

## The Floors Pt. 2

I will FOREVER be pissed at my brother for not getting word to me about what was happening in Haley's life. I would've told them they better not f\*\*k it up like they did. Haley fought for their family. BLEED for their family and let all her secrets that she'd held onto her ENTIRE life be exposed." Frank said, "Physicals are mandatory. It would've come out." I laughed, "Do you really think that? Haley could've popped away. She could've cried. Eric would've been worried just as her father was. EVENTUALLY she would've had to get one because someone would've wanted to know about her reaction. Haley could've gotten out of it at the time. I'm sure she just reached the same conclusion that I did. Eventually it would happen, so she let it come out. Under the guise of the Connors have no secrets."

Frank was silently absorbing my words, "Then they kept a secret that could've ended up with her brother injured, she believes they could've died, possibly her brother in laws deaths, and her mate would've raped. That's not even debatable. If E.J didn't have his shield...iron would've coded Haley's system. She would've gone into the labor. The pain of Eric being raped could've killed one of the triplets or the iron could've. I don't think Eric is the type of man who would've known how to forgive himself for that. If I know that, Haley does. What Cassandra did is a HELL of a lot worse than what you did to me. It's water under the bridge to me, but if you did what Cassandra did to me... I'd have Chase kick your f\*\*\*\*g ass out of our home. Haley is a better person than me in that aspect. I'd live in the land of what ifs from Cassandra's actions, and NEVER be cordial with her. In fact, if I'm around Cassandra Connors she can expect me to be the rudest person she's ever encountered. I see Haley as a little sister. Her brothers have been FAR too nice to Cassandra in my opinion, but I know why they have been." Frank was clearly intrigued, "Why? Why would the Hackura be nice to Cassandra if Haley is truly that hurt?" I said, "Oh she is that hurt. I am probably the ONLY person Haley told her feelings about mates to. Fabian always told her she wouldn't get one, and that if she did, she'd get rejected. I think she put it so far out of her mind as a possibility. She told me one time on one of our longer recon missions that she'd hoped IF she had a mate, he and his family would accept her. Cassandra's actions would lead Haley to believe she didn't want her with Eric. Because she wanted Haley to be someone she's not. Her brothers have been nice because Haley wants peace in her home. I'd also have punched that b\*\*\*\*h in the face for telling Haley she kept forgetting about her children. Haley never thought she'd have kids because of what happened to her. Her reaction to being touched meant... she just didn't think she had it in her. She's afraid of being a bad mom, and I want to punch Cassandra in the throat for saying that to her."

Frank said, "I didn't know Cassandra had said that to her." I said, "Haley and I had ourselves a VERY long chat when I got back. Cassandra is lucky I haven't actually met her yet." Frank laughed, "Is it wrong.... I hope I'm there when you do meet Cassandra?" I snorted, "It might put you in an awkward position." Frank snorted, "I am close friends with Nathan Connors. Chase's mother was friends with Cassandra. I respect the woman, but if you punched her in the throat.... It would be one hell of an event to watch. Haley would protect you which would put Alpha Eric in a spot. Do me a favor and wait to punch Cassandra when I'm around." I laughed, "I suppose I can do that." Chase stepped in the room with Matt and Ted. Matt and Chase looked anxious. Ted winked at me. I said, "You guys ok? You look tense." Chase looked from me to his dad, "Everything ok in here?" I said, "Why wouldn't it be?" Chase said, "Well... I thought Isaac was in here with you guys." I said, "I told you I wanted to talk to your dad. No offense, but Isaac is Matt's dad not yours." Chase stuck his tongue out at me as his dad laughed. Frank said, "Everything is ne Chase." I said, "Yup. We've started with a clean slate. We both want a do over." Chase studied me. Then he kissed me as Isaac came back into the room. Matt and Ted said, "Well, we have to go." Ted said, "I want the play by play tomorrow Lex." I smiled, "Sure." He left and Frank raised an eyebrow at me. I just smirked. Frank said, "So very interesting." I laughed, "See you around Frank." Frank said, "Will do."

I turned then walked over to him. I held out my hand, "I need your phone." He was surprised but handed it to me. I put my number in and shot myself a text. I texted him back.

Me: You need my number if you can nd out anything discreetly

Frank looked at his phone and nodded. I smiled and Grabbed Chase's hand. We left. Going back to my place. Chase asked, "You exchanged numbers with my dad?" I said, "Yes. I told you. I always wanted to be close with my string's family. He and I are getting a do over." Chase laughed, "You amaze me." We spend the rest of the day buried deep inside each other. When we woke up the next morning. I tried not to let my anxiousness show. Chase frowned, "Are you alright?" I nodded, "Yes." Chase said, "Do you have a big event this week?" I said, "No, just planning on going to the shroud for a bit today." Chase nodded, "Alright." We walked outside. I kissed him when we reached my car. I jumped in. Kincade and Kevin both looked at me. I said, "Ted and I are going to the shroud today. You guys can stay in the oce and then we will come back." Both frowned "We can't come with you? There's no way?" I said, "No... not right now. If it was ocial... me and Chase... then as my guards...my brother would allow you in, but no. I'm sorry." Kincade sighed, "Just another way this job is hard some days." I said, "Sorry." Kevin laughed, "If it were easy. We'd get bored." I laughed, "Can't have that." When we got to the oce Ted was waiting. He simply got in my car. He said, "WHEW! Joanie and Mark are FIT to be tied that I'm ditching them." I laughed, "Kevin and Kincade might spill they could've come." Ted said, "I didn't get permission from Heath." I laughed, "Sly." Ted said, "So... we are going to chat, but... why are we going home?" I said, "I say this because you won't judge." Ted said, "TeleTed is a free judgement zone."

I took a deep breath, "After I passed out from reading the letter left at my house. I saw my mother." Ted said, "Go on." I smiled. That's what I loved about Ted. He just accepted things. I parked at my house and turned to Ted. "She told me to look under the oors of our family home. Well, she told me to tell Heath to do it." Ted said, "Heath isn't in the shroud today. He won't be back until Wednesday." I said, "I know. That's why we are going today." Ted said, "You aren't telling Heath about this? You're going to go back to your family home for the rst time since you found your parents.... To look for something under the oors. Today of all days?" I said, "I can't make Heath go back there for possibly something my subconscious threw at me in a moment of pure overload." Ted said, "Can you even go back there?" I said, "I have to. Mom came to me. Heath has enough to deal with. I can do this. Then if I nd something... I can take it to him." Ted nodded. We got out of my car and ran to the shroud. We snuck in the way I'd snuck out to get drugs. Once we were inside Ted said, "So that's how you got out to go get drugs?" I nodded. Ted said, "You always were smart. Let's go." We ran to my old house. I paused. Someone had kept things up. It looked just as I remembered. Heath's house was on the opposite side of the shroud. Noah's family had moved over there too. No one lived over here anymore. I took a deep breath and stepped up on the porch. My hands shook as I reached for the door.

Ted said, "You don't have to do this." I said, "I do." Ted sighed, "This was such a bad week to come here." He wasn't wrong. It was the anniversary of my parent's death. That's why Heath was gone. Ever since I started being mission focused... Heath would take some time off the week of the anniversary of our parents' death. I nally managed to open the door. I walked inside. I looked over to the staircase. My mind ashed back to seeing my dad. I felt sick. Ted said, "Lex..." I said, "Open the oors. That's what she said? Why did dad die over by the stairs, but mom...? She was by the couch. I walked around the corner. I sat down on the oor. I began to feel around for any sort of false door. Ted joined me. We searched for hours. I was beginning to think this was all a massive joke my brain played on me. I'd really come into my own personal house of horrors because I passed out and my mom said open the oors. I mean really? Open the oors. Ted said, "Do you want to go?" I said, "Let's check my dad's oce." I had no bad memories there. It would be easier to be there. We began to search, but we found absolutely nothing. I groaned in frustration and leaned back on my dad's bookcase. I heard a click and turned. Oh god... Tell me I didn't break something here. The bookend my dad kept had sunk down into the bookshelf. Ted gasped. I turned as a panel by foot on the oor opened. I said, "Son of a bitch." I pulled les out, and there was a locked box. The les contained different passports for our family. There were passports for each of us with multiple names. What the hell? I looked at Ted. I asked, "Is it me or does this seem like..." Ted said, "Go bags. Like leave and never return.... go bags. What the hell is going on?" I said, "I have no idea."

I turned to the box. There was some sort of locking mechanism I'd never seen before. I hit it against some things, but nothing happened. I groaned, "How do we get in this?" A voice said, "You need me." I gasped. I dropped the box. I whirled around to see Heath leaning against the doorway with grocery bags in his hands. Ted stood, "Isn't he not supposed to be here?" Heath said, "I think the better question is.... What are you two doing here?" I gulped, "Umm... well... it's..." Heath said, "Ted, why don't you go visit with your family. Seems my sister and I have things to discuss. Don't mention I'm here though." Ted looked at me. I nodded. He said, "Of course. Mums the word. Lex, text when we are leaving to go back to your place." I nodded to him. Ted took off. One he was gone, Heath said, "Where did you nd that?" He pointed at the box. I said, "I literally found it in the oor. Mom said open the oors. We've been looking all over the house. I accidentally opened it by hitting the bookend." Heath said, "Mom said? How would mom say anything?" I said, "What are you doing here Heath? You're never here at this time anymore." Heath sighed, "Let's go to the kitchen." I nodded and Heath hid him out. Heath put everything away, and I sat down at the kitchen bar. I forced myself to focus on what Heath was doing. Heath turned, "Every year I tell people I'm leaving, and I come here. I feel closer to them here, and I pour over everything I have on their deaths hoping something will break." I said, "Why didn't you tell me? I would've joined you!" Heath said, "Lex.... you saw horrors here." I said, "You did too!" Heath said, "I saw mom, and I saw dad. I focused on you. I knew they were gone. I wasn't here when it happened, and I didn't take pills to numb the pain. That's not a dig, just a fact. I didn't know if being back here would bring up that need for you."

I sighed. He had a point. Damn him. "Have you found anything?" Heath sighed, "No. Mom and dad left me a weird looking key when they died. I got it when I turned seventeen. I've been looking for what it opened for seven years. You said mom told you to open the oors. Did you remember something else from that night?" I said, "No. When I passed out the other night after reading that letter from whoever.... I saw her Heath. She was in that meadow she and dad would take us too. She told me to tell you to open the oors. I thought you were gone, and honestly ...tell me it doesn't sound crazy. I saw mom and she said open the oors. When were you going to tell me you knew about Chase and me?" Heath was surprised, "What?" I said, "You know he's my string. I told you I found my string, but Chase told me you came by and read the letter. The only way for that to happen would be if he called you. If he called, you then you've known he's my string." Heath said, "I told you, there's not much concerning you I do not know. I did know, but you didn't tell me. So I didn't mention that I knew." I said, "So what? You two have been hanging out and exchanging numbers!" Heath said, "No. We discuss you and your protection. I don't talk to Chase Daniels about anything else." I said, "Why don't you like him?" I said, "Who says I don't?" I said, "The tone of voice you use to say his name." Heath said, "Not important. You like him, and he makes you happy. Right now he's useful to me. He can help keep you safe. Other feelings are not important." I said, "They are to me. I want you to like him." Heath said, "I will try. For you." I got up and kissed his cheek, "Thank you." Heath nodded. I handed him the passports. "Why would we have needed these?" Heath frowned, "This is a go bag."

I nodded, "I see no other conclusion." Heath said, "Why would they plan to leave our people? At least I can look into these names. This is good. I'm not sure I would've found this without your open the oors clue." I said, "Admit it. You would've thought I'd lost my damn mind." Heath said, "No, I would've thought you had a dream. I would've looked into it, but not too hard." I shoved the box to him, "Where's your key?" Chase took out a chain around his neck. He did have the oddly shaped key to the box. He took a deep breath and opened it. We both looked at each other in confusion. Heath said, "Oh for god's sake! ANOTHER KEY! Did she give you any other hints?" I said, "No... I guess we can search the whole house for more clues. Mom's oce?" Heath nodded and we ran back to mom's oce. Her secret compartment was pushing a picture frame down on her desk. The oor by where her feet would've gone opened. There was another box just like the one in dad's oce. It also had a key. Mom's didn't have secret passports though. She had letters. I tried to read them. I frowned, "I don't know this code. Do you?" Heath said, "No, but that's a woman's handwriting." I said, "All are signed by M." Heath said, "Could be code. I'll look in our les. See if this is anything we can crack." I sighed, "We should...check their room." Heath said, "Lex... You don't have to do this." I said, "I do. She came to me Heath. Everything isn't on your shoulders. I'm here too." Heath said, "She came to you, but she told you to tell me." I said, "You and me big brother. We are on this path together." Heath smiled and kissed the top of my head, "I love you little sister of mine." We went upstairs. We found two more hiding spots with more keys. Dad had letters from D and mom had letters from D too. I frowned, "What the hell is going on?" Heath said, "I really don't know." I said, "It meant enough for them to keep it." Heath held up a baggie of money. "They had go bags and money... A lot of money."

We sat down on their bed, "Any idea what those keys go to?" Heath said, "A bank? A P.O. Box somewhere. Safety deposit box. I know we are keeping this between us. You can tell Chase, but that's it." I nodded, "Ted knows about the box." Heath said, "But not what's in it." I sighed, "True." I looked at the closets, "Closet seemed like a good place to hide things." Heath snorted, "You're right." We found more boxes with keys. Heath suggested we check our rooms as well. We both found boxes in our closets. They didn't hold keys though. They had letters addressed to us. I cried, "This... it's been here the whole time." Heath held me in his room as he cried. He opened his letter rst letting me read it with him.

Son,  
  
If you are reading this... Likely your mother and I are not with you, or at least I am not. Things got crazy so fast. I made mistakes, son. I am sorry if I am not with you, your mom, and your sister. If your mother isn't there, then I am so sorry for you and your sister. You two are the best things that ever happened to me. I love you both so much. You need to protect Heath. Protect your little sister. She needs you. If I'm right, you're mother's past caught up to us. We could never tell if it was all truly over. I tried to kill her for years, but he's slippery. I thought I had him the last time, until recently. Your mother swore she saw him again. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm paranoid. I hope I am. I hope that I can shield the three of you. Or at the very least my death satished the vendetta against our family. That's right. Family. It was wrong, but there was hurt there son. A lot of hurt. You have family. Find them. They will help you. I know they will. They always wanted to know you and your sister. We kept you from them, and that...we thought it was the right call. Now, I'm not so sure. I think they were set up. I kicked them out of our homes for betraying your mother and me. They always denied it, and I never believe them. After a few weeks ago. Moves are being made. I was always a good chess player son. I hope to win, but if I don't. You have to. For your little sister. She looks just like your mother. I fear that as she gets older.... the obsession will switch to her. Do not trust Noah Calver. I've seen how he looks at her. He can't have my little girl. I know he's not for her. Our goddess showed me her path. It's not with our people. Her string is not hood. Another reason I'm writing this letter. I hope I'm wrong, and that seeing Lexi's path doesn't mean I'm going to die. I think it does though. I think it was a warning to keep her and Noah a part. I know you will lead our people Heath. It's your path. It doesn't have to be lonely, son. Lean on your sister. Lean on my family. They will help you. Remember, your happiness matters too. I love you son.

Love Always

Dad

Both Heath and I had tears trailing down our faces. Heath looked at me, "I'm so sorry. I never should've led Noah near you." I said, "You didn't know. We didn't know these were here, and we had no way of knowing." Heath said, "You're right." He began thinking. I said, "What's that face?" Heath said, "Dad would've left a clue for me and you to nd these. Someone kept it from us. It would've been coded. Someone went through their things and took it out." I took a breath, "I asked mom if she knew who killed her." Heath said, "And?" I said, "She said she did. That we did too." Heath stood and started to pace. I've been looking outside the shroud... If we know them... then our families didn't do to Lex." I said, "I know." Heath said, "That means...someone here killed our parents." I said, "I know. I thought it was mom's ex-boyfriend, but we don't know him." Heath said, "That we know of. There was a big gap between when dad ruled our people and me. Someone could've assumed another identity. Or... he has the damn identity, and we just don't know who he is. No one knows who she was dating." I said, "Our grandfather does." Heath said, "And someone has kept us all apart." I said, "You think our family wanted us, and were kept from us?" Heath said, "Now I do. Everything lines up. I'm trying Lexi... I'm trying to nd them and hitting walls everywhere." I frowned, "Well, if they are following us... we can bait them. I'm being followed. I can have my guards drop back. Chase would know when they were there. We could talk to them if the wolves told them we wanted to talk." Heath said, "You can't drop your protection back like that. Not with people coming after you. Our family can wait. We've waited over a decade for them to step up." I said, "If they know the identity of her ex-boyfriend. That makes them important." Heath said, "We've waited for justice for over a decade too. They can wait until we get Noah and his stupid s\*\*t sorted." I said, "You mean kill him." Heath said, "I do. Our mother's ex should've been killed. If whoever he is comes for you... he's dead. Noah... will be dead as soon as I get my hands on him."

I sighed. Heath sat back down, and I opened my letter.

Lexi,

My sweet beautiful little girl. You have your mother's heart, and my stubbornness. You look just like your mother. I need you to know, I love you. I remember when you were you came home crying because someone was mad at you. Your mom jumped in the car with you, and you all went outside the shroud for the very rst time. I was a nervous wreck. You came home smiling. Neither of you would tell me what you did, but you told me you had the best day with your mom. You have always been a strong stubborn little thing. I need you to trust your brother. Heath has good instincts. I need you to help him though. He'll need your little spire self. Don't let anyone ever put that re out, Lexi. You are meant for great things. The day will come when you forge your path outside our shroud. Don't be scared of that my precious little girl. Your string is strong, and he can protect you. I would not part with you if he could not. You have such a big destiny little girl. Just as Heath does. No one can take that from either of you. Heath can be too like me sometimes. He can get too focused on the work. I needed your mother, and until he nds his string; he will need you. You two can handle anything if you are together. You two were always thick of thieves. The perfect blend of your mother and I in each of you. You two never fought as kids. We always worried about that, but you didn't. That's rare, trust me. The bond you two share is beautiful. Never lose it Lexi. Be good to each other. I'll be watching out for you both if you're reading this. I'll be the wind at your back, and the sun on your face. I love you little girl.

Love,

Daddy