brownish-gray scru lining his jawline. The jawline that was speckled with lines of red streaking from the top of his forehead, where the bullet had entered. His body was sprawled right across Chase's, the hand that had once been holding a gun remaining open and empty. I pale in realization, as I begin to process that if his body was across Chase's, where I had been standing when I fired my shot, I had been the one to kill James. Somehow, amidst all the chaos, against all odds, I had killed him.

"Faye." I had almost forgotten that Travis was still standing beside me, squeezing my hand.

"Oh my god." My mouth quivers and I cover it with my free hand. My eyes wide with disbelief, I look up at him in shock, "I killedhim."

Travis brings his hand up to my cheek, the warmth of it slowly thawing me. The look he gives me is a combination of incredulity and awe, of wonder and amazement. I continue to stare back at him, at a loss of words as time seemed to still.

"You saved me." He mutters breathlessly, the shock evident in his tone. And just as he uttered those words, the refreshing sound of sirens filled the atmosphere. Still far away, maybe a couple minutes or so, but close enough to know that we were safe. I close my eyes, relishing the sound.

With my eyes still closed, I could feel the feather-light kiss Travis

pressed to the corner of my mouth, and I smile.

"Technically," I began joking, my voice still shaky, "we have your pepper spray to thank for that."

I open my eyes again to the sound of Travis's rumbling laughter. It was a so laugh, one that was considerable given the circumstances, but it was enough. I stretch up on my tiptoes and press my lips to his. He wraps his other arm around my waist and grips me momentarily. Momentarily because seconds a er I kiss him, my family comes rushing out, Wes being dragged along reluctantly by Layla.

A er reassuring them profusely for ten minutes straight that it was finally over and a er promising to mull over every single detail with my dad later on, I was able to put their minds at ease slightly. It wasn't the end of the conversation however, not by a long shot--but it was the beginning of something bigger, a family that was united and brought together.

When the ambulance had arrived at last, Layla and I made sure that Wes was taken into custody by the police cars that accompanied the truck. Sometime a er Travis had been getting treating by a paramedic for all his injuries, his younger brother, Mason, darted over to greet him, having been in their care when this all went down. And as Layla, Laura, dad and I were being examined, I glanced at all of them and smiled. I smiled because, deep down, despite the hell that had been unleashed upon us, I realized that they were my home. And when I met Travis's stare, when I remembered the unapologetic sacrifice he had tried to make for me earlier today, I realized that he a was my person

## The End

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## And there it is, lovelies.

Here is the ending that was two years in the making. I'm sorry for making y'all wait so darn long, but it's here now, and I hope this gives you the closure you need. I want to thank all of you for being so fiercely loyal to this book, and for literally inspiring me to come back to wattpad

I have plans to write a fantasy romance trilogy next (in it's entirety, I promise), but the writing and topics are very dierent. I felt that I had to finish this beloved novel in order to fully embark on my next writing journey. It felt so wrong to start something new when I had an unfinished novel, and now that I have written this, I feel at peace!

I hope that this book brings joy to you and that all my readers (older and new) continue to enjoy this book in its entirety.

Love, summer

**Finished Reading Playing With Fire**