THORNS 93

Chapter 93: Moment Of Release

Austin pressed his back against the cool brick wall of the dormitory as he peeked his head around the bend and looked through the glass tempered door. "It looks like the coast is clear. I don't see the dorm mother anywhere."

[Are you seriously afraid of that old lady?]

"It's not about being afraid. It's about her giving me more work to do when she sees me. And if I refuse, she'd blab about it to the principal."

[Don't you have any skills that'll help you sneak to our room without being detected?]

"If I did, I would've used it long ago."

[Seriously, how did you even get into Future Academy and not some second rate institute–]

"Shh! Be quiet! I'm about to enter the building."

'And it wasn't me who got accepted. Rather, it was the previous owner of this body who did. But no one shall come to learn of this.' Austin thought as he hovered his student tag over the scanner, opening the door with a soft beep.

He eased the heavy tempered door just enough for him to slip through, when he immediately dropped low and prawned all the way to the long beige couch in the common room.

"... Huh? Who're you–"

"Shh! Shut the fuck, bitch! Unless you wanna get clobbered!" Austin glared and hissed at the scrawny nerd who was reading a book.

"... S-Sorry." The nerd buried his face in the book and ignored him as he crawled by.

[Hahaha! That little bitch nearly pissed his pants!]

As he reached the end of the couch, he peeked through the hallway that leads to the kitchen where the dorm mother's room was stationed. The door stood wide open empty. And there were no sounds coming from the kitchen.

"Wait. Is she not here?"

Austin was right in the middle of standing up when he heard the dreadful sound of the front door beeping, as well as the haunting sound of humming. The same humming he would hear when working for a certain old lady.

"Fuck!" He didn't look back.

He dived behind a large potted palm, the fronds shivering against his shoulder. He waited, lungs burning from held breath, until the heavy thud of the dorm mother's room door finally clicked shut.

[Nearly there, Austin! The stairs are about ten feet away!] Gary spurred Austin on, who was pretty much sweating buckets at this point. Nervous that right as he steps out from beyond the potted plants, the door would open.

[Stop being a pussy and just book it!]

"Motherfu–!" He didn't crawl this time. He lunged from his cover, his feet hitting the first step with a muffled thump. He took the stairs two at a time, staying close to the wall to avoid the creakiest floorboards. By the time he reached the third-floor landing, he was a blur of motion.

By the time he reached his room, Austin quickly slid his tag across the scanner with trembling precision and threw himself inside. He leaned back against the wood, the click of the deadbolt signaling his safety.

"Phew. Made it." He pushed himself off the door and tossed his jacket on the floor.

"Congratulations. Although you made the whole thing seem harder than it actually was." Gary commented as he popped out from Austin's shadow and leaned on the study desk.

"Whatever. So where's the potion?"

"Now hold your horses, Austin. You're not seriously going to go to the West Wing looking like that, are you? Not to mention you smell like sweat. Are you trying to scare away the ladies?"

"Who cares! By the time I'm done with Amy, I'm gonna smell sweaty and look messy anyway!"

"No shower. No potion. And to think that earlier I was praising you for your clean hygiene... How very disappointing..."

"Why you gotta be so goddamn picky?!"

"Austin..."

"Grrrr... Fine! I'll take a stupid fucking shower!" Austin stormed off to the bathroom and swung open the door with fury.

"Thank–"

SHUT!

"-you..." Gary tip-toed towards the bathroom door and leaned his ear against the wood as if to listen carefully.

He patiently waited until finally, the hiss came. The pipes groaned, followed by the steady drumming of water hitting the plastic basin.

He moved instantly. He lunged toward the center of the room and dropped to his knees on the hardwood. There, discarded in a careless heap, lay Austin’s denim jacket. It was still warm and damped with lingering sweat.

Gary took the jacket in both hands and brought the collar against his flushed face. He shut his eyes tight and drew in with a sharp, jagged breath. And the scent hit him like a euphoric sting.

"O-Oh fuck– *Gasp* *Huff* A-Austin..." Gary breathed in and buried his face in the jacket.

A potent mix of salt, cedarwood, and the intense musk of skin that had just been crawling so idiotically on the ground. It was thick and intoxicating, a private essence that seemed to fill both his lungs and veins.

Feeling dazed, Gary stumbled back toward the unmade bed across the room. Onto Austin’s mattress, as he buried his face in the jacket’s lining. He rolled onto his side, curling around the fabric, his breath coming in ragged hitches as the smell clouded his judgement. The world outside the room ceased to exist; there was only the steam from under the door and the overwhelming proximity of the scent.

"I-I’m losing it... Austin, this is all your fault. *Huff* Why do you never look my way..." He moaned into Austin’s pillow.

Wanting to feel more, Gary reached down into his pants, but instead of there being the bulge of a man in heat, there was a soaking wet valley that seemed to suck in the fabric of... women’s undergarments.

Next, he reached up into his sweater. His hands struggled to find his chest as a tight layer of bindings covered it.

"It’s just for a moment... *Huff* Just for one moment, Austin~ Don’t come out yet~ Please..."

He reached for the linen that tied his bindings tight, desperate to feel the cool air against his skin and the softness of the sheets. He climbed onto the edge of the bed as he clutched Austin's pillow to his chest, his heart hammering against his ribs in anticipation. He was halfway through unwinding the long strip of cloth when his shoulders finally relaxed. Revealing his true silhouette as it began to emerge in the shadows.

"Finally... I can feel you... Austin~" A crazy smile of ecstasy began to form on his– no. Her face.

Gone was Gary's usual deep voice as a high-pinched moan escaped her lips. She plopped back down on the bed and mounted the pillow while taking in the scent of the jacket. With any and all restrictions gone, her chest settled into its natural, soft curves. They were moderately sized with a delicate fullness that had been so carefully pressed flat beneath her bindings. The cool air of the room hit her skin, causing a faint shiver to trace down her spine.

"Hahaha~ Austin~ Austin~ Austin~!" Gary's hips furiously rode the pillow as her hand clutched around the jacket, her mind picturing it to be the neck of Austin.

"Ahahaha~! Look at you! So weak beneath me! But I know you love it! Don't you, Austin~? Don't you!?"

Feeling the heat below her waist was about to hit a crescendo, Gary clutched her breast with one hand while the other reached inside her hot, drenching pussy.

She leaned forward and sprawled herself inside the bed sheets as she desperately pleasured herself, seeking release. "Fuck! Austin, I'm cumming~ I'm cum–"

Click

"S-Shit!" She stopped everything that she was doing and slipped down below into the shadows.

"There! You fucking happy?! I'm clean! Now give me the– Gary?" Austin quickly surveyed the room but found that it was empty.

"Gary! Where the hell did you go?! Did you seriously just ditch me?!" He waited for a response but none came.

"That motherfucker! An unreliable piece of shit, is what you are! Fine then! I'll just seduce that bitch myself! I don't need no fucking love potion! I got all the charisma and charm I need!"

Austin was about to pick up his jacket, but saw that it wasn't in the place he last left it.

"What the hell? Where's my shit?" He looked around and saw a piece of his jacket sticking out from under his bed sheets. "Did I put it there? Whatever."

Right as he was about to take it is when–

[Don't touch that!] Gary's usual deep voice resonated through Austin's head.

"What the!? Hey! Get the fuck out my shadow and give me the potion!"

[Yeah yeah. Quit your bitching.] Gary appeared, now back to his regular clothes, and handed Austin the potion.

"Where were you?! I thought you bailed on me!" Austin yelled as he yanked the vial out of Gary's hands.

"What do you mean? I went to go grab the potion. You think I keep it here?"

"Oh. I guess that makes sense. Anyways, let's get going! I've been thinking about all sorts of ways that I'm gonna fuck Amy! I can't wait! Viva la Love Potion!"

"Uh-huh. *Gasp* Austin, wait! There someone behind the–"

Beep Click

"Hm? What was that? You kinda got cut off." Austin looked back at Gary as he opened the door but saw that he was suddenly gone.

"Love potion? Fuck Amy?"

Austin's head slowly turned towards the door as the last voice he wanted to hear in that moment came into being.

"E-Emelie–"

BOOM!

CRASH!

Chapter 94: Emelie's Fury

"Mind repeating what you just said, fucker! Cause I KNOW you didn't just say what I think you did!"

Austin, who was blasted back towards his bed, struggled to get up. One, because the impact of Emelie's magic made him feel like every bone in his body was popping, and two, because he knew it was pointless to try and argue back. Emelie was angry. She heard everything. And there was no stopping what was to come.

'I'm fucking dead, aren't I?' Austin lamented as he peeked open his left eye to see just how furious she was.

'Also, why are my sheets so wet–'

"I warned you! I fucking warned you and STILL you don't listen! I knew you were going to do something idiotic the moment I flew away! It's like the phrase 'take a hint' doesn't exist in your bird brain! If that's how you wanna play it, fine! Now you're gonna pay the price of your stupidity!" Emelie stepped inside the room and slammed the door shut.

’Nononono! I need to do something!’ Shivers crept down his as Emelie’s menacing aura filled the room.

Austin pulled himself up and scrambled backward, his heels catching on his rug. "E-Emelie, wait! It’s not– I was just talking, I swear! Just spouting random nonsense! Y-You’re making a big deal over a nothing burger–!"

He didn’t get a chance to finish.

CR–CRACK!

SNAP!

Emelie flicked her wrist, and the heavy oak dresser across the room lurched forward as if kicked by a giant. It slammed into Austin’s ribs, pinning him against the wall with a sickening thud. He gasped, the air leaving his lungs in a ragged wheeze.

"G-Guhaa! *Cough* Y-You’re gonna kill me?!"

"I told you I won’t kill you. But you sure as hell are going to wish I did."

She didn’t use her hands. She didn’t need to. Not for this someone this filthy. With a sharp upward gesture, Austin was hauled toward the ceiling, his limbs splayed out by invisible tethering forces.

In a blur of motion, a heavy glass globe of the earth whipped across the room and shattered against his shoulder.

"Ah, shit! F-Fuck! It hurts!"

The pressure in the room seemed to thicken, pressing against his chest until his ribs began to groan under the atmospheric weight. She slammed him down onto the floor, the floorboards cracking beneath his spine, then dragged him back up again.

"Please!" Austin sobbed as blood trailed down his chin. "Emelie, stop! I'll never speak a word about her again! Hell, I'll never go near her again! I'm begging you–"

"You're begging for a mercy you never intended to show her," Emelie silenced him. Her jaw set, and the windows in the room shattered outward. A storm of invisible blades began to lash at him, bruising and battering him until he was barely recognizable. Just a heap of broken pride and torn fabric.

"P-Pleash... S-Shtahp..."

She then walked over to him and grabbed his face, green ethereal light emitted from her hands as all his cuts and bruises started to heal.

"Elmeliesh... Sh-Shank... T-Thank you–"

"Shut the fuck up." She let go of him and dropped him to the floor. "You think I'm through with you? Well think again. Cause I haven't even gotten started."

Emelie didn't want a quick ending. She wanted to burn in his memory why he should have heeded her warning.

"N-No! Help! Help me!"

As Austin scrambled toward the front door, Emelie's fingers twitched.

In an instant, the room became a whirlwind of localised gravity. Right when Austin's fingertips were about to touch the door handle, he felt a tug pulling him from behind as a supernatural force lifted him up and threw him across the room, back to his bed.

"Dammit!" Austin then reached for the edge of his bed, but the bedframe suddenly groaned and folded in half like a piece of paper, snapping his fingers back.

"FUUUCK! MY– MY HAND!"

With a sharp upward flick of her chin, Emelie hoisted him into the air. He hung there, suspended five feet off the ground, kicking at nothing.

She didn’t strike him with objects this time. But rather, she used the air itself. Each subtle movement of her eyes sent invisible "slaps" of concussive force across his face and torso. His head snapped left, then right, then back, as if he were being handled by an invisible heavyweight boxer.

"You thought she was a prize? Someone you can claim in your stupid fucking game!" Emelie stepped over the debris, her boots crunching on glass. She closed her fist slowly. Austin’s scream died in his throat as the air pressure around his chest tightened, squeezing the breath out of him until his face turned a bruised purple.

Although the ringing in his head blocked out anything Emelie said, Austin saw the pained look on her face and managed to choke out a few words through the blood pooling in his mouth. "Please... Emelie... I’m... sorry..."

"Sorry is for accidents, Austin," she hissed. She jerked her hand down, and he slammed into the floorboards with a force that cracked the joists beneath. Before he could even bounce, she ripped him back up to eye level and grabbed his face again to heal him.

"And this is no accident." She tore out the vial that he had miraculously managed to hold onto despite everything that’s happened to him.

"N-No... My... cheatcode..."

Snap

"... What did you just say? You fucking swine! You never change, do you!?"

A dozen heavy textbooks flew off his shelf and orbited him like a chaotic ring of Saturn before taking turns slamming into his stomach and thighs.

The mirror on his closet door exploded. Emelie held the silvered shards in the air, spinning them in a glittering, deadly circle around his throat. She let him feel the cold whir of the glass against his skin as she sliced open tiny cuts on his face and body.

Finally, she threw and slammed his body against the four walls of the room, treating him like a ragdoll before stopping him mid-air in front of her again.

Austin was in ruin. His eyes were swollen shut, and his breathing was a wet, rattling whistle. He tried to sob, but he didn't even have the strength to produce tears. He just sagged in the air like a broken doll waiting for the final snap.

Reason has left Emelie's mind the moment he said that dreadful word.

Not caring about anything or anyone, she raised her right hand high, her palm glowing with a violent, vibrating hum. The very molecules in the air began to whistle. This was the end. She was going to drop the entire ceiling on him.

Suddenly, the room went unnaturally dark.

From the corner of the room, the shadows detached themselves from the floor and rose like ink dropped into water, swirling into a tall, hooded silhouette.

"Playtime's over, Emelie." A voice resonated.

Before Emelie could launch her final attack, the shadow-user stepped forward. In one fluid motion, tendrils of pure darkness erupted from the floor, wrapping around Austin's broken form.

"Gary! I know it's you, you bastard! Even at the park! What you did to Kurt! Don't think that I don't know it wasn't you!" Emelie screamed in rage, throwing a concussive blast of force at Gary, but the energy passed through the darkness as if it were smoke.

"So you know my identity then? Well, no matter. He’s mine for now," Gary looked down at Austin’s unconscious body.

The shadows pulsed once, turning into a localized black hole that swallowed Austin whole. A split second later, the darkness collapsed in on itself with a soft pop, leaving the room silent, ruined, and empty. Emelie stood alone in the wreckage, her hands still trembling with a power that no longer had a target.

"Suuuu... Haaaaa." She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

As the adrenaline receded, a cold, sickening wash of clarity took its place. She looked at the blood spattered across the wall and a different kind of shiver took hold.

"I almost did it." She whispered to the empty room. "Fucking hell, I actually almost did it. I could’ve ruined everything..."

The anger was still there but it was now overshadowed by a terrifying realisation. If Gary hadn’t intervened, Austin would’ve died, disappeared, and returned back to the living with something that even she couldn’t stop.

"I guess this counts as a blessing in disguise... Austin is still alive, but now, he’s broken. And most importantly, he knows. He knows what would happen if he ever chooses to act out again."

Emelie then stood up and entered the bathroom, where she poured out all the contents of the vial down the basin. Once she finished, she turned away from the wreckage she caused and left the ruined room behind.

’I should take Amy away for the time being. It’s not safe here. And Gary. I still don’t know what your motivations are, but just know when I see you again... You’re dead.’