

MOVIE >take68> - A Dorm. A Delinquent. A Girl.

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To everyone's avid support on this book, i love you, love you so so so so much.

[PS I read ALL comments. There isn't one comment that i don't read. Its just that sometimes I'm sneakily reading them at work and I can't give away that I'm doing so 'because texting isn't allowed' and it would totally look like I'm texting if I reply. <3]

*@lena_glck : i think jo reads all of our comments now and is just like:sh** what have i done I'm so good haters back off or something LOLLOL I try to be as humble as possible, but you guys deny me of that specific characterstic. And btw, yes, I loved the fact that you guys turned the comment section into a chat room. It made me proud—and my day. GO F.A.I.T.H.FUL FAMILY!!!*

Fayth walked on the icy and yellow crispy gass, heading to nowhere. She walked, with no destination whatsoever. She walked, because her heart wasn't beating frantically at all. It was mute. Muffled. The beats faint to even her own hand. And she was afraid...she might die any second now.

All this time...all this time I had been wondering what it felt like to kiss...my own brother? How to touch and feel...my very own sibling...? How could I be so sick? This is revolting. This feeling I have now in my stomach, in my bones, in my head...it's absolutely revolting...

And that's not all. To think that my father had cheated on my own mother! Even if I had hated her! Even if I despised being her daughter every hour of every single day, still! How could he?! Is it not enough to betray your own daughter for bringing her to this world to only live a life of agony?! Couldn't he be content with only that?! Did he have to make me disappointed in him even after his fucking death! Do I have to hate him even now?! Why the hell didn't I just die when I had the chance, dammit! Why am I still alive to feel only more pain from my past!

Fayth fumbled in her pocket and took out the medication bottle. Her hands were shaking so badly, half of it had fell on the ground at her feet, while countless ones fell into the palm of her hand. She then shoved the bottle into her pocket and resumed walking.

She looked at her candy, frustrated on how she'd be able to consume all those at once. *I might choke—oh to the hell of it! Let me choke to death. Who the hell cares?! Not my damned parents!*

“What the hell are you doing?!”

Fayth shoved all the tablets in her mouth and started swallowing one after the other.

Lexis attacked her, quickly wrapping an arm around her neck and poking his forefinger inside her mouth, scooping out as many as he could. However he only was quick enough to get a few to drop to the ground, the rest she pushed him away and swallowed.

Why the hell does he always have to be there?! Especially at my worst times. Cant he just leave me the hell alone?! What am I to him anyway?! Does he think I'm some fucking sweet ol' dead doll to push around because she wont talk back? Damn, I could about break his neck to show him right now. Beat the shit out of his fucked up head.

She made her way around him and kept on walking. Lexis stopped her by setting himself in front of her again.

“Will you leave me the hell alone?!” Fayth exclaimed, her whole body shaking with anger.

The dead expression she had after the marathon race, the expression Lexis saw in the pictures Jessie showed, the expression that he sees daily in the mirror, it was there, planted on her face. She wasn't Rihanna Gessner anymore. Fayth Armstrong was back.

He searched her eyes. And instantly he saw more things there. He saw feelings, he read her well and through.

She's distraught. She's so damn distraught. Something made her livid again.

“What happened?” Lexis asked, taking an insignificant guess that it was about her parents again.

How the hell could he be so slick? Like I'm going to fucking tell him what happened or something. Might as well rip his intestines out and strangle him with them before that happens.

“Get your face out of my way before I make it my mat. Right now, you're only getting on my nerves.”

She tried to make her way around him before he stopped her again. Fed up, she began taking swings at him, but he blocked them all effortlessly.

I should have taken the pills after I beaten the shit out of you. Fucking asshole using my numb mind to his advantage.

“Do you honestly?” Lexis began, pulling his manipulative side out. Snapping at Fayth and looking straight

This is the first book on the wattpad I had to buy because I could not stand to not know the next string

"Do you honestly," Lexis began, pulling his manipulative side out. Sneering at Fayth and looking straight into her eyes, he continued. "think I give a damn on why you're mad right now? Just who do you think you are? No one cares about you."

"Shut up." Fear started overtaking her body.

"You once said that your parents love you, that they're taking you somewhere special this Christmas. I don't believe it. In fact I think they sent you here because your too much space wasting their time."

"Shut up. Shut up. Shut up!" Fayth unleashed her arm and began hitting him, releasing all the anger she felt on Lexis instead. She wanted to hit him harder, to hear him feel her pain, but he only stood there while tears ran down her cheeks, unbothered by the exhausted hits on his chest.

"Shut up... I hate you..." Tears streamed down her face. "You—you never even came to me. You never came to see me...you never thought about me. Even that I'm sure of! Was it because I was the daughter, the daughter of the woman your dad made you marry!? I hate you for making me feel your own suffer. When all I was an innocent girl who wanted her parents to be there for her when she cried. How hard—how hard could that be? Couldn't you even call...one phone call to tell me how your day went? You didn't even have to ask about me anything. You could have just called to tell me you cared. I missed you. I missed you every day. I missed you when I saw the other kids play with their daddy's. I even longed for calling you

daddy...which never happened. Not once! I hate you. I hate you every day. I wish that I can rewind time and die too. I wish I never met you. And now! I hate you more than ever! I hate you—you ungrateful man. I hate you for making me fall in love with my own..."

She felt as if the world was closing on her. She didn't know if the blurry vision was because of the crying or her eyesight going down with the feeling that was starting to concur her body. A rush of shallow air went down her chest, but didn't make it all the way. She was starting to fall. Fall to her knees. Blackness took over. And she was gone.

"That's quite a lot of dosage, and you said she was still rather upset?"

"Very."

"That's impossible. With that much, she should have been completely muted. Anger shouldn't even be in a mile radius near her. It must have been quite a resentment that overpowered her mind."

Silence. No answer.

"I could tell that there was more taken only an hour before that too. Must of had a terrible day. I'm suggesting rehab for her right after she becomes conscious again. To be honest, her blacking out was the best thing that happened to her. I'm glad you provoked her enough to get her anger out into view. If she held onto it, she could have done something to herself with no doubt." Pause. "You seem to know quite a bit of this yourself..."

Silence. No answer.

The doctor resumed. "I'm suggesting she stops using the medication immediately after she's revived. But that would be nearly impossible for her. Not unless..."

"What?"

"Well there's a special room inside a mental institution made for such people. No matter what they do they won't be able to hurt themselves. But I'm thinking that's a little extreme. And I highly doubt she would agree to it."

"I wouldn't either. I'm thinking of letting her intake any medication that could reduce stress for the time being."

"Are you her boyfriend?"

Pause.

"Yes."

"She's a lucky one. Then I'll go get something for her to take right now before she wakes up."

When Fayth regained consciousness, she opened her eyes to a large white room. Groggy, she straightened up, however, since she was wired up to machines on either side of her, her movement was cut off short. She squinted her eyes at the strong sunlight coming from a large window on the right side wall of the room, and wished someone could close the curtain.

As if her mind was being read, someone pulled the blinds on it, and instantly the room became more easier and clearer to see.

"Vincent!" Happiness seized her entirely.

Vincent chuckled and sat on the edge of the bed, then leaning in, he cupped Fayth's face in his hands. His eyes were exhausted. She can see how much she made him worry, and instantly hated herself for being the reason he was anxious. All she ever did was make him look at her like that.

"Do you always have to make your old man terrified? What happened...?"

Lexis, who was sitting in the chair across the room, speaking to Vincent before Fayth had woken up, wondered if he should leave the room. She hadn't noticed that he was there, and because of her high dosage intake, she most likely won't remember what had happened between them earlier.

However as soon as he stood up to take his leave, Fayth broke out in a sob. He stopped and watched her. In that moment, he wished he had the convenience or even the right to comfort her.

Instead, Vincent wrapped his arms around Fayth and held her tightly as she resumed crying. And instantly, Fayth felt safe. Safe enough to cry even more. As if crying wasn't a shame anymore, but an act of relief instead.

"When..." Vincent whispered, "When did you stop telling me everything Fayth? I thought you finally saw me as a real father figure..."

Fayth hiccuped a sob. "Vincent?"

"Yes love?"

"Jessie...the one I loved for so long now...the one I dreamt and gave you headaches over the phone from talking so much about...he's—"

"I know. I'm sorry for what happened. I'm sorry it turned out to be like this, but I promise you'll find someone else. Jessie can always be your special friend, no matter who he'll have romantic feelings toward."

He had found out...that Jessie's gay? Fayth sobbed harder and pressed her face into Vincent's shoulder. "That's not it." She cried. "Jessie's—Jessie's my brother... Dr. Dean told me. My dad is a cheating bastard."

Vincent became immobile, frozen, paralyzed, so silent that Fayth's sobbing became instantaneously too loud in the large room. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't see anything anymore, and as he looked over at Lexis, who stood there disbelief breaking down his sullen expression, Vincent barely managed one word out, in search of an answer from him. "*What?*"

Lexis shook his head, indicating that this was his first time hearing about this too.

Fayth resumed crying, and Vincent held onto her endlessly, until no tears were left in her body. Until she was as dry as wood. As broken as a dropped piece of glass. As hurt as a bleeding wound. As breathless as a drowning man. She was no longer Rihanna Gessner. She was the broken and unlucky Fayth Armstrong.

Fayth and Vincent stood in the parking lot of the hospital, where she met with Lexis for the first time. And right now, Vincent had said something absurd. Unimaginably absurd.

“What do you mean I’m going to go live with him?!” Fayth bellowed. “When did he come here anyway?!”

Fayth didn’t have a clue how he found her. However, she was more angrier at the fact that Vincent right now was suggesting that she’d go with Lexis for Christmas break. She didn’t understand what was going on, but she had a feeling he was still unaware of the Academy’s Christmas break mishap.

“Lexis said that the two of you have discussed this before. He also mentioned that he requested you to go with him as a friend instead of staying at the Academy and you’ve agreed.” Vincent said, fibbing.

“What—how—when did you even come here?!” Fayth asked, this time looking over at Lexis.

“I’m studying medicine. I was leaving the Academy since John demanded that I meet with him,” that much was true, the rest...not so much. “and then I saw Vincent carrying you. He had found you unconscious. To help a sick person is second nature to me, so I left with him and kept you alive until you reached the hospital. It was an excuse for me to get out of meeting my father as well.”

“What? Why?” His answer only made her more confused. She sensed that he was lying somewhere along the lines.

“Because of the promise you made me. You said you’ll keep me company this winter instead of staying at the Academy. Oh wait,” he looked at Fayth with sarcastic confusion, “You didn’t tell Vincent that the Academy—”

“Oh right.” Fayth quickly cut him off. “Right, right. Because it turned out my best friends were actually going to spend Christmas with their parents too.” Fayth looked at Vincent, suddenly nervous. “Sorry I overreacted Vincent. My mind wasn’t working straight after all that happened.”

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And that's how Fayth ended up going to Lexis's house. She was terrified of one thing. His father. She may have been saved the first time she met him, but if she were to meet him again, her hair and makeup will no longer take up all the attention like before. Surely he will see more details this time. The details will add up and finally reveal who she really is in one closer look. Leading to that, what terrified her most was one absolute thing. *Lexis* finding out.

His house was a residence near the beach. Fayth wondered why they weren't going to the main mansion. Was it a norm for their family to spend their Christmas somewhere else? Not to mention in a beach house this small. Originally, she expected a second mansion or a villa maybe, but this was as typical as a beach house could get. Glass balcony, big doors, two floors, with a generous sized garden in the back.

The first thing that caught Fayth's attention when they drove here was the warm air. It was a lot warmer, and she liked that instantly. Lexis drove, he had a nice black Ferrari F12 that he was able to afford without the need of his father's money. Fayth sat shotgun and she didn't like it at all. It reminded her of recent events that happened. Events she didn't want to recall.

On their way, they kept silent the entire time. In exception to the one time that they stopped at a red light, and right before resuming to drive after it turned green, Lexis looked over at Fayth, with one hand holding the steering wheel, and the other with his elbow leaning against the opened window, his fingers combed through his long hair. "I want you to know something before our Christmas break starts. And I want you to

On their way, they kept silent the entire time. In exception to the one time that they stopped at a red light, and right before resuming to drive after it turned green, Lexis looked over at Fayth, with one hand holding the steering wheel, and the other with his elbow leaning against the opened window, his fingers combed through his long hair. "I want you to know something before our Christmas break starts. And I want you to think about it boundlessly. If...all matters in the world reproduce, honesty will always be the most generous. Always remember that."

This struck Fayth deeply. She had answered by looking out of her window and avoiding his gaze, however she spent the rest of the drive thinking about what he said.

Now they were here. She stood on the porch, gazing at the beach that sparkled under the sun. There were a few people walking up and down the shore, and she was suddenly tempted to mimic them.

But was even more tempted to see what a normal family home looked like.

She walked behind Lexis as he unlocked the door and walked in. She felt small for some reason, like a child that was in a place that they didn't belong in. Vivian and Charles were the only two people she had ever visited in her life, and she had done that enough until she was comfortable. However as she stood outside the unfamiliar place, she was suddenly scared of its foreignness.

Fayth, timid as can be, slowly walked into the door, and was suddenly taken aback by how open—no, *empty* would be the right word—it was. As if someone had just recently cleaned up everything and only left a few things behind. Even the drapes on the windows were missing.

Lexis looked around his house for the first time. Because of his sudden outbursts from Anthony's aftermath, almost everything had been destroyed. And he had to called a cleaning company to come and clear everything up.

"Did you mention...to your parents that I was coming over?" Fayth said, looking around in confusion. Surely this isn't what a normal household looked like. Surely, this isn't how a guest is welcomed.

Lexis glanced at Fayth. "My parents don't live here. I live here by myself."

Fayth froze. Suddenly, she remembered what Jessie had once told her...

He has a beach house about eight hours away that he lives in with Dawn in the summer, he could be staying there right now.

She snapped her head Lexis's way and with as much vulgarity as she could, she said. "What the hell did you just say?"

His face was blank, unaffected by her distaste. "My parents own five or six houses around the world, but I don't like the size of any of them. Dawn gets consumed by more emptiness in a place that's supposed to be called her home and thats not healthy for her. So I bought this instead."

Fayth stared at him, completely baffled.

"Yes. I've lived on my own for three years. Any other questions?"

She quickly shook her head.

"I'll show you where the guest suite is. I had it renovated for you while you were in the hospital."

He began making his way toward the stairs.

"Do you honestly think I'm going to live alone with you?!" It's one thing sharing a dorm next to a million other girls close by with a boy—that she had liked too—However it's another story when she has to share an entire house with no one other than Lexis.

*No way in hell this is happening. I need to call Vincent—*She looked around for her phone, but realized that she must have forgotten it in the Academy.

Lexis, who held back a smile as Fayth looked for her phone, which was now turned off in his pocket, looked at her and reasonably said. "Of course not. It'll be too annoying being you're only attention in this house."

"What the—"

"Have you forgotten that I have a daughter? She does live with me. In fact, she'll be here any second now."

That's right... Sudden excitement clouded Fayth's thoughts at the idea of living with Bubbles.

"Daddy!" A chauffeur opened the door for Bubbles. She ran in happy as ever and jumped into Lexis's arms. Lexis, whom still catch's Fayth in disbelief every time he does this, caught her in his arms with a face lighting up almost instantly. Fayth didn't understand. How could this transformation happen to him just from a three year old? So fast too, in seconds even. Moments ago there was no one as emotionless and as dead as him, and now he was extremely attentive with the girl in his arms.

As a sudden shallow feeling settled in her stomach, Fayth was beginning to doubt the facts and believe that Bubbles really was his daughter. Not his niece.

Lexis glanced at Fayth, his thoughts calculating. His plan put in place. "How was your day?"

Bubbles became ecstatic. "You should have seen the things I drew daddy. Mrs. Carter put a huge white paper on the wall and all of us drew all kinds of things."

"What else did you do?"

Why was he so interested in such lame things? It's only childish stuff. It can't be that interesting.

"Well, at play time, me and George and Kristin went to the playground and played tag..."

The shallow feeling became heavier. Sadness took over Fayth's whole body and she was slowly drowning in misery. She couldn't stand hearing them having a conversation like this. It was her childhood all over again. The jealousy, the hate, the sadness, the denial, it even found a way to haunt her now.

Glad that Dawn still hadn't noticed her, Fayth quietly exited the door and ran toward the beach. And as she ran, her motives were to get away from the thoughts that were starting to creep their way into her mind. First the car, now this. It was as if coming to this place was to make her remember.

She slowed down to a walk, and ended up on the sand almost a mile away from where she left the house. She knew she wouldn't get lost, but she felt safer here. Far away from his clever eyes that seemed to haunt her everywhere now. He knew, somehow he knew what to say. He always did. And for an odd reason that

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She gazed at the breathtaking sight in front of her. The water glittered, and slowly the uneasiness in her chest was replaced with something more fresh. Easy. The sound was calming too, as if it was rocking her into stabilization, telling her to let go of the world and just believe, think, feel and wonder about nothing. To erase her being. And she was feeling it, feeling herself being lost in a vague of blurred out nothings.

And in that single moment, she snapped back to reality. Realizing something crucial. Something she should have remembered before she had come here. How was she supposed to get her share of candy now that she's somewhere else? Vincent used to send them to her in an orange mail packet to her dorm. However, how is he going to send it all the way over here? Surely Lexis didn't leave any contact information behind, he wasn't the type. And her phone was at the Academy.

Maybe I could get it off of a drug store around here. Yeah, I just need the prescription.

But how will she get the prescription? And when she does, she'll have to wait for it for three days if not more to get it in the mail. There was no way she'll be sane enough to last that long. Especially while living

But how will she get the prescription? And when she does, she'll have to wait for it for three days if not more to get it in the mail. There was no way she'll be sane enough to last that long. Especially while living with Lexis. The things she will do...

No no no no! I need to get it today. I need to go back—

Sounds of footsteps came from behind her, the sound of flip flops getting closer and closer until they stopped right on the other side of her.

Fayth sighed, "Go away. I'll come over later on."

"I won't go away, but I wouldn't mind the second offer."

And... Christmas Break starts. :)

Let your imagination run wild—what do you think will happen between them while living together?

I know that a lot of you probably wished that she shared a dorm with Lexis instead. And how THAT would've turned out. Well... do you know how they say save the best for the last? What's better than sharing an entire house with him instead? ;D

IF YOU LOVE FAYLEX, IF YOU LOVE THIS STORY PLEASE GO BACK TO THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS AND VOTE. IT'LL MEAN SOOOOOOOO MUCH TO ME. LIKE YOU HAVE NO IDEA :'(

BTW, I hear a lot of people telling me to run my book for the wattys. However I have no clue what that is. Anyone?

I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU.

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(i put my excuse of a trailer [first time ever making one, so.. haha] on this chapter. I honestly had no idea how hard it is to make one, especially trying to find scenes that in some way or another can go with the book. [that was the hardest part] so check it out if you have a minute :* <3)

Sorry, forgot to add the goal. Its the same as the chapter before. (totally forgot what it was.) Probably 1000 votes 1500 comments? So that.



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Fayth looked over at the person that sat next to her, and immediately flushed. "Sorry. I thought you were my friend."

He had dark lagoon colored eyes, thin long lips and long black hair that fell down and to the side in swish motions. On his bottom lips, he had two rings. Snake bites. And on his left eyebrow he had one more piecing. Fayth checked out his black v-neck shirt and dark skinny jeans, and instantly became aware of how similar he looked to the guys that grew up around her.

She looked away.

"Well, I am now." The stranger said. He was about sixteen years old, and when he smiled, his smile was wide.

Fayth didn't answer, and instead stared out into the water, hoping to be left alone.

"So what's a rocker chick doing around here?" His eyes glistened as he looked at her face, then checked out her body slowly, without getting caught. *Its pretty nice. She's really curvy too. First rocker chick I see with a fine body like that.*

Fayth fought the urge to look around and check to see if he was talking to someone else. Instead, she asked. "Me? Rocker chick?" She frowned. "I'm not a rocker chick, but I'm here for Christmas break."

It must be the hair color and the eyeliner. She hadn't realized that they would put her under a specific label. And she didn't like it. She had never been fond of being labeled and in fact, she loathed it more than anything.

The guy nodded, then catching her off guard, he said. "While I was walking back home I saw you coming out of Lexis Ellis's house. You with him?"

Its the reason he was sitting with her now. As soon as he spotted her again while walking, he decided to check out what's going on.

Fayth was surprised that he knew Lexis. "We're keeping each other company this Christmas."

"So are you two..."

Fayth shook her head. "No." She decided not to say more than that, though he waited for more.

He finally nodded, hiding a smile. "Cool." Standing up, he said. "Hey, you know what? You should come see my band play next Saturday. I bet you'll like what you hear."

"You're in a band?"

He nodded and wiped some sweat off his forehead with the palm of his hand. "Yeah, I play lead singer. It's a little gig that's going to be held up in North Ridge. You won't miss the concert. All kinds of people perform their own shit there. You should come over and watch us play, you won't regret it."

"Sounds fun." *Might as well look forward to something while I'm here.* "I'll be there."

"Next Saturday." He pointed out once again so Fayth won't forget.

"Next Saturday." She confirmed with a nod.

He started walking away, but before getting too far, he turned around and asked. "Oh, I almost forgot. What's your name?"

"I'm Rihanna. Rihanna Gessner." She had no idea she said the name to the wrong person at that moment.

He smiled his big smile again. "Nice meeting you Rihanna. I'm Seeger."

"Nice meeting you too Seeger." Fayth smiled and waved at him.

She sat back down, deciding to enjoy a little more of the scene in front of her. Before she knew it, hours passed by and the sun began to set, disappearing on the other side of the horizon and leaving behind a gray evening.

Fayth sighed and stood to her feet, feeling the blood rush to her head from the sudden movement. After settling her sight, she turned around and made her way back to the house.

While walking back, Fayth ended up getting in a fight with a few girls who threw firecrackers at her. After beating the shit out of one of them, she had taken the firecracker the girl threw and slipped inside the girl's jumpsuit. A lot of screaming happened. A lot of her friends trying to pull her clothes down, and as she watched, Fayth quickly realized what she had done and began apologizing to them.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." Fayth said, her eyes filled with regret and fear.

"Shut up!" The girl said, pulling away and running off while limping with her friends.

Fayth stared after them, her heart pounding with fear. *Its already taking control. Her habit of a mind is already taking control.*

After reaching the porch, Fayth knocked on the door, and a minute later, Lexis answered.

"Its Anthony's birthday, the password."

Fayth nodded and walked into the dark living room, feeling a little bit shaky. A table light was turned on in one corner, however the light from it barely stretched out in the large space of the room. "Where's Bubbles?"

"Asleep."

"Did you tell her—"

"No. you can do that yourself."

"Hey, can I—"

"The answer is no."

"I didn't even ask yet."

"No, you can't use my phone to call Vincent and request your medication." He stopped walking and turned around, his impassive expression clear in the barely lit room.

Fayth stayed quiet. There was no use in arguing with him, he'll just keep on reading her mind either way.

"Why?" She finally asked.

"I brought you here for a reason."

"What's that?" She quietly said, staring down at the floor between them. *I have to get out of here. I can't stay with him. This isn't right. He's a guy and I'm a girl and this isn't right. The feeling in the room right now...it isn't right.*

"I'm not going to tell you it." He said, a hint of seduction in his voice.

The large room suddenly felt small with him in it. Fayth began to feel the magnitude of the situation. She's...living with Lexis. Lexis...the person who once threw knives at her, someone she feared more than words can explain. A person so emotionless she'd hardly believe he'll think twice in causing her harm. And she, right now, had all of his unequivocal attention in a room by themselves, with no one else but a three year old sleeping upstairs.

She didn't like it. In fact, it made her palms sweaty and her heart race as the tension between them grew.

This isn't right. This isn't right.

Breathless, she said. "You must be joking."

"I'm not. You just have to deal with this situation right now. Any way you want to of course. However with Dawn here, I believe you'll make the right decision."

"You don't understand. I-I just—outside—"

"I don't care."

She looked up at him baffled. *How can he be so cold like this?*

She turned around and made her way to the door. "I'm not risking my relationship with Dawn. I'm going back—"

"Going back to the Academy?"

Fayth halted.

"Should I just call Vincent and tell him everything then? That you'll be leaving here and heading to the Academy, which right now is temporarily closed. He told me already. Thanked me for taking care of you since he had other matters he needed to take care of. I'm quite sure he'll be kind enough to cancel all plans he had with his girlfriend for Christmas and spoil you instead. It's only their anniversary anyway. What's there to ruin?"

Fayth turned around and stared at him, more pissed than she ever was. There will be nothing, absolutely nothing left for him until he says every single thing that will somehow make her angry. This person—

"If anything, I don't want to share the same living space with you." She said, her eyes stinging. She couldn't. At all. Every time she stood with him in one room, the air would suddenly get heavy, so thick that she could barely breathe it in. Everything in her body would stop working right. Her hands would begin to shake, her knees would quiver. And right now, it was happening all over again.

Lexis walked toward her, slowly, his eyes fixed on hers, devouring her inner core.

Her chest began to shrink at his movement, and fear began to eat her insides. "You're so mean." She said, her voice breaking.

One step. Two step. Three step. Closer. Closer. Closer.

This isn't right....

"And uncomfortable. I can't even muster the courage to look at you and not feel fear right now." She breathed.

His steps erased more of the space between them.

This isn't right. This isn't right.

Her breath staggered. She became tense and her muscles tightened. "So why are you making me do this?" She gasped, her breath gone.

She can feel her heart vibrating on her chest. He was so close now. So so close.

"You don't even know...anything. You don't know anything about me."

When Lexis stopped right in front of her, that's when she staggered back. He looked inside her eyes, and for a moment she was lost in his hypnotic ones. She remembered them. She remembered them looking at her in the same way he was now, but she couldn't recall the place. It was as if she was the only one there, the only person that mattered to him, and the only one that existed in his mind. He engulfed her with his eyes, and she became completely breathless, out of words to say and out of thoughts to think. He was completely entrapping her into his powerful stare, as if in some twisted world, he was in love with her. In love with everything about her.

This isn't right!

At that thought, her heart jumped and she quickly turned around, yearning to get away as her heart began to thrash in her chest. She forgot how to breathe. She lost all the right senses. Her body burned with discomfort—

Before she made it a few feet away, with powerful arms, Lexis took ahold of her wrist and threw her against the wall, imprisoning her with both of his arms on either side of her. Her breath was gone, kicked out of her lungs. She stared at him with wide eyes. He stared down at the floor between them, seeming breathless. She stared at his hair, her breathing staggered as she began to pull away her neck and shoulders, needing to escape this moment.

She hated being this vulnerable. Like a child in front of a monster. She hated that he made her feel this way. He looked up at her, his lips open, his chest rising and falling as his breath came out loudly. He was *almost* angry. He looked inside her terrified eyes and his entire body became an erupted volcano. He knelt in, slowly, his eyes dropping to her lips, then looking back into her terrified eyes. He loved her fear. In the very least, she felt emotions toward him. He loved that she was nervous. He loved *everything* about her. His lips stopped a hair away from hers. And he looked into her eyes. He can feel her hand shake as she unconsciously seized his shirt above his hipbone, making that part of his body the main branch to all his burning passion. They stared into the others eyes, both of their breathing caressing each other's lips, while many emotions poured in between them. Eating all the words they yearned to say.

"You..." Lexis huffed, his breath hitting her lips and sending chills down her spine. "Need to accept me now. Whether you like it or not." His voice was low, a whisper, a mumble that caressed her ears and made her chest tingle.

Unconsciously, her grip where she held onto him tightened, now clutching gently on his skin, making him suck in his stomach and grit his teeth as his body reacted massively to it.

She gave a weak shake of her head in answer, her eyes still wide open. Her breathing coming out in disordered rhythms.

Lexis, who's lips were barely touching hers, pulled away, staring at her expression.

Finally she swallowed, closing her eyes and releasing the muscles she was holding in her stomach.

"No?" He said, still in a mumble. Still imprisoning her with his arms.

She was still trying to catch her breath, still trying to understand what was happening through his mind. Finally, she nodded.

His jaw twitching, Lexis knelt in again and with his lips caressing her ears, he said. "Then this will be the last time I'll touch you in this house." He pulled completely away. Fayth fell to the ground, her body shaking, her chest rising and falling, her eyes closed as she lay her head back.

What the hell just happened with me?

Lexis disappeared up the stairs, and moments later, a door slammed.

Angry and frustrated, Fayth was a complete mess the next few days. She would wake up before Dawn, get out of the house, cause unintended trouble everywhere, then come back sometime around midnight and pass out.

Doing this, Fayth haven't laid eyes on Lexis for quite a while now. Though she did sense that he would stay awake until she had come back. Truthfully, she wasn't an idiot to not realize his attraction towards her by now. And that terrified her. She was never intimate with a man before, and to her that's the most terrifying idea to cross her head. Living with Lexis was as uncomfortable and as terrifying as unpredictable as it was. Unlike her basic bland relationship with Charles who she knew well and could control easily. Lexis, however, was a man of his own actions, a man who made her almost suffocate yesterday by simply corning

Doing this, Fayth haven't laid eyes on Lexis for quite a while now. Though she did sense that he would stay awake until she had come back. Truthfully, she wasn't an idiot to not realize his attraction towards her by now. And that terrified her. She was never intimate with a man before, and to her that's the most terrifying idea to cross her head. Living with Lexis was as uncomfortable and as terrifying as unpredictable as it was. Unlike her basic bland relationship with Charles who she knew well and could control easily. Lexis, however, was a man of his own actions, a man who made her almost suffocate yesterday by simply corning her. If anything, she'd rather stay sane in the head and not see him.

And so she avoided him.

And he avoided her. As promised.

Dawn, on the other hand, still had no idea all together that Fayth was living with them. It seemed like Lexis hadn't bothered to tell her yet.

Then it all changed. About six days later of not seeing him, Fayth came back late one night and dropped on her bed. Her clothes stank. She had no money and wasn't capable of buying herself any apparel. In fact, she didn't even have pajamas to change into.

She was so exhausted, she couldn't even think straight, so instead, she stripped to her underwear like always and climbed under the covers, making a note in the back of her head to steal money from somewhere tomorrow and to at least buy sleepwear.

The next morning, sunlight covered Fayth's eyelids. She wouldn't have noticed it if an earthquake wasn't erupting from under her. Wondering what the hell was happening, she turned on her bed and squinted her eyes open.

There was no earthquake, just a Bubbles jumping frantically on her bed excited as ever. She was smiling big, happy that Fayth was here.

All Fayth's lack of sleep from the days before added up and she had overslept, and it seemed like Lexis chose today out of all days to tell Bubbles that she was here.

Nonetheless Fayth was cranky, upset that someone had woken her up when clearly she still needed some sleep.

"You're here. You're here. You're here." *Jump, jump, jump.*

Fayth gritted her teeth and smiled, when in reality she wanted to blurt out a few curse words. Guessing Bubbles wasn't going to stop jumping like this until she got up, Fayth straightened into a sitting position and dangled her legs down the bed.

Thankfully, Bubbles finally descended from on top of the mattress and stood in front of Fayth, still smiling like a kid on Christmas morning.

"I couldn't believe it when daddy said you'll be staying with us Faith. This is so amazing!"

Fayth scratched her hair and yawned, trying her hardest to smile. "I know. I was excited about it too."

Is this what you woke me up for? Are you fucking kidding me? Goddamn it this kid...

-what the hell am I thinking? This is Bubbles, the ray of hope in my life. She's the person I'm excited to know for a long time so I can raise her with the upmost love I can manage.

Gritting her teeth and pulling herself together, Fayth stood to her feet, the covers around her falling to the floor.

And that's when Bubbles started screaming. Pointing at Fayth and screaming as if all hell was loose. As if she just saw a tarantula walking up Fayth's body.

Fayth took a look at what she was pointing at and that's when she realized that Fayth was standing in front of Bubbles with just underwear on.

Bubbles fell to the floor laughing hysterically. A moment earlier she was screaming as if she saw a ghost, and now she was laughing like there was no tomorrow.

At the same moment Lexis rushed into the room, worry written all over his face.

Fayth quickly grabbed the covers and pulled them up and around her, wrapping herself as her face turned beet red. She looked away from him, the back of her neck and her ears burning up.

"What's going on? Did something happen?" He said in a controlled voice.

Barely taking breaths, Bubbles stood up and said. "Faith wasn't wearing any clothes at all." She said. "You should have seen her."

"No, he shouldn't have." Fayth quickly said. "It's just that I don't have any sleepwear, that's all."

What the hell is her problem? How could she just blurt out something like that? If she's going to be so damn judgmental then she shouldn't have come in here in the first place.

-calm down, it's alright. She's just a kid anyway. I can't blame her for doing something so innocent like that.

"Come and eat break fast." Lexis said to Bubbles, ignoring Fayth all together. "We'll go shopping later."

Bubbles nodded happily and skipped to the door. Lexis was about to follow her when Fayth stopped him.

"Hey Lexis, can I talk to you for a second?"

He liked the way she said his name. Loved it.

Bubbles stopped and turned around.

Fayth smiled at her. "You go ahead and start eating your breakfast first. That way we can go shopping faster."

“Okay!” Bubbles nodded again and went down the stairs.

Fayth walked to the door, as steady as possible with all the fabric compressing around her. And when she reached it, she took in a long set of breaths and turned around, facing Lexis, then quietly shut the door behind her.

Lexis stood there, his hands in his front pockets, his eyes gazing out of the large window. He couldn’t stand looking at her in the attire was in. He knew he’ll act again on temptation. And he hated that she didn’t respond the way he wanted her to.

“Get her out of here.”

Lexis glanced over at her, then back at the window. Her voice had sudden vulgarity in it that wasn’t there a moment ago. “Why?”

“Just get her the hell out of here and as far away as possible if you’re not going to get my candy. Get her away before I hurt her.”

Still gazing out of the window, he said. “My daughter will live with us.”

Fayth ruffled her hair wildly with one hand in frustration. “You don’t understand. I was about to say some disgusting things to her when she woke me up this early. Can you even imagine how hard it was to keep a mask on?”

He kept quiet for a moment, his eyes squinting at the sunlight coming from the window, pleased with the thoughts that were running thru his head. “Well then, if this is how it’s going to be...”

Fayth looked at him hopeful.

“Then I’ll make sure she stays.”

Fayth stared at him with disbelief. “Are you kidding me? Do you even comprehend the significance of this matter?! I don’t want to lose her!”

He smiled and looked over at Fayth. “Then I advice you to continually compose yourself. Get dressed, breakfast will get cold.” He opened the door and left.

Fayth walked over and sat on the bed. She couldn’t believe it. How could he ignore the fact that she’s risking an Earth wide relationship with this rehab of his? And with who, Bubbles, out of all people, *her*.

7:03

It became worse in the mall. The holiday decorations were placed in every corner, different amusing ones every time. Lexis and Fayth would endlessly have to run after Dawn and catch her while she dashed toward toys without a care. Fear for her, added to her lack of medication, Fayth was beginning to get pissed by the second.

When they finally had a settled minute, Fayth went into one of the stores and grabbed an outfit she could wear for at least then. A pair of skinny jeans, a sweater and a beanie to shove her messy hair in. After she changed into them, she came out and threw her old clothes in a nearby trash can.

"Do you need anything else?" Lexis asked.

They stood in the store, and he was holding Dawn's hand while she played with necklaces hanging from a small shelf.

"I do..." Fayth asked, she felt her face heat up. She couldn't tell him she needed underwear.

Lexis noticed, he held back a smile and took his wallet out of his pocket. "Here." He said, handing her his credit card. "Get whatever you need and meet us outside the store's front."

7:03

Her heart beating like no one's business, Fayth took his card and flushed even more. She sensed that he knew she was going to buy something feminine.

"The pin is also Anthony's birthday."

She nodded, becoming uncomfortable under his knowing stare.

After they left, Fayth quickly grabbed the few things she needed, with some extra clothes to change into and checked it out on Lexis's card. In the moment that she stood there, while the cashier rang everything up, her heart pounded at how far the two of them went. At first sight, she fainted when she saw him. And now, as she stared at his name on the credit card, he was paying for the things she needed. He was...taking care of her...

And she didn't mind it.

After she was done, she took the bags and left to where she was supposed to meet them. Lexis stood against the wall while Dawn talked to a man dressed as Santa.

When Lexis saw Fayth, he took the bags from her to hold.

“Its okay, I can do it.” She tried.

Looking at Dawn, he said. “Don’t worry about it. Dawn, let’s go.”

Dawn ran over and stood in front of Fayth, indicating that she wanted to be picked up. Fayth knelt down while someone from behind her said, “Hey Lexis, who’s this?”

Lexis, glancing back at Seeger, gritted his teeth and said. “No one.”

Fayth held onto Bubbles and stood up, then turned to face the familiar face.

“Oh—” Seeger said, a smile breaking on his lip. “Rihanna? Rihanna Gessner right?”

Fayth smiled and nodded once. When she glanced at Lexis, he looked at her with a weird look in his eyes. Like he was mad that Seeger knew her name.

When did they meet? Why the hell did she give her that name? This idiot—

“So that’s her.” A girl behind Seeger said. She stood there with a hello kitty shirt on, and stuck her hand out to Fayth, “Hi, I’m Emily.”

Fayth smiled and shook hands with her.

“And this is James and Kyle.” Seeger said, pointing at his two other friends, who said their hellos to Fayth and went back to checking out some girls that were walking past.

“What do you want?” Lexis said.

“I was actually here to buy my parents Christmas presents, but I’m glad I ran into you too.” His wide smile was extra wide now.

“Why?”

“I told my ‘rents that you were back again and that you brought a girl over—”

“You told them her name?”

“Well, yeah.” Seeger shared with his parents basically everything. Unlike Lexis, he was a talker.

“Then what?”

"My dad called uncle John, told him that you were back here and that he and aunt Megan should come and we should all spend Christmas together this year."

So Seeger is Lexis's cousin?!

Lexis gritted his teeth. "Did your dad mention Rihanna?"

Fayth became uncomfortable, wondering where this conversation was heading. Or why Lexis was suddenly angry enough to look like he could kill Seeger right now.

Seeger frowned, trying to think back and remember. "Yeah, I think so. They talked for a long time on the phone so..."

Fayth wasn't sure, but she thought she heard Lexis swear under his breath. It was her first time ever hearing him curse.

"Let's go." He said, his voice suddenly cold.

With a quick bye, Fayth quickly turned around and followed Lexis. Behind them Seeger yelled. "Dinner at your house in two days! Don't forget!"

your house in two days! Don't forget!"

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I LOVE YOU, AND THAT'S TO SAY IN THE VERY LEAST!!!

GOAL SAME AS THE LAST ONE (IT'LL BE LIKE THAT TILL THE END OF THE BOOK!)



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Chapter Seventy

It was terrifying. It really was. Lexis could have his reasons why he didn't want his father to come over and see that Rihanna Gessner was there, but Fayth was terrified that John would finally find out that she's Fayth Armstrong.

And then Lexis would know...

"I'll make the main dish if you'd like." Fayth suggested.

They were sitting together on the large dining table, eating the pasta Fayth put together.

Lexis glanced at her and held back a smile. "It's fine." Lexis said.

"But your aunt called..." Fayth continued, "And I don't think they won't..."

Lexis' aunt, Seeger's mother, called. He seemed like he was good enough with her, talked to her like he would with Jessie, and when she requested the Christmas dinner to be at his house, knowing that he would never attempt in attending one somewhere else, they decided to come to him. Lexis tried his best to get out of it. And his aunt did an even better job in convincing him. At last, he told her he would think about it.

"I know. I still don't think it's a good idea."

"Why?" Fayth thought back to the event in the mall with his cousin. "What was that all about anyway? With Seeger?"

Lexis glanced over at her, putting his fork down, he laid back against the chair and placed a fist on top of the table. "I don't want him to see you." He said quietly.

"John?"

The way she said his father's name so easily indicated her familiarity with him.

“Yes.”

“Why?”

Lexis looked up at her. “Because to him money is everything.”

This didn’t explain any of what Lexis was trying to say. In fact, it only confused Fayth more.

“So are you going to be holding the dinner tomorrow or not?”

Lexis sighed. “Will it be too much to ask you not to sit with us? If they ended up coming?”

Fayth shook her head. “Of course not. I can stay upstairs.” Honestly, she really wanted to feel what a family meal was like.

He nodded, however, he can see the sudden dull look in her eyes. A part of her had been looking forward to it...

“So are we going to buy presents...um, or maybe not today?” Fayth tried to think of how Christmas actually worked. Do you buy the presents on the actual day?

Dawn picked her head up from her plate of food and looked at Fayth, her eyes glinting. “Yeah! When are we getting the presents?!”

Lexis's heart squeezed in agony at Fayth's question. He can see how alien she was with holidays. He can't imagine how she lived her past life. He can't imagine how alone she had been. He can't imagine how disturbed she must have been as years passed through her life, years she'll never get back and relive.

He was about to tell her that stores close tomorrow, so of course they need to buy them as soon as they could, but instead, he decided not to make her feel any more miserable.

Staring at the table, she quickly said. "Sorry, but my parents usually get everything ready, so I never know what happens..." I should know what happens on Christmas day...god, I should have done a little research before opening my mouth.

"Don't worry about it. We'll take it a step at a time." Lexis said. "First we'll go buy presents. It's only fair that both of us get Dawn something."

Fayth nodded.

Lexis looked at Dawn, narrowing his eyes at her, he said. "And this Christmas I don't want any sort of animal as a present."

Last year, Lexis opened his extra-large box and a python

slithered out. He fell back at the sight, and swore loudly in front of Dawn. For the rest of that day, he had to explain to her that only people who are unintelligent swore.

Bubbles pouted. “But it was Uncle Anthony’s idea.”

Everyone fell silent, and the air in the room suddenly felt heavy. Of course. Anthony, the joke master would be behind this. Of course. He had made a small family of three in Christmas seem like an entire country was inside the house.

Dawn, who sensed the bad atmosphere, descended her chair and said. “Sorry daddy.” Looking down at her feet, she said. “I’ll go and get dressed so we can go to the store.”

The smile that was on Fayth’s lips disappeared, her face becoming completely vacant with despair as her heart squeezed in yearning and loss. Anthony...Oh my god Anthony.

Lexis look down, having a hard time of keeping his impassive mask up. His eyes shut tightly and his fist tightened. He could barely let a breath out as anger began to bring down his calm serenity.

Fayth looked over at Lexis. She can clearly see how much he missed Anthony. His face twisted in pain, and his jaw twitched, as he held back a sigh of torture. He looked like he

wanted to break something, to show anger that had never been shown before, but held back as his insides fought with Anthony's cold memory.

He stood to his feet and turned around, facing the balcony's glass door. Why did you leave Anthony? I miss you kid; I miss you so damn much. You're not being fair. I can't take a day to remember you now, you're not being fair.

With tears running down Fayth's face, she wished to stand up and hug him. More to comfort herself than to comfort him, but knew well she didn't have the right to do so.

She stood up and quietly took the plates to the kitchen, silently running the water and letting the soap clean the dishes. While doing so, all the air in her body froze as strong arms wrapped around her from behind, and Lexis' head rested on her shoulder. On his cheeks, she can feel the wetness. On her cheeks, he can feel the wetness. She can feel his heart beat against her, strong and fast. A heart beat so angry, it almost matched her miserable one.

For how long they stood there with the water running...they had no clue.

"I miss him too." Fayth whispered, closing her eyes and

enjoying Lexis' embrace in that moment. "I wish he was here too."

Bubbles came into the kitchen a moment later and the two pulled away from each other.

"I'm ready daddy."

After finishing up the dishes, they all went to the mall and bought presents. Later than day, Seeger came over and asked to meet with Fayth. Even though Lexis didn't like the idea, for an odd reason, he sensed the tasteless relationship Fayth had with Seeger. Though she was kind to him, she still didn't see him anymore of a stranger. It was exactly the feeling Lexis held when he would see her and Kurt together. Seeger was a person she could do without.

The two of them walked to the beach, where they sat down and talked. After a while, Lexis came up in the conversation.

"We used to be closer than brothers. Lexis taught me how to play the guitar. He taught me how to knock kids out when they mess with me. He taught me a lot of things. He even taught me some of things gramps never bothered to tell me. Like how to flirt with girls. You'd never see us apart. We did everything together. I was like a duckling following her

mother everywhere.

“It was all good.” Seeger snorted. “Until he turned twelve. There were a lot of problems going around with my cousin Cara, his sister, and he just stayed home all the time. She was pregnant with Dawn, and he was taking care of her day and night. Whatever she wanted, whatever she needed, everything that was supposed to be done for a pregnant woman and more, Lexis did it all for her.

“She was only twenty-one back then. Her boyfriend left her pregnant and my uncle was so ashamed of her, he hoped the news would forget she existed. I guess that’s why he was strict on Lexis. With Anthony having cancer, Lexis was his only hope now and his only heir to the Ellis and Sons corp, and he couldn’t lose him.

“I don’t know the whole story, but something happened in his house one night and gramps died. I heard he was shot, but no one talked about why or who was the reason, though we were already suspicious it was aunt Megan, Lexis’ mom. But uncle John paid the press to shut up about it so we never knew the whole story. And then Cara passed away.... Everything good about Lexis was gone after that day. He put what was in his heart on his face. To him, his sister was everything. She was the mom who was never there for him,

that never bathed him or fed him. The dad that showed him business and money was everything. She filled in the spot for all of that. But in one second, she was gone. That drove Lexis insane. After his sister died, nothing mattered to him. He was so deathly it scared the piss out of me. He didn't get involved with anyone anymore. And my uncle decided to lay off of him for a while. Now it seems like he's back on his tail again.

"I don't know what your relationship with Lexis is and if you're going to like me saying this or not, but Uncle John is fixing Lexis with this girl named something Armstrong. She's so rich, she might as well be a universal president." He smiled big. "If anything, I want Lexis to get married to her just so I can get a chance to meet her myself."

Fayth looked out onto the sparkling water, her heart heavy. She was suddenly hurting again, jealous. I wish I had an older sister like that. I wish I—"

Vincent.

He might not be family, but he might as well be.

"So are you and Lexis, you know." Seeger asked, eyeing Fayth.

Fayth smiled and looked at Seeger. "I have a boyfriend.

His name is Charles.”

He stared at her face. She was serious.

He straightened up and realization dawned on his face.
“Oh. Sorry, I didn’t—”

“No, it’s okay. Only Lexis knows about it anyway.”

“Why isn’t he with you then?”

Fayth thought about Charles. He must be going insane now trying to contact her on her phone. He must be giving Vincent hell. She needed to find a way to contact him soon. Maybe she can borrow Lexis’ phone while he’s sleeping or something.

“He’s spending Christmas with his family.”

“And you? Where is your family?”

“They’re in Texas. I couldn’t afford a plane ticket, so I ended up going with Lexis.”

“Why not with—what’s his name, Charles.”

“Lexis wasn’t going to spend Christmas with his family, but Charles is and I don’t feel comfortable getting in the middle of a family event. We only started dating a few weeks ago.”

“Oh.” It makes sense. They really aren’t into each other.

“What about you and Emily?” Fayth asked.

Caught in surprise, he held back a smile. “What about?”

“She seems like she likes you.” Fayth smiled. If there was one thing she can tell right away, its jealousy. And back in the mall, Emily wasn’t really fond of Fayth at all.

He shook his head. “I like her too. That’s enough.”

“So you’ve never dated her?”

He shook his head again. “I can’t. Dating between band members is prohibited. It’s not healthy for the bands future.”

Fayth softly punched his arm. “Hey! That never stopped a man.”

“You talking from experience?”

Fayth’s face flushed deep red. “No—”

“Yeah, right!” Seeger started laughing. “Charles and Rihanna sitting in a tree—”

Fayth stood there while he ran around, kicking the sand and laughing as he sang the childish song, she verbally denied and denied, however...in her mind all she thought about was Lexis.

It was about seven p.m., and since it was Saturday, Fayth got ready for Seeger's concert.

She didn't really want to go alone. Not only was she friendless around here, but she was terrified that there would be a lot of people there, making the chances of her causing trouble pretty high.

So she walked over to Lexis, who lay on the couch with Dawn laying on top of him on her back, with a tablet open and a game on there that they did together. Even though it was something that's incredibly pleasant to see, Fayth could only grit her teeth and hate it. Hate it entirely.

"Lexis."

His heart jumped. His muscles tensed. I wish you said it more.

He glanced over at her. Noticing she wanted to talk about something, he straightened up and placed Dawn beside him with the tablet.

Fayth sat on the smaller sofa, staring at the ground and wondering how to ask without sounding rude. "Uh, Seeger, you know his band. He invited—well actually, you know what? Never mind."

Fayth stood up, her heart beating frantically. She hadn't realized that trying to ask him to go with her would make her feel so uncomfortable.

“Would you like Dawn to come and watch with you?”

She paused from walking away and turned around, looking at him. He looked up at her with eyebrows raised.

How could he be this smart? Its unnatural.

She nodded.

“I'll have to go with her.”

She nodded again.

And that's how they were all standing in the crowd of people, waiting for Seeger and his band H2H (Heaven to Hell) to come out on the stage.

Fayth eyed the piano on the stage, wondering what it would feel like to play in front of that many people.

Lexis, who sensed where her gaze was lingering on, knelt in and near her ear whispered. “You should try playing.”

With sudden shyness that overcame her out of nowhere, she looked down at her feet and shook her head.

Lexis smiled and looked away. A few seconds later he

knelt again and said, “I think Dawn would like it.”

Fayth didn’t answer. Little did she know that Bubbles had already talked to Seeger, who managed to somehow embarrass her in front of all the people that were there and ask her to come on stage.

“I didn’t know you could play.” Seeger said, smiling his big smile.

“I can’t.” She said, nervously keeping her back to the crowd of people. “I think I should go now before I vomit my dinner.”

Seeger grimaced. “Come on! Let’s see how you do it.” He took ahold of his mic and ushered for Fayth to take Emily’s place.

Wiping her sweaty palms on her jeans, Fayth made her way over to Emily and sat beside her.

“Nice seeing you again.” Emily said.

Fayth only smiled, not knowing what else to say.

“Here’s the music sheet. I’m guessing you can read notes if you can play...”

Fayth nodded, her throat too swollen to actually speak. She kept pushing her sight away from the stares of the huge

crowd.

“Well then, I’ll sit next to you just in case you need to stop or get too nervous.”

Fayth nodded again. “Thanks.” She whispered.

Emily scooted so Fayth had enough space, and Seeger gave the cue to go. With her heart in her stomach, Fayth began to play.

It was so incredible at first. The sound of the piano overflowed more than any of the amateur playing on the other instruments. It was so clear and precise. So much emotion poured into the song that wasn’t there to begin with. It made the music sound different. Seeger stared at Fayth the entire time as she swayed behind the piano, a smile slowly edging on her lips as they played on. He couldn’t take his eyes off of her as he sang. She was so fucking beautiful it wasn’t even real. How could something like her exist. How can something like her talent hide under her confused vacant mask. It was so damn unbelievable.

The song came to an end, and Seeger kept on staring at Fayth. His heart pounded hard and fast. He was suddenly uncomfortable standing there watching her. She became a completely different person in his eyes.

Fayth stood up and smiled as the crowd erupted in cheers, men whistling, or throwing compliments at her. She couldn't believe that they heard what she delivered. To her, she heard more of Seeger's singing and the guitar playing than anything else.

After quickly leaving the stage, she made her way out to where Lexis and Bubbles last were. She looked around, trying to find them, but she couldn't see where they were.

Wondering if they had left to the bathroom, she went to the gray small square building and checked in the family bathroom, however it was empty.

"Hey." She turned around and looked at the man who called out of her. "You looking for someone?"

She looked at his skull t-shirt. "I don't think you know who I'm looking for." Fayth said, her face suddenly turning cold. She walked on trying to avoid him.

Three more guys that wore similar clothes to the first one, leather and black, came from around the bathroom building and stood in front of her.

"What's up man? Where did you go?" One of them told skull t-shirt.

Skull t-shirt smiled. "I'm trying to make a new friend.

You guys can go.”

“I’m fifteen.” Fayth lied, trying to scare them off.

“I’m eighteen. Bite me.” Also lying, cocking an eyebrow.

Without another word, she tried to go around him again, but he pushed her back. “Don’t make this harder. I’m just trying to be your friend here.”

“I wouldn’t think you’d be stupid enough to make it any harder. I’ll scream every fucking molecule of air in my lungs if you lay your hands on me again.”

The guy laughed, fascinated by Fayth’s snakiness. It was sexy as hell. “You’re trying to play hard to get now? You know you want me.”

Taking in a long breath, Fayth closed her eyes for a moment and reopened them. Composing herself, she tried to make her way again.

The guy’s next push had her sliding backwards on the ground, while the rocks underneath her scrapping the skin on her arms. She looked up at four men who had somewhat filthy looks on their face.

Where is she?!

Lexis looked around, Dawn in his arms. She had run off earlier while he watched Fayth play and had to go and find her. After pulling her away from a clown that she had become morbidly attached to in the few minutes, he made his way back. However, Fayth was done performing and she wasn't anywhere to be seen.

Spotting Seeger taking a break by the snack bar, he made his way over to him. "Where's Rihanna?"

Seeger looked up at Lexis, surprised that he was talking to him. After getting over the shock, he asked. "She wasn't with you?"

"Clearly."

If she's not with Seeger than where the hell did she go?

"She finished performing and left. Hey, by the way, where the hell did she grow up. The shit she played isn't a joke'"

"Watch your language." Lexis handed him Dawn. "Take care of her for a bit."

Lexis turned around and walked off, slowly getting pissed. He took out his phone, deciding to call her, but then realized that her phone is now in the closet of his bedroom.

Damn.

Frustrated, he slipped the phone back inside his pocket and combed his fingers through his hair. Where had she gone? She couldn't be looking for him right now, could she?

Did she go to the restroom?

He looked around and spotted the gray square building with a toilet sign. Quickly making his way there, he walked into the short hall and checked the family bathroom first, then went to the female's.

With a strong urge to go inside, he lingered around the door for a minute, waiting for her to get out. But one after the other, only girls that stared at him and walked away while whispering came out.

A kid that's about eight or nine ran away from other kids that were chasing him, making his way across Lexis to the other side of the building. However, before he took the turn, he froze and his eyes widened while he stared at something behind there. With his mouth opened, he quickly turned around and began to run back the way he came. Terrified.

His heart beating heavy, Lexis made his way to where the kid had stood, wondering what he saw. For some reason, he sensed it. Sensed the upcoming, but refused to think of it

much further. And when he reached the other side and turned to see”

His heart sank.

Chapter Seventy-One

How did this happen...

When did it happen...

He looked over at the scene in front of him. Three men lay against the ground, unconscious, and the forth laid there, his red shot eyes opened wide, staring at Lexis without blinking as he lay there unconscious as well. Blood made endless trails from the top of his head down his forehead, his eyes, his lips and to his neck.

So much blood...

Fayth sat on the ground beside them, shaking while holding tightly to the neck of a broken dark green bottle. Her lips trembled, her head quivered, arms shivered. Her shirt was nearly ripped from the shoulders. Her hair was a

complete mess. Blood soaked the hand holding the bottle where she had cut herself from the broken edge. She noticed Lexis and began to shake her head violently. “I didn’t do it.” She gasped, her lips trembling. “I didn’t do it.”

Her eyesight was gone. She wasn’t seeing anymore. She was halfway dead. All the emotions one is supposed to feel were all electrified inside of her, making her lose sense of what is right and what is wrong. Making her lose every bit of common and humane sense.

“I didn’t do it!” She breathed. “Please believe me. I didn’t do it.”

Lexis’ chest rose and fell. He stared at the sight in front of him with his lip ajar, and his heart began to beat faster, harder, at the sight of blood everywhere.

He quickly made his way to Fayth, and unconsciously, she began to cower back in fear, raising her arm above her head as if he was going to hit her. “No! I didn’t do it!” She cried.

Lexis knelt down beside her. He hadn’t realized how serious her problem was until then. Gently, he undid her bloody fingers from around the bottle.

“I didn’t do it.” She repeated over and over.

He can sense her fear, her need. Her wishful thinking. “I know. I know who did it, so you don’t have to worry about it anymore.”

She stared at Lexis.

Lexis stood to his feet and made his way back, looking around to make sure the area was vacant, he quickly made his way to the front of the building and opened the first aid wall mount cabinet.

After retrieving the first aid kit, he came back and began checking the men’s pulse. Three of them were okay. One of them wasn’t breathing. Lexis quickly performed CPR on him.

By then, Fayth was sitting against the wall, her arms wrapped around her legs. She would mutter her denial every second, terrified of the nothing that’s inside her head. She wanted out. She wanted to relieve her mind from how brutal her way of life was. She needed her candy. She needed it now.

“Look.” Lexis said.

Fayth looked over at Lexis as he pointed at the man’s chest rising and falling again. “He’s alive. They are all okay now. I made them all okay. They’re as good as new. You

don't have to worry."

Her disturbed expression instantly broke free and relief dawned on her. The shallow breathing in her chest took its break, releasing all the tension that was holding her mind to consciousness, and in the words Lexis had said, she finally found her consolation.

She rested her forehead on her knees as she suddenly fell quiet.

Then fell to the side, falling against the rocky ground, fainting and letting her mind rest.

After bringing the man's heart beat back, Lexis took out all wallets from inside each of their pockets. The man that was bleeding from his severe head wound, as Lexis checked his license, was named Martin Chester and he was twenty-seven.

You sick bastard.

Relief washing his face, Lexis knew the man wouldn't be able hold an underage accountable for what Happened. He would automatically be blamed and he doubted the man would be careless enough to say what really happened.

He quickly wrapped Martin's head and did everything basic to keep him alive. Then Lexis pulled out his phone and

called his manager. “Some trouble happened over here. I want you to take care of it.”

After giving his manager the details, Lexis slipped out all four of their IDs from the wallets and put them inside his own back pocket instead, then walked over to Fayth to check her pulse.

He brought the first aid kit over to her and began to clean her wound too. After wrapping her hand with an ace bandage, he picked her up and took her to the car. As he was putting her in the back seat, laying her across so she can rest until they went back home, she refused to let go of his neck. Her eyebrows were pulled together, her chest rose and fell as if she was having a bad dream, however for Lexis who looked down at her, being that close to her body, being held the way she was holding him...

Gritting his teeth, he undid her arms from around his neck and pushed himself away—and is if it occurred to him in that single moment, he was glad that Bubbles lived with them.

That feeling...when you wake up and wish deeply you could go back to unconsciously closing your eyes and dreaming a happy place instead of facing the judgmental

reality of the day. It's an ugly feeling. Filled with fear and disappointment. Fayth hated it most.

Fayth looked at the time, it was five a.m. She guessed that's how life really is. When you sleep on guilt, it will wake you up to get tortured by it earlier than your usual time. "You didn't learn your lesson yet," it says, "so that's enough sleeping and forgetting about it. Wake up and feel more of me. You need to learn your lesson."

She sighed and glanced at the phone as it started vibrating.

It was Vincent. She smiled.

"Merry Christmas!" Fayth quickly said, beating Vincent to it.

He laughed. "Fine, you won this year. But that doesn't even us out, so I'm still the winner in general."

Fayth giggled. "You're going to doubt me next year? Oh and the fact that you were the one who rang me first too."

"Exactly, so how was I supposed to know the exact second that you'll answer?"

She laid back against her pillow and sighed. "You're right..."

Silence covered both ends.

“Sorry I’m not there...” He said.

The heavy sadness was unbearable, Fayth covered it up with a laugh. “Hey! I told you not to say that anymore. You make me feel like I’m being pitied.”

“Fayth?”

“Yes?”

“I have a feeling that something isn’t right. Did something happen?”

Fayth stayed quiet. The room around her became empty of color and shape, and everything was a blur of silent nothings.

His voice became calm and fatherly, “I don’t like it...you stopped telling me everything. How am I supposed to feel unruffled these days when my baby isn’t telling me her troubles?”

Fayth bit her lip, losing her composed state. She barely noticed the texture of the tears that went down her face. She just said what she had in her heart.

“Vincent... I don’t like it... It started out as something I enjoyed because I wasn’t the person in my past anymore. I

was someone...good for a change. I liked that. But a lot of strings and side effects came with it. Now that I went through the feeling of loving someone romantically, I'm starting to have emotions that are negative too. And their all my fault... The scary thing is, I am starting to solemnly wish to go back and just live in my past. Because at least then, I wouldn't have complicated affections. Instead, my mind would be set on just one rule. To hate. How can I be so self-possessed now that I'm off my meds and out hurting people that I'm finally starting to...?" Tears fell down her face as she remembered Lexis' expression when he saw the hurting men. He hated her. He hated her with all of his being.

Vincent was quiet for a moment. For a second, Fayth thought the phone went dead. And her heart dropped in fear of being rejected even by him.

"You're not alone. That's what I want you to think every time these negative thoughts visit your hot tempered head. Just stop and think about me and say 'If I'm going to lose all the people in the world, I'll still have Vincent.' Just think like that Fayth. You'll be okay."

She smiled through her tears. "Don't you get it? I'm already losing my Vincent too. You...have your own family now." You decided to spend Christmas with her instead of

me.

“Don’t ever say that!” Anger suddenly shot in his voice. He sighed in frustration. “I can’t believe you’d even consider that thought. You, Fayth, is my first and my most important family. I put you before Jamie in everything, because you, no matter what anyone says, are my daughter. This world that we fell in, it’s not your fault. You need to understand that.”

“If it’s not my fault, then why do I feel like I was a mistake to be born? Why am I here to live like this?”

“You’re not a mistake!” He said indubitably. “You’re the baby I raised day after day. How could you think like that?! Look at Bubbles. Didn’t you say that her life is similar to yours? But can you honestly look at her and think that she was a mistake?”

The question hit Fayth like an earthquake. She realized how cruel the words she had just said only then—when it was implied on Bubbles. How could such a beautiful intelligent child be a mistake? She didn’t need her parents to make her whole, all she needed was her own personality to make the people around her happy and in return earn great love. She wasn’t a mistake; she was far from that. She’s an absolute angel sent from the heavens.

“Whatever it is that had made you this hurt, you can fix it. And if they are worth you being hurt over them, then they’ll understand your struggles. Don’t let your own self down, because that’s all you’re doing. If you give up on them, they’ll just have an open door to put a void between you and them. Do your best...to make them understand how much you truly care.”

Fayth sniffled the last of her tears and smiled energetically. “I’ll try my best! I really don’t want to lose Bubbles.”

“Wait. This whole time...you were talking about...”

“Yesterday, something...bad happened. Something I usually did...before. Lexis saw and he had a weird look on his face. I honestly doubt he’d ever let me be near Bubbles again.”

“What happened?” Vincent’s voice suddenly had an anxious tone in it.

“I—I almost killed—”

“FAYTH!” Vincent bellowed.

Tears began to fall again, and Fayth held back the sound of her sobbing. She knew she’d disappoint him. I wish I didn’t tell him. I’m such an idiot!

“You promised me Fayth. You told me you’d change. You promised.” She can hear the tears coming down from Vincent’s eyes from his foggy voice.

“I’m trying. I swear I’m trying. But they were trying to rape me and I didn’t know what to do. No one was around. I was so scared. I didn’t know what to do.”

Vincent’s breath was kicked out of him. He had judged her too fast. “I—What? W—w—what?!”

“I’m okay now. I promise I’m okay.” What the hell? How could you tell him that?! Now he’s going to worry. Shit.

“What does Lexis have to do—”

“Hey found me. He helped them, told me that they are alive and that I shouldn’t worry. I don’t remember anything after that, but the way he looked. I’ll never forget. He’s not going to let me near Bubbles anymore. I think he’s terrified of the person I really am.”

Vincent sighed, finally understanding what happened. “I wish you two would love each other already.”

Fayth almost fell off the bed. “Oh my god, Vincent ew. Bye.”

Fayth tapped end, and threw the phone on the mattress far

away from her. All of the sudden her heart began beating hot and heavy in her chest and she felt the urgent need to take a shower with cold water.

What the hell...

She looked at the time, it was about five thirty. She slipped down under the covers again and wondered what it would be like staying in her room all day on Christmas. Surely Lexis will ask her to leave as soon as he sees her. The sweet shy Rihanna, the image the entire Academy had of her, it was all gone now. Lexis saw the real her.

Is this what Christmas this year will be like for me? Do I have to feel lonely again when I have a person I love nearby...Bubbles, I wish I wasn't so unlucky.

“Faith! It’s Christmas!!”

Fayth had fallen asleep, and she abruptly woke up at Bubbles tiny voice yelling in her ear. The feeling of her hands on her cheeks Fayth sensed clearly. She opened her eyes and there was Bubbles, smiling broadly and looking at Fayth with her big blue eyes. It was almost unbelievable, that Fayth would wake up to such a beautiful Christmas. She earnestly wanted to pinch herself just to make sure it wasn't

a dream.

“Merry Christmas!” Bubbles exclaimed, laughing joyfully.

Fayth straightened up into a sitting position, which ended up making Bubbles sit in her lap, and nervously tried to say merry Christmas back. Fayth was kind of shocked really. She wasn't expecting Lexis to let Bubbles see her again. The smile on her face erased all memories of yesterday and it felt as if today wasn't more than a normal day. Starting out with Bubbles cheerful smile.

“Come on. We don't have all day.”

Fayth looked over at Lexis, who stood by the door arms crossed. He was still in his pajama, a white tee and a Calvin Klein dark blue pants.

What's going on? Why is he being like this? Because of Bubbles?

They got off the bed and went down the stairs to the Christmas tree. They were supposed to decorate it yesterday after they had came back from the concert, but it seemed like Lexis and Bubbles had done the decorating while she slept.

“Wow...so pretty.” Fayth remarked, dazed by its beauty and the lights twinkling on it. She nervously looked over at

Lexis. “C—can I touch it.”

He nodded.

She walked over to it and touched the stingy branch tips. She looked closer at the decorations put all over the tree, the different colors, the star on the top, and couldn’t believe how much different it looked from the malls or the TV. This was real.

“Daddy, can we take a picture first? It will be amazing if we took one with Faith.”

Lexis put together the camera on a tripod and the three stood beside the tree, with Fayth standing a little bit off to the side.

“Come closer Faith.” Bubbles said.

Fayth fidgeted, her heart beating like a drum, and took a step closer to them. Lexis slipped his arm around Fayth’s waist and pulled her close to him. Feeling her heart yearning to jump out of her throat, Fayth blew out a long pressured breath.

“You said you weren’t going to touch me anymore.” She breathed.

“Unless a situation called for it, I won’t. This is a

situation that called for it.”

“What about yesterday?” Fayth asked, wondering about the hug.

“You needed it more than I did.”

She stayed quiet.

With his right arm around fayth and while holding Dawn with his other arm, Lexis clicked the remote button he was holding in the hand carried Dawn and said. “To family.”

“To family!” Dawn exclaimed.

Fayth opened the only box with her name on it and took out a gorgeous white dress with a red bow on the front right under the chest. Knowing the material by heart, Fayth knew it would cost a lot more money than an average person could afford. Which meant she had to be shocked by it, beyond its beauty. She needed to convey how Rihanna Gessner would react by receiving such an expensive present.

However surprise didn’t come out as much as Fayth wanted it too, instead honest happiness covered her face.

“This is...for me?”

Dawn nodded. “I never see you wear dresses. I think

you'll look so pretty."

"Oh my god." Fayth breathed, tears threatening to come out. She couldn't believe that she finally received a Christmas present. "Thank you so much Bubbles. Its so beautiful."

Fayth wiped at her tears, and as Dawn walked over, Fayth knelt down while Dawn wrapped her arms around Fayth and hugged her tightly. "I can hug you all day." She said.

Fayth smiled through her tears. Where was this? Where did my childhood go? Why couldn't I have a bit of what she had now. She's so lucky she has Lexis for a father. I wish my father was anything like him.

"Can I talk to you?" Fayth said to Lexis when she stood up.

They walked to the kitchen and left Bubbles to check out her other presents in the living room. Fayth leant against the counter and Lexis semi sat on the dining room table five feet across from her. "I got you a scarf. I thought it would be inappropriate to not get you something when you've housed me for Christmas. Just so you know, I'm not expecting anything from you." She quickly cleared up, somewhat lying as she looked down at the floor between them. He hadn't

gotten her a present, and it was awfully embarrassing now.

“I already gave you you’re present.”

Fayth looked up at him, surprised. “What?”

“Do you honestly think your phone grew legs and walked here?”

And that’s when Fayth realized Vincent’s call this morning, however since she had the phone for so long, it being back in her hand didn’t seem much of a surprise. That’s why she hadn’t realized...

“Thank you.” She mumbled, dropping her gaze to the ground again.

Lexis straightened up and walked closer to her.

She crossed her arms.

He did the same. Leaning closer to her, he mumbled. “What did you say? I couldn’t hear you.”

Feeling her heart beating anxiously again, she quickly shook her head. “You’re parents.” She finally breathed. “Dinner—what are you going—Do you want to—” All trails of thoughts disappeared.

He knelt in. “I’m not touching you.”

“I’m not reacting—”

“You are. It seems like you’ll be the next one breaking the rule of touching.”

“It’s not—”

He knelt in closer, almost hovering over her now. “What is it?” He asked, his eyes lost in wonder. “What do you really want to talk about?”

She looked up at him. “Why?” She exhaled, feeling her stomach tighten. “Why are you not kicking me out the house? Why are you letting me near Dawn? Why aren’t you asking me what happened?”

“Do you really want to know?”

She looked back down. Yes I want to know. I’m dying out of curiosity.

“Answer me first. In all honesty.” He paused for a moment, wondering how she’ll react to what he was going to say next. “On the Dawn Academy Winter Masquerade Ball, why did you kiss me?”

Fayth was caught in a terrorized expression. “W—What?” She gasped, glancing at him then back at the floor.

“You could have easily gotten away by using your

amazing fighting skills from yesterday.”

Fayth clenched her fist. She felt her entire body turn inside out. She could barely contain her breathing anymore.

He knelt in closer. “Why are you suddenly nervous?” His voice was low, a smile in it. “Tell me why you kissed me. The real reason.”

Chapter Seventy Two

He knelt in closer. “Why are you suddenly nervous?” His voice was low, a smile in it. “Tell me why you kissed me. The real reason.”

“I didn’t—”

“If all matters in the world reproduce, honesty will always be the most generous. I told you. Lying won’t get you anywhere anymore. If you lie, you will only lose something.

You will never gain anything good.”

Fayth closed her eyes shut and looked down. “To get away. I did it to get away.” She breathed.

It really was her.

He knew, however for some reason as long as she denied it, a part of him denied it too.

“Fine.” He sighed. “I’ll let it go... For now. But that kiss...I’m returning it. And when I do, it won’t count as touching you.”

Flabbergasted, Fayth tried to get away, but Lexis quickly put his hands on the counter on either side of her. “I bought you and Dawn a mask to go with the dress. Its part of Christmas to wear one.”

I’m such an idiot. I should have figured out that its part of Christmas before him. I should have gotten one for Dawn before him—Wait...if I’m able to wear a mask...

“Can I join the family dinner?” She looked up at him, her eyes pleading. “Please. I—I think you might need help. I can greet them.”

Lexis pretended to think about it. “Alright.” Eying her, he added. “Just be careful.”

She stared at Lexis. Of what?

He knelt in all of the sudden, so close, that his lips almost touched hers. Fayth gasped. He tried to hide a smirk. “Don’t worry.” He whispered. “I wouldn’t want Bubbles interrupting us when I return it.”

Feeling her chest become hot with discomfort, Fayth quickly managed to get away without touching him. “I’m going to go call Charles. I miss him.”

“I love him.”

Three words. So purely said. I love him... How can such three words be so powerful? So powerful, yet so easily said. Is this really what a person in love is like? To be able to say such three words on a whim.

Emily stood on Lexis’ balcony with Fayth. She had been walking down the shore when she noticed Fayth standing there by herself. Fayth, who hung up on an angry Charles, that demanded to know where she is over and over again, couldn’t go back in. How could she possibly stay in the same place with Lexis now, knowing at any given minute he might make a move on her? She couldn’t give into that risk. Impossible. There was no way....

When Emily came over she was glad. Fayth needed someone to take her away from her thoughts. Even while talking to Charles, all she could think about were Lexis' words. However as Emily and her talked more and more, somehow Fayth began to listen more than think. Geez, girls talk a lot. And if you don't listen, they'll notice and flip out. So Fayth had to listen.

Now, she stared at Emily surprised at the confidence she had. The way she admitted it made it seem so easy. How could admitting your affections for someone be this simple? Unless the love is mutual, unless it's as old as the person themselves, then it's fake. Nothing is that simple.

However Fayth didn't comment. She barely knew either of them. And love... Love had failed Fayth before, many times. She couldn't give her opinion on something inevitably flawed in her life. If anything, she can only give a good opinion on what bad luck was.

Emily laughed at Fayth's expression. "You look speechless." Taking a deep breath in, she smiled and looked off to the beach.

She was pretty, Emily. Black hair, with streaks of pink in it. Dark makeup that was done in a much better way than Fayth's messy one. Her tongue piercing. Her Monroe

piercing. It looked cute on her. Her clothes were adorable too. Fayth had always thought Hello Kitty belonged to little kids only, but on Emily, it fit right. It wasn't childish anymore.

“The whole neighborhood knows that I have a crush on him. I'm pretty sure he knows it too—but he acts like he doesn't.” She looked at Fayth and smiled. “Because I could beat up a guy if I want to, that's why.”

Fayth smiled. “Why aren't you with your family? Isn't it Christmas at your house?” Did not everyone celebrate Christmas? Wait, I didn't just offend her, did I?

She took out a new phone and flashed it in front of Fayth, ecstatic. “Look what I got. Bet you don't have that in your collection.”

“Nice.” Fayth commented, though she had seen things a million times better.

“After the gifts are open, I usually leave until the rest of my family arrives, then I go back to celebrate it for real. Dinner is going to be amazing tonight.”

I wish I could say the same thing...

“Mom and dad are probably sitting under the mistletoe right now, that's why I left.”

Fayth fell quiet. She looked off as her stomach started to churn, a sick feeling cutting at her.

“I know a lot of kids are disgusted by the thought of their parents touching each other, but I love it when I know their loving. It makes me feel like we really are a family. Because we share the same love. That they aren’t separated, or at least, they aren’t fighting.”

Fayth gritted her teeth. Shut up. Don’t talk about parents in front of me. Unless you want to get your ass kicked you better shut the hell up right now.

“I hate it when kids dislike their parents for stupid things like being an authoritarian. Because every time I think of myself as a mom I could easily see myself become protective. Why would those kids treat their parents like that...? It’s so inconsiderate I could beat them up myself.”

Shut the hell up. You bitch, you don’t know anything.

She snorted. “Don’t even get me started on those rich kids—”

I’m going to kill you. I could just think about a million things I could do to your right now.

“They’re so inconsiderate. They have everything and they don’t love their parents right. How is that possible? You

don't struggle to work, and even though they give you everything you need by working day and night, you can actually talk to them one word out of line?"

I turn and sock her right in the middle of her face. Of her damn mouth.

"These kids are so ungrateful"

Then get a flamethrower and melt her lips together. Fucking burn her face off.

"How could they not treat their parent's like a prize worth a life time."

At this point, Fayth was done. She couldn't take it anymore. She—

"We need to start cooking." Lexis said. He stood by the open glass door, arms crossed and his face cold, emotionless. His jaw twitched as he glanced over at Emily.

Fayth turned and walked back to the door, barely saying goodbye. However as she walked in, Fayth turned around, her body about to explode. Let me just beat her one time. Just let me fucking shred her face once. Just once.

Arms took ahold of her from the back. Holding her tightly. Fayth listened to the footsteps as Emily walked down

the balcony stairs. And Lexis began to slowly pull away.

Fayth quickly turned around and pushed her body against his, yearning for his strong grasp. “Please. Hold me a bit longer. I’m going to fucking choke her. I’m going to—”

With an impassive expression, he rounded his arm around Fayth’s shoulders and held her tightly, She pushed her face against his neck, trying to contain her breathless feelings, and with all her strength, she wrapped her arms around him and held him tightly.

Hold it. Lexis Closed his eyes, feeling her lips against his neck, her chest rising and falling against him. Just hold it. Think of something else. Damn it—

He pushed Fayth away, suddenly feeling breathless himself. He pushed her by the shoulders so she was against the glass. He looked inside her eyes. She could see his need. She could sense a sudden animalistic feeling on him. She could feel the scolding vibe coming off his stare.

“Daddy, what are you doing?” Bubbles stood next to his legs, looking up between him and Fayth.

Lexis quickly looked away, dropping his arms, while breathing in and out loudly as he tried to calm himself down. He quickly shook his head and looked back down at Dawn.

“Nothing. Let’s go and see what other presents you got.”

Fayth looked after him, her mouth slightly open with an expression that was caught in question. What the hell....just happened?

The guests were coming in about an hour, both Lexis and Dawn had already taken showers and got dressed, and now Fayth was looking at herself in the mirror. She had the white dress on, no make up and her hair was tied in a bun. She looked at the white glittery mask in her hand, wondering exactly how much it’ll conceal from John’s eyesight today.

“You look beautiful.” Lexis said, standing in the doorway.

Fayth turned around, feeling naked without her usual thick eyeliner. It was her mask, her shield against revelation, and for Lexis to be looking at her bare face right now, it made her feel as if she wasn’t wearing anything at all.

“I—” What? Should I thank him? Why was he up here? Where is Dawn? She couldn’t be sleeping...

Lexis walked in, his eyes still on Fayth’s, a small smile on his lips. He took slow steps until he had enough space to close the door behind him.

“What are you doing?” Fayth breathed, taking a step back.

“Why? Are you scared?”

“Its my room.”

“Its my house.”

She bit her lip, trying to make her breathing less hectic, her nervousness less noticeable.

“You should really accept me now. You’re fighting with yourself.” He took a step closer. He wasn’t going to rush this. He was going to enjoy her beauty first.

“I’m not fighting—”

“A part of you is curious, the other hides behind that curiosity. I can read people. I told you that before. I see it...”

He took a few steps more.

“...in the way you look at me...”

Fayth now stared at his legs as they walked closer.

“...in the way you react....”

Her heart thrashed. Her eyes began to widen as the space between them disappeared by every step he took. She inched back slowly, wishing she knew what thoughts were there in

her head. However everything was foggy. The room was quiet. Her breathing was loud. His smile was everything she saw.

“Charles.” She finally choked out. “I love Charles.”

However, all she saw was how Lexis looked like in his black v-neck shirt and dark jeans. How his long hair fell on his forehead in soft strokes. How his blue green eyes looked at her with so much intelligence, eyes that unwrapped her by simply gazing at her.

“Charles? Charles who?” He said, challenging her, his smile twisting on one side of his lips.

“Uh...” Charles who? She closed her eyes, trying to make her thoughts more clear, but everything was foggy.

She let out a strained breath and opened her eyes. Lexis stood in front of her, his face close to hers.

“Don’t touch me.” She quickly gasped.

His hands were in his front pockets. She noticed that lately, he no longer held a cold expression around her. It was always curious, tempting, flirtatious or challenging. His smile was genuine. A smile she now knew where Anthony inherited his from.

She clenched her fists, which got even more moist as the heat of her body only grew. Them alone in a room is exactly the thing she wanted to avoid. It terrified her to think he would want to return the kiss now. She didn't want it. That kiss—

Lexis slipped his hand on her cheek, making her drop her gaze and exhale a short breath. For a moment, all he did was stare at her. He wondered what goes on in her mind, what happens when he touches her. Does she feel what he does? Does she love it the way he...

He knelt in, wanting to feel her against him. He knelt in, caressing her cheek with his thumb...

“Daddy?”

Lexis froze, gritted his teeth and swore under his breath.

He dropped his hand and turned around, smiling while looking at Bubbles, who stood by the door while holding the handle. “You woke up early.”

“There is someone knocking on the door.”

Lexis nodded. He turned around, his jaw twitching and looked at Fayth, who stared at the floor barely able to hold back a smile. Sighing deeply, he turned back around without a word and left the room.

“Merry Christmas.” Seeger quickly said, handing Fayth a wrapped box. He looked around her at Lexis. “Sorry man, this year it’s for the lady.”

Fayth smiled. She didn’t know why exactly she liked the sound of Seeger talking to Lexis like that. It felt warm. Like a family.

“What’s with the mask?” He looked Fayth over and bit his lip. Well, damn. That’s my present right there. “You look hot.”

Fayth softly punched him on his shoulder.

“Uncle Seeger!” Bubbles, who wore a matching mask like Fayth, ran over and jumped into Seeger’s arms. He seemed to have gotten her a gift too, but hers was in a tiny box. A pair of earrings.

The next person to make it was a blonde woman a bit older than Vincent. Fayth quickly grabbed the plates of food she was holding.

“Here, I’ll carry that for you.”

She smiled sweetly. “Thank you honey. I’m Seeger’s mother, Mrs. Ellis, but since Lexis’ mother is older, then use

that on her and just call me Donna.”

“I’m Rihanna. Nice to meet you and merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas to you too. My husband will be a little late. He had left to pick up Lexis’ parents from the airport.”

Why am I the one greeting and listening to this?! It should be Lexis.

“Oh okay. Its fine, we’ll wait.”

“Hello Lexis.” Donna said, taking her shoes off at the entrance and walking further into the living room, where Bubbles ran off to her and hugged her.

“Merry Christmas honey, you’ve grown so beautifully.”

Lexis who sat on the sofa, nodded once at his aunt and impassively said. “Merry Christmas.”

Fayth left to the kitchen and arranged the plates Donna had brought on the dining table. However, after she was done, she found it hard to move from that room. She was shy of going back into the living room and interrupting their family time. She didn’t belong there. She could almost see Bubbles sitting in Donna’s lap and that alone made Fayth suddenly feel out of place.

I was greeting them into this house just minutes ago, but

now I feel like I'm interfering in their business. How did it turn out like this in just a few minutes?

“Hey man. Who's Charles?” Seeger asked Lexis as he dropped down next to him on the sofa.

Lexis clenched his jaw. Seeger noticed.

Seeger looked away. “Shit.” He mumbled. He stood up and walked over to the dinning room. Fayth stood by the kitchen counter, leaning her back against it with her arms crossed. She was staring at the ceiling, her eyes glazed, zoning out into space.

Fayth didn't realize it right away, but when she looked over and saw Seeger, she was sure he had been standing at the entrance for longer than she had thought, watching her.

“Can I speak with you? Privately?” He said.

Fayth was uncomfortable with the look he had in his eyes. It was something that she'd see in Charles's eyes often. “We should go back...it's disrespectful of me to leave the guests...”

She made her way toward the living room, deciding that she's better off feeling uncomfortable next to Lexis than being here.

Seeger caught her arm. “It will just take a minute.”

She looked at him. For a weird reason, she sensed what he was going to tell her. However Seeger isn’t...just isn’t. He’s a person Fayth could do without. A person she doesn’t have to see tomorrow. A person she won’t wonder about.

Deciding to just get it over with, she nodded and walked out to the balcony with him. She leaned against the railing, looking at the beach, while he closed the door behind them.

She shivered momentarily as a chill in the air passed. Seeger walked over and took off his scarf, wrapping it around Fayth’s neck slowly. “You see,” He said, taking his time with the scarf. “This year is the first year that uncle John is traveling all the way over here to spend time with the family. Do you have any idea why?”

Fayth stayed quiet.

“Because of you.” Seeger said. “When he found out that he was living with a woman other than the one he was planning on marrying him off to, he decided to come here to see his son face to face. Also you.”

Fayth looked back at the beach. She wasn’t worried. If John wanted confirmation on whether she held romantic feelings toward Lexis or not, she can easily assure him that

she didn't. She can assure him of her relationship with Charles as well. Lexis and her might have a difficult relationship, but its barely confirmed if they were even friends yet. The only real bond between them right now is one thing. Bubbles.

“You don't seem scared.” Seeger noted, smiling.

Fayth shrugged.

“Anyway, that's not what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Fayth looked at him.

He sighed and leaned against the railing next to her. “Do you know what's the difference between fate and the future?”

Fayth shook her head. “Not precisely.”

“Both are arrows. The future arrow aims right at you, and you expect it but you can't dodge it. That's what's happening to Lexis now with his father. He knows what his father wants from him, but he can't really avoid it. Fate however is an arrow that hits you out of the blue from the back. You don't expect it at all. You don't even see it coming. I believe...” He turned around so he could face Fayth, “that already happened to him. The millisecond both of you met.”

Fayth felt what he said as the truth, but more so with Jessie than Lexis. “It’s not like that between us.”

“It’s what you want to believe. My point is, whether you have affections for each other or not, tonight will be double bad if Uncle John feels anything coming off of you two. Maybe if you and I pretend like we’re dating, then it’ll make it easier on Lexis.”

Fayth thought about it, considering the idea.

“We don’t have to do anything. And we don’t have to tell anyone about it right away. If for any reason things got bad, and I mean like really shitty, then I’ll stand up and tell them you’re my girlfriend. And when I do, don’t deny it. I’ll help my cousin out. You’ll help Bubbles’ dad out. What do you say?”

Fayth looked back at the beach, her eyes lost in thought. If John comes, he’ll most likely stare at my face more now. He might see similarities. That aside, if I’m able to get away from that stare, he won’t be able to know who I really am. If that’s so, the moment he sees how Bubbles is comfortable around me, he’ll feel threatened. He’ll wonder how close the three of us were. He’ll wonder why Lexis invited someone to his house for Christmas. Of course, he’ll try to hurt Lexis. He’ll find a way to do degrade him in front of Bubbles. That

can't happen—

“Okay.” Fayth took a deep breath. “Let’s do it.”

Chapter Seventy three

The atmosphere was chilling.

Everyone in the family sat on the dining table of ten seats. Lexis, Fayth and Dawn on one side, John, Megan and Seeger on the other. Seeger's parents sat on the two ends of the table.

All anyone could hear is the clanking of the spoons and knives against the plates. John muttering every now and then. It was the most spine chilling dinner Fayth ever had.

When Ellis's parents had finally come, Fayth partially hid behind Seeger most of the time, only coming out when Megan pulled Fayth into a tight hug. Like Donna's, it had felt very motherly. And as the hug lasted, it was in that exact moment that she innerly and completely hated Lexis.

He had everything. Everything. Bubbles, and a mother that gave warm hugs. He had everything. And Fayth, Fayth was a slowly erupting fireball.

When his mother hugged him, Fayth began to feel sick to the stomach. In her mind, Lexis in some way was similar to her. They shared a trait. She connected with him and she saw that she wasn't the only one with imperfections. When she saw his family around him, it was almost as if Lexis had pushed her away by making her see that. See him surrounded by people Fayth will never have. And when she saw, she felt more alone than ever.

She hated him for letting her experience it. She had never been more jealous of a person in her entire life. To know that someone else who was as broken as you has something that you don't have....it was by far the most horrible feeling.

Lexis, I fucking hate you, you lucky son of a bitch. And I've never hated a thing more.

And now, everyone sat on the dining table, and as every second passed with Fayth glancing up to see if John was looking at her, she regretted not being elsewhere. She hated this. She hated the family dinner, the family and Lexis. She hated everything.

But no matter how much anger piled up under her skin, she couldn't hate Bubbles.

Lexis could feel the vulgar vibe coming off from next to him. Something was wrong with Fayth. She looked like a balloon that was going to explode at any time. He couldn't understand why a person who looked forward to a family meal can become like this. He expected her to be enjoying this at first, and yet, as his eyes ran over the quiet grim faces of his family, he almost understood her disappointment.

However, what he was seeing in her eyes wasn't disappointment. It was something much more deeper and heart wrenching than that. It was evil. Pure evil. It was menacing. She could kill someone right now.

He slid his hand under the table and slipped his phone to her lap. She was almost surprised, but quickly held herself

and froze, not wanting anyone to notice. Then proceeded to take the phone and look under the table at the screen.

Wait for me upstairs. Now.

She gave him the phone back from under the table and stood to her feet, finding it more than relief to get away. As everyone glanced at her, she muttered her excuse to use the bathroom and began to walk away.

She made it up the steps and harshly took off the mask, her body suddenly breathing in and out violently. She wanted to break something. She wanted to fucking bash a window or break in a door. She made her way toward her room and fought the urge to slam the door behind her.

Pacing back and forth, she breathed in and out. Walked to the wall and placed her forehead against it. Shut her eyes and tried to think of nothing. Gritted her teeth and imagined herself as a frozen ice cube.

The door opened and Lexis walked in. He made his way over to her as she turned around and looked at him. Her seething expression was in place. Fayth was back.

Concerned, Lexis stopped in front of her and asked. "Is everything okay?"

She didn't say anything. Just stood there with her nose

scrunching up. Her eyes piercing into his like two daggers.

"What's wrong?"

He tried to reach for her, but she jerked away, an expression of disgust taking over her face.

"You have to tell me what's going on to help you!"

She stayed quiet. Turned around and made her way to the small window. Before getting too far, Lexis caught her shoulder and turned her around. She was crying.

"What's wrong?"

"I hate you. I hate what you have. You—you're messed up like me! But you have a mother! You have a mother who can give such a warm hug! You have something that I will never have. You have a cousin. A daughter. You have a father. An uncle and an aunt." I have no one. I have no family. "You're as broken as me. You have done so many bad things like me, why are you lucky? What aren't I lucky? Why? Tell me."

Lexis' expression looked battered for a moment, and his eyes held sudden pity for Fayth.

"Don't!" She warned him. "Don't you even dare feel sorry for me! Its even worse. Don't make it worse."

He took a step toward her.

She took a step back. "I hate you. I fucking hate you Lexis Ellis. And I don't want to spend another minute in the same house as you. As soon as everyone's leaving I'm leaving too. I'm not going back to the Academy. I'm not going back home. I fucking hate you."

She rounded him and made her way to the door.

"What about Dawn? Do you really think you can never see her again?" His voice was low. He saw the honesty in the words she said. She wasn't lying. She really was going to leave.

Fayth paused and looked down. "Its why I'm leaving." Her heart hurt at the thought alone. "Wouldn't I end up hating her at some point too?"

Bubbles, who had been sitting in Mrs. Ellis's lap, refused the next spoon extended for her to eat from, and slid down to stand on the floor.

"You're full?" Mrs. Ellis asked.

Bubbles and Fayth barely had any contact ever since the rest of her family set food in the house. Everyone wanted to pamper her up one way or the other. Hold her, tell her how cute she was, kiss her, hug her, pick her up, put her down,

pick her up again, pass her, play with her, hold her again.

It was a sick sight.

So that's probably why the rest of the family—those other than Lexis and Seeger, who had seen Fayth and Bubbles together more times than one can count—were thinking Fayth had no relationship whatsoever with Bubbles. In fact, since Bubbles was always so cold to strangers, they had thought she was the saw way with Fayth.

That being said, Fayth didn't see it weird in anyway when Bubbles ditched her grandmother and came over to her, climbing into her lap instead. They had done this recently quite a lot ever since they had started eating together. Bubbles would come over and sit in either Fayth's or Lexis' lap, whoever she feel most comfortable eating with that day. It happened so much that two spoons were no longer used, and they began to use the same one instead. It had become natural. Like breathing air. Something to not even think twice about. And for that reason, Fayth didn't notice the looks the adults were suddenly giving them as she began to feed Bubbles from her spoon.

"Say ahh." Fayth said quietly in her ear as she put the spoon next to Bubbles lips.

After swallowing the bite, Bubbles pulled at Lexis' sleeve.

Lexis brought his cup of lemonade and held it for Bubbles as she sipped loudly from it. It wasn't anything unusual. That's how it had become on the dinner table. It wasn't much to wonder about. It was just...that. Everything just happened. And that is why Fayth was taken aback when she looked up and saw almost everyone staring at her, curious.

"That is enough!" The way John's voice rang through the quiet room, the way he jerked up to his feet, slapping the table and making the plates rattle on the table, made everyone flinch with fear.

"You!" He pointed at Fayth, more disgusted than anything. The angriest she had ever seen John. "Get the hell out of this house now!"

Fayth's eyes open a big wider, disturbed and shocked at the tone of voice John was using with her. He had been nothing but kind and somewhat of a kiss ass for as long as she knew him. To see him now, it was as insulting as it was shocking.

After the shock wore off, Fayth hid her anger and decided that truly it was enough. It was time for her to leave. Her

plan that she had been working on, it was time to put it on the table. She was going to leave, find rehab her own way, far away from everyone she knows. Of course, she'll run into a few dead ends, but no one said it was going to be easy.

"John!" Megan, his wife, demanded. Disbelief covering her tone. She looked at him as if she couldn't be more disappointed.

"Did you not hear what I said?!" He insisted, his lips curling as he said the words. "Leave." He enunciated the word so rudely this time.

Looking down nervously, Fayth nodded and slowly put Bubbles, who looked terrified, down on the floor. Then slowly began to sit up.

A hand caught her. She looked over at Lexis. His face was never more empty, more cold. He pulled her to sit back down. "Dawn. Go to your room."

Dawn quickly rounded the table with wide eyes and ran for the stairs.

Standing up himself, Lexis pointed at the door across the two rooms and with an emotionless voice, he looked at John and said. "Leave."

His father looked at him with his mouth ajar, disbelief

coating it at his son's bluntness.

"Leave. Now." Lexis said, his eyes sharper than anyone had ever seen.

"Lexis, honey—" His mother tried.

Lexis glanced at her and she abruptly closed her mouth and looked down.

"Are you treating your father like this right now?" John asked, his eyes squinted and his nose twisted.

"Leave." Lexis said, not bothering to argue with him on whether he was ever a father to him.

John slapped the table again and gave Lexis a scorching stare. "Oh, you think you're the only one who can give orders. This may be your house, but Dawn isn't yours."

This made Lexis' eyes falter a bit.

John noticed. "I have official custody of her. I'm her grandfather. Her mother's father. You're just her uncle. You can kiss the relationship you two had to hell."

Lexis' jaw twitched. His eyes held a sudden fear that Fayth saw quite well. And to think this is all her fault.

"John, that's enough." Megan said quietly, staring at her plate.

Fayth stared at her. How distraught must she have felt with all that happened to her through her life. How strong her love for John was to have stayed with him till now. She was such a strong woman. Lexis was so lucky to have her.

And to think right now to be reminded of her dead daughter so easily like this, without a care of what her feelings conveyed....

"I'll marry her." Lexis finally choked out, closing his eyes, reopening them, and looking back at his father. His dead eyes were back, without a single emotion behind them. "I'll marry Fayth Armstrong."

His father was taken aback, his expression no longer angry. Surprise took over as he began to nod in appreciation. "Well then..." However he eyed Fayth with distaste.

"She's close with Dawn." Lexis said, his voice void of any feelings. "Dawn is the one who requested for her to come."

Nodding again, John said. "Fair enough." And he began to sit down.

"No. Since I gave you what you want, you can leave now." Lexis said, pointing at the door again.

John paused mid-way sitting in the chair. He looked at Lexis with scorn-filled eyes.

Lexis only stared back, his haunting eyes more deadly than ever.

His mother glanced at him and pushed at John to begin walking away from the table. "Let's go John. You're not making this any better."

John began to walk away, angrily grabbed his jacket from the hook and made his way to the door.

Megan grabbed her jacket in her arm and hurried after him. Before getting too far, Lexis stopped her.

He took the jacket from her hand.

He helped her wear it.

And while doing so, he said. "Only a heartless bastard would let you go out in the cold like that."

Fayth had followed Lexis out, and so did the rest of the family. They watched as he gently helped his mom put on her coat. A sad shy smile was on her lips as she stole glances at her son.

John stopped walking, hearing his son say what he did. He knew it was intentional. He knew he meant to say it and who it was said to. It was too much. He took a hold of a two foot slim marble vase from the side table and turned around,

aiming it at Lexis' back as he growled.

Megan, seeing it first, turned Lexis around and took the hit instead, her mouth opening as the pain from her back blew her full force.

Lexis stared at his mother, shocked. He looked up at his father, and the sudden glint of his eyes was never more serious then. He was going to kill the bastard. He was going to kill him.

Pulling away from his mother, he stormed toward John, who aimed the vase at Lexis again, not in the least worried about his wife, who was now in Donna's arms.

Knowing, feeling what was going to happen next, Fayth ran between the two angry men. She quickly caught Lexis, pushing him away from his father. He was going to kill him. Lexis was going to kill his father tonight, there was no doubt about it. Seeger knew it too. He came over from behind Lexis and took hold of his arms, pulling him back.

Swear words were flying everywhere. From almost everyone.

Seeger's dad, who had his hands in front of him, trying to calm John down, did nothing but stand there, using calm words that were blurred out by all the other words that were

mostly coming out of Seeger and John.

And then it happened. Fayth was pushing Lexis away by his chest when she glanced back and saw John going for Lexis' head with the vase. His grit teeth were bare as he breathed in and out rapidly, and at this point, he was blinded with anger

And so Fayth did the first thing that she could do right then. She turned around and kicked the vase out of John's hand.

The vase went flying and then crashed against the wall, falling to pieces to the ground as everyone quieted down and stared at it.

Breathing loudly, Fayth looked at John and said. "Please stop." She moved away from Lexis and stood between them now as they stared at her with unreadable expressions. "There is a little girl upstairs. And right now she's terrified. I doubt that's how she wants to define the word family when she's questioned about it."

Tears began to run down Fayth's face. She looked at Lexis and shook her head. "Your mother's hurt. If he's a piece of shit, I understand. But your mother is hurt."

Lexis turned around and looked at her. She sat on the

sofa, her hand on her back, biting her lips, staring at the floor, ashamed, blaming herself over and over again, like she had been doing so effortlessly for years and years. Fighting the tears back that she without a doubt felt unworthy to let escape.

The door slammed shut. John was gone.

"I'll go check on Bubbles." Fayth said, turning around and going up stairs as Lexis made his way to his mother.

When she reached Bubble's room, she knocked a few times but no one answered. Worried, she twisted the lock and walked in. "Bubbles?"

Fayth looked around, but the pink accented room was empty. Having a hunch of what she must be feeling, she walked over to the dresser and opened the door. Bubbles was huddled in the corner crying and shivering.

"Oh my god." Fayth breathed. She pulled Bubbles out into a hug. Bubbles grasped at her and sobbed even more into her chest. Fayth caressed her with her hands, picked her up and cradled her as she paced back and forth. How terrified she must have felt. She couldn't even imagine what was going on inside her head right now.

"Your daddy is okay." Fayth said, whispering in her ear.

"He's helping grandma feel better."

After awhile, Bubbles calmed down and only dry heaving was left for her to control.

"I hate him." She stuttered through her heaving.

"Who?"

"Grandpa. I hate him. He never made daddy happy. Not once."

"You must love your daddy a lot." She can feel it again. The anger, the hate, the jealousy under her skin was starting to get hot again.

Bubbles slipped under her covers and closed her eyes, blinking out the last of her tears. "He makes not having a mommy okay."

Seeger walked into the room. "Rihanna..."

Fayth stood up and met him halfway in the room.

"We're leaving. Aunt Megan is going to be staying at our house tonight."

Fayth nodded.

"I'm sorry about the whole shitty family thing. We couldn't even use our plan." He snickered. "Not that we had

the chance."

Fayth pursed her lips and looked down at the floor.

"Hey. You only live once right? You might be used to your normal family, you should get a taste of the rich bastards family too. If you want you can always come and live with me. My mom likes you more than you think."

Fayth smiled, liking what he said about his mom, and looked up. "So Emily can choke me in my sleep?"

He rolled his eyes and smiled big, then ruffling Fayth's hair, he headed for the door. "Take care of Lexis. It seems like you're more scarier than him. You handle him better than any of us."

Fayth waved goodbye and walked back to Dawn, who's eyes were slowly starting to close up.

"Fayth?" She said faintly.

"Mmm?"

She turned on her side and put both of her hands under her cheek, her eyes now completely closed. "Daddy's going to get married, isn't he?"

Fayth stared at Bubble's face for a long time. She can hear the sadness in her voice. She hated the idea of sharing her

father.

With a deep breath, Fayth said. "No. He's not." Her words spoke truth. And nothing but the truth.

She stayed with Bubbles afterwards until she was safe and sound asleep. She caressed her hair, singing her the lullabies she memorized over the few days in hopes to use them on her. However Bubbles slept with Lexis, and unless it was during nap time, Fayth barely had the chance to be there with her and watch her sleep.

When she was sure that Bubbles wouldn't wake up any time soon, Fayth left the room and went downstairs, looking for Lexis. However he wasn't anywhere on the first floor.

She went over to the balcony, and realized that it had gotten much darker outside than she presumed. Lexis wasn't there either.

She went upstairs and found his room locked. She had never been inside of it, so she wasn't sure if it was usually locked like this. Taking a deep breath in, she knocked on the door a few times.

No one answered.

"Lexis, it's me. Could you please open up."

A few moments later, the door cracked open. Waiting for Lexis' head to show, Fayth stood still, however when a suspicious moment passed, she pushed the door open and walked in.

Lexis was walking back to his king sized bed, his steps somewhat uneven. When he reached the footboard, he dropped down on the floor, leaning his back against it, then buried his face in his hands.

Fayth looked around the room, a specific smell hitting her in the nostrils. She squinted her eyes in the dark and noticed a few outlines of bottles on the floor.

Sighing and wondering how Bubbles will survive with Lexis as long as he had a family like his, Fayth pull the desk chair over and set it in front of him. "You were drinking?" She asked as she sat in it.

He didn't answer. He didn't have to. As she looked around the room even more, Fayth saw the bottles on the bedside table, where he had been sitting before she came in.

"Why are you here?"

For a moment, Fayth was taken aback by the cold grave stillness in his voice. It had been awhile since he had used that tone with her.

Drunk. Its because he's drunk.

She knelt in and took ahold of his wrist. 'You're drunk. You should lie down.'

He jerked his arm away from her grasp. "Don't touch me." His tone was low and dead.

She knelt back against the chair and held back her anger again. It had been all what she was doing today. Holding back the anger that built up every minute. She sighed and turned into business mode. She couldn't get angry. Even though her candy wasn't in her system, she still needed to do one last thing for Bubbles father before leaving. She needed to be composed if wanted to get anywhere with him. If they're both angry, they'll end up killing each other and making Bubbles upset.

"Fine. It seems like you're not in a good mood. Before I leave...I want to make a deal with you. Are you in a mood to negotiate?"

He glanced up at her, his face only showing the emotionless Lexis, and nothing else. Was he even aware of who he was talking to at this point? Did he care? Did he hate her for what she had done to his father? Did he hate her for being the reason his mother was hit today? Did he hate her

because Bubbles cried? It would make sense.

Did he hate her because she said she hated him? That would make even more sense.

"What the hell do you need?" He asked, saying it in a way as if he was disturbed with her entire existence.

Fayth gritted her teeth. Calm down. He's just drunk, just calm down. "You're being forced to marry again, aren't you? The last time ended in a way where you're father still had a little bit of hope left since he realized the problem was you, and not the Armstrong's."

He grabbed a bottle that was sitting next to him. Fayth quickly took it away from him.

"Will you listen to me now?" She insisted.

Lexis gritted his teeth and closed his eyes.

"I'll help you this time. I'm going to do it for Bubbles mostly. The marriage ordeal, you don't have to worry about it. No one's going to take Dawn from you, because this time, I'll guarantee that the arranged marriage is completely broken, with the other party being at fault. Not you."

The room was quiet. Very still. The silence that stretched between them was the loudest thing to be heard.

"In return, you have to promise not to contact Vincent when I leave." She looked down at her joined hands, sadness thickening in her chest. "And at least apologize to Bubbles for me."

She pushed the chair away and stood up, then began walking to the door.

"How are you going to convince her of such a thing? Do you even know what kind of person she is?"

Fayth froze but didn't turn around. His voice had suddenly become different.

"Yes. I know." She said, her voice reassuring.

"Then you know it's you."

She turned around slowly, as if she was walking on eggs, and looked at Lexis. He stared at her with the most manipulative stare she had ever seen.

"Fayth Armstrong."

Chapter Seventy Four

The air felt heavy, the room was so deathly quiet you can

hear the light wind outside the window. Fayth stared at Lexis, and Lexis stared back, his eyes challenging her to lie to him.

However, it was impossible to lie at this point. You simply cannot deny a complicated question of its right answer. The fact that the right answer had been found, to such a complicated question, it means that a lot of thought had been done to get to it. And there was no way that she can simply lie now. He knew. And honesty is the most generous. It will be the only thing that will help her right this moment.

Questions... So many questions. How did he know? For how long? Had he known for a long time and hid it away from her? Can she beg for secrecy?

“Did—did John tell you?” She breathed, her eyes squinting in disbelief.

There was an arrogant smile on his lips. She hadn’t seen it for along time now. “No one knows except for me.”

Her arms began to shake, and she curled her fingers into fists to compose herself. “For how long?”

“A memory.” He answered. “And a few more.”

I should have found a way to stay away from him from the start. A way that was much better than I intended.

“Then why? Why tell me now?”

Lexis eyed her, his sullen face cold and void of life, of any feelings. He straightened to his feet, keeping his eyes on hers, melting her from the inside with his sharp menacing gaze. She wanted to look away, but his glare was shackles that only made her frozen in place.

“Because you’re a hypocrite.” His words were more of a fact than they were an insult.

However, it was the very first words that triggered the anger Fayth had been taming under her skin throughout the day.

She didn’t say a word out loud. She could only stare at Lexis as he slowly turned into the being she met when she first enrolled into the Academy. The one who had a face so emotionless that her knees began to quiver with fear.

And it wasn’t because she was scared of him, but rather because at that moment she was seeing herself in front of her. The self she had used all of her sanity to shove and bury behind a place she never wanted to visit again. And right now, she was facing it. Facing him.

“Then—then why deal with me for so long? Why did you put up with my presence?”

He grabbed something from his back pocket and threw it to the ground. It slid and landed by her feet. Fayth looked down at the picture of them three by the Christmas tree. Bubbles was smiling widely, her eyes sparkling like it was the happiest moment of her life.

“Because of this. Because she means the world to me. And if she wants something, I can’t refuse giving it to her.”

So this was the reason he brought me to this house? It really was for Bubbles?

Fayth closed her eyes. You gave me hope. You gave me hope of having a second chance. You treating someone insignificant to you so well, it gave me hope that I, who is also bad, could have also been mistaken for someone misunderstood, and not heartless. Just like you.

But now...

She opened her eyes and looked at Lexis. His vile stare was heart sinking.

He took a step toward her, his eyes vaguely squinted as he looked at her with hate. “Do you think I don’t know about you? I know everything about you Fayth Armstrong. I know who you were. I know how you grew up. I know what you did to your classmates. I know what you did to strangers on

the streets. I even know...what you did...to your own parents.”

His voice was dripping venom. So cold and thick with indifference. He was a Lexis that knew life wasn't feelings. He was the Lexis that simply didn't know how to get what he wanted by sweet talk. He knew what he wanted. And he knew he could get it. But it wasn't going to be by playing nice.

He was so disgusted with her, Fayth felt that. He hated her. He saw her as a mere existence unworthy of life. She couldn't run away from the words he was saying. The truth, the past, the pain, the disgust, the hate, she wanted to get away, but she had become entirely prisoned by him. By his voice.

She had the sudden urge to prove him wrong, to get his approval and his praise, but knew clearly well she couldn't. It was too late. The truth was the truth. And that's exactly what had kept her stuck in her state of mind: the truth that even Vincent couldn't speak of.

“You've abused and tortured so many... When I called your old school, do you have any idea what they've said about you? What your classmates said the moment your name was mentioned? Fayth? Who? That money soaked

Devil? I'm glad she's gone. She should have died with her parents in that car crash. Not one good word was said when you were mentioned."

Fayth couldn't hold her arms back from shaking anymore. Her entire body began to tremble with anger. She shut her eyes, hoping her ears would somehow turn off too.

"You... do you have any idea how much hate is there bottled on top of you from others?" He said, his voice drifting through the room and seeping into her skin. "Its no wonder...why your parents hated you."

Yes, I know. They did hate me. They hated me with all their hearts.

"Stop." She begged.

"I haven't even begun." He said, his voice getting nearer as his footsteps took him closer toward her. "Are you trying to run away from what clearly was your fault? What is it? Do you think I'm not aware about...what could have been your little sister right now?"

"Stop. STOP!" Fayth's eyes shut tighter, her body shaking violently now. Her wall that she built up was slowly breaking to pieces.

"What is it? Its not like the truth can be hidden."

She opened her eyes, anger piling up in her brain. He was standing a few feet away from her. His face more darker and colder than ever. Gritting her teeth, she chillingly threatened, “Don’t you dare say a word more!”

“Or what?”

She stormed to his bed side table and took ahold of one of the bottles.

He turned and began walking slowly toward her again. “What? You’re going to hit me?” He snickered with disgust. “Because you fear the memories? Because you know that their your own fault? I bet they hated you so much, your parents. I bet they hate you now no less. Go ahead and hit me, it’ll probably be the only thing that’ll make me stop speaking at this point.”

“You heartless bastard.” She breathed.

Out of control, furious, loss of any sane thoughts, she was a wild animal. No motive left in her heart, but one goal. She didn’t care of what was in the past, present or the future any more. She had become a single minded empty human with no motives whatsoever. Nothing mattered. And to only make it better...

Dying will shut you up too.

“Of course you’d do it. A person who killed their own parents for their own desires would surely do anything insane. You. Killed. Lives. Not two, but three.”

“STOP!” She screamed, crumbling with anger. She sprang the bottle forward, and not backwards like Lexis had thought she would. She wasn’t planning on hurting him. She was planning on...

As she brought the bottle back so fiercely toward her own head, Lexis dropped his expression and quickly attacked her, shoving her to the mattress as the bottle rolled somewhere in the room and hit a table. She wildly shook and struggled under him, screaming as the wall crumbled to more pieces, the memories trying to break through. She didn’t want to remember. She wanted to lose the sense of being able to remember anything.

Lexis caught ahold of her wrists against the bed, pinning her beneath him in an unbreakable grasp.

“GET OFF OF ME!” She screamed in his face, gritting her teeth in hate and pain. She wanted to be able to do something. She wanted to jump from the window. To drown in the beach. Anything to make another barrier between her and her memories.

“Why don’t you remember?” He mocked, his jaw twitching against her struggle. “You’re shy of it now?”

The steering wheel felt so cold that day.... But not as cold as the feeling I had in my heart.... The small dashboard in front of me was the biggest thing inside the car.... At least for my eyes. I kept staring at it, at the road, waiting for the right moment. I knew these streets well, I had cruised them since I was thirteen. I knew them so well...

“No. I won’t. I will never!” She yelled, her anger boiling over, making a side of her head hurt as if it was going to explode.

“But you’re a murderer. They hate you so much. You should at least live in the world of bloodied guilt. Live in your memories.”

Tears ran hot on her cheeks. “They wanted to bring in another life to join the hell they created in this family, are they insane? How could they take the fact so lightly? And no, that’s not all, they wanted to celebrate it too. As if it’s something to be happy about. You’ll end up giving her up you unfair bastards, just like you did to me. She’ll live a life of jealousy and hatred and the feeling of being so alone in this world. But you don’t care, hell if you even thought about naming her yourself. Vincent will do it, right?! He’ll raise

her up just like he did with that Fayth! We'll just continue to work and worship money like it's a deity. Who the hell cares about family, it's only a whole entire life sitting in that empty house, playing, sitting, eating all alone. Wondering what she did wrong. Wondering why her parents didn't like her. Wondering how to make it right, and no matter what she did, it was never enough. Why do you have to care?! That's probably what's ringing in your heads. It's probably what's going to ring in your heads when that defenseless baby is born!"

"If money isn't their god, then are you? Why would you just kill them so heartlessly without a reason."

"Then I'm sorry for not being judgmental from the start. Sorry for not speaking out loud and telling you what lousy parents you are! Do you know how happy I was when Vincent told me you were coming to see me for my birthday?! Can you even imagine the shyness I felt? From my own parents? Why would I have to feel that? Aren't I your daughter? Why would I have to feel nervous and so shy when I'm meeting my own parents? I loved that day more than anything. I looked forward to it more than I've ever looked forward to anything in my life. I was so happy. I felt like the luckiest girl in the world. And what do I get in the end? Phone calls from here and ignoring from there?! Why

did you come and make me feel hope?! Why didn't you just continue ignoring me if that's the response I was going to get! Did you...seriously think I'm going to let that baby see the light of day with parents like you..."

Fayth became so angry, she wanted to kill someone. Anything. She wanted to break the wall, the window. She wanted shatter something and make it feel pain. And she want to hurt something and make it absorb all the pain inside of her. The guilt, the feeling of being something dirtied, it was the worst feeling she had to ever face. This feeling...was also joined by another.

Relief...she was so relieved that it was all taken off her chest.

She opened her eyes, blinking out the tears, as her eyelids slowly slipped open and looked at the eyes that were looking down at her, the sudden soft features in them were no longer judgmental. They had something in them that made her heartstrings pull.

"You could have taken care of her yourself." He said simply. "You could have named her and raised her yourself. Then maybe she and Dawn would have become best friends. You didn't have to decide her sake on your own."

The words hit Fayth like a pile of bricks, sinking into her heart like a knife. Her breathing became shallow as she gasped. How couldn't I...have thought about that before?

Lexis' smile was imaginary, it was different than anything she had ever seen before. "I bet she would have given you your parents' share of love as well as hers. You could have been happy forever. Without ever going through the feeling of being a murderer."

To end it with words that made her cry out of sadness and not anger, was the most painful thing of all. Because it was true, Fayth would have raised her up with all the love in the world. She would have given her anything. She would have looked back and always found Fayth there smiling. She could have given her their parents' share of love too.

But she wasn't here.... All because of Fayth.

"Oh god, oh god Lexis, what have I done?!" She closed her eyes and sobbed.

Lexis stared at her, his heart wrenching at the pain he knew she'd go through, but knew it was needed to make her climb over the mountain in her heart, blocking her way from moving on.

"They forgive you. I forgive you." Lexis whispered.

She shook her head, opening her eyes as her face scrunched up in pain, gasping for air. “You don’t know what I did. You don’t know what happened.”

Lexis let go of her wrists and instead pushed himself a little farther away as he stared into her eyes. Something is wrong.

She shook under him, sobbing as if pain overtook her entire being. “You don’t know what happened. Even Vincent doesn’t know what really had happened.”

Her heart trembled. Her salty tears burned her cheeks as her thoughts triggered her guilt. She was so sorry. More sorry than anyone could ever predict. No one will ever understand how much she regrets that day. If she could go back, she would do everything differently.

“He—” She gasped. “The reason I’m okay. The reason I’m alive. My dad—He jumped across the limo and covered me with his body. He...” She covered her face, ashamed as the memory flashed before her. “Protected me. He risked his life for mine.”

Lexis stared at her, wondering about what torture she had been feeling with that act done upon her insane mind at the time. She must have been dying inside trying to forget and

not regret.

He wrapped his arms around her and flipped to his back on the bed, laying her on top of him. Pulling her close as she sobbed. Stroking her hair as his heart beat with pain for her.

“Please...” She gasped against his chest, grabbing onto his clothes. “I feel like I’m going to go insane if you don’t give me some right now. I can’t take it anymore.” Her candy. She needed it. More than ever.

“You are facing the truth of what could have been insanity if kept bottled up inside in your head. Now, you can be angry without any side effects. Be as angry as you want. Look at me and be angry for me, and not because of your memories.”

Fayth picked herself up and looked into his eyes as he lay against the mattress, staring up at her with something much more than caring, something less than pity. She was transfixed by it.

“Let me go outside...” She breathed, feeling her insides become warm with something she didn’t understand. Her body reacted ridiculously breathless to being this close to him for the first time. “I’ll swim. That’s all I’ll do. Just let me do something to drain my energy on before I become

something you don't want to see.”

He smiled, a smile so beautiful, it kicked her even more breathless. “Are you caring about me right now?” He said in the softest voice Fayth had ever heard anyone use with her. It was so loving, so caressing, it made her completely thoughtless for a moment.

He looked at her, his eyes smiling as well. Soft as they teased her. Her heart pounded at the sight of them, and everything around them stopped.

It was that moment exactly.

She knelt down, her eyes not leaving his, the beating of her heart clouding each and every single thought inside her head, and until her lips softly touched his, did she close her eyes and moan softly. She bit his bottom lip gently, gazed it with her teeth, her breathing stumbling, and Lexis, shocked for a moment, laid so still under her that he barely reacted. Then at once, his hands were grasping onto her head, her cheeks, pulling her closer. He poked his tongue through her lips, groaning, and she granted him entry. Fiercely, he flipped her so she was on the bottom and he was on top, and as the kiss deepened, her heart pounded and her body felt like it was going to turn inside out.

No more was there a barrier between them. It was all out in the open. As if the door that was closed for so long was suddenly unlocked, and a rush of cruel reality devoured her, grabbing her heart in a fist so steel like, it suffocated her.

It was everything but a kiss. It was a declaration of emotions that emerged into the light. Emotions that were hidden deeply underneath her pain.

Fayth woke up, her head on Lexis' chest. He had his arm around her, holding her tightly to his steel like body. Her heart began pounding instantly at the thought of him, at his touch, at the first memory she cherished with him.

For how long had they kissed before they fell asleep side by side? She straightened up and looked at his face. She felt prisoned again by the sight of him. She wanted to sit there and watch him forever. To grow wings and shelter him from everything bad this world might give him. The sudden pain in her heart was unbearable.

She put her hand on her chest, feeling her heart beat fiercely. Something changed. Her eyes were frozen on his face, her thoughts tangling like forever existed. She looked away, her stomach twisting with the fluttering till she felt

sick, feeling her body somewhat numb and somewhat branching out with strange feelings.

She stood up and left the room, and as soon as she went inside the guest suite, she leaned against the wall, her heart beating in her throat, and dialed Charles.

“Fayth?” A groggy voice answered. She had woken him up.

“Charles?” Her voice was breathless. Her vision was white. Done. It was all done now.

“Are you okay? What’s wrong?”

“I love you. I love you Charles, okay?”

There was a long silence that stretched out.

“Fayth, are you okay? What happened?”

Fayth broke out in a sob, crumbling to bits, falling to the floor, the phone tumbling and falling apart into three pieces. Her body began shaking. She covered her eyes with the palms of her hands. Gasping for dear life as she sobbed. Her entire life drew out in front of her. Everything was broken. But everything was not. It hurts... Oh god it hurts. She pushed her palms against her mouth to hold back the sounds, the sound of her heart wrenching sobs. I don’t want it. I don’t

want it. This feeling, Lexis... Lexis please take it back. I don't want to be in love anymore. Love is so much worse. I can't. I can't handle it. I can't handle it. Loving you, its so much more than I thought. Loving you is so real, it hurts.

She sobbed as if there was no tomorrow. Pushing her face against the carpet to mute the noise. Barely gasping for breaths between. She was so broken. But she...was not.

Please, oh please god take it back. I'd rather be alone. I don't want love anymore. I made a mistake. Forgive me, I made a mistake. I thought love was happiness. But love...hurts.

Chapter Seventy Five

He made her accept her past, and not hide from it. He had her face her fears, the memories that were haunting her every time they tried to come back. She was relieved. She no longer hid from the truth. To have been able to say it, say her feelings out loud with someone that judged her righteously, it was exactly what she needed. Vincent, to help her survive her internal battle, superficially coated the truth with white lies. However Lexis set the table, made her see and eat the truth. Then he embraced her for who she was and what she have done. He forgave her...

It had been exactly what she wanted.

Fayth rolled out of bed, sitting on the edge and staring out of the light in the window. She wondered what time it was. Her heart pounded at the thought of seeing Lexis again. She missed him. In the few hours that she slept, she missed him. It was so unhealthy, the feeling inside. She snaked her hand on her chest, feeling the thrashing of her heart increase as the memory from last night clouded her vision. She wanted to touch him again.

And yet at the same time, that love terrified her.

Now I know what love is. It isn't wishing Jessie will hold me, or kiss me, or tell me he loved me back. Love is caring so much for a person, that fear never felt more real to let him step out of my eyesight for a single second, frightened that something will happen to him. Frightened that he will somehow get hurt. Frightened that one day...death will do us apart.

She couldn't love him. She had to deny this love. If she gets so attached to him... No! She can't. She will never. Anymore of it and she'll go insane by him simply having a paper cut.

I have to find a way to get away from that love.

Deciding to face it like her memories, she showered and went downstairs. The sound of Dawn in the kitchen made her stomach churn. She wondered how it'll be like living with him now. With her feelings overpowering her mind like this.

She walked into the dining room, where Lexis stood with Bubbles in his arm. She was holding his face in her hands, giving him a kiss over and over again on his cheek. And he was smiling as he stared at her.

Dimples. He had dimples?

Fayth's heart began to beat at an abnormal pace at the sight of him. Her body wanted to explode in happiness, and her mind rushed the thoughts of touching him. Even if it was a simple hand on his shoulders. She wanted to feel that he was there. That he hadn't left.

"Hey Fayth!" Bubbles said. Lexis had taught her that Rihanna's name was really Fayth. And Rihanna was a second name that she sometime uses. She too had thought the nickname Fayth gave her was the noun faith.

Lexis looked over at her, and when their eyes met, Fayth let out a silent gasp, and quickly dropped her gaze to the floor. She refrained herself for holding her chest again.

Shit. Calm the hell down.

Her heart gave a squeeze of longing as it beat fiercely. She was tempted to walk closer to him, to lay a finger on his arm at the very least and feel his existence.

Lexis' body heat soared at the sight of her. He gritted his teeth, breathless at the allurement that took him by the second.

Damn.

He was glad she couldn't see his face as he struggled to keep himself under control. It felt so immoral to be holding

Dawn at that moment, while his thoughts and body devoured the temptation of loving the life out of Fayth.

He put Bubbles down and straightened up, then gazed over at Fayth as she stared at the floor, glancing up every now and then. It was almost unreal, what happened last night. And the fact that she had initiated it...

He looked closer at her expression and realized that her body language, her facial expression, the furriness of her eyebrows, and realized something was wrong. He squinted his eyes, watching her a bit more. Does she regret it? She looks like she regrets it.

Fayth kept glancing up at him. His face was questioning her, as if her reaction to him was strange. She knew she was being abnormal now, but if he remembered what happened last night, he'd understand why. However, his expression read something different.

“So do you want me to go through with the deal from last night?” She asked in a soft voice, barely letting her tone be any louder than her heartbeat.

Lexis studied her expression. Why? Why does she regret it? Was she so high on pain that she only acted on impulse? Had she used her so called overbearing energy in that act?

Why is she still set on leaving? He hated that deal. It was what made him make her face her past so she can stay and live with him in the present.

He decided to test her. If anything, he had to at least make sure if she had any feelings toward the kiss. He had to know if what they had was something to continue on. “What are you talking about?”

Fayth’s heart dropped between her knees. He couldn’t have forgotten. “Yesterday night...”

Did he not remember? Was he that drunk?

He blinked at her, a clearly confused expression on his face. “What happened last night exactly? I was intoxicated so I can’t remember anything.”

Fayth clenched her fist. He doesn’t remember anything? The silent confessions, his cruel cure to pull me out of my buried-in past, the passionate kiss that lasted forever before I had fallen asleep from the oppressive emotions, even the sleeping side by side, he couldn’t recollect any of it because of his intoxicated state?

Was it...all forgotten in that moment?

A smile broke on her face, and relief overtook her body. There was a way to undo things after all. If he couldn’t

remember anything, than all she had to do was teach herself to not love him anymore.

Lexis gritted his teeth at her reaction. It was as clear as the sun. “You seem relieved. Had something happened last that I shouldn’t be remembering? Is that it?”

He knew it was exactly that, yet, he didn’t want to admit that it was over. That what they had was nothing.

“Oh, its nothing.” She said—and he was a single thought away from taking ahold of something and crushing it.

The bell on the door chimed and Martin looked up from the paper at the entering costumer. A smile was about to make its way on his face, happy that he finally had someone to buy a car, but his lips froze as a guy walked in, with empty eyes looking around the room and a bored, emotionless yet sharp expression masking his face.

His eyes didn’t for once rest on Martin where he sat behind the desk, and instead, they traveled to the windows, the piles of papers in the corners, the ripped leather chairs, the desk.

“Well, what can I do for you sir?” Martin asked, planting a smile on his face. Must’ve had a shitty day.

However, the man completely ignored him. Was he a man? He looked like he can be a kid too. What? Eighteen at the most? Martin sighed. If he was going to be one of those needy kids that come around here for cheap cars and try to low ball him, then shit will go downhill really fast. The last time, he threatened a kid that he'd go to the police and the smart ass already knew that Martin would tell no police man shit about coming over to the car lot, not with half of the cars not inspected.

Martin peeked out of the window at the front lot where most costumers park their cars, and his eyebrows shot up at the sight of a black Ferrari parked next to his hauling truck. He looked back at the man that walked in, realizing for the first time how nicely dressed he was. His eyes were still studying the room, with his hands in his pockets, and when he finally settled his eyes on Martin, Martin quickly pulled on his costumer guaranteed smile.

I'm earning big cash tonight.

Lexis walked toward the desk, his empty eyes not leaving the mans as he slowly took one hand out of his right pocket and placed an ID on the table. "You dropped this."

Martin looked down at his license that he'd been missing for days now, then looked back at the man in front of him,

his smile gone.

There was no sarcasm behind the costumer's voice. It was like it was under effortless control. At the same exact time, it had this cutting edge to it. And it didn't seem like he insisted on having to say it without emotion. Instead, it was like he, himself, had no fucking emotion whatsoever. It crept the shit out of Martin. It was a voice of one volume, one tone, automatically. Combined with a permanent impassive face. He wasn't staring at your normal average teenager, he was staring at a man that was molded by either street gangs or hell. He reminded him of the guys in prison before Martin had come out two months ago of being in there for two years. The guys that were in there for life, they had the same vibe this guy had. His face, his voice, the ease of his body movement. It was if it was a nature's thing, his being, and he had no hand but to put down the reality of himself.

Jesus Christ this kid is a fucking devil's saint.

Martin tried to maintain his smile on his face, however the back of his neck started to sweat for no particular reason. "Thank you man. Its too bad though, I thought I got my first costumer for the day."

Lexis tapped his fingers on the table's top, his eyes back at looking around the room. Something about him terrified

Martin. How the fuck isn't he in the least bit readable? Martin should at least see something on his face to see what his motive for standing there like that was. Instead, his expression was the definition of death. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

"Is there something I can help you with?" The car lot owner said. He's a kid. What the hell is he capable of anyway. I'd piss in his little ass and he won't be able to do shit.

Lexis' eyes settled on the man again, and the man found himself clenching his fists, ready for a fight.

How the hell did he have my license anyway?

Lexis looked away. And slowly, he put his hand back in his pants pocket and began walking toward the first window of the three in the room, his face still blank. Still unreadable. When he reached it, he stared outside, looking around the vacant area.

Martin stared at his back, wondering what the hell he was loitering around for. He gave him his ID, now he needs to get the fuck out.

Lexis took his hand out of his pocket and began to slowly descend the blind on the window. "Lucas White." He said.

Again, that voice. Why is it so fucking dead?

Lexis made his way to the second window and looked out of it. “Xavier Reed.” Then he put down the blind on that one too.

When he reached the last window, the chill in the room was ridiculous. He did it to it the same thing he did with the first too, then turned around and looked at Martin, his hand back in his pocket. “Rick Foster.”

The smile on Martin’s lips was forced now, wondering how the hell this guy knew his friends names.

“I’m guessing you don’t know where they are right now.” Lexis said flatly.

I was with them just two nights ago. The car lot owner’s smile looked apologetic. “You must’ve gotten the wrong names or something—”

If they did some stupid ass shit, then why pull me in it? These shit heads—

“And of course, you. Martin Chester.”

“How do you know me—Oh.” He picked up his ID. “With this?”

“It seems like your head is fine.”

“What?”

Lexis nudged his head toward the staples apparent on Martin’s forehead.

“Oh.” Martin rubbed his skin around the scar. “Listen, I’m busy so—”

“You could’ve died that day.”

“What?”

Martin stared at Lexis, his eyes blinking, the smile no longer there.

“The day you tried to rape the girl at the concert. You could’ve died.”

How does he know about this? Shit. Is he police? Did I mistake the age? Was me receiving my ID without question an answer to what went on that day? Shit. Fucking shit.

“But I saved you. I decided that you dying had two bad ramifications right then, so I decided to save you.”

Martin’s eyebrows shot up. “Oh. That was you—”

“The first was to make sure my fiancé doesn’t feel the burden of having done a sinful act.”

What the hell is he spurting now?

“Oh. Okay, but you know I really have to get this work done, so can we talk about this—”

“The second was...” Lexis’ eyes were more empty than ever. “If you were dead, I wouldn’t be satisfied. And so I needed you alive.”

“Wait, what?”

“The woman you tried to rape is my fiancé.” Lexis said evenly, slowly making his way toward the desk, toward the door.

SHIT. She was fifteen. What the hell?

Martin laid back in his chair, his hand slowly inching toward his bottom drawer, where his pistol was hidden under a few scattered files. With a smirk, he said. “Listen. I get it, you love her. I did a mistake. She lied to me and said she was older. I thought she liked me, but then she went crazy on my ass. I’m not sure what she—”

“You don’t understand.” Lexis said, all feelings detached from him in that moment. “I’m not here to listen to what happened.”

The smirk on Martin’s lips deepened. “Oh come on! She didn’t even let me do anything. So what’s the problem?”

Lexis looked down at the floor, blinked once then looked back at Martin, his stony-eyed and frigid face emotionless. It made Martin's toes curl.

“Listen, if this is about revenge, then okay. I get it. But what the hell man? I told you, I wasn't at fault. She didn't even let me hit once. Its over.”

Lexis didn't like the smile on the man's face. And even though he knew well it was forced, it still played with his nerves.

“And why did you save me then? I don't get it. If you were mad about it you could've let me die.”

Lexis made his way to the door.

Is he leaving? Martin paused his hand from going for the drawer, a sigh on his lips.

“I told you.” Lexis turned the lock on the door. “You dying wasn't satisfying me. Its too easy of a road for you to exit out of.”

Martin gritted his teeth, his smirk still apparent on his face. It seems like I'm going to have to pop a bullet in his ass after all.

He reached for his drawer. “So what? You're going to kill

me now?”

“No.” Lexis turned around, a lazy smile on his face as he looked at the man. “But you’re going to wish I did.”

Fayth let out an aggravated sigh. She knew it. She knew everything was going to go bad. To the hell of it. Lexis knows about her past, every bit of it, and Bubbles was inside the room crying right now. Because of who? Her.

Everything was going wrong. She should’ve never agreed to come to the beach house. So many negatives happened here that there was no way her life was ever going to be the same.

I miss him. Why is he still not here?

She let out another aggravated sigh and paced the space in front of Bubbles room. It was the thousands time that thought had rang through her head. Lexis. Where is Lexis? I miss him. Is he okay? Did something happen to him? Why does he have such a fast car anyway? He should get something that goes at the very most fifteen miles per hour. Does he even know how many car accidents happen nowadays? He probably doesn’t even care.

“Bubbles, please open the door. I’m really sorry.”

“Is something wrong?”

Fayth spun around, caught off guard by the sudden presence of Lexis behind her. Her heart began beating automatically at his sight. She stared at him, her eyes blinking and her ears stretching, her stomach cheering with butterflies. He’s back.

“Where were you?” She forced an angry tone.

I missed you. I missed you so much, it hurts. That’s love. Love hurts. I hate the amount of love I have for him. It hurts. I hate the thought of losing it. It hurts. I don’t want to lose him. I don’t want him to leave me. I don’t want to not see him for a single second. I love him. But I hate the love I have for him.

He slipped his hands in his pockets.

She waited for an answer, but his unreadable expression gave her nothing.

“I—today I—” She took in a deep breath. “We went to the mall.” Lexis had given her his credit card again this morning, and told her to go shopping with Bubbles and get whatever they needed. “And I, you know, was aggravated a few times with Bubbles while we were shopping. She just wanted to run away and check out things by herself. When she’s with

you, she doesn't do that. She makes sure you're okay with it first. But with me, she just goes and tries on everything. She threw a tantrum because I told her I didn't have money for the ice cream machine, and since the machine didn't accept credit cards, I didn't know what to do. I calmed her down. I tried everything I could to not get mad at her, or at least not to show it, but when we were leaving to the parking lot, she ran off again by herself and a car was pulling out and she was almost going to get hit and I was so scared. I grabbed her back and yelled at her a lot. I think I called her a few names while I was screaming too and she's been upset with me since then."

By her last words, Fayth was crying herself. She knew she hurt Bubbles, and she wasn't sure if Bubbles was ever going to look at her the same again. She's barely four, and that's the age where kids are curious and she knew she should've been more patient, but it's her first time being with Bubbles outside the house for an entire day.

Lexis smiled. "So you didn't like the fact that she was being wild in a public place? Isn't that a good thing?"

Fayth looked up at him, wondering which direction he was seeing what she said to him from.

"And you taught yourself to hold back all the bad

emotions for an entire shopping spree? From what I heard, women shop for a long time.”

“Um.” Fayth’s tears stopped working at the confusion that hit her. She expected him to be mad at her in the very least, but he was being kind.

“And you were scared for her. When someone does something foolish that might put them in a dangerous position, its very normal for a person that loves them to become angry.”

“You don’t get it, she’s mad at me right now.”

Lexis sighed. “I’m mad at you too, but I’m still associating with you as I did before.”

“Why are you mad at me?” Fayth asked unconsciously. She didn’t like the fact that he was mad at her. It made her heart hurt. However, she right away remembered last night and dropped her gaze to the ground. “Oh.” He knows about her. Everything too. Of course he’d be angry with her. “Never mind.”

Lexis’ hands itched, he wanted to hold her face and tell her that it wasn’t her past that he was angry with, it was her state of mind now. She didn’t receive his feelings like he wished she would. She didn’t give him the acceptance that

he wished she would have done this morning.

Instead, he had only seen regret in her eyes. She wished for him not to remember. And if that's what she wanted, then he can only give it to her to settle her in comfort.

She looked up. "Hey Lexis?"

He closed his eyes for a moment, gritting his teeth. He wished she would say it more often. How is it that the most person he had been around with in the two weeks, had so rarely said his name?

"Yes?"

She bit her lip, a lump formed in her throat and left. "I'm—I'm going through a really hard time in here." She pointed at her chest. "I can't explain it, but my emotions are literally everywhere. And even though I tried really hard in the mall not to bash out on Bubbles, I knew I was still weak not too. Maybe if she—maybe if you can..."

"Dawn has to stay here." Lexis said flatly, settling the matter.

"I know that. I know that she's your daughter and everything. And I don't want to put you under the choice." I can't leave you. I can't bear not to see you for a single second now. "But if I have to stay here, I really wish that she

was somewhere else. I might get so angry to release... I—I—”

She didn't know what to say anymore. She only bit her lip and looked down at the floor.

“I really do mean it when I say Dawn has to stay here.” Lexis said again, this time, his voice had more emotion to it. Fayth looked up at him. His eyes were squinted apologetically while he looked at her. “You’ve heard about what happened, what I did before. Ever since I lost my sister, I felt like I lost something that protected me. When I fall asleep, I remember what I did to my grandfather. I dream it so vividly, and when I do, I dream of my grandfather doing things to my mother that my dream demands me to watch. I can’t get away from it. I almost suffocate. And after awhile, I became hypnophobic. I can’t sleep unless I’m with someone.”

Fayth stared at him, her lips ajar. It was worse than her own nightmares, which consisted of her driving her parents toward the cliff, with her father murmuring indistinguishable words in the back seat. Like a snake slithering. “So you need someone to make the dreams less alive?”

“Not in that technical sense, but in a way yes. I need comfort.” He didn’t like that he had to admit that, but apart of him felt relieved that it was to Fayth in the very least.

“So when you used to sneak in my dorm...”

He nodded. “If Anthony wasn’t there, and Dawn was with her grandma, I would use Jessie.”

That made sense.

“That’s why Dawn has to stay here.” He said, and this time she understood what he meant.

“But I’m going to hurt her. Even more than now. I don’t want to risk my relationship with her, and her presence really does help me a lot. It makes me want to do better. Except I don’t think she’ll be fond of me anymore if she hears me swear at her or even use physical force on things around her. If she can go away for just now...”

Lexis internally smiled. “I’ll do that, but there will be two conditions.”

“Fayth’s whole body lit up. “I’ll do it. I’ll do anything.”

“First, you and I will go on dates. Not in the technical terms. They’ll be more like sessions. I’ll ask you questions about your past, and you’ll answer them.”

She nodded, not thinking twice about it.

“And the second one is more of a need for me than it is an unfavorable act for you. Just...fill in Bubbles space on my

bed. And if you agree to both, I'll send her to live with her grandma for the next week until the Academy starts again."

Fayth bit her bottom lip. Her body heated up at the thought alone. The no to that would be more said from the nervous attack she knew well she'd be going through, however a part of her head burned with greed. How is it possible to not see him for an entire night. She wouldn't be able to sleep either.

Maybe this is a way I can get over loving him. Maybe if I see him so much, my raw determined feelings would get so used to him, that they wouldn't be this strong anymore, and eventually cease to exist all together.

"I really don't like the idea. But...fine, I agree."

Lexis' unreadable expression faltered, suddenly surprised at her easy approval. He expected her to insult him in the very least. However, she agreed.

She agreed...

Chapter seventy six

After sending Bubbles away, the two of them stood quietly in the dining room. Fayth wondered what to cook. She was hungry, and she knew Lexis would be too.

Images began to flash in the back of his minds, thoughts, needs, desires, things he knew Dawn was keeping inside an animalistic cage. And now that she wasn't in the house anymore...

Lexis turned around and looked at Fayth. "Our first date. Get dressed, it'll be tonight."

Fayth froze, staring at Lexis with wide eyes. Her entire body became a mess of undeniable happiness at the words he said. "Uh..."

"You changed your mind?"

"It's not that. I just—" She took in a deep breath. "I just want to make sure you know that I'm still with Charles. That I still love Charles."

Lexis' expression was completely blank. "I know."

She waited for him to say more, however nothing more was said. Blinking rapidly, she slowly turned around and made her way upstairs.

I swear I thought I saw him get angry for a split second.

When she reached the top of the stairs, a massive crash was audible from the first floor.

Her heart dropped. "What happened?!" She screamed, turning back to make her way down the stairs.

"Nothing. A cup broke." Lexis said, his voice somewhat breathless.

She ran down the stairs, and made her way into the dining room, hyper with worry, however froze and stared while Lexis stood there with his fist bleeding, the glass from the china cabinet behind him splattered on the floor.

Fayth began to shake, terror seizing her body. She was traumatized at the sight. Her eyes opened wide, she slowly made her way to Lexis, and he looked up at her as she stared at him with fear. "Damn." He swore under his breath.

She took ahold of his arm. "Oh my god. You're bleeding."

“Its fine.” He said, pulling his arm away.

She didn’t know what it was, but she became so inadvertently angry that before she knew it a chair was in her hands, and flying against the wall. “FINE?! YOU’RE FINE?! WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?! YOU’RE FUCKING BLEEDING!”

“Who’s fault do you think that is?” Lexis mumbled, his voice cold as he shook the blood that oozed out of his hand and onto the carpet.

“I FUCKING HATE YOU! YOU IDIOT I FUCKING HATE YOU!” She began to attack him, and as Lexis’ anger began to rise, he caught her arms and tried to hold her still.

Even when she’s angry she’s so damn attractive.

Slowly taking in a deep breath and exhaling it even slower, he put his anger under a cap and closed his eyes. “Go upstairs and get dressed.” He said between gritted teeth.

“Go to the hospital first.” Fayth retorted, her body turning inside out while his hands held onto her wrists.

How can he make me feel like this by simply our skin touching.

“I’m going to be a doctor. I can treat myself.”

“Do it in front of me.”

“WHY THE HELL DO YOU CARE?!” He suddenly broke down. It was rare seeing him angry, and Fayth for some reason, liked that expression on him. It made him seem more human. A terrifying human, but a human all together.

“You love Charles don’t you?” He spat, his eyes lost in disbelief and confusion.

She kept quiet.

“Then don’t worry about other men. Worry for a person you really care about. It’ll confuse...” He turned around, grabbed the small first aid box and left to the door. “I’ll be waiting in the car.”

She looked after him, her anger boiling beyond and over.

This is exactly why I hate this love. I’m becoming so sentimental, that it terrifies me.

Fayth picked out the largest sweat pants and shirt in her collection, deciding that at least it would make it less of a date that way.

When Lexis saw her, he only glanced over long enough to see everything and look away, his blank expression not

telling her what he thought.

Their first date was in a restaurant by the ocean. He had reserved a private balcony room five floors off the ground, where it was easy to watch the water and the sun setting over it.

Fayth, who was still angry at him, was about to comment on how beautiful the scenery was, but quickly held her tongue.

“What did you mean by sessions anyway?” She asked, she had decided to completely ignore making eye contact with him. Instead, she grabbed the menu and kept her eyes on it as she randomly read different selections.

“Talk. I meant talk.”

“Why my past? Why not yours too?”

“We can talk about mine. If you have a question, ask. I’ll answer it.”

“Fine.” She sighed, her eyes glued to the menu. “Let’s talk.”

“You’re not going to look at me?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because.”

Lexis kept quiet. Eventually, he said. “Why did you dress like that?”

Fayth’s heart began pounding. “Because this isn’t a date.”

“Or is it because you didn’t want it to feel like a date? You do realize that even if you wear strings for a dress, it really won’t faze me.”

She kept quiet.

“You don’t have to try so hard.” He said in a soft voice. “If it’s him that you want, then it’s him that will be for you. I’m not taking you from Charles.”

You already did. She snickered. “Like you can...”

“When did you meet him?”

Fayth sighed. “It was around the time that I met you.”

“The very first time?”

She nodded. “After...after that...you know—”

“When I helped you after you fainted?”

After watching the man’s head get decapitated, and after she threw up everything that was in her stomach, Fayth had woken up moments later with young Lexis pouring a water

bottle on her face, hissing at her to get up. He had kept glancing back at the warehouse, making sure that no one heard, then slowly he helped her straighten up.

When he looked at her as they stood in front of each other, he became completely transfixed for a moment. Something about her made him lose significance of the actual matter that was happening behind them. Behind the warehouse's metal wall. He took ahold of her cheeks in his hands, watching her eyes as they became frantic with fear. "Those pretty eyes didn't see a thing. You fell asleep and you dreamt a bad dream. And I woke you up. Got it?" He whispered.

At that moment, he had never seen a more stranger girl. She looked like she was full of indifference. It was a strange thing to see on a girl and for some reason he had liked it.

And as she stared into his eyes, for a moment, she can see intelligence she'd never seen in anyone her age. He was smart, and because he was smart, he must be saying the truth. She decided to believe in him.

"Back then, that man was wiring money and documents to an underground establishment. From separate major corporations as well. And as soon as someone caught him, they promptly called everyone that was involved that night

and they had them all come on call, despite who they had with them in their vehicles or what they were doing. They wanted to find out who that person had wired everything to. They also brought a few of their trusted employees there to make them watch. So they could see what'll happen to them if they ever tried to steal or lie.”

That day Vincent had told Fayth that he finally managed a time to have her go to dinner with her parents. However halfway in the limo on her way to meet them, and Vincent calls the driver and tells him to head to the warehouse. Her father had shared a limo with another company's MD and he needed to leave earlier than the rest.

When she reached there, her father had taken a long time to come, and there were sounds coming out of the warehouse. Curious and mostly wanting to see her father, Fayth left the limo.

She wished she never did.

When she had come back, feeling nauseated and not anywhere stable in the head, she walked to the wrong limo, after she got in, she was startled to see a boy playing a game on a phone. He looked over at her, his curly hair pouncing as he quickly straightened up. “What are you doing in here?”

Fayth was exhausted. For some reason, she was terrified of going back in her own limo. The boy from before had went back to watching what was happening in the warehouse and she had become somewhat scared of him too, wondering how the hell he stomached it. So instead, she stayed with the curly haired boy, and when the driver got a phone call saying to take Charles back home, she had told Charles that she can be his new friend if he lets her sleep over.

“I told Charles what I saw that night. I told him about you too. He was the one who took me away from that filthy place. I slept over at his house, and we got along really well. He was really dumb, so when I got angry at him, he’d space out for a moment and then completely forget that I got angry at him. Sometimes, he’d ignore my anger all together. For some reason, I liked that. Usually other kids would be offended and hate me right away, Charles was too stupid to understand my intentions or what hate was in general. You on the other hand...”

Lexis looked up at her face and eyed her. “What about me?”

“You, that night, scared me more than what I saw in the warehouse. Why did you watch?”

Lexis didn’t answer for a long time. “I was oddly

inquisitive. I was tempted to figure out what was going on. It made me sick no less, in spite of that I wanted to find out what my father's true colors were. What our world was like."

"I'm sorry." Fayth mumbled. "For treating you the way I did when I enrolled into the Academy. Your eyes had haunted me since that day, and when I saw the man you had become, it terrified me to see myself in you. I was trying my best to become a good person. It was hard for me to do that when you were around. You only reminded me of what it was like before."

"I'm sorry too." Lexis said, his eyes staring at her blushing face. "I'm sorry that I was not there when no one else was." His voice was suddenly low with a strange emotion. "Sometimes, that before, I get angry for not being apart of it."

Fayth looked up, her eyes meeting his for the first time since they had sat down.

"I hate to think of a life you lived in that I didn't share with you."

He stared into her eyes, and so much emotion devoured her that for a moment, she couldn't breathe. It was as if she

was the only thing that ever mattered in life. The only thing he could see—love.

It made her heart heavy, her breath taken away. She loved it so much. Loved his love for her. She loved his beautiful eyes, his cheeks, his lips, she loved everything about him. Her hand began to reach up, tempted to caress his skin, to hold him.

His eyebrows pulled together in confusion, questioning her sudden intentions.

And as if reality smacked her in the face, she quickly grabbed her phone instead.

“I promised I’d call Charles before he sleeps.” She quickly stood to her feet and walked out of the door, slamming it behind her.

When they went back home, Lexis left upstairs to take a shower and Fayth slumped on the sofa.

When she had left out of the door, Lexis had somehow managed to shatter the glass table against it. After compensating with the restaurant, they left without eating.

And now she was exhausted, hungry and sleepy. She put

her head down on the arm set, thinking of food. This must be the feeling Alvin has, except with him, it was more of an all day thing.

Moments later, someone was waking her up gently.
“Fayth.”

She wasn’t sure what she was hearing, but she slowly straightened up and looked at Lexis. He stood there with a white shirt on and his dark blue Calvin Klein pants. His hair wet as it fell across his forehead and face.

He was holding a plate with a sandwich on it. She was barely awake, still tired and sleep deprived. So her head kept falling to the side.

“Eat this, then sleep.” He said, but she wasn’t sure if she heard that either.

Before she knew it, she was held up, straightened into a sitting position all the way back against the sofa, almost sitting in Lexis’ lap. “Eat it.”

Her mouth began to move but her eyes were closed, and when she began to eat independently, Lexis straightened up and left to get her a drink. When he had come back, she was a bit more awake.

“Here.” He gave her the cup.

“I’m still hungry.”

“What would you like? A sandwich again?”

She nodded.

He left to the kitchen and made her another one. She had followed him and was now standing against the counter. When he was done, he handed it to her and she began to eat with her eyes closed again.

“I don’t have to sleep tonight. You can sleep in the guest room.” He said, standing in front of her with his arms crossed.

She shook her head. “Its okay. We made a deal.” Her eyes would close every few seconds, and her head would fall then jerk back up.

Lexis walked closer, ready to hold her if she fell asleep. “Are you still hungry? Do you need something else?”

“Bathroom.” She mumbled, then quickly stumbled and made her way up the stairs. After brushing her teeth and washing her face, she became fully awake. She went to her room and picked out a hood shirt and used the same large sweat pants to sleep in.

Being fully aware now of what was going on, she slowly

made her way to Lexis' bedroom. I'm just going to sleep. So what?

She breathed in and out to calm her frenzied emotions down, then slowly made her way inside the room.

Unconsciously, she closed the door behind her. At the sound of it shutting, her heart jumped. This is bad, this is really bad.

Lexis was laying on the left side of the king sized bed, his right arm bent under his propped head as he stared at the ceiling. When he heard her come in, his eyes dropped down, staring at her from across the room.

He studied her nervous expression. He was fond of it. If anything, he would be more aggravated if she found it easy to sleep next to him. Deciding to tease her, he said. "What? You're scared I'd do something to you?"

Fayth's eyes opened wide at his seductive voice. "No!" She quickly defended. While her heart thrashed in her throat, she quickly made her way across the room, and with shaking hands that she hoped Lexis wouldn't notice, she picked up the cover and slowly slid under it.

She clenched her fists at her sides, stared at the ceiling, and held her breath.

He turned around to face her, she slithered until she was at the edge of her side of the bed, still on her back. “I promised that I wouldn’t touch you while we’re in this house. Remember?” His voice was still seductive. The heat in her body became ridiculous.

“Y-Ye—” She decided not to speak. It was giving her nervousness away.

“So unless you break it, I’m not touching you.”

Oh god, I’m the one who broke it that night. I’m the one who kissed him. Its not happening again. Its not going to happen again!

Not trusting her voice, she nodded.

“I’m going to close the light now.” He reached above her, deciding to tease her some more, and grabbed her remote this time. However as he looked down at her squirming body, as she stared at him with terrified eyes, the small smile on his lips suddenly disappeared, and his heart began to beat like all hell was loose.

She whimpered.

Not realizing he was closing in on her, he quickly swallowed the lump in his throat and pulled away, going for his remote instead.

In the dark. On a bed. Next to Lexis Ellis. It was the last thing Fayth had ever thought would happen to her. As soon as the lights turned off, she turned to give him her back.

The entire time, she felt suffocated, she couldn't even breathe right. It sounded too loud and struggled in the empty room—house. She can feel his body heat behind her, she could almost feel him behind her, making her entire back tense and stiff.

The back of her neck burned with the heat in between them. Her skin began to sweat like an endless amount of water was trying to leave out of her skin. It became excessively uncomfortable.

Why the hell did I wear a hood shirt?!

She closed her eyes shut, wishing she could kick the cover off her body.

Lexis gritted his teeth. He was mental. In what part of his mind did he think that this was ever a sane idea. He couldn't even look at her anymore. He turned around, giving her his back. His eyes shut as he held back his urges and desires. His skin sweated through his clothes, and he was never more tempted to pull off his shirt. He'd usually sleep with it off, but knowing it'll make her uncomfortable, he had kept it on.

And now he wondered if sleep is even an option with Fayth next to him.

He grabbed the remote and turned the AC on.

Fayth sighed with relief at the sound of it.

However, neither of their body temperature calmed down. Fayth was tempted to get up and leave the room. However the deal was made, and she couldn't pull back from it now. Lexis was tempted to leave as well, finding relief in being somewhere else and not sleeping, than being here and tortured, but that would give him away to her, and they were going to have to do this every night now. He needed—

“Do you need the cover?” He asked, his voice breathless.

“No.” She barely answered.

They quickly pushed it away and off the bed.

This is so terrible. I'm never going to sleep tonight. Fayth hugged the pillow, imagining it as a rock.

Lexis crossed his arms, imaging them as shackles.

And in that very state, neither of them slept the entire night.

When the morning light finally seeped through the balcony glass doors, Fayth's heart was on the verge of

fainting. Her entire body shook, exhausted with the night long emotions.

Lexis on the other hand, was exactly point zero, zero, zero, one away from murdering someone.

What finally brought them to their feet was the door bell. Wondering who was here this early in the morning, Lexis got up and made his way across the room and down the stairs. Fayth followed him, putting as much distance as she could between them. It took all her self control not to call for him. She wanted him to turn around. She wanted to see his face. She wanted to tell him what she was feeling. But she held her tongue, hugging herself tightly through the sudden chilly morning air in the house.

When he reached the door and opened it, Fayth froze in her spot. What the hell? What is she doing here? How did she know where Lexis lived? Oh my god. Fayth looked between him and Vivian, her heart pounding with discomfort.

This happened?

Chapter Seventy Seven

“What are you doing here?” Both of them asked at the same time. Then, as if they were connected telepathically, they both turned their attention to Lexis.

Lexis looked between them, his face blank. Grabbing his keys from the nearby table, he turned around and left out of the first floor balcony door.

Vivian checked out Fayth. “You look like shit.” She said, remarking her restless face. She walked further into the room and threw herself on the sofa. It annoyed Fayth how comfortable she was. “Why are you here?”

“Rehab.” Fayth said, crossing her arms—still standing by the door.

“With Lexis?” Vivian asked, her green eyes opening wide, finding this funnier than what Fayth excluded it to be.

“What are you doing here?”

Vivian blinked. “You look like you have a stick up your ass. Calm the hell down.”

“What are you doing here?” Fayth asked again, her anger visible on her face now.

Vivian cleared her throat and straightened up, not finding it funny anymore. “My dad kicked me out. My little brother was being a bitch so I shoved him down the steps, and my mom is pregnant so she has a stick up her ass too. Everyone in that house is hormonal. And,” She looked up at Fayth, her eyes faltering into sadness. She looked away, checking out the new curtains, and said. “I couldn’t find you.”

“So you came here. To Lexis.”

“You know how nice Charles’s mom is. It freaks me out.”

“What about your uncle?”

“He’s getting married. I hate happy people.”

“Why did you get a new tattoo?” Fayth asked, eyeing the flower on Vivian’s wrist.

“I was bored.”

“I told you your status is sensitive. I told you not to fucking put body art on your skin.”

“You did it.”

“I did it because I didn’t give a dead man’s last hoot before.”

“I don’t either.”

“You’re not me.”

“You molded me to be you.”

Fayth pointed at the door. “Leave.”

“Nope.” Vivian said, though she became slightly fearful of the angry Fayth. It seemed like she was literally no longer Rihanna. The made up Rihanna put Vivian somewhat more at ease into getting away with things. “I think I’ll stay here and enjoy being under a roof with a person who couldn’t care less about this shitty world.”

“If you stay here I’m taking you to get surgery done.”

“What?” Vivian snapped, disgusted.

“Those tattoos are going to get removed. And I’ll beat the shit out of you if you think otherwise.”

“I’m not doing it.” Vivian spat, disbelief covering her tone. “That shit hurts like hell.”

“Then leave.”

“Why?!” Vivian stood to her feet. “You’re here.”

“You’re the vice president’s daughter you idiot, you can’t just go where you please.”

“That’s not what you taught me before.”

“Vivi, its not—”

“Don’t call me that if you’re going to be mad at me.”
Vivian’s eyes stung. She wished things would go back to before.

Fayth sighed. She walked over and pulled Vivian into a hug. “Why did you push him down the steps?”

“I told you—”

“The real reason.”

Vivian held onto Fayth. She was quiet for a long time before she said. “My dad got him a kite.”

Fayth pursed her lips. This would sound so stupid to others, but she understood. “You should have told him. Use your words instead. Tell him you would’ve liked it if he got you something too.”

“That would sound so childish.” She pulled away and wiped her tears. “Especially coming from someone like me.”

“Are you hungry?”

Vivian nodded.

Fayth made her way to the kitchen. After fixing her and Vivian breakfast, they sat on the table and ate.

A knock came from the door and Fayth stood up to answer. It was Seeger.

“Hey, come on in.” Fayth smiled and opened the door wider for him. He walked inside and looked across the two rooms where Vivian was sitting on the table.

“Oh. You’re here again.” Seeger said, his smile disappearing.

Again? Fayth looked between the two. When was Vivian ever here?

“Do you know me?”

“Not me. Emily does.” Seeger said, making his way inside and slipping into one of the chairs.

Fayth began putting a set of plates in front of him, eyeing the two.

“Emily? Emily who?” Vivian’s face broke into comprehension. “Ah, the hello kitty girl.”

Seeger stared at her, his eyes showing his dislike for Vivian’s tone when she discussed Emily.

“Well, yeah. I’m here again.”

Seeger turned his attention to Fayth, who was pouring milk in a cup for him. “So, how are you?”

“I’m doing good.” She answered with a smile. Glancing at Vivian, she said. “So why were you here Vivi?”

“Oh.” Her voice sounded bored. “I forgot to tell you. Lexis and I slept together for about a month.”

The carton slipped out of Fayth’s hand and crashed against the cup, creating a bigger mess.

“What?” Fayth demanded, breathless. Completely disregarding the spilt milk.

“Not strictly. Just laying side by side.”

Seeger noticed the anger fuming off Fayth, and for a long moment, he wondered if Charles existed all together. It was obvious how much the girl liked Lexis now. He gritted his teeth and stood up.

“I think it was a mistake coming here. Anyway, my mom wanted me to let you know if you will be holding Dawn’s birthday party tomorrow and if you needed any help.”

Fayth was still staring at Vivian, fighting the urge to beat the shit out of her.

“Hey, he’s talking to you Fay—”

“Shut up.” Fayth retorted. She looked at Seeger, relaxing her expression, she said. “I’m sorry Seeger. I’ll let Lexis know.”

He nodded, a displeased expression on his face.

After he left, Fayth was standing over Vivian, firing questions at her. “Why were you sleeping with him?”

“I told you. I didn’t mean it intimately. Though I wish it was like that.” She sighed. “He was using me. Around when his little brother died he was a complete wreck. He broke all the shit in this house. In the night, he used sleep as a get away from reality and since I didn’t ask questions, he used me so he could sleep.”

That’s not good enough. Did he like her? He must’ve liked her. There was no other reason why he’d let a girl sleep in the same bed as him. He could’ve used Jessie. Why Vivian?

Fayth shut herself in her room the entire day, the anger inside boiling her organs, melting her heart. She wanted to break things. To pound and crumble every little thing in her sight.

Vivian had tried knocking on her door more than once, but Fayth ignored her. Ignored the reasons why she was knocking too. About an hour later, Lexis' voice was behind the door.

“Leave.” Fayth said angrily.

“Open the door.” He demanded. His voice held a hint of warning.

“No.”

“How hard do you think it'll be for me to unlock the latch of a bedroom safety lock?”

Gritting her teeth, Fayth walked over and unlocked the door, then ignoring him, she turned back around and walked to the large window.

Lexis shut the door behind him, then quietly locked it.

“You're furious.” He stated the obvious, walking until he was standing right behind her.

A veil of heat began radiating off her skin. She can almost feel him behind her, and her back arched at the thought.

“Obviously.”

“What made you angry?” He asked, his voice soft, serene.

Her heart pounded hard and fast in her rib cage. She

almost forgot to breathe as she suddenly lost all train of thought. “Nothing.”

“Vivian said you became angry after you found out we’ve slept together.”

“You didn’t sleep together!” Fayth denied angrily, whirling around and facing him. Disbelief overtook her at how bluntly he said it.

He nodded slowly, biting his lip to hold back a smile. “You’re right. So why exactly are you angry?”

“Why did you use her?” She was getting irritated again.

Lexis reached over and took ahold of her clenched hand. Her knuckles were turning white at her trembling grasp. “Because she was easy to use.”

Her heart began to pound fast. I love this. “There was Jessie.”

He slowly undid her fingers, opening her fist from the painful posture she had her them in. “Jessie would never leave the Academy for however long I wanted him to. His mother won’t let him.”

Her body heated up at his touch, and she knew she should pull away her hand yet she didn’t. Selfish, she was.

“Bubbles.”

He softly caressed the inside of her palm with his thumb, where her nails had left little crescent dents. Her stomach tightened at the strange feeling that engulfed her. “Anthony died. Do you think I was stable enough to control myself around her?”

Fayth pulled her hand back and looked away.

Lexis took a step closer to her and took her other hand, redoing what he did to the other one. With a quiet alluring tone, he said, “I’m not precisely comprehending the matter here. What’s upsetting you in general?”

This shook Fayth, realizing that she had put her true emotions on display without realizing it.

Staring at her hand between them, she quickly shook her head. “I’m worried for Vivian. She’s like a sister to me. How dare you use her?”

“There was no one else to use.” Lexis gritted his teeth, letting go of Fayth’s hand. “You and I weren’t exactly on good terms, so I couldn’t ask you for the kind gesture.” He said, almost reading her mind and making her purse her lips in case of her emotions being found out. “Your relationship with Vivian, however, is quite ambiguous.”

Grateful that he didn't question her concern further, she clenched her hands and said. "I've completely forgotten that Bubble's birthday is tomorrow. Your aunt wants to know if you'd like to have her help with it."

Lexis sensed Fayth's need for the change of subject. "Will you be okay? You're not comfortable with birthday celebrations. The last time you were in one didn't turn out so well."

She bit her lip and looked down at the floor. "You know..." She said quietly. "I've wondered why I easily get along with kids. Anthony then Bubbles. I wondered why they attract my attention and love more than those my age, and I realized, I really want to give them something I wish I was given when I was younger, and maybe if I give it to them..." She looked up at Lexis, then back at the floor between them. "I can get it back from them and it will feel like I've had my childhood. With Bubbles, I have to use a baby voice. With Anthony I had to degrade my maturity to his. With both of them having been involved with my mentality, I feel like I've lived my life to the fullest now. I'm not really missing anything, if that's understandable. I'm just trying to cope with what I have and see it in the most positive way I can."

Lexis studied her expression, how she had reacted to him holding her hands a few moments ago, the way she stayed standing still though he had clearly taken a few steps closer to her, then finally he said. “If the rule you are applying is true, then I must be what your mentality needs now.”

Fayth froze.

He took a step closer, his heart slowly picking up a faster beat. He gently cupped her cheek with his hand and said. “Am I your present relief?”

She took a gulp of air, her heart threatening to escape by now. She despised the ridiculous heat radiating off her lower back, giving her the sense of weakness in that moment. She dropped her gaze from his familiar intelligent eyes, wanting to escape their mysterious and clever tone, and ended up staring at his lips instead.

Oh shit. This is so wrong. This shouldn’t be happening. I’m scared.

“Fayth.” He quietly said, making her breath hitch. She loved it. Loved the sound of her name with his alluring deep voice. It sounded so accurate. So good. Like it was meant to be said by him.

At that point she didn’t care. He knew that she knew that

he knew. It was done. There was no reason for lies. Honesty was the only thing that will harvest her positive things. She had to believe that. Believe in him.

And yet...

“Can’t you just make it less complicated?” He said. “Why are we running in circles. We’re both mature enough to handle honesty.”

“Its not as easy as that.” She choked, glancing every now and then at his eyes. She was suddenly terrified again. Her heart began to beat in fear this time. She can feel the heat radiating off his hand onto her cheek, however now, it wasn’t a good feeling anymore. It was a threatening one.

Gritting his teeth, he took in a deep breath and said. “I’m going to make it simple for you. Do you or do you not like me?” He pronounced slowly.

“I don’t...”

Lexis gritted his teeth, he dropped his hand and took a few steps back as disappointment began to take over his emotions. His impassive blank expression back in place. He turned around while an angry fire inside of him yearned for him to crush something to pieces.

“...hate you.”

The air in the room stopped. Everything, the sounds, the wind outside the window, their breathing, his heart. Just stopped.

He slowly turned back around and looked at Fayth. She stared at him with the most perplexed expression he'd ever seen. For the first time, he saw eccentric fear in her eyes that he had never seen in anyone's eyes before. Not once. He saw the most beautiful yet heart shivering emotion in the world.

And he didn't understand. Her. What she meant, but he knew it meant something, and to him, at that moment, it was enough.

Fayth's fingers began to tremble violently, mortified of her revelation. She knew it barely made sense, nevertheless meant anything. It wasn't an actual confession, but to her, it was the most horrifying feeling. She can't imagine herself actually confessing now. She'd have a heart attack if that moment truly came.

He believed in it, whatever she said, he believed that it was something to start with. He slowly closed the distance in between them, his heart now racing, wanting her. Needing her. She was so beautiful. Her words, her, her eyes, everything about her. He needed to feel that beauty. He needed to make it, in the most selfish way possible, his.

Sensing his sudden intentions in his fiery eyes, Fayth's body began to shake in fright. Her chest trembled, her heartbeat rang in her ears, she looked at him, terrified, and yet...she couldn't move away.

Pounding brought her attention back and across the room at the door, where someone was beating on the door with their fist. "Your mother is downstairs Lexis. If you're in there." Vivian shouted.

He didn't care. He didn't care if the house was burning down. He didn't care if world war three was happening outside his doorstep—

"You promised." Fayth choked out, her eyes opening in fear. For no reason at all, she was on the verge of crying her eyes out.

He paused, staring inside her big innocent eyes. He was frightening her. He can see that. She didn't hate him, but that certainly didn't mean that she liked him either. She had said something that only confused him more.

Swearing under his breath, he closed his eyes for a moment, and it looked like he was struggling to keep apart of him under control. Taking a deep breath, he opened his eyes and asked. "I was going to fondly embrace you."

She clenched her teeth at how straightforward he was.

“But you’re right, I promised. However, concerning later events that this may happen again, I won’t stop if you are going to give me the right feelings. I’m a man. Let’s be civil regarding this fact.”

Before hearing what she had to say, he turned around and left the room.

Chapter Seventy Eight

Fayth followed him down to the first floor, where Mrs. Ellis was sitting on the couch by herself, her legs tucked under her. When she saw Lexis, she quickly straightened up.

When Fayth reached the bottom of the steps, she watched as a few men placed a white piano in one side of the living room. Another man came in and placed a bench in front of it.

“I—” She looked at Lexis then Fayth. “A little birdy told me you played the piano, so I brought you a late Christmas present.”

Fayth was pulled aback, touched beyond limits. She looked at Lexis, who stared at the piano, then back at his mother.

“Oh wow—Thank you. Thank you so much.” Fayth rushed to say. She wanted to say more, to thank her more, but didn’t find the right words that would really explain what she was feeling.

“I want you to be careful honey.” Mrs. Ellis said. “John, I feel sorry to say, isn’t a moral man. He isn’t happy with you nonetheless, and there is a massive chance that he might threaten your family.”

Fayth smiled and nodded. “I’ll take care of it. You don’t have to worry.”

Her answer wasn’t what Meghan thought she was going to hear from the young lady, and it stroke her as strange that she was laid back at the sensitive information she had just shared with her. Unless the girl had taken it lightly, she expected fear at the very least to overtake her. Shock at what type of man Lexis’ father was.

Meghan switched her attention to Lexis. “How are you?” She asked self-consciously.

Lexis felt it. For the first time since years now, he felt it. The weight of a mother. The love of a mother. Fayth had shown him what he was taking for granted. And he felt it in that moment. What once Fayth felt toward her parents, the

shyness, it was coming toward him from his own mother.

He slowly walked over to her, then held her cheeks in his hands and kissed her forehead, pulling her close. His heart was ripping at the shock that took her, took her breath away. She shouldn't need to feel this. He was her son for god sake.

“Forgive me for being an incompetent son.” He quietly said, as he held her tightly in his arms.

Fayth watched as Mrs. Ellis's face fell in disbelief. Her eyes blinked constantly, her lips were ajar as she breathed in and out in surprise. And then at once, she wrapped her arms around her son, pulling him close, and broke into a sob that shook her. “Don't apologize. You're everything to me. Everything.”

“I'm sorry.” Lexis said.

He had walked behind where Fayth sat on the bench of the piano. She stared at the keys, but didn't touch them.

“Its fine. I'm fine.”

He slipped next to her on the bench. “She can be your mother too. She made sure I was aware of that.”

Fayth only smiled. A fake smile that he easily saw

through.

He put his fingers on the piano and Fayth was shocked to see him play a quick piece. Only a few seconds long, but it was enough to make her look at him with surprise.

“The very first time I heard you play, you tore me apart. At that time, you played a very doleful song. It wasn’t it that made me feel stripped, but it was the genre in general. You see, my sister, Cara, was a pianist. And all I’ve ever heard her play is songs that somewhat sounded like that. Unwanted by her father, pressured by her family for loving the wrong man, and in the end, for that man to impregnate her and leave her, she lived a life much harsher than the rest of us. And she knew, she knew what had been happening in our household. What William had been doing to my mother. She knew from the very beginning, and as I remember back, I reminisce all the times she’d pull me away to her room, and play the piano as loud as she could, as fast as she could. I always questioned why she had done it, but never figured out the reason. She made it impossible. Until the night she wasn’t home. At that time, there was no one to stop the truth from coming into the light.

“She taught me a few things. Ever since I was little. The guitar, the piano, she taught me how to play and I’d teach

Seeger.”

Fayth noticed how he avoided expressing his feelings toward his sister and her loss. He wasn't ready to face it.

She looked at him. “When I saw you hugging your mother, I wanted to choke you.” She said honestly. “I nearly went berserk. And yet I didn't, do you know why?”

His eyes searched hers.

“I felt special. Through her I felt special.” She quietly said, looking back at the piano keys. “To the point where jealousy didn't take over.”

Why is she so terrified? What is she scared of?

“There are times you'd make me feel special as well.” He said, his empty expression made her clueless about what he meant. “The times you'd share with me things that you didn't share with Vincent, I adore those moments.”

This made Fayth laugh. “You're a very comfortable person, considering the persona you have. I trust you more than I trust myself.”

They were both surprised at what she said, however he decided not to make a big deal out of it. He didn't want to cower her away from speaking her true feelings.

“There are some more memories that I didn’t share with Vincent.” She quietly said, deciding to enjoy the civilized conversation she had with him. These private moments will be rare now that they shared the house with Vivian. She had left to buy clothes, having come here with nothing at all.

“Like what?”

“The piano, I stopped playing it the past three years. To be honest, ever since Vincent had me take piano lessons, I slowly began to love it. The piano understood me. If I was feeling angry, I would play angry notes, and so they would speak to me. The music that drifted would feel exactly what I was feeling. Something shared my pain, and I held a certain obsession to that. When I was sad, it was sad with me, when I cried, the notes made others cry as well. I became connected to piano playing. For all the wrong reasons. I was opportunistic. I hated being alone. And Vincent had work, and he disapproved most of my actions. I know they were all wrong, but I became a person that was taught to be who I am, by not me, but by the things my brains conceived around me.

“Out of all the activities that my parents had Vincent enroll me in so I wouldn’t have time to spare anymore, to either do bad things or think about them and wonder where

they are or when they're coming, playing the piano was my favorite, a relief. I never saw it as something that I had to do for them, but myself. Golf, tennis, boarding, gymnastics, all of these were time consuming parts of my life, I hated them. I knew the intention behind them. Its all for my parents. So they're happy."

"Why did you stop playing the piano?"

"It was around the time I met Devon for the first time."

"In your uncle's dojo?"

Fayth nodded. "I guess you already manipulated a reading out of Devon?"

Lexis stayed quiet.

"At that time, I didn't know that my father had come to me. One minute I'm in my house, Vincent talking on the phone. I had fallen asleep and the next minute, I'm waking up in this strange place.

"I was trouble, I've always been. I hated everything and when I tried to hate sensei, it didn't work. He didn't give a damn. He just had that smirk on his face, and I liked that for some reason. He was hard to please, a person that wasn't afraid. In my life, it was difficult to find people like that. Everyone worshipped the money my family possessed. He

had strength too. So I decided to put up with him the first day, and when I saw him teach the kids all those moves, I liked him even more. The kids had this certain confidence that I never had. I was confident, but it was the shady kind of confidence. It had nothing to do with my insecurities. I was still insecure. Confident but insecure. Them, however, is what I wanted to be like. Entirely confident.

“I was still hard headed so I didn’t give in. I decided to sneak out at night and just go back home. Before the night came though, sensei sat with me and told me that my father was having a hard time, and that he was my uncle. My father’s brother. My heart dropped right then. And all I could think is family, he’s my family. I still remember how happy I was.

“I stayed in that place for six months. Enjoying my time with my uncle and taking lessons from him. He was still a prick. He was so mean, but I liked him nonetheless. He was family, and that’s all that mattered to me. Anything that was family, no matter how long I haven’t seen them or if I’ve ever met them even, they were more than good enough for me. That’s...how desperate I was.

“One day, sensei got a call that my father was coming to pick me up. I remember how excited I was. My dad, really?

It amazed me that he and not one of his secretaries or drivers or even Vincent was coming to pick me up. I was never more excited for anything in my entire life. I was finally going to see my Father.

“To pass time, I sat in the room in the back where my piano keyboard was, and played music. I remember the happy song I played till now. I remember the exact notes, the exact rhythm. I remember the door closing in the other room, I remember the loud voices that came afterwards. I remember my uncle’s voice demanding the visitors to leave. I remember the things crashing. I remember my uncle screaming bloody murder. Then one of the men was screaming, screeching like someone was skinning him alive. It was obvious that I shouldn’t get involved. I remember my uncle shouting a few times ‘don’t stop playing.’ I knew what he meant. And all I could do is keep playing the piano. They’ll think a radio is playing somewhere, I kept thinking to myself, and if I stopped, they’ll know I’m here. My uncle will have to deal with having to protect me too. I didn’t care what it was about. I knew it was bad, and I guessed it had nothing to do with me. I was terrified to see what was going on. No matter how curious I was, I didn’t want to see blood again. I can hear bodies being brutally beaten. I can hear the pain and the blood smell filling the air. But I didn’t want to

see what I knew was happening. I just played the piano as if my life depended on it. I didn't help my uncle. I didn't even check to see if he was alright. As the screams and yelling became louder and louder, the beatings became more worse and audible, and all I could do was stare at my fingers as I kept on playing. I wanted to stop, but I was so terrified. I remember the foul feeling in my head, I remember how much my fingers shook, I remember how nauseated I felt. I was sick to my stomach.

“Ever since that day, I could never look at a piano the same way again. I remember minutes later, after I've become exhausted and had nearly collapsed on the floor, my uncle called for me. He was grunting, and when I walked into the big room where he was, I remember how much my legs shook. I couldn't feel them anymore. They were so numb that I was barely able to stand up, and when I saw the sight...” Fayth's fingers began to shake at the memory as if she was living it.

“What sight?”

Fayth closed her eyes and shook her head. “He told me to clean up the blood with him. It took about an hour to clean all of it up—and fifteen minutes more to clean my vomit. After we were done, my uncle called my father, told him

what happened, I think my father bought him a fake identity and my uncle was off somewhere over seas. I was sent to another state for a few more months with Vincent and that's where I found out my father was the cause of another CEO's death."

"What influenced you to play again? You did it just fine a week ago."

Fayth smiled sadly. "Anthony." She took in a long breath. "I remember it. How happy I was. I was so happy that I couldn't comprehend the fact that sadness existed in the world. I can't explain it, but there was a certain willpower that took over me. Like a belief that I could suddenly fly, you know? And so I did it.

"I think I really upset Anthony that day. He cried a lot because of me. Because of the sudden mental recollection, I had fainted and he thought I died." Fayth began to wipe the tears, having no idea when they began falling. She looked away and mumbled. "God I miss him so much."

Lexis loved it when she cried. She became vulnerable. Someone who feels, who's honest about her emotions. It was a healthy thing for her. He imagined that in her seventeen years she had never once cried. Only now after her parents death, she must have become so fragile.

“You need family Fayth.” He said. “And you have one. I’ve invited Jessie to come tomorrow, you should tell...”

She nodded, wiping her tears. However a strange expression was covering her face. It took Lexis completely off guard.

He cut off what he was going to say next and stood to his feet, slowly walking backwards then leaving the house entirely.

And Fayth sat there, her eyes glazed, completely unaware of his sudden disappearance.

Standing by the water on the beach, Lexis took out his phone and dialed Vincent.

“Its me.” He said once Vincent picked up.

“Lexis? Is everything alright? Is Fayth okay?”

“She’s fine. By any chance, are you sending her medication without me knowing?”

“No! I haven’t—are you saying she’s been taking pills without our awareness?” Vincent demanded, suddenly angry.

“Its not quite that either. She reminds of how she used be in the Academy. I just thought that she might have convinced

you to give her the medication in secret.”

Vincent was silent for awhile. Thinking back to all the times he'd seen her lose her mind, and the things she had been telling him lately, he sighed and said. “I'm going to tell you something son. Fayth never loved anything in her entire life. She knew how to hate, she knew how to do it as if its second nature to her. Love, however, is something very much alien to her. To love something, something she never thought she could love before, and to truly feel deep emotions for it, it will mentally hurt her. It will, in other words, screw with her head to the point of no return. She'll deny it. She'll run away from it. She'll do everything she can to not be scared anymore because that's one of the symptoms that will entirely consume her. Fear. Remember that.”

Now thinking back...

Realization took Lexis by surprise. “So thats...” He was about to end the call, but Vincent quickly said.

“What is it that you figured out?”

“The reasons behind her absentmindedness.” He said, his eyes replaying recent events. “She'd been keeping herself under an entirely different mask.”

“What do you mean?”

“Like before.” Lexis thought about her cognitive disorder with her parents. “When she used to impede memories of her parents, she had been doing the same thing with Jessie.” And in some twisted way, me.

How did it happen, neither knew. However since Vivian shared the house with them, Fayth ended up falling asleep in the guest suite, and later on Vivian slumped next to her and fell asleep as well. Lexis stayed awake the entire night, leaning on the balcony’s railing and staring out into the dark night.

Lexis theory was this: She’d been jealous of Vivian and him. There is no other reason to answer her reaction. Surely she’d been conflicted with her feelings, and now all he had to do is prove it right. He needed a reason to test his theory and act upon it.

And when the morning came, the girls woke up around ten and found that a catering company had already come and decorated the house for Dawn. Fayth, however, walked out of the house, terrified of her self-control. Worried that she would ruin for Bubbles her special day.

The rest of the family, Jessie and Dawn came around

three o'clock. They all brought presents for Dawn and music played really loudly. After their family dinner, Dawn's friends began to arrive with their parents, all with gifts. And Dawn welcomed them intelligently into the house as if she was the adult. Lexis, who let his mom take the lead into welcoming the guests afterwards, stood against the wall, arms crossed, proud of his daughter.

He wondered where Fayth was. Jessie and Dawn had been asking him every few minutes to call her and tell her to come. They had missed her and wanted to see her urgently.

However Fayth wouldn't answer any phone calls and Lexis began to worry.

Vivian, who hated seeing a birthday party just as much as Fayth did, stayed upstairs in the guest suite. She was so angry with Fayth. How could she leave her alone and go without taking her with her? They were always joined at the hip. The least Fayth could have done is invite her to where ever she went.

However it seemed like Fayth was no longer taking companions. It was all fucking over between them. Vivian walked to the bathroom and looked at her face, the thick makeup she wore. The piercings. The tattoos. What the hell did I do all of this for? For someone who left me alone as

soon as she found a better life?

She grabbed a band and tied her hair up in a bun. Then began to harshly wash her face. Wash her makeup. Her eyeliner, eyeshadow, lipsticks. She pulled off all of her piercings, then stood before the mirror looking at her bare face. It had been such a long time since she saw it so empty. So innocent looking. Her eyes were distraught. She can see the pain, the loneliness inside of them. And it was all Fayth's fault. Fayth, the good girl.

And now Vivian was the only bad apple in the crate.

She took out her phone and dialed a number. When Cube answered, she sighed in hesitance and said. "Its me."

"Oh!" Cube stretched out with his hoarse voice. "Will if it isn't my baby flower. Where have you been? Old daddy got your mind in a shackle?"

"A baggy. Can you deliver it by tonight?"

He sighed. "Yeah. But it'll cost a bit more."

Vivian stared at her eyes in the mirror. She didn't want to go back, but knew it was the only way now. She was alone. More alone than she'd ever been.

Around seven o'clock in the evening, it was getting dark

and Fayth was making her way back home. She was exhausted. More than that ever. Her legs hurt and her stomach muscles contracted with hunger. She had no money and there way no free source of food anywhere.

She knew, however, awaiting her is a lot of food and cake. That, in the very least, was making her feel better.

A long whistle came from the side of the shore. She looked over at a man who stared her up and down, his arms in his back jeans pocket. He seemed familiar, but she wasn't sure where she had seen him before.

“You forget me girly, didn't you? Fucking hotter than planet bitch, ain't you?” He walked over to Fayth, where she stood next to a wall of bricks separating the beach houses from the shore.

“Cube?!” Fayth spat out in question, surprised. “the hell are you doing here?”

He let out a strangled chuckle. His hoarse voice damaged from his cocaine intake. “Babe, you know why I'm here.”

Anger and disbelief began to rise in the back of Fayth's mind. “No. I don't.”

“You telling me your little soldier didn't tell you?” He said, now standing in front of Fayth.

“Vivian?”

He sighed and pulled out a cigarette from his pocket. He stood against the wall and lit it, resting his left shoulder against the bricks. “She wanted a baggy. So I gave it to her.”

“YOU ASSHOLE.” Fayth broke out in a scream. Gritting her teeth and breathing from her nose she faced Cube and in his face hissed. “I warned you not to be her supplier anymore.”

Cube took a long drag on his cigarette and blew it in Fayth’s face. “And I told you to sleep with me first.”

Vivian sat by the bushes, two lines of the white crystalline powder trailed the back of her hand. She had a hundred dollar bill rolled up, one end against the beginning of one line, and the other in her nostril.

She was about to take in her first snort, when hands caught her shoulder, shaking her and the powder do the ground.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Jessie pulled Vivian up to her feet, pushing her against the brick wall behind her. He had never witnessed someone using drugs, and for a moment, the idea terrified him. It was such a different world,

the existence of it completely differed from what he had seen on TVs or what people said. He actually witnessed someone trying to intake it, and given his clean reputation, he never thought he'd see someone do something so vile. Especially someone he knew.

“Why are you being reckless? How could you treat your life so cheaply like this?”

Vivian breathed, glad that she still had some in her baggy that was now hidden behind the bushes. She had her eyes closed, breathing from her mouth and letting her thoughts disappear into a smoke of irrelevance. Her gray mind took in a world that she felt comfortable in. She hated being alone.

Jessie stared at her as her exhausted expression began to slowly change something in him. And when she opened her eyes, it was as if it was his first time seeing Vivian. Her face bare. Her hair tied up. Her innocent eyes on display, not hidden behind a fictional sketch of a bad girl.

“You should leave.” She said quietly, trying to be as humane as possible.

“This isn't you.”

“You don't know me.”

“Funny thing is, I'm looking at you right now. I can see

the real you for the first time.”

She let out a humorless laugh.

“You’re not Vivian anymore. You’re Rihanna’s Vivi.”

She gritted her teeth and looked away. “What does she look like to you?” She asked, tears stinging her eyes.

“The most innocent and beautiful human I had ever seen.” He said in honesty. He can feel his insides change, his mind, his desires. In that moment, he realized how dangerous one’s mask can be. Sometimes...makeup can hide something that could have happened but was hidden.

She pushed him away, however he pushed her back against the wall. He wanted to look at her longer. His heart pounded. His palms became sweaty. And something in his stomach tightened.

He had usually only felt this way toward Joshua. However, now, looking at Vivian’s vulnerability, it was a hundred times stronger.

“You’re blind!” She screamed in his face. “You’re so fucking—”

It wasn’t right. It wasn’t wrong. It was impulse. The way of life. Fate. Something that was bound to happen from the

start of time. He knelt in without a second thought and his lips invaded hers, taking her in and his tongue not letting her go. He didn't want to stop. Never did he think a girl would make him as breathless as she did, as light hearted, more of a man, than she did. At first, she refused his kiss, but as if she was suddenly ignited too, she wrapped her hands softly around his neck, her nails slowly grazing his skin, making him moan into her mouth.

He pulled away, looking inside her eyes. They both had the same yearning in them. "Come with me." He told her.

She nodded, her face flushed. He took her hand in his and impatiently lead her toward where his car was parked.

However not long after they've begun walking, both of their bodies on the verge of submitting to one another right there and then, they stopped.

And watched the scene unfolding in front of them.

"I told you to not get near her!" Fayth screamed. She was so angry, you'd think she was committing verbal murder.

"Calm your shit down girl." Cube said with his hoarse voice. "Baby flower is old enough to make her own decisions. She was chasing a high and I'm her supplier. Its business. Nothing personal."

“Stop.” Vivian insisted.

Fayth looked over at Jessie and Vivian, who stood hand in hand, staring at her. She wondered what the hell was going on in front of her. How was it possible that the picture in front of her was anything real.

And then there was Jessie, looking at Fayth with new eyes. He had always seen sweet insecure Rihanna, and now he was seeing a vicious creature. Tonight, the rules were reversed. Vivian became who she really was, and Fayth became who she really was.

And yet, he missed her so much. Something inside of him pulled at the sight of her. A reunion party breaking loose inside his head. He wondered how she had been doing. Where she was. He wondered who the girl in front of him was and where she had been hiding.

Fayth stared at him. Her eyes cold. Dead. Vivian can see the sudden impassive emotion on Fayth’s face. The sudden void to humanity. She stared at them, and for a moment, all they could do is stare back.

Looking at their hands joined together, at Vivian’s bare face, at Jessie’s dumbfounded expression, with no feelings whatsoever, without letting her eyes move away from them,

her left hand reached up, took ahold of Cube's neck, and cracked his head against the brick wall.

Once.

Twice.

"No! Stop!" Vivian began to scream violently, as Cube's moans first were struggled, then silent all together.

"Rihanna stop!" Jessie insisted, his nose flaring.

Lexis was standing on the balcony when he heard the voices. And as soon as he heard them, he ran down the stairs and made his way down the concrete path that lead to the shore. When he reached the opening of the brick wall, he made his way through it and found Vivian and Jessie standing side by side, watching something.

He walked closer and found Fayth. She was standing with an incredibly indifferent expression, stone like and dead, holding a man's neck. And as he watched, he saw her pull his unconscious face and then sock the side of his head against the wall, where a large trail of blood had been made.

Lexis made his way toward her. When he passed Vivian and Jessie, he stopped. "Go home." He ordered, turning around and staring at them.

For a long moment, they hesitated, their eyes still on Fayth.

“Let me stop her. I can stop her.” Vivian said, taking a few steps forward.

“Go. Home.” Lexis repeated, his eyes now sharper than a knife.

“Come on.” Jessie said, pulling at Vivian’s hand. His heart hurt for Fayth, but he knew when to not cross Lexis, and right now, Lexis was on the verge of bringing down hell.

After they disappeared to the back where the larger parking lot was, Lexis stopped next to Fayth, who sunk to the sand, staring at Cube’s unconscious body blankly. She wasn’t seeing. She wasn’t feeling. She completely put a void to her sanity.

“Fayth?” He made his voice as gentle as he possibly could.

She looked up at him, her face completely empty.

“Its me Lexis.”

She looked back down at the man.

He knelt down, leveling his height to hers until he became

less intimidating. “Do you remember me?”

Without looking at him, she nodded.

“Why did you hurt this man?”

She didn’t say anything.

“Fayth?”

“Is he dead?” She suddenly asked, her voice was completely emotionless. She didn’t care if he was dead, she just simply wanted to know.

“Probably.”

There was a long silence before she turned and looked at him, her eyes pouring into his. “Good.”

“Do you want me to save him?”

She was going to blurt out no. However she hesitated.

Lexis let out a sigh of relief. He closed his eyes then reopened them. “I’ll save him, okay?”

She hesitated again, then nodded. And slowly, the sane Fayth came back. And Lexis couldn’t blame her for what she had done. He knew why. She wanted to warm up the subject to Jessie. To slowly introduce the person she was in her past, so when she breaks it to him that she was the one who killed

his father, he wouldn't be shocked, or in the very least, hate her as much.

"Its okay." Lexis said softly, pulling her by the hand into the house. "The moment you feel something, squeeze my hand tightly and I'll take you out of there."

Letting out a strangled sigh, Fayth slowly nodded. She took in the decorations, and remembered her own birthday party. The balloons, and how one was the cause of her mother going into labor. She looked at Bubbles, who so happily danced with her friends to the music blaring out of the speakers, and a shy smile began to take place on Fayth's lips. How sweet she looked. So beautiful in her blue dress. She missed her so much.

Lexis looked at Fayth and was flooded with relief at her reaction. She was accepting it well. She was coming back.

When everyone left and it was only family, Fayth didn't find the urge to leave the party once. She was so consumed by the happy Bubbles and the things they did together that it no longer mattered to her what her own birthday mishap looked or felt like.

And after everyone left, Fayth went upstairs and got

dressed in the hood shirt and sweat pants. Vivian wasn't going to come tonight. And Lexis hadn't slept for two nights. If anything, he'd faint from his over conscious mind any minute now.

When she walked into his room, he stood by the window, staring out into the dark night.

"I'm sorry about what happened today. I went out of line." Fayth said, frozen by the door, unable to move from the emotions that weighed her down every time she thought of her inappropriate actions. If it weren't for Lexis, Cube would have died. "I just wanted to scare Vivian a little. And..."

"I know. I know why you did it." Lexis said, his back still to her. "Go to sleep."

Fayth's eyebrows pulled together, his voice caught her off guard. It was thick with a barely noticeable texture. And she wondered what was going on in his head.

Is he mad at me?

She looked at his fingers, and was even more surprised to see them shake. The last time she had seen them in such position was when he checked Anthony's pulse the day he had passed away...

Oh god...

She made her way to the bed and slid under the covers. Then closed her eyes shut and told herself how selfish she was. Told it so many times that her mind became sick and and numb with the thought.

She wasn't sure if she fell asleep, but nearly forty minutes later, her eyes opened again to a dark room this time. It felt like it had been five minutes ago that she laid in bed. However as she opened her eyes, she realized it must have been more.

She was met with Lexis' sleeping face. His serene expression so incredibly beautiful. They had somehow moved in the night until they were away from the beds edge and instead facing each other in the middle, with barely any space between them.

Her heart began to beat faster. She put a hand on her chest, feeling the pounding of it under her touch. Its as if it knew him. Her hand then reached out to touch his face, but her feet began to sweat with fear and doubt, and she pulled her hand back.

She slightly straightened on her elbows so she can look closer at his face. His head laid there on top of the pillow, his

eyes lids still as he silently breathed an even rhythm. He looked so tired. And yet, his perfectly toned skin made her fingers itch again, yearning to caress the clarity of it.

She reached over once again, and frightfully let the tip of her fingers caress his cheek, for a second at first, incase he'd woken up, but when his steady breathing continued with his heavy sleep, she resumed her journey.

She touched his eyebrows, softly caressing them with her forefinger, and continued her way to his eyelids, the softness of them making her heart shiver. They were the beautiful mystical eyes that always stared at her with god knows what thoughts behind them. And as she touched his long eyelashes, she wondered who he looked liked. John? Not really... But he didn't look like his mother either. A mix of both maybe?

She touched his nose, it was sharp and symmetrical. She let her fingers travel down to his slightly full lips, the lips that had that slight smirk on them at the sides. The lips that looked oh so inviting right now.

Her heart began to pound faster, heavier. She opened her lips, her lungs needing a bigger hole to breathe from. She looked at his sleeping eyes, then back at his lips.

She knelt down until her lips were an inch away from his, with a voice lower than a whisper she said. “You cared so much about me. About how I might feel during Bubbles birthday party and how hard it’ll be on me. When today is the date you’ve lost someone so dear to you. I feel so selfish. So conceited. And more sorry than I’ve ever been.”

She knelt in, closing her eyes, and placed her lips in between his. He was still unconscious under her, unmoving as her lips slowly moved against his immobile ones. And as the urge for harshness dared her to go deeper in the back of her mind, she settled for the kiss that fed her inner relief in that moment and slowly pulled away, looking at his beautiful sleeping face once more.

I wish I held your hand that day. I wish I pulled you away from the warehouse and demanded that you didn’t watch. I wish I left home with you instead of Charles. I wish I was there when you needed someone the most that night instead of Summer. I wish I was there when Cara died. I wish I was there. Because I too hate to think of a life you lived in that I didn’t share with you.

She turned back around and wrapped her arms around the pillow, closing her eyes, wishing love was easier to process and accept. And yet, it was nearly suffocating to let him in to

see the truth. If there was one thing she hated it was the unknown. She couldn't be sure of the future, and unless she was absolutely sure that her love wouldn't hurt her in the end like it always did, then she can't trust putting it out in the open. She wasn't confident to built this love yet.

Lexis slowly opened his eyes, and stared at Fayth's back.

His theory...came to life.

Chapter Seventy Nine

Don't.

She's there and she gave him what he wanted.

Don't.

Reflection to her intentions and desires.

Don't.

It was a give and take.

Don't—

Lexis pulled Fayth back, until she was under him. Her eyes flew open and she stared at him as he looked down at her, his breathing staggering. The animalistic look was back in his eyes. A hundred times stronger. And he could see the sudden fear in her eyes. She hated that she was caught. She was going to make excuses again. She was going to lie and say that she loved Charles. She was going to say that she thought Lexis was Charles and its why she kissed him. She was dreaming. She wasn't thinking.

And right now, so much fear made up her expression that it was almost insulting. She hated that she was trapped by Lexis. He can see that. She didn't want him. Yet she did. He can see that. And maybe he would have been kind, sympathized with her raw emotions. Maybe he would have pulled away and decided to give her the freedom of choice. To not damage her much further. To listen to what Vincent had once said about her broken affair with love and kneel

before her decisions.

But right now nothing could stop him. He was a man. And she had given him the right feelings, the perfect ones.

She's broken.

And yet, he knew nothing but the electrified feelings in between them at that moment. He can see the little tears forming at the sides of her eyes. He can see the small tremble of her lips, but he couldn't comprehend the sensitivity of them in that moment.

If she's already broken, then why would it matter if I hurt her further more now?

It was an excuse. An evil thought that gave him the passage to enter. To let his temptation take the wheel. He knelt in and began to kiss her, so deeply that for short seconds, he can feel her gasp under him for air. She pushed him away. Kept her palms on his chest, grasping his shirt and pushing him. But he couldn't move. He was too fond of being in control. He liked the possessive feeling he held. He can do anything with her. She was his. His. And nothing can stop this moment.

She pushed him away, with so much strength, it was in fact surprising. She quickly climbed off the bed and began to

back away, her tear streaked face more angry and terrified than ever.

Lexis rolled off the bed and began to walked toward her, breathless. He slowly made his way in her direction, and she kept walking backwards, their eyes locked. He can see the hate she held for him in that moment, but he couldn't care less. And Fayth watched him, watched his dark, cold set eyes. His hard jaw. His slightly flaring nose.

Her body movement was blocked by the cold glass of the window, and her eyes opened a slit wider as she realized she had been walking in the wrong direction of the room. She felt behind her for the door handle, but instead, grasped the window sill.

Lexis continued his way toward her, and as she tried to bolt for the door on the other side of the room, he briskly grabbed her wrists and pushed her back against the window.

And he began to deeply kiss her again. His tongue familiarly moving with hers, And as she tried to twist her wrists out of his grasp, he only held on tighter, painfully tighter. It was too much. As the front of his body pressed the front of hers, like prison bars, she began to panic, the adrenaline in her body firing at the impudence of the situation. She tried to push him away again—

And ended up embracing him instead.

Her hands were released as she began to kiss back, deeper, faster. Her hands went around his neck, her nails digging softly into his skin and pulling him closer. She turned him around, pushing him against the wall near the window, and knelt against him. His hand were pressed at the small of her back, pulling her closer, and the heat in her body began to become insanely breathtaking.

His hands moved up to her face, holding her cheeks as he resumed to kiss her. He wanted more of her. He wanted everything. She was his everything. She was the reason his sanity hadn't left him ever since Anthony's death. It wasn't Dawn. Dawn was always a thorn in the back of his throat, reminding him of Cara. She looked exactly like his sister, however he always managed to push all the negativity aside and love Dawn nonetheless. Fayth, however, she made a world for him. She took him out of his misery and planted a life worth living for around him. She was his sky, his earth, his sun and moon. The air that he breathed, his thoughts every time he'd think. His absolute and most important everything.

It was exactly what Fayth had been wanting to do ever since their last kiss. Every time she looked at him, she'd

yearn to at the very least to touch him. Feel his existence. Kiss him till love defined their life. And its why her heart beat like life meant a new beginning. That hate was not a natural thought anymore. Its why she loved Anthony and adored Dawn, its why marriage existed and the sun rose and set every morning. Its love. Its him. Its Lexis.

But love can go away. Like it always had.

That thought shattered every other thought in her head, and she began to push Lexis away. Both of them breathless, they stood now feet apart, staring at each other with fiery eyes.

“What are you doing? Are you crazy?” She said, her eyes judgmental, pushing him away.

He gritted his teeth and closed his eyes. “Don’t.”

“No. I will.” Her throat was scratchy. The fear in it became visible again. She hated showing her mortified emotions, but knew it was impossible to hide them at this point.

“Why?” He insisted, opening his eyes. They no longer held a cold stare. And instead, they looked at her with so much hurt. “Why not?”

She gritted her teeth. She hated seeing him hurt. It

shattered the protective walls she held around herself. She looked into his eyes and bit her lips. Tears fell as she slowly felt her pain make way into her chest. She can feel the discomfort she'd get every time she faced her love for him. It was suffocating.

“Because I love you.” She breathed.

Disbelief clouded his vision.

“I love you so much that I’m terrified of it. I love you and I don’t know how to love you right.”

He put a hand on her cheek, still speechless, but she pushed it away.

“I’m scared. I hate that I love you and I’m scared. I don’t want to love you. So don’t make it harder on me. I’m meant to be alone. You meant for someone else—”

“Don’t say that.” He said, taking ahold of her trembling hands.

She pulled them away. “I don’t like it, how much I love you. Understand me.”

“I understand. I know how alien you are to it. But you deserve to love. You deserve to have something that you love—”

“How could you promise that I’ll have it? How can I be sure that you’ll be there forever? What if I get attached and then one day, you’ll—”

“I’m here. And I plan to stay here for a long time. If its your dream to have something you love, then it’ll be as much as you fight for it. If your dream is small, you fight for it less. If its so big that it consumes you, you’ll go through all the obstacles, everything you fear, all your weaknesses until you get it.”

She shook her head. “I’m not going to risk it. I’d rather stay in my safe zone, hate you and die hopeless.”

He pulled away, his mind exploding into a million angry thoughts.

“This is not fair.” He gritted his teeth.

“Its fair for me. Its the least I can do for myself.”

“And me?”

“You can find someone who isn’t born broken.”

“I’m not perfect, I’m as broken as you. And I’m okay with a broken woman. I’ll protect you, love you, I’ll become the shell to all your bruises, and I’ll be the one thing you can have when you can’t have anything else.”

He waited for her. He waited for her answer. He was so hopeful, and as he looked at her as she stared down at the floor in-between them, he wanted to show her what he meant. He didn't want to say his feelings, he hated saying his feelings. He wanted to show her. He wanted to shelter the rest of her life the right way and make up for the past she lived in.

"Its not enough." She finally whispered. "And its unfair to you."

He clenched his hands, the window looked tempting to crush his fist into, but he held back and stepped farther away from her. "They say first love nurtures you, builds you until your strong enough to take on love, but its your second love that completes you. Could it be the case now? Does it mean that you've only shown me what to find in a lovable woman?"

"You can't—"

He walked backwards further, even more angry. "Love is symmetrical Fayth. what you give is what you get." He turned around and left the room entirely. And Fayth fell to her feet, only then realizing how much her knees shook.

Vivian paced on Lexis' porch. She was so happy, giddy, overly taken by a feeling she didn't understand and yet did. It was a good feeling. A lovely feeling. It was different than the one she felt toward Fayth. This one was made of blocks that were made of a million different colors, overwhelming her with an amount of feelings she never had before.

And all she thought about was Jessie. The kiss from last night. His words. His hand in hers.

She paced back and forth. Back and forth. A big happy smile on her face. She didn't want to go into the beach house just yet. She didn't want to share her happiness with anyone.

She sat on the steps and pressed her clenched hands to her cheeks. Reminiscing the forceful kiss Jessie gave her, the words he had said and his compliment, she began to squeal like a little girl on Christmas. She bit her lips, and shut her eyes, wondering if it was all real. Was it real? Did it happen? Why did it make her so happy? So very, very happy?

"Vivian?" She looked up, her eyes opening a slit wider at the sight of Jessie standing at the end of the steps, looking at her with squinted eyes.

She dropped her hands and stood up, her heart beats going apes shit in her chest.

“H–Hi! Hi.” She said, her voice a little too high. She cursed at herself in her own head.

He looked down at his shoes. “About last night...”

Vivian bit her lip and held back a smile. “Yes?” She asked with a sweet voice, hopeful.

He closed his eyes and stuttered his next words. “I–I don’t know what happened. I’m sorry. I wanted to apologize.”

Vivian’s entire facial muscles loosened, dropping with her heart. “Oh.”

“I don’t know what happened. I think I was just too–” He didn’t continue. He only looked at her.

She nodded. “Oh okay. I see. I was kind of wondering what that was all about.” She fake laughed and tucked her hair behind her ear.

Act normal you idiot.

He rubbed the back of his neck with his right hand, avoiding her gaze. “I’m not sure. But I wanted to apologize. It was really rude of me and I realized that the responsibility I had taken back then isn’t really what it was supposed to be. It doesn’t make sense, I know. But I just wanted to let you know...”

“Totally get it. It was all in the moment, blah blah blah. Got it.” She turned around, feeling her eyes burn and her throat ache. The feeling that was eating her insides right then, it was the worst fucking feeling ever.

“Vivian?”

“Yeah?” She asked, holding the knob and staring at the door. Like an idiot, she was hopeful again.

He was quiet for a long time, and Vivian was tempted to turn around and take a glance at his expression, however she knew her own expression would give her away, and so she stood still. Waiting.

Finally, he sighed and said. “Never mind.”

She listened to his footsteps walk away before she turned around and watched him leave. A heavy disgusting feeling weighed down her breathing, making her suffocate on the bad taste of thoughts she suddenly had.

What’s happening to me...What’s fucking happening to me?!

The bad feeling in Fayth’s chest wouldn’t go away no matter what. It was as if something heavy was pressing on

her chest. Her heart would beat fast, continuously too, even if she wasn't doing anything. And the bad feeling just wouldn't go away no matter what. Her heart beat wouldn't calm down. And her mind would tell her over and over again that something awful was going to happen soon.

She got off her bed and walked to the bathroom. After taking a shower and getting dressed, she went down stairs and sat in the living room, then checked her phone for any messages or missed calls from Vincent.

The bad feeling made her weary. She was afraid that something might happen to someone she knows. What if someone she loved was going to get hurt? Or even worse, die? And why, oh why did it seem that way in her head?

She rubbed her chest and tried to breathe in and out deeply, however she'd find herself gasping instead.

Vivian walked in through the door and dropped on the sofa, laying down and placing her arm over her eyes. She seemed to be in a really bad mood.

"Are you okay?" Fayth asked. Her voice came out motherly.

Vivian suddenly broke out into sobs, and Fayth quickly stood up, walked over to the sofa Vivian laid on and sat on

the carpet near it. “Hey, what’s wrong? What happened?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know Fayth. Oh my god I don’t know a fucking thing anymore.”

After she calmed down, Vivian explained what happened last night, including all the details. After witnessing Fayth’s outburst, Vivian and Jessie had left to the parking lot, where they discussed Fayth a bit more and were suddenly met by Seeger, who’s very close with Jessie. He invited him to his house, and Vivian stayed in her car, trying to understand her emotions.

“Fayth?”

Fayth’s eyes were gone. They were glazed, exactly like glass. It put Vivian on edge. Her expression was blank and it looked like her thoughts were blurry. Almost as if she hadn’t heard a single word Vivian said.

“Hey, what’s wrong? You okay?” Vivian asked, straightening up and looking inside Fayth’s eyes. Her heart began beating uncomfortably.

Fayth blinked at Vivian. “What?”

Vivian stared at Fayth, suddenly worried. Fayth had definitely tuned out everything Vivian had said about Jessie. “Never mind.”

“What about you? Why were you crying?” Fayth asked.

Vivian stared at Fayth awhile longer, blinking rapidly and wondering if what she heard was actually what Fayth said. “Were you not listening at all?”

“You said something?”

Vivian stared at Fayth, wondering what the hell that meant. Had she not heard Vivian? But she was looking at her. Had she gone temporarily deaf?

“Yeah. About last night.” This time, Vivian changed the subject, getting the chills from that convo. “Why did you do that to Cube?”

A dark expression covered Fayth’s face. “Why the hell did you call him Vivi? I thought I told you that it wasn’t—”

“You used to do it. Why can’t I?”

“Because I was stupid. And you should learn from my mistakes.”

“So you get to have all the fun?” Vivian snorted. “And I’ll just be a boring angel.”

“Vivi... I was so reckless back then. I wish I can turn back the time and do everything differently. I wish our life had a friendship that wasn’t built on crimes, drugs and hate. I wish

we had someone to lead us on the right path so we could have turned out decent.”

“No one could have saved us.” Vivian said, staring down at her tattoos. “We were so far down in shit. And you...”

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Its okay. I forgive you. I only ever held you responsible when I wanted someone to blame. But then I realized that I’m the only one responsible for my own actions and I shut up about it. You know. I’m okay now. But I just wish he would tell me why it can’t be me. I felt it Fayth.” She began sobbing again. “I felt the universe in my head. I felt like everything was going to be okay and I was safe. I felt it. But he took everything back and said it was a mistake.”

“Who?”

“Jessie. I don’t know what it is, but its something.” She pointed at her temple. “Something right in here. It clicked and things began making sense. You know where the door stopped right by you? It opened and it kept going and I saw hope in a longer happy life for me. But it had to be with him.”

Silence.

“Fayth?”

The only sound in the room was the hands of the clock, the soft murmur of the waves crashing outside on the shore.

And Fayth sat there frozen. Her eyes glazed again. Completely blanked out from every feeling and thought a human could have. Vivian suddenly was jolted into a pile of questions about her best friend. A very bad feeling, similar to Fayth's, made its way into her chest. Her heart began beating continuously. Something pressed down on her breathing, making her nearly suffocate.

Why do I feel like something bad is going to happen?

Vivian rubbed her chest, getting uncomfortable by the second. This feeling...it's absolutely horrifying.

Chapter Eighty

The chilly air outside sent shivers down Fayth's back. She

stepped out onto the balcony and walked to the railing, crossed her arms on it and leaned forward. The thick uncomfortable feeling was still there in her chest, pulling her down into misery. She didn't know what it was leading to. What the end of it was. She was so terrified of something, but that something was unknown. She can feel her heart beating furiously like it was nearing the end of something horrible, but she didn't know why or what it was. And that only made her that much more uncomfortable.”

Two familiar faces caught her attention out on the beach. She squinted her eyes and watched as Lexis slipped his arms around Vivian, pulling her close as she laughed loudly about something. He then knelt down and pecked her cheek, her forehead, then her lips.”

She laughed again and playfully pushed him away. But he took ahold of her face with his hands and pulled her for a real kiss.”

And while doing it, his eyes knowingly looked over at Fayth, gazing at her menacingly, squinting slightly as he stared with a knowing fixed look. Fayth stood there her lips ajar, her fingers, her head, her chest, trembling with shock and disbelief. She tried to mask it, tried to cover most of it, but it was impossible to see what he was doing and not feel

absolutely outraged and shocked, hurt and terrified, scared and upset from it.

What are you doing Lexis? Why are you doing this to me?

Feeling weightless and limp, with her shaking feet barely holding her up, she turned around and walked back inside the house, barely dropping into one of the dinning room table chairs before falling to the floor.”

I can’t bear see him with someone else.”

He told Vivian to sleep with him on his bed tonight. He told her that in front of Fayth. Fayth was so shocked, but she only sat there staring at the table like she wasn’t fazed, but from the inside a little bit of her died. She was slowly losing all her ties with Lexis. She barely saw him anymore. He was never there. She woke up and she wouldn’t see him, she barely heard his voice even, and throughout the day, little did she know of anything he did.”

He didn’t need Fayth anymore. He already had someone who he was comfortable with. Fayth knew it. She knew he felt something toward Vivian. Her and Vivian were similar in some ways, So if he was attracted to Fayth for being a

broken women, then easily he'd be interested in Vivian as well. They did share the same trust issues with both of their parents. Sharing common characteristic surely will only bring both of them closer."

And even so, every time she thought of the kiss that happened between them, her stomach would do a flip. And she would feel sick to her gut.

That night, that's exactly what Fayth was terrified of. She was so scared. What if he already moved on? What if he found something in Vivian that had him decide that she was the one for him all along? What if they're doing something that him and Fayth hadn't done yet? Something special just between them."

In the middle of the night, Fayth would make excuses to walk the hallway where his bedroom is. She'd walk and pause by the door, listening for things. She wasn't sure what she was listening for. Voices would be bad because why were they awake and what were they talking about? And no sound at all would be even worse because what were they doing that didn't require talking? They couldn't have fallen asleep already."

And Vivian was much more daring than Fayth. She had always tried to outdo Fayth's silent yet killer persona by

being the daring one. And that had made her somewhat stupid, doing things without thinking twice. What if she tired to be daring with Lexis? What if she gave him what Fayth couldn't?

In the morning the house was frozen cold. Fayth sat on the sofa rubbing her shoulders and upper arms with her hands. She didn't know where the central heat remote for the house was."

She looked up as Lexis descended the stairs, his dark bangs falling on his forehead. His deadpanned eyes sharp with a certain cold hateful glare that he carried endlessly these days. She watched him as he descended the last step and walk across the room toward the den."

They haven't talked since that night. And every time she realized this, the feeling in her chest would become heavier, her heart would beat faster with discomfort. And the bad, bad feeling would haunt her until she felt like she could cry.

"Hey, do you know where the heating remote is?" The words slipped out of her lips before she could stop them. She was hopeful that he would at least look at her, nevertheless answer. She knew he'd answer. It was a simple question and

this was his house, but she couldn't stop herself for being hopeful as if he wouldn't.

And he didn't.

He completely ignored her.

Didn't even stop to listen. He just walked by like she didn't exist anymore. Like she was a ghost. Someone unneeded. And for a moment, one question rang in her thoughts:

Why am I still in his house?

She wanted to leave, but she was selfish enough to say. There was no way she was going to leave him. Leaving him meant moving on. It meant detaching herself from the world she had lived in with Lexis. It would mean going back to being alone. She will no longer attend Dawn Academy. Seeing Lexis would be on occasion if a shareholder party or an event was to be held between companies. She'll become more than distant with him. More than strangers and less than friends. Life would inevitably give her the answer that she was suddenly so afraid of right now: Give up love and die hopeless."

The bell rang and Fayth opened the door. Seeger's smile

was heartwarming as he slipped around Fayth and greeted her.”

“Hey.” She answered back.

He paused and glared down at her from a side view of his face. “You okay? You look like you went to hell and back.”

“Hmm?” She asked, realizing its exactly how she felt like from the inside. “No. I’m fine. I think. I don’t know actually.” She said it as nonchalantly as possible, in hopes to not be questioned about it further more.”

They walked further into the living room but paused to look over as Vivian came down the steps by two, a big smile on her face, and shortly after, Lexis followed, slipping a watch on his wrist.”

“Bye!” Vivian exclaimed. “Lexis and I are going on a date!”

Lexis reached the bottom of the stairs and slipped an arm around Vivian’s waist, pulling her toward the door.”

It hit Fayth like a brick wall. Her heart sunk and her eyes stung. She forgot what breathing was.”

Don’t go. Why are you going with her?

Fayth’s hand reached over to Seeger’s and held it tightly,

needing something to grasp before falling to pieces. Vivian waved at her and jumped out through the door, excited as anything.

Please. Please Lexis. Don't go.

Seeger watched Fayth's frozen expression. He can see how broken she felt inside from the wet glint in her eyes. When the door closed, he slowly turned around and looked at Fayth. "Well, at least you admit that you like him now."

Fayth clenched her hands, barely able to contain her anger and hurt in front of Seeger. "I hate him."

'Really? Because I think your just jealous.' Seeger pointed out the obvious. He sighed and fell back against the sofa. 'I think the only way to beat that is to make him jealous.'

She sat on the nearby side table and covered her face with her hands, fed up. She didn't want to hear anyone talk anymore. Her hands itched to hold something and crash it against the wall.

"You remember our plan that we were going to use when uncle John came over? You and I...together. As in dating?" He tried to hint. "We can use that now. I bet you you'll make him jealous."

Fayth stood up, planning to leave. She was so sick and tired of life. Of thinking. Of feeling. She didn't want to plan or scheme. She didn't want to make anyone jealous. She didn't deserve Lexis. She was nothing. The only good thing about her was her money. That was it."

Seeger stood up and crossed the space between them before Fayth got farther away. He smiled big and slipped his arm around her shoulders. "I think its time to put our plan to use. Plus, I know just the place to put a smile on your face."

The state fair wasn't it. Fayth stood her ground, embarrassed at what Seeger was suggestions and kept refusing his command."

"There is no way I'm riding that!" She said. Staring at the plastic horses going around and around on rods. Her eyes were opened wide with denial. "I'm not a kid."

"But feeling like a kid is what you need." He picked Fayth on his shoulders like a sack and quickly climbed to the Merry-Go-Round. The ride lit from everywhere since it was nearly dark out. Flashing around for everyone to see.

There were adults riding it as well, however they only did so because of their kids. Fayth and Seeger were the only two teenagers on."

It was amazing. The feeling that she was suddenly drowning in. The bad feeling in her chest slowly dispersed behind a cloud of happiness. She completely forgot that the feeling existed all together. And as they continued to play games, winning and competing as they continued to collect more prizes, Fayth realized how warmhearted Seeger was. She knew it from the beginning. That he was a safe island to land on. He had also been an island she could easily sail away from. However, now that changed. She liked his honesty. The way he made her trust him with his righteous actions. He was so sweet, the way he helped older ladies down from the ride stairs. And when Fayth would ask about Emily, he'd avoid any personal questions about her, telling Fayth to ask Emily herself if she wanted to know anything."

And she liked that answer. A lot."

"Alright. This is our last match." Seeger said.

They stood by the High Striker, the yellow pole with a bell plate at the top didn't seem much of a problem for Fayth to strike at all. Seeger noticed that."

"This ain't as easy as it looks. You're going to lose." He stuck out barely seen muscles. "You're looking at the boss of this game here."

Fayth frowned. "I hope you're embarrassed with yourself. I've seen girls with bigger muscles than that." She softly punched him and winked. "You sure you don't want to go to the shorter one in Kiddie Land?"

He glared at her and took the hammer. "Fine then. Let's make a deal. If I win, you'll let me kiss you."

Fayth sighed. "Usually, you never ask for a kiss. You just take it."

He wiggled his right eyebrow. "But I don't want a boy meets girl kiss. I want an under the curtain one."

"You'd have a great relationship with Windex."

He laughed and tapped Fayth's forehead. "You're adorable." He said, complementing her humor. Though she wasn't joking at all. "But I meant you'll have to stand there and not move away until I tell you to. Can you do that?"

She rolled her eyes. "Yeah, sure. But if I win," Which she was absolutely sure of. "You have to consider Emily's and your feelings and risk it. You don't know, maybe it'll turn out better than what you think."

He shrugged, not giving it much of a thought. He seems to be as stubborn as Fayth, thinking he'll win. "Alright then. Let's do this."

He grabbed the hammer and stood by the high striker. Taking a deep breath, he sucked in his stomach, buffed out his chest, and brought the hammer down. Surprisingly, Seeger wasn't kidding. The bell went off and he looked over at Fayth with confidence.

“Don't underestimate a man's strength.” He kissed the muscles on his upper arms and blew his arms up in the air.

She could cancel him winning out. All she had to do was win. And he seemed to be set that she would lose. It looked as though he knew nothing about Fayth.”

Seeger handed her the hammer and stood close to her side. “See, you have to tense your arm muscles first. Make them tight. They're holding the hammer, not your hands.”

Why was he helping her?

He put a hand on her back. “Make sure your back is straight too.”

Fed up, Fayth brought down the hammer, wanting to show off her skills without his pointers. However as soon as she took initiatives, his hand slid down from her back all the way until it was cupping her butt.”

And she lost it. Every nerve in her body stood on end and she became unbelievably tense. The puck ended up rising

only third way up, missing the tower by a small distance.”

She angrily turned around, her face flushing, and stared at the smug Seeger with disbelief. “You fucking pervert, I’m going to fucking shave ice in your lungs.”

She began chasing him, and he ran away throwing his head back and laughing. By a round warehouse, where the fortuneteller was, he ended up stopping and resting against its wall. Without pause, Fayth pulled back her fist and socked Seeger.”

He took ahold of her and flipped her until she was against the warehouse. “I still won.” He said, breathless, with a big grin on his face.”

“By cheating.” She insisted, her anger visible in her eyes.”

“You know, ”He said, kneeling in so their faces were an inch apart. “You have a dangerous side to you that you hide well. I find that...” He knelt in closer. “Extremely sexy.”

Its when they began kissing that the horrible feeling from before made way into her chest. In fact, it never left. Her happiness simply disappeared and she was reminded by Lexis. She missed him. She wanted him. She loves him and she can’t imagine life with another soul. It was always Lexis.

He was the only relatable being that can make her scars look unblemished. Comparing herself to only him will make her realize that life isn't that unfortunate. She had always been the most ill fated being in every single part of her life, until he came along. Having him, she finally stumbled on her first good luck charm.

Someone pulled Seeger away, then smashed a deathly fist across his face. Fayth looked over at the furious Lexis, who stared at Seeger where he fell to the ground.

“What the hell are you doing?” Lexis asked. His eyes were on Seeger, but his question was for Fayth.

Fayth was silent. Confused. Shaken by the fact that Lexis was there in front of her.

Seeger stood to his feet again, wiping the side of his lips with the back of his hand. However once again, Lexis socked him across the face, sending him sliding against the gravel again.

“What the hell man?” Seeger exclaimed, jumping to his feet and wincing. “I let it go the first time, but seriously?”

“Go home.” Lexis said, this time his eyes meeting Fayth's.

He's talking to me. He's finally talking to me.

“You can’t control her like that.” Seeger protested, wanting Fayth to stay with him.

Lexis punched him again. This time, Seeger ended up stumbling backwards but regaining his posture before falling. He didn’t want to take Lexis on in a fight. Not will he only get his ass beat, but it’ll put bad karma between the family.

Seeger could only wipe more blood that oozed off his lip and stared at Fayth wondering what her decision was.”

Lexis is here? Why is he here? Is this the place he left with Vivian to? That’s right. They went on a date. And this is where it was. He hates me now. He hates me so much that he doesn’t want me dating his cousin.

Angry and hurt, she walked over to Seeger. “Let’s go. I’ll go with you.”

Lexis stared at her. His eyes void of any emotions. Bulletproof glass hard to shatter. He crossed the space between them and pushed Seeger away from her hold. “Did you not hear what I said?”

He was a strike away from beating Seeger to death, but Fayth took a hold of his wrist. The touch alone sent a jolt of shock through both of their bodies. And Fayth looked at his lips, tempted to cross barriers and go through hell again.

Instead, she dropped her tone until it was a threat and said. “Don’t ruin my date for me.” She pushed his hand away and took ahold of Seeger’s hand. “And enjoy yours.”

They turned to leave.

Don’t leave me, like everyone else did. “If you leave with him, it’s really over.”

Fayth nearly stopped, but her footsteps resumed to make their way farther away from Lexis. To think back about it now...had it been different if I left with him that day instead. Had it been different if I turned around and took ahold of Lexis’s hand? Had it been different if I chose the road that I knew and loved instead of the one I was betting my hotheadedness and hopelessness on?

As both of them walked away, Fayth’s hand began to shake. Seeger could feel her breakdown through that single skin touch. He looked over and stared at her as she tried hard not to cry. Not to fall to pieces right then.

“Rihanna...”

“I feel like dying. Please. I feel like I’m shredding and I don’t know what do. My heart hurts.”

“Rihanna.”

He didn't even know her real name.

She knew she was no longer welcomed at the beach house, that much she was aware of. In other words, Fayth was to disappear now. Leave and live the life she was meant to live before meeting Lexis.

When Seeger dropped Fayth there, he had knelt in and kissed her a quick kiss on the lips. It didn't feel right, but it didn't feel wrong either. It was just that. He was okay. She didn't hate him. But he didn't make her feel like Lexis did when he kissed her. With Seeger, it felt like something she can have and give back without looking forward to a future with. It was temporary.

With Lexis, it was life.

Fayth closed then door and a huge crash made her whirl around, her heart pounding with fear. She looked for the source and Lexis stood there, across the two rooms, where the window for the den was shattered to the ground. His hand was bleeding, slowly turning blue. His body shook. His eyes were murderous.

“Well, your back.” He insisted. His voice was so cold, it made Fayth flinch.

She stood there breathless, staring at his bleeding hand and hurting for it as if it was her own. She wanted to step forward and take care of it, do something for it, but knew her boundaries were now limited.

“WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU DOING WITH HIM?!” He suddenly broke out, moving and shoving anything in his sight to the ground.

Fayth gritted her teeth, holding her tears in and her head high. He was judging her when he was kissing Vivian earlier? That doesn't give him the right.

The sound of crashing materials was frightening though, however it made her more angry than it scared her. It was unfair that he was mad. She should be the one to be angry. He cheated on her first.

“Its none of your business.” She insisted, she walked in and began making her way toward the dining room.

He turned her around and pressed her against the wall. “Its my damn business and you know it.”

She shoved him away. At first, she was going to make her way toward the front door and leave out of it, but that's farther away now. She turned back around and made her way into the dining room, where the balcony door was.”

“Have a good life with Vivian. I hope your happy.” She said sarcastically.”

Lexis stopped by the dining table, holding onto one for the chair’s back for support. “If you want me, you can still have me.”

She turned around harshly, exposing her tear streaked face to him and with a deafening voice, she yelled. “I don’t want you!” She took ahold of the vase and threw it across the room, wishing to aim it at him. It crashed against the microwave, the pieces of it falling on top of the range oven. “I don’t fucking want you anymore! I don’t want to see you even!”

It wasn’t her talking anymore. It was her anger. Her hurt. Her jealousy. “I hate you!”

He left her so fast. He purposely rubbed her love for him in her face. He kissed Vivian and he left with her. He left her alone with Seeger and he didn’t care. And now he does?

He gritted his teeth. “Your such a hypocrite.”

“Oh! Me?” She let out a humorless laugh. “I’m the one using a girl. Sorry. I forgot.”

“Jessie.”

Fayth sucked in a breath.

“Why are you avoiding thinking about him?”

Fayth’s thoughts tried to bring back Jessie. Tried to let the facts sink in. However she pushed them away.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Of course you don’t. You don’t think about him anymore, do you? You avoid and block everything that has to do with him. Jessie, the person you were in love with for months. The one whom, I’m taking a guess here, you’ve had romantic thoughts toward day after day, he’s your brother. Accept it.”

The fact slowly tried to break into Fayth’s memories, her thoughts, her deep subdued comprehension. But she pushed it away.

“Stop.” She insisted, closing her eyes.

He didn’t want to. He wanted to hurt her. Just like she hurt him. For leaving with Seeger instead, he wanted to hurt her.

“You still don’t get it, do you?” He said. “Running away from something won’t make it go away. Jessie’s your brother. You mistook your brotherly love for him for

something intimate. And you wanted to act up on it, and yet, when it came down to me you're horrified now? You can't face me either. You can't treat me right. If I was Jessie, you would have, wouldn't you?"

Fayth placed her palms on her ears. "Stop." She breathed. "Please, I beg you."

"I hope the fact eats you alive. Just like your slowly killing me right now."

"Lexis!" A voice outside the balcony door brought his attention to behind the glass, where Vivian stood on the stairs, waving her hand and beckoning him to go with her.

Fayth looked over at her, then at him. As if she was suddenly shaken into reality, she quickly began to reach out for him. "Don't." She gasped, slowly shaking her head. "Don't..."

Lexis took in a deep breath. "You shouldn't have made yourself easily replaceable."

Her anger. Her jealousy. The pain and disbelief. The energy that suddenly overlapped her was overwhelming."

"Don't." She repeated again, her voice breaking. "Please Lexis, don't."

He made his way to the glass door and slid it open. With his back to Fayth, he said. “Think about your life. Think about why you’re losing more than your gaining.”

He slipped the door closed behind him.

“No. Don’t go.”

She remotely shook her head, her chest shrinking. She stared at him as he walked down the steps, and then away with Vivian.

Don’t leave me alone now. Not after the thoughts you left in my head.

Fayth dropped to her knees, holding her head in her hands.”

I fell in love with my brother. I loved him. I loved my brother. I wished he’d kiss me. I wished he’d love me. Was never more romantic with anyone until I saw him. And he turned out to be my brother. My brother. My dad is a cheating bastard. I hate him. I hate Jessie. I hate Jessie for existing. I’m already having trouble with my fucking reality. Why make it harder? Why Jessie? Why did you come along and ruin everything.

And Lexis. Goddamn him. Why leave me to my thoughts? WHY?!

Silence stretched, and like a volcano Fayth erupted. She stormed to the kitchen and took ahold of anything on her way and began to smash it, crushing things against the floor and the walls. She took ahold of any object she could see, crashing it against the balcony glass door. She was so blinded by hate that she no longer made sense of her actions, or what she was doing. So much energy escaped her, took control, that she was no longer hurt or in pain as blood made its way down several places on her body.

It was as if a tornado had went through the house. The sofas were shredded with knives. The dining room table was flipped over, its legs broken. The china cabinet was flipped over, the rest of the glass from Lexis outburst also crashing. The windows were smashed in. The lights were crushed. Several black holes ended up in the walls throughout the house. The kitchen cabinet doors were all broken off. Every sitting object was now on the floor, either not longer useable or crushed.

And even after all of that, Fayth was still a fireball. The energy inside of her daring her to go beyond limits. To hurt someone. Murder even.

Hearing police sirens and guessing its the neighbors who have called in, she left the beach house. Her legs shaking, yet

numb. She barely felt a thing inside her body. She made her way down the concrete blocks, on the sidewalk and through the walls entrance that led to the beach.

She fell near the bushes against the wall, suddenly sobbing. She was so confused. She wanted things she couldn't have. And she wanted things she didn't want. It confused her. She wished Lexis could untangle her from the inside. But he didn't. He left her.

Shaking, her hands touched something slimy. She looked down and through her blurry vision she could see something familiar. Pushing some of the bushes away, she picked it up and looked at the small baggie.

Her eyes squinted at it as her brain made the decision. She wanted to stop thinking. And this was perfect. Her overwhelming thoughts would die out by the high. She just— She just—

Her memories went back to when she was addicted to crack. She had barely left it. Barely stopped the addiction, and now she can't go back. There was no way. If she went back, that means bad Fayth has to come back. Fayth that hurts people. The Fayth that Vincent hated. And eventually Lexis well.

And Jessie's her brother. She was in love with her brother. *God, why is this happening to me!*

She broke out into another set of angry sobs as she stood up and began ramming her fist into the wall, so many times that blood began to ooze out in an unhealthy matter. But she couldn't feel anything. Nothing mattered.

Nothing...

Mattered...

She grabbed the cocaine and decided to go for it.

No, I can't. Lexis will hate it. I don't want him to hate me. Lexis.

Lexis...

She began running toward the beach. Her sobbing endlessly shaking her chest as she ran faster and faster.

If you tried to stay. If you showed me how much you'll be there no matter what I could have said or done, I might have believed you when you said that you'll be there. That you won't go anywhere.

And Jessie? If he hadn't been gay... If he had returned those feelings! In a matter of seconds....

Now she felt like she was going to hurl. She went into the

water. The wetness of it weighing her legs down and slowing her into a walking pace. And as soon as the water was deep enough, she dropped down and began to swim violently, as fast as she could. She wanted to swim as far away as she can, until all her thoughts are drained out of power. Until they are turned to mush. Until she simply couldn't think anymore.

Seeger is already in love with Emily and even Fayth couldn't even love him to begin with. Vincent is old enough to be her father. Jessie is her half-brother. Lexis is out of her grasp.

And it was normal. This was her life. This was her screwed up life.

But in the end, does she even want love? If Lexis hadn't forgotten about that night, she was going to bury herself alive in fear of the love they could have had. Being afraid to lose him, for him to leave her, for them to love each other with every breath and thought and end up a million miles away even if they're standing right in front of each other. That feeling in itself is horrifying. She didn't want to go through it again.

She had let out a small irritated scream. It was a bad idea. A very bad, bad idea. Right away she began choking as a gulp of water went down her airway. She began coughing.

Her arms wailing to stay above water. She couldn't swim anymore. With that one uncomfortable swallow of water, more water kept coming in. And naturally, she kept reopening her mouth to inhale air. With that, even more water suffocated her. She swam in place, her hands randomly smacking the water as if she can hold onto something to stay afloat. And before long, her splashing and fumbling around to stay on the surface was no longer of use.

She wanted to yell for help. To scream for someone to save her. She didn't want to go yet. She wanted to see Lexis one more time. She had to tell him that she was sorry. That she'll love him right. She'll find a way to not be scared anymore. She'll love him more than anyone can ever love him. But as she took a quick glimpse through her blurry vision, a glimpse that barely lasted a split second before she began slipping limpness underwater, she realized she had swam nearly a half a mile away. And no one was there. Not a single soul.

Fear began making its way in. And her panic reaction only made it worse. Her heart was beating in discomfort. She was shaking, but she knew it was happening. This was it. She knew it.

She saw her death before she felt it. The darkness of the

ocean completely blinded her sight for anyone to help. And she could only see murkiness at this point. Her eyes turned black. Her chest heaved with water. Her brain went blank. Her breathing stopped. And she began sinking under the dark deep ocean.

This feels nice. There was corner in her head that was taking her aside with it. As if she was heading toward a bright light of happiness. Luring her to come and rest with it. *Rest.* That's right. It wanted her to feel comfort. No, not feel. It wanted her to not feel anymore. She wanted that...she wanted to not feel anymore...

She wanted to see Anthony.

She was gone. Fayth Armstrong was gone. And the silent serene emptiness of the ocean began to slowly wash away all of her sins, pulling her away from the reality she always feared and loathed.

Chapter Eighty One

“NOBODY TOUCH HER! I CAN FIX IT. I CAN FIX HER.”

Lexis angrily knelt back down next to Fayth and clasped the palms of his hands against her chest, pumping the water out of her lungs. But she wouldn't answer. Her heart had stopped. Silent sobbing escaped from his lips and tears fell from his eyes as he continued pumping while staring at her face, his thread of hope running on a broken needle.

“Don't leave me Fayth. They all left me, don't you dare leave me.”

He pushed on her chest harder, faster. His lips trembled

from the cold air of the night. His cold wet clothes stuck to his skin as her body moved with his thrashes.

Vivian stood close by with a few others who were walking by. She was pushing a fist against her lips, shaking with wide eyes, tears falling as she gasped a breath after the other.

Lexis shivered with fear as he continued to push on her chest. “Fayth. Please Fayth.” Still pushing on her chest, he threw his head back and let out a cry. “God no. Keep her for me. I need her.”

His head dropped on her lifeless chest. And his body shook as his sobbing continued. It’s all my fault. I should have never left her. I should have stayed with her. I killed her. I’m the one who killed her.

And now...she’s gone.

No. No. No. No—

The sound of her beating heart as it suddenly came back put him under complete stillness. Right under his ear...a very faint heartbeat was there. He quickly straightened up and began pumping her chest again, performing CPR and focusing all of his mental recollection on bringing Fayth back to life.

A wake up call was it. Fate was an amazing thing. It knows what to make you lose to gain. And what to make you gain to lose. Sometimes bad things happen for good things to appear. It was a nerve-wracking cycle to give you wake up calls, over and over again.

He didn't visit. Not once. Fayth was in the hospital waiting for the door to open, to see Lexis' face at least once, but he never came. She couldn't lose hope though. Every time the door opens, her heart beat would pick up, and then despair takes over when she see's someone else. Its not Lexis.

Was it over? Was it really not healthy for them to be together? It must be. Fate must have given them the answer to their severe relationship.

The first person Fayth had woken up to was Vincent. She couldn't remember anything before that. She didn't know how long she had been on that bed or what day it was. Wires and tubes were stuck to her body. She opened her eyes and she saw life. The ceiling was the prettiest thing she had ever seen. The little plastic pieces stuck to her body were so soft and felt amazing. She can feel them. She was alive and she could feel them. The air that went down to her lungs, it was

the most precious sensation she had ever felt. Her eyesight, the fact that she could see. She could see life.

She began crying uncontrollably. This was the first time she had appreciated something so deeply. Being able to see, breathe, comprehend things around her like a living human being, it was fairly the best taste life had ever given her.

Before... Rihanna, she didn't even know what crying was. She never let a single teardrop out of her eye. Even back then.... The last time in her parents car crash... she didn't cry because she lived. It's true, she had lost her memory right after the crash, but even when she regained it, she wasn't glad at all for being revived. Instead she was so angry that she had tried to take away her life again.

But now, she was more than thankful. She was more than touched. She believed in God. She believed in fate. She could have died. She knows it too well. She should have died. But she was here. Alive. Saved.

"Vincent." Her throat felt raw, and talking made it ache, but she called for him again and again until he woke up and looked over at her.

And right away, relief washed his face. He smiled as tears ran down his cheek. "Fayth, oh god Fayth." He stood up and

walked over to her, hugging the parts of her that could be hugged. He kissed her forehead, her hair, over and over again. And she kept on crying. And clutching him.

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” She kept on mumbling. Because she knew clearly well what she had put him through, and she didn’t know what else to say.

“It’s okay. It’s all okay now. You’re okay. Everything’s okay.”

The room became quiet, and the existence of everything around her became valid. It felt normal now, like she was in the hospital because she merely got sick. Everything went back to normal. Life resumed.

“I was just a little angry. I thought I could swim and drain it out.” She mumbled against his chest.

“I know. Lexis told me. He feels very regretful and guilty. He says its his fault to begin with.”

She shook her head. “It’s not. He’s actually been very helpful.” Why did she defend him? Clearly, he was partially guilty.

Vincent kept silent for a few moments before he said, “Fayth...are you in love with Lexis?”

She burst out crying almost right away when he asked. It was so sudden that he reacted in confusion.

Loosening his grip on her, he quickly said, “Does something hurt? Do you want me to call the nurse?”

She shook her head. “No—No—that’s not it.”

He waited until she calmed down before he talked again. “What’s going on inside in your fragile heart? You use to tell me everything...”

“Until I met Lexis.”

“Until you met Lexis.” He confirmed with a sigh.

Bubbles came. Lexis wasn’t with her. She came with Seeger. And Vincent found her an absolute sweetheart. After she gave Fayth the banquet of flowers, she cried and cried. Fayth being tied up with the wires, ended up comforting her with words while Vincent picked her up in his arms, walking around and rubbing her back and whispering calming words to her. It reminded Fayth of her childhood. The childhood that had taken advantage of her misery. She should have seen those moments back then. Her real father was there, beside her every single day, but she was too stupid to realize it. Vincent was her father, it was never her biological one. It

had always been Vincent.

“You okay?” Seeger asked.

Fayth nodded. For some reason, her thoughts were too heavy. She kept thinking of everything but what was happening to her in that moment. She was literally gone from reality and pushed into a corner made up of thoughts about only Lexis.

“You don’t seem okay.”

Fayth shrugged.

Seeger knelt in and ruffled her hair. “Part of this shit was my fault, wasn’t it?”

Fayth looked up at him. Slightly smiled. Then shook her head. “It was mine and Lexis’. It wasn’t anyone else’s fault.”

Vivian walked in through the door, her footsteps hesitant but her eyes set as they shook with shock and disbelief. She made her way violently through everyone and laid herself next to Fayth, almost on top of her, ignoring all the wires and the size of the bed. She hugged Fayth closely and cuddled her face into the hollow part of her neck and shoulder.

And then she was silent. But her body shook as she secretly sobbed.

Everyone avoided looking at them as they had their moment. Vivian was like Fayth in the past, she hated to show anyone her tears. And as the others looked away, Fayth tried as hard as she could to wrap her prisoned arms around Vivian.

“Vivi...”

“Oh my god. I can’t believe you were going to leave me again. I hate you but I can’t do anything. I don’t know what to fucking do.”

Vincent walked towards the door with Bubbles, knowing Vivian’s language could get a lot more colorful. Seeger followed them, leaving the two to reunite.

“I’m right here Vivi. I’m right here. I’m not going anywhere.” Fayth’s voice was sweet and kind.

Vivian picked up her head and looked down at Fayth. Her face was bare of any makeup. It almost looked naked. But Fayth loved Vivian when she was like this. When she didn’t try. She shone so beautifully and powerful.

“You were going to leave me.” She said between sobs, tears shining on her long eyelashes.

Fayth swallowed the lump that formed in her throat. And she began crying. Not for her, but for Anthony. She was

reminded of him. Of how he left. He left too early. Is that how he experienced his last moments? Did he want to tell Lexis that he loved him too? Did he die alone without the single bit of strength to hold onto someone before his death?

“You’re so beautiful Vivi. I’m alive right now, and everything is just so beautiful. I’m so sorry for ever hurting you. I’m so sorry for ever taking you for granted.”

Vivian knelt back down and hugged Fayth again, and for the rest of the day, the girls knelt side by side, enjoying a long talk. Playing on their phones and laughing at each other’s idiocy.

Vivian suddenly saw life in its real form. It could go away in a single second. In a single angry moment. She saw what love meant. She saw the realism of bad vs. good. And she wanted to follow what Fayth was now. She wanted to love like Fayth did, live like Fayth did, smile the way Fayth did.

After Vivian left, Seeger came back inside by himself.

“Guess what?” He said, coming over and sitting on the chair by the bed.

“Hmm?”

“I just found out that girl is the vice president’s daughter.”

Fayth found that funny. She laughed and nodded. “Yup. That’s her. Weird, isn’t it? You didn’t think you’d so easily be in the presence of the vice president’s daughter like that, huh?”

“No.” He said, suddenly serious. “That’s not what’s weird. What gets me is, how you, the daughter of a poor family in a small town in Texas, knows the vice president’s daughter.”

Fayth dropped her gaze.

“Rihanna...” He sighed and looked away. “Guess you’re more dangerous than I thought. You guys met in school or something? You’re pretty cool, so I’d understand how you got her under your wings.”

Fayth didn’t like the fact that Seeger didn’t know her name. Or that she had to lie to him. Its not needed anymore. He was more than a trust worthy friend. And she needed someone she can openly talk to. Someone who knew Lexis too. The lies were weighing her down. And there wasn’t a reason to hide anything from him anymore.

“Can I tell you a secret?” She asked.

Seeger looked over at her. He was silent for a long time,

weighing what she was going to say to him in his head. “Are you going to wake up and regret it?”

She shook her head. “I won’t. I trust you.”

He still seemed a bit afraid of being trusted by Fayth. He nodded. “Alright. Hit me.”

“Rihanna Gessner. That’s who you know me as. I’m fifteen and I used to attend Dawn Academy because I got lucky with a scholarship. Well, that’s not who I really am. I’ve had a terrible time growing up. I wasn’t a good girl. I was nightmarish. The guy that you saw here a bit ago, that’s Vincent. He brought me up but I was hell on a bitch in his life. Six months ago, I drove my parents off a cliff.”

Seeger’s eyebrows pulled together as he judgmentally stared at Fayth.

“I’m only telling you this because sooner or later you’re going to hear about it. Vincent had tried to cover the news but it’s getting out either way.”

“I needed rehab and Dawn Academy was part of it. So I began attending there with a fake identity that Vincent bought from a family who lost their daughter in a car crash. Her features looked a lot like mine. I just had to change my hair color and add the heavy eyeliner just like she did. In

case anyone tried to dig into her parents life, at the very least they'd see me—or someone very similar to me—in their pictures.”

Fayth looked up at Seeger. “Shocked much?”

He blinked, trying to put together what Fayth said word by word inside his head. After organizing his thoughts, he mumbled. “Ye—Yeah. Pretty much. Well...” He narrowed his eyes in thought, “Partially shocked. Lexis knew all of this?”

Fayth nodded.

“So if you aren’t Rihanna...then who are you?” He asked, staring into her eyes.

“Before I tell you, I have to ask. Do you regret...you know....anything about me now that I have told you this? I won’t be mad, I would just like to know.”

He snickered. “Hey, I didn’t fall for your name you know.” He knelt in and tapped her nose. “I fell for the mysterious girl behind it.”

She swallowed, feeling uneasy now that she was confessed to. “Okay, one more question. Did you by any chance get that full girl’s name? The one Lexis is arranged to marry?”

He frowned. “Now is hardly the time to ask about her. Keep your jealous traits for when you confess to that jerk. But yeah, her name was Fayth...” It seemed like he was realizing this for the first time.

He stared back, his eyes glazed. “Fayth?”

He looked away, “Dawn calls you Faith.”

Fayth swallowed again and her heart began beating rapidly at what his reaction might be. This was her first time confessing all of this to someone. So she didn’t know how mad they could get...

Seeger jumped off the chair and stared at Fayth completely shocked. Pointing his forefinger at her, he exclaimed. “You—you’re Fayth?!”

Fayth slowly nodded. It seemed like she had made a mistake in telling him... She couldn’t even take it back and replace it with a joke now...

“This—This whole time I’ve been with and have kissed Fayth Armstrong?”

Fayth nodded again, this time confused.

“I was with the heiress of Armstrong Next? I held and kissed the youngest hottest billionaire chick in the world?”

Fayth stared at him, frowning.

He smiled. “Man... I’m lucky as fuck.”

Later that day, Seeger’s mom and Lexis’ mom came to visit. They tried to hug Fayth and said a lot of nice things. With Bubbles back with Seeger and Vivian and Emily being there, it was a full house.

Fayth really enjoyed their company as they sat around her, smiling and talking as if everything’s okay. She liked how Bubbles joked and acted silly, making everyone laugh every time it became silent in the room.

And though everyone was there, nothing seemed real. It was all plastic. Imaginary. At random times she’d hold in her tears as she thought of Lexis. She wanted to see him more than anything. She missed him to the point of where she’d suffocate in attempt to hold her breath. She’d wish over and over again that the next time the door opened, it would be him. No one else but him.

Instead, she acted happy and looked warmly at those around her.

They would ask her if she was doing good.

And she'd smile and say that she was just fine.

But she's not fine at all. She was yearning for the normality of a day. Where she would see Lexis. It felt so wrong, how things played out. It wasn't supposed to be hospitals, moms and Seeger, smiles and laughter. It was supposed to be the beach house, tensivity and excitement, wanting to speak endearing words out loud but feeling embarrassed and holding back. For the past two weeks, her days were Lexis. And that's what she wanted now.

But she held it in and smiled. Tried to keep up with their conversations as they spoke. Things were going well and it didn't seem like anything bad was going to happen. However things became really hard when Jessie walked through the door.

"Rihanna." He breathed, walking in with a box of chocolates and a banquet of red roses.

Everyone already knew Jessie. They smiled at him and made way as he walked over and placed the things in his hands on the bedside table, then knelt in and kissed Fayth on the forehead.

Like an idiot, Fayth couldn't hold it in. She began sobbing. She tried to cover her mouth, to mute the awkward

sounds coming from her throat as she pursed her lips, but it was near impossible.

And as if Jessie understood what she was feeling, he sat on the edge of the bed and held her cheek with his hand, wiping her tears with his thumb. “You’re okay now.”

You don’t know anything. And I’m so afraid to tell you.

She didn’t think she’d make it through the hour with Jessie being there. However, facing him was slowly healing her in ways she didn’t think were useful. Hearing and watching him as he normal spoke and did things, she saw that nothing really changed. It was all normal and he didn’t know about her feelings for him. He’ll never have to find out about them either.

Miraculously, Fayth slowly began enjoying his presence. She felt light and happy, and every time he smiled and laughed, she’d smile and laugh. He’s my brother. She smiled as the thought became a somewhat positive one now. I have a blood related family and he’s my brother. And this is forever.

The door opened and Fayth watched Vivian walk in, bringing the coffee Fayth had asked for and putting it on the tray table nearby. Fayth looked over at Jessie as Vivian

suddenly held his entire attention. His eyes followed her as she put the coffee down, as she knelt over and picked up the box of tissues that fell to the ground, as she straightened up and shyly looked over at Jessie. Their eyes locked for a single moment, then he looked away, back at Fayth. And finally smiled.

“I’ll be back in a minute.”

Fayth nodded.

He stood up and left the room. A moment later, a text message came to Vivian’s phone and she looked at it, holding back a smile, she left the room as well.

She had no idea how she felt it, but she did. It was dark, nearly eleven at night. Outside the window she can hear the hard and fast drops of the rain, hitting the glass like small rocks. At certain moments, the rain would calm down, barely letting the sound of the droplets be heard, and then suddenly a huge gust of wind would go by, taking the rain with it and throwing it against the window harshly.

But that wasn’t the sound that woke her up. Nor was it a sound at all.

She can sense him in the room. Whether it was the

rhythm of his breathing, the sweet scent that escapes his skin which she had so easily memorized over the nights from sleeping next to him, or simply his lingering daunting gaze. She was already aware of his presence near her. And she was never more intimidated by him than that moment. The second before her eyes opened, a rush of feelings took over her. Her body suddenly tensed at the preconceived emotions of him being there. Next to her. In the wake of her near death experience and the time gap of when she had last seen him.

He was caught this time. Her eyes had caught him watching her sleep.

Fayth looked over. And sitting on the chair by her bedside, staring at her with the most dark and lifeless expression she had ever seen, was Lexis.

Chapter Eighty Two

The room was dark, aside from a small round light that shone off the wall behind Fayth's bed. The sound of the rain calmed down to a drizzle outside the window. There was a thunder strike that lasted for seconds, its echo only disappearing after the rain picked up again. And Fayth was absolutely transfixed by one thing in the room. Lexis' eyes. There was a glint of wetness in them. At that sight, a funny warm feeling tickled the inside of Fayth's chest. Butterflies.

Its as if she had fallen in love with him all over again.

They sat there, staring at each other in the dark without a single word said. Lexis had been holding Fayth's hands. And that alone was more than enough for her right then. To feel him there. She was no longer in the arms of death.

His voice had a thick tone as he whispered. "I plead for a miracle to keep you alive. I was damned to imagine I would get one."

She could barely speak as her throat swelled up.
"Lexis..."

She looked away. He waited for her until she was recollected. He can see how much of a hard time she had. He can only imagine the feelings she had gone through, then resumed to hold in, hiding them from everyone else. And they were all his fault. He had scarred her again. He had undone what her parents did to her, but in a manner a million times worse.

"I thought you were mad at me." She whispered, her grip on his hands tightening. "I thought you were upset. I didn't think you'd come."

"I was just a hurt man, Fayth." He stared down at their joined hands, his jaw twitching as he gritted his teeth. "I did

not know what love was until I loved you.”

“Don’t.” She gasped. She was scared again. She didn’t know why, but she was suddenly frozen ice from the inside. Whether fate was giving out hints or not, she understood enough now on how their relationship will evolve. It was complicated. A risky challenge she no longer wanted to be apart of. “I don’t trust this love anymore.”

He gritted his teeth and looked away, his eyes held the menacing cold stare from before. “I don’t trust our love anymore either Fayth. Its destructive. It almost killed you.”

She bit her lip and closed her eyes. She knew how much her words hurt him. She had been hurting him repeatedly with little of her leniency. She was mean, but she was a loveless wreck with many sins. Misunderstood to the bones.

With a quiet voice, she said. “I fear the love I have for you. I fear being so attached to this love without the guarantee that one day it won’t end. And by this I guess you could see the amount of lust to the love I have for you right now is. Which will without a doubt kill any intention of me ever admitting this love to you in actions. I’m scared Lexis.” She breathed. “I’m mortified.”

“And I won’t love you again.” He was barely able to say.

“I don’t think there is a single person I’ve ever loved that I didn’t end up losing or hurting. I’d destroy you.”

She opened her eyes, pushing back the tears. I hate this. I don’t want a replay. If all matters in the world reproduce, honesty will always be the most generous. I don’t want to lie anymore. I don’t want to run away from the truth. “But I want you to.”

“I can’t Fayth. Not anymore. I can’t trust that you won’t run away again. I can’t trust that I won’t hurt you again.”

The room fell silent as the rain came to a stop. The only sound that was audible now was their breathing, as they stared at each other with a suffocating vibe in between them.

“But I want this. I really do.” She begged, not able to hold back her tears anymore.

His impassive expression was suddenly serious as his jaw twitched. “Show me that you’re sincere. Let me trust our love. Marry me.”

She looked up at him and her eyes began blinking without a stop. She looked inside his eyes and she saw truth. She saw what it was that had held her captive by him. His hypnotic gaze was incredibly alluring. Loving and tender. She could see the endless love he had for her.

She pulled him as he stared at her with the animalistic look in his eyes. She wanted to embrace him. Feel more of him. And as he stood up, his eyes not leaving hers, and laid next to her on the bed, she suddenly felt more alive than ever.

He placed his arm under her head, and she comfortable fitted her body next to his. Looking up at him, she said. “You tried making me jealous.”

“Its the only way I could get your attention. I loathed the fact, but you only ever felt for me when I made you feel unpleasant. Its been like this since the first day I saw you.”

Clutching his shirt in her hand, she said. “You’re right. Me loving you is probably the most imperfect love to ever exist. And I’m barely aware of what I mean to you. What you think of us.”

He knelt in until his lips were next to her ear. Under his breath, using his seductive voice, he whispered. “My love for you is that of a blind heart, which gave up on its own self because it believed that it was unpleasant.” His hands slowly slipped inside her own, their fingers entwining slowly, his skin gently gliding against hers, making her heart fire up with the private tensivity of the moment. “However it began to see again upon your imperfections. Upon your worst

mistakes, it believed that it may not be so bad after all. That there are worse things than it. Our imperfections compliment each other Fayth. They speak a language of their own, one to the other would say, ‘I’ve done worse, so cheer up.’ And those imperfections in both of us, are like the night and day, they both are halves of the heaven, and together they are complete.”

She was overflowing with different emotions as she listened to his honest words. They were exactly what she believed, the words she needed to understand what they have. Simplicity was key, and he had made their love as simple and as unchallenging as possible. She pulled away and looked inside his eyes, this time answering him with clarity. “I love you.” Its true that she will always have that stationary fear for him—every time he drove a car or was around paper for a paper cut. In that case, she’ll just have to make sure that he was okay. He’ll work at home and she’ll burn all the papers there is.

He kissed her forehead. “I loved you first. And I’ll love you last. That’s a promise that my imperfections are willing to keep for as long as there is night and day.”

She was lost in his eyes. So in love with his every word, his every move and breath that she couldn’t look away.

Nonsensically, her hands moved up and cupped his cheeks.

“I truly thought I was going to lose you.” Lexis breathed, his words breaking. “Its not that I didn’t know what I had. I knew damn well what I had, I just never had the intention of losing you.”

His eyes became wet again. She realized what she had done to him. She was his mother, his father, his brother and sister. She was everything and he almost lost his everything. He was a broken child, who had love in his hand, but so sour that it almost killed him, as one after the other failed to respond decently.

He laid his head on Fayth’s chest, listening to her fast heartbeat as she breathlessly hugged him close. It was the very first time that she saw Lexis as a child. And this was by the far the most intimate moment they’ve had since they’ve known each other. All of his guards were down. He’d let her in. He’d spoken his feelings. He treated Fayth with his honest emotions.

He straightened up, his hands pressed down against the mattress on either side of her. He stared down at her lips, then back into her eyes. “Fayth...”

A knock came on the door, followed by. “Rihanna honey,

its Megan. Are you awake?”

Lexis and Fayth’s gaze froze. They stared at one another wondering what Mrs. Ellis was doing here at eleven o’clock at night.

Deciding to ignore his mother, Lexis put a finger on his lips.

Fayth shook her head. It felt as if she was lying to Lexis’ mother. And in all honesty, Fayth wondered why she was here during this hour. It must be important, whatever it is she came for.

Gritting his teeth, Lexis pulled away and swore under his breath. Then quietly, he stood up and went into the bathroom, soundlessly closing the door behind him.

Fayth waited until it was completely quiet before she said. “I’m awake.”

She shyly walked in, bringing with her a brown box. She sat on the chair Lexis had been sitting on a few moments ago and placed the box on the bedside table. “I noticed that you don’t eat hospital food. You’ve refused the butler’s offering more than once. So I thought I’d make you something homemade. I don’t really know what you like, but I figured everyone likes Chinese, so I made a variety of that.” She

laughed.

Fayth tucked her hair behind her ear, feeling embarrassed. She was in fact starving. Vincent couldn't come visit her in case of being seen by Mrs. Ellis. And she didn't trust hospital food. Even though they were in the elite suite, where the butler could make her anything she'd like, for some reason, something about it being cooked in a hospital made her gag.

"Thank you. I have a certain liking for all Asian food, so Chinese sounds great." It was awkward and nice. She liked being taken care of by Lexis' mom. It was special and the woman herself was heartwarming.

"I also wanted to talk to you." Mrs. Ellis said. "About Lexis."

Fayth nodded, her eyebrows pulled together with confusion. "Sure."

"He's a good man. I know he upset you, but its not his fault honey. Its his father's. I can see the way Lexis looks at you. If he could, he wouldn't go with the arranged marriage. He would rather be with you instead."

Fayth held back a smile. "You don't have to worry about it Mrs. Ellis. Lexis and I are just fine."

Fayth wondered if she should tell her or not. She hated that she was lying to her about who she really was. However, if anything, Fayth will let Lexis break the news to his parents on who Fayth was.

“But—”

Fayth shook her head, the smile still on her face. “One day you’ll understand. But believe me, it’s all okay.”

Megan sighed in relief and in the way her shoulders slumped down, Fayth can see how tense she had been.

“But you are right. Lexis is a good man. He loves you a lot. To the point where once I sort of became jealous of it.” Fayth said, smiling through her words.

Megan began to laugh.

And it was such a nice thing to hear. Her eyes were so sad. They’ve held an endless sadness in them. Fayth didn’t quite understand what it was about her, but she knew one thing. Megan was never a bad grandmother to Dawn, she was simply fed up with the bad things she had received in life.

Jessie made his way through the door and into his

mother's study. The headmistress had asked him to come back to Dawn Academy and begin getting things ready for the upcoming semester. The Winter Beauty Pageant award was still in the midst of getting prepared and he needed to make sure that the stage was set for the ceremony.

Right now, he wanted to grab a book to read. The workers that were required for the set up were still not here and it seemed like it'll be an hour before they reached the Academy. So he scanned his mother's shelf for a book decent enough to read until then.

While running his fingers over the names of the books, walking and reading at the same time, in hopes of finding a title that he was familiar with or a new one that could catch his eyes, he paused and looked at something resting there on the empty space at the end of the shelf.

He had seen it before. Many times too. He just couldn't believe how he forgot about it.

"How are you feeling?" Mrs. Ellis asked, her voice gentle.

"I'm doing better. They said that I should be discharged by morning two days from now."

Her eyes squinted in sadness. “It’s been such a long time since I sat by someone like this in a hospital. I couldn’t even make it when my daughter was giving birth here...”

Fayth swallowed the lump that formed in her throat and almost imagined herself being Lexis’ sister, Cara. On a bed like this, giving birth, waiting for her mother to come, scared and alone. Then, as if it couldn’t get any worse, right before getting the chance to even see her baby....

“I’m sorry about what happened. Even though it’s none of my business, but I do believe that you’re feeling an empty regret. Whether you were there or not, that was going to be your daughter’s fate. And maybe you weren’t there for a reason. Maybe it was better for you to not witness it.”

“Just like Anthony.” She smiled sadly, holding back her tears. “You even sound so much like her...”

“Who? Your daughter?”

Mrs. Ellis shook her head. “No, she was a good friend of mine. We actually attended the same school, Dawn Academy. Lived life together, until we were old enough to marry. She was like a sister to me. Back then, she would comfort me in my most distressed moments. She was a pure angel, that even when I found out that she was in love with

the boy I liked, I let her. Not minding that she took away something from me that was very important back then.”

“Are you still friends now?”

She shook her head. “The man that she fell in love with was the son of an important official. Personally, I don’t know details about him, I just know that his father held a high position, and something similar to what is happening to Lexis now happened to him. Even though that man loved my best friend tremendously, his father’s power on him made him give up on that love and do what his father planned for him. But by that time, it was a bit too late. My best friend was already pregnant. The woman that man was arranged to marry to was understanding. She said that she would keep it a secret and even act pregnant and later on say that it was her own child for their sake. And that’s how it came out to be.”

“That’s incredible. How come you don’t talk anymore?”

“Back then, I was standing by her just like this, while she lay on the hospital bed giving birth. She hadn’t informed anyone of this before, but she had been pregnant with twins. It seemed like she hadn’t told her lover either. She had wanted to keep one of the babies for her own. Just the fact that the baby would be her lover’s son was enough.

“She begged me not to tell, and before I knew it, I was hiding one of her babies with me until her lover and his new wife came and took the other one. A boy and a girl were separated at birth and are now living in two completely different worlds. The girl with her father and the boy with his mother. And because she was terrified of her lover’s father ever finding out about the son she kept, she disappeared and we never heard anything from her ever again. Though she did call me when my daughter died, saying almost exactly the same words as you did.”

Fayth smiled, though sadness hovered over her at the tragedy behind the story.

“But do you know what the odd thing about this story is?” She asked.

Fayth smiled. “What?”

“On that same year that all of this happened, I found out who the important man was. The girl from the twins that was given to her father to keep, is the same girl that my husband had arranged Lexis to marry.”

Fayth’s brain went completely blank.

Mrs. Ellis smiled. “Don’t worry. Even though I would love to have my best friend’s daughter as my daughter in

law, I have a good feeling that you and Lexis are a better match.”

This is where I have seen her before. When I saw the pictures on the laptop, I knew I’ve seen her somewhere, and now I know exactly where.

Jessie stared at the picture in front of him. It was a picture of Fayth. A picture he’d seen many times before. The same eyes, same features, same hair color as the ones in Fayth’s laptop.

But the one in front of him wasn’t Fayth. It was his mother when she was Fayth’s age.

How is it possible? How can it be that Fayth and the headmistress look exactly the same when they were teenagers?

It can’t be...

Chapter Eighty Three

When Mrs. Ellis left, Lexis exited the bathroom. He slowly walked into the now lit room, his eyes staring at Fayth with a very undistinguishable look on his face.

Fayth looked back inside his eyes. And for a moment, she was completely blanked out.

No... No way...

“You knew...” She breathed. She wasn’t asking, she was stating it. And him dropping his gaze to the ground confirmed it.

He looked back up, staring into Fayth’s eyes. “I hadn't a clue what your reaction might be toward the matter. However yes, as soon as I heard the information regarding Jessie being your half brother I promptly began searching around. Both of your birth dates gave it away almost immediately. When I found out that yours also falls on July fourth, I knew it wasn’t a coincidence that you and Jessie were conceived on the same day. And so I did a bit more questioning and decided to keep the rest to myself until you found out the reasoning from the source directly.

“The headmistress had lied to you simply for your own good. She thought you had a significant and settled life with your real mother, furthermore she didn’t want to ruin a seventeen year old long life for you, of your supposedly good memories with them. She had no idea what your feelings toward Jessie were. She just wanted to let you know that he existed. That you had a brother whom she hoped will

take care of you after the death of your parents. She didn't want you to be alone."

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"It wasn't my right to share any of this with you, and I believed you'd be angry—hurt that your mother had abandoned you. I didn't want you to feel anymore neglected by people who were supposed to love you. If the truth had to stay hidden for me to accomplish that, I wasn't going to think twice about keeping it in the dark."

Fayth stood to her feet off the bed, stumbling forward while the wires were still stuck to her body. Lexis jolted forward and grasped her shoulders, stopping her from moving further.

When she was younger, a child at the age of three or four, Fayth would continuously do something. Until her teacher put it a stop to it one day.

"Fayth, how come you don't draw in the face?"

Fayth would draw the body, however, she wouldn't draw in any details for the face. Other than a simple circle, she wouldn't let herself go past drawing anything else. Not the eyes, nose, mouth. Not even the hair.

Fayth shrugged.

“Don’t you know what color mommy and daddy’s eyes are?”

Fayth looked down, feeling embarrassed. She didn’t want to answer the teacher. She didn’t want the others in her class to hear.

“Let’s start with mommy. Are her eyes...green?!” The teacher enthusiastically asked.

Fayth was about to answer, but then paused her shoulders from moving.

“How about blue?” The teacher asked, a smile still on her face.

Fayth sat there quietly.

“Brown? Gray? Hazel—”

Fayth looked up at the teacher, and her teacher suddenly froze, the smile on her lips disappearing.

The haunting look inside Fayth’s eyes was heartbreaking. They were impenetrable, but heartbreaking all together. And slowly, the teacher began to put together what exactly was going on inside the mysterious girl’s head.

She didn’t know. Fayth Armstrong had no idea what her parents’ faces looked like. What their eye color was, or how

long or short their hair was.

“You don’t need to know any details to draw honey. You can guess. You can make them out to be whatever it is you want them to be.”

By the end of the class, the teacher had come back to see what Fayth had done with her drawing. Inside the face, fayth had two dots for the eyes and a lopsided line for the mouth.

She had copied the smily sticker her teacher would constantly give out. It would be nice, maybe even selfish, to see her parents as often as those stickers were given out. And she wanted them to see them smiling every time she does.

Now, standing in Lexis’ arm, Fayth gazed at him while smiling, the tears burning her cheeks as they began to fall. “But Lexis, what are you talking about? I have a mother. A mother.” She stared into his eyes for a long moment of silence. Her insides were twisting, her stomach burning with a nauseating feeling. She would only get this way when an overwhelming emotion overtakes her body, and right now, she wanted nothing but for everything around her to be as real and alive as can be. Even if it made her sick to the stomach. “I have a mother.” She breathed, this time to herself. “That’s more than happiness. That’s—”

I have a mother...Her heart began to shake so violently one could almost see it vibrate on her chest. Her hands trembled, beads of sweat coating the skin inside her palms. A quick shiver went down her spine, almost paralyzing her in place, and Fayth was completely at loss for words.

My real mother is still alive...

I—I met my mother. It would explain why... why she was so happy when I had visited her the last time—and so worried too. Just like a mother would. To have her daughter that was taken away from her at birth...she must have been heartbroken. And I saw that on her face. For the first time, I actually did feel happy. So happy that I can't stop crying right now.

Even though what I did with that car wreck was unforgivable, I still can't deny my need for a mother right now more than ever. And if it wasn't for her face expressions that I had seen during my last visit to her office that keeps replaying in my mind right now, I wouldn't be this set on believing in her. She was happy to see me and so, so worried too. It was for my own sake—to not confuse me about who I was exactly—that she hadn't wrapped me in her warm motherly arms.

The tears that fell down her cheeks, the lie she said about

my father having an affair with her so she wouldn't spoil his and his wife's image. I can see it all clear now. Even after all these years, her heart still felt for me. She still smiled, cried, worried, and cared for me. So much that she scarred her own image to protect me from the cold hard truth of her past.

And to think...that she had probably not found out about her first love's death until she had searched about Rihanna Gessner, the mysterious girl who enrolled into the school as a late arrival. To think that she had to face the truth of her first love's death because of me...not only that, but the fact that I was the one who caused it...

It was just unbearable...

She should have hated me. But why? Why did she treat me like she was the one at fault. When in truth, the blame belonged to that point in time. The despicable moment when she had to make the decision of whether to give me up where I'd be raised in a rich and well stabled family, and to be made out as the real daughter of both of those parents, or having to deal with her lovers father, who will make life hell for her and for me the moment he finds out whose daughter I belonged to.

It was a decision of a damned moment.

“Sir?” A man in a black suit walked into the MD’s official office. John Ellis stood by the long window, his hands crossed behind him as he watched the river below.

He turned around to face the visitor. “Did you get what I asked?”

“I have, but there is a problem and it may conflict with your intentions sir.”

John was going to simply threaten Rihanna Gessner out of Lexis Ellis’s life with a certain method that he used quite often. Bring into play those closest to her. He had sent some of his men to bring the Gessner family to be held in a warehouse, where he would have them physically severely dealt with. Surely when their daughter sees them, she will abide to all his requests faultlessly.

“What is the problem?”

The man walked forward with a tablet. He opened the screen and a shot of three students from Dawn Academy appeared in front of him. John’s gaze trailed over them and paused on the third, his vision suddenly blurring out then coming back into focus, and his eyes slowly began to widen.

“What is this nonsense?” He insisted, grabbing the tablet into his two hands. He turned around and began to walk back

toward his desk.

“Its Fay—”

“I know who it is.” John argued, hastily turning around and facing his secretary. “But who was it to play such a an absurd joke. Clearly Fayth Armstrong doesn’t attend the Academy, no matter how many times I had made it clear to her that its a great opportunity, she made it even more clear that she didn’t need the education provided here.”

“Sir. It is Fayth Armstrong.”

“I already said that I knew—”

“No sir. What I meant, that picture is a student that attends Dawn Academy, and it really is Fayth Armstrong.”

John stared at his secretary with confusion. His expression completely blank as he tried to put together of what the meaning of his words were.

“Fayth Armstrong? The Fayth Armstrong.”

“Yes, sir.”

John could only stare aimlessly at his screen.

“But I wasn’t aware...”

“You wouldn’t have been sir. She had been attending the

Academy under a different name. My resources have come with one explanation to why she had done so. It seems like she had known your intentions about the arranged marriage between her and your son sir. To find if he's compatible enough, she enrolled while concealing her real identity—”

“This is absurd!”

“There is something even more absurd sir.”

John watched his secretary. He had become accustomed to him enough to know that bad news was coming. John prepared himself for the worst.

“The picture had been traced back. My resources say they had come out of a laptop in the girls dormitory, specifically the one the headmistress's son resides in. After further investigation, we had come to confirmation that the student who hid her identity as Fayth Armstrong was in fact...Rihanna Gessner.”

Everything was absolutely still in the room as John processed the words.

Denial.

“It can't be.”

His secretary kept quiet, confirming the nightmare that

was slowly emerging from below, wrapping John in a blanket of suffocating fear.

“It absolutely can’t be...”

He began to see similarities. He began to see truth.

Acceptance.

Fayth Armstrong was hiding behind a ploy made of a pathetic creature like Rihanna Gessner? She had tricked him into thinking she was someone else, when all along, the person he so comfortably insulted without holding back, the person who had seen a side of him he’d never let show in his business career, was the Fayth Armstrong?

John clutched his heart as a muscle inside gave a tight squeeze, he fell to his knees, his legs barely holding onto his weight. Fear, depression, high blood pressure, and an inner cry for help made him cower back into a ball made of endless chest pain. He tried to stand up as his secretary jolted forward, worried as he slowly began to help his boss to his feet, however John fell back down, his chest no longer able to function the right way.

All along...Rihanna Gessner was Fayth Armstrong?

Chapter Eighty Four

They stood there, Lexis' arms wrapped around Fayth. Fayth's arms wrapped around Lexis' waist. Both quiet in the empty hospital room.

He slowly pushed her away, his hands still holding her shoulders. His face was unreadable glass, one without an expression or an emotion to let Fayth know what he was feeling. She hated that. She hated how much void he puts to his feelings, but knew it was something she couldn't change in Lexis Ellis.

He opened his lips to say something, but then held back. For the first time since they met, she knew exactly what he wanted to say. She didn't know how, but she did.

“When I enrolled into Dawn Academy,” She said. “I had no clue that one day I'll be standing here in front of you, looking at you without hate. I had no idea that I'll end up having a family; a brother that I could so easily talk to and love, and a mother that actually cares. And I definitely didn't have the slightest hint that I'll be marrying you.”

A sudden half smile appeared on his face, making him flash the deep dimple in his cheek. His eyes were warm with relief, her answer more comforting to him than she thought it would be.

“Tomorrow?”

She hesitated, suddenly terrified. “Uh...”

The light in his eyes dimmed.

“Its not that. There are things, girls have to, you know...”

“I don’t care about any of that.” He argued. “All of those things that you want to get ready, do it afterwards. Do it after you’re officially mine.”

Her face began to heat up, feeling hot and bothered all of the sudden. She didn’t know—She didn’t. Her eyes uncomfortably widened at the thoughts of being his alone. His wife. His spouse. His lover.

She took a step back, natural fear of the idea making her overly uncomfortable. Lexis quickly took her face into his hands, worried. “I’m sorry. Its okay. We’ll slow down the matter if you’d like. As long as you need.” He wasn’t completely satisfied with his words, but the fear he put her in annoyed him.

He turned and looked toward the door. “Vincent is going to be here. I let him know through a text message that you have knowledge of the facts now. He had found out earlier about the matter as well.”

Fayth was still stuck on sharing a marriage life with Lexis. The unknown of it was all she wondered about.

“I’ll leave so you two can talk about it comfortably.”

He moved away, turning to leave.

Fayth grabbed his shirt like a child, her gaze falling to the floor as she mustered the courage to speak her thoughts. “Is it okay?” She said with a small voice. “Is it okay if we marry but don’t—I mean not until—you know if we can just—”

He took ahold of her shaking hand. He understood what she was saying. Her innocence was something he could read into so easily.

“Yes.”

“Fayth?” Vincent said with worry as he walked into the room. Fayth’s smile was reassuring. She didn’t hate him. She really didn’t hate him... With a sigh of relief, he pulled her into a hug, “I only found about this when you told me about Jessie. I had no idea myself. But after I found out there was no way for me to tell you. You were in no stable state to receive any news like this. But I promise I was going to tell...”

Fayth hugged him back and nodded, unable to open her mouth from the fear of crying like a child.

He pulled her back and looked at her face carefully, “There is someone...who wants to talk to you. Is that okay?”

She already knew who it was, so she nodded.

He dialed the number for her and handed her his phone. When the other line answered, Fayth swallowed the lump in her throat, threatening her now more than ever that if she had said one word she would start crying uncontrollably, but she couldn't wait, she had to say what she wanted to say, from the bottom of her heart.

“M...Mom?”

The sound of her mother's crying on the other end broke Fayth's heart, and tears began streaming down Fayth's face. “Oh Fayth, how much I've wanted to hear that. I cant—I cant even put my apologies into words. I'm so sorry for not being there...”

“It's okay mom. I know you're a good person. That's enough for me. You'll take care of me from now on, right? I'll come back home and find you there all the time, right? You'll tell me you love me, right? It's okay, I'm happy.”

The sound of her mother's crying on the other end had

Fayth's heart tremble in longing. She earnestly wanted to see her...

“Can—Can I come up to see you? I'm in front of the hospital... Jessie wants to properly introduce himself too.”

“Please, please yes come. Would you like me to go down there myself? I'll run...”

“No honey, please stay in bed until I come.”

Fayth looked at Vincent, whose eyes were filled with tears. “Did—did you hear? She's here! She's really, really here! I'm going to see my mom Vincent! I'm going to see a mom who'll love me just like she loves Jessie.”

Vincent stood up.

“Where are you going?”

He looked down, like Fayth, tears began streaming down his face. “This is a private family reunion. I shouldn't intrude.”

He turned around, inhaling a big breath, he made the decision to become completely professional now. His daughter had her real family now.

Fayth's arms wrapped around him, holding him in place as she her breathing came out loudly, with shock. “You're

my dad.” She insisted with pain. “How could you even say that.”

Vincent took ahold of Fayth’s hands and pulled them away, however she pulled her hands away from his grasp and wrapped them around him again. She was like a child clinging on to a parent planning to abandon her.

“You... shouldn’t call me that.” Vincent said. “You have your family now. I can’t keep you away from them. You should see me as your guardian from now on. I am in no place to take your father’s position in your life.”

“I hate you for saying this right now.” Fayth sobbed. “I can’t believe you’re saying this.” The shock wouldn’t wear off. How could he? How could he decide what he was to her like this?

He pulled her hands away, deciding not to face her. He walked toward the door.

“Are you telling me...that the fact that I love you more than anyone in the world—even myself—doesn’t matter to you?”

He stopped walking. Turned around.

“I love you Vincnet.” Fayth admitted, exhausted. “You’re my dad. You took care of me when no one else did. You

changed my diapers at times and fed me milk. You played with me and taught me proper manners. You taught me how to speak and how to deal with so many things. And you'll still teach me so many things."

Vincent closed the space between them and grasped her into a hug. His insides in a battle. He'd be selfish not to teach her how to formally be with her own family, especially in the world they lived it, where people are so easily judged for who is who, but Fayth is his little girl. No matter who her real family is, she's his little girl.

"I love you too." He said, his voice shaking. "I love you too." He said again, this time sighing in relief.

A knock on the door made Fayth go stiff. They pulled away and she held onto Vincent's arm as she stared at it.

"Come in." He said.

The door opened, and even though she had seen them more than once before, Her mother and Jessie seemed to be suddenly so different. They were now family. Her blood related family.

Fayth's mom, eyes buffy from crying so much, was the first one to hurry over. Fayth let go of Vincent and met her halfway, letting her hug Fayth as tight as she wanted.

“Oh my little baby, you’re so beautiful. I can’t believe god gave me the chance to meet you before it’s too late. I’m so sorry. Mommy’s so sorry for not being there. I promise it wouldn’t happen again.”

They hugged for what seemed like forever, and Fayth cried until the tears ran dry. When her let her go, she couldn’t help but hurriedly hug Jessie, who was silently crying at the side at the two’s reunion.

“I’m such an idiot.” He said. “I’ve seen you in pictures of my mom when she was young in her study and I couldn’t put together the puzzle.” Even though he was crying, even though he seemed so happy, it felt like he was pitying her for her past. He knew...he heard the whole story.

“I’m sorry.” She mumbled. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you beforehand. I was just scared of what I might have to tell you. I didn’t want to say the truth, and I’m so sorry for that too.”

His grip tightened around her. “Don’t,” He insisted. “ever apologize to anyone ever again about what happened back then. If anything, every single one of us should be apologizing to you.”

He really is my brother...

Charles had come in to the dorm early morning. Fayth was to be discharged soon and Vincent had left a few minutes ago. As for Lexis...

He was buying another house closer to the Academy.

As soon as Charles had seen her, he could see the difference. She was no longer Rihanna. Fayth Armstrong was permanently back. And that's what he told her. "Glad your back Fayth Armstrong."

"I never left." She had replied.

"Oh you did leave. Somehow you managed to do it, and I thought I could get away with a lot of things when I noticed that."

"And now?"

"Doesn't change a thing. Let's run away together." He said, slipping inside one of the chairs. He wanted to hug her, he had missed her more than anything. But again, Fayth Armstrong was back, and a part of him was always on edge near her. He knew not to push past his limits, or he might lose her with her hot temper.

Fayth sighed. "Lexis and I are going to get married."

Charles jumped to his feet. “What?!”

“Probably today.”

Charles stared at her.

Fayth looked inside the bag her mom had brought with her. She had shopped for her a change of clothing to be discharged with.

“You’re joking right?”

“Nope.”

“Why? Last time I knew you hated him. Is it because of the arranged bullshit? Is Armstrong in trouble or something?”

“No. I just like the guy.” She answered back coolly.

“Why don’t I believe you.”

Fayth stopped what she was doing and looked over at Charles, her eyes murderous. “Because its hard for me to admit what I feel toward a person who makes me feel like life will end if he’s slightly hurt. You know I’m dumb when it comes to expressing my like for something.”

A long silence passed through the room.

What happened in the past three weeks to make her like

him that much? How did he know where she was when Charles didn't?

"I thought it was Jessie."

"Jessie turned out to be my brother."

"What?!" He was even more shocked.

"My real mother is the headmistress of Dawn Academy. There is a lot that happened when you weren't around."

"How—Why—... What?!" He was completely lost.

Fayth smiled and shook her head. "You took it worse than me."

After a long silence, Charles looked over at Fayth again. "You lived with him, didn't you?"

Fayth nodded.

"How is it possible that you turned all of that hate into marriage?"

"You said once that its possible."

"Are you that inconsiderate of my feelings toward you?"

Fayth sighed and looked over at Charles, her eyes staring into his with a knowing gaze. "I know you love her."

“What are you talking about?”

“You love her Charles. Stop making yourself avoid it. I know. You know. We both know it. I saw it the moment you laid eyes on her in the kitchen.”

A lump formed and disappeared on Charles’s throat. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Fayth sighed hopelessly at him. She knew that he was fighting with himself. He knew what he wanted, but his feelings were in a battle when it came down to it. He was only giving in to the habit that he had created over the years, and now, he was incredibly selfish of his feelings. He no longer believed in anything else other than Fayth. She had always been the only one person that he could never get, and because of that, his fight was always burning high. “Mandy. The reason you endlessly tried to get into F.A.I.T.H. no matter how hopeless the headmistress made it seem, it wasn’t for me. It was for her.”

Charles’s eyes widened for a split moment, his lips ajar as he blinked the shock that suddenly overwhelmed him.

“That’s not—it’s not—”

“She’s eighteen. She’s about a year and a half older than you. It shouldn’t be that big of a problem.”

“What the hell are you talking about?!” He began fully on denying. “Are you insane?!”

He was angry now. Only because his denial was greater than what the truth was. It was completely masked with thoughts of betrayal. He felt like he was betraying Fayth with his divided feelings, and it was the last feeling he wanted to feel after all this time. To admit to in front of Fayth.

“Its fine.” She assured him. “I loved Jessie.” She so openly admitted now. “Its okay to love twice. Sometimes, our eyes play tricks on us. Until we actually see the real thing, our eyes will always play tricks on us.”

“My heart doesn’t play tricks.” He struggled to say while shaking his head, while his eyes became wet. “I love you. You know that.”

“If we dated, you would leave in a month time the moment you get angry at me. I know that. You know that. We’ve known each other too long and I’ve known you since we were kids. That’s how I knew you’re head over heels every time you look at Mandy. I denied it because I needed you at that time, but now I don’t.”

“That’s mean. You shouldn’t say that.”

“Its the truth. I’m being honest with you. I could lie to

you right now and sugar coat things, but we both know that's not the type of person I am. You hate the person I am. You never tried to really pursue me until I was the weak girl under Rihanna Gessner's identity. You saw goodness, a fake persona that attracted you to try and attack. Now I'm that straightforward hellcat again. That girl was never one you dared to confront so openly with your feelings."

"I could love you—"

"For how long?!" Fayth insisted. "A month? Two? A year? Eventually you'll get tired of me."

"What about Lexis? What's the difference with him?"

"He nearly knows nothing about me. And it'll probably take us years to simply figure each other out, be as comfortable as we can around each other. You and I? We're already comfortable around each other. We already know everything about each other. A relationship between us would die sooner or later. The date we had? I felt like I was hanging out with you. I was horrified before the date, wondering that somehow you'll make me feel any different, but no. It was bland. Tasteless. Normal."

"What's bad about normal?"

Fayth stared into his eyes. "Me." She whispered. "I'm not

normal.”

They stared at each other for a long time. “I don’t feel for her like I do for you.” He finally said.

Fayth shook her head. “That’s how it starts. You barely know each other. You think the emotions lead to something else. Then its a one way ticket toward vows and a life long goal.”

Charles look down at his shoes.

Then back up at Fayth.

He closed the space between them and pulled her into a hug. Shutting his eyes and realizing that for the first time, his life didn’t depend on love. It depended on her friendship. Their friendship. He wanted to keep her in his life no matter what. No matter how many other women he ends up falling for. Fayth will always be the only person, the only woman, he can never detangle his life around.

“You are the only woman who can make my world interesting.”

Fayth smiled. “And that's why we're still friends.”

Chapter Eighty Five

The rest of the F.A.I.T.H. members and ex-members arrived at the hospital, entering the wing like a bomb was inside. As soon as they saw Fayth, who was in the ending of putting the last of her belongings in a suitcase, they paused to stare at the new person in front of them.

The new person created in their minds.

Oh my god, its Fayth Armstrong.

It really is that girl. Its her. Its her. Its her.

Is it okay that I'm looking at this incredible creation right now?

I smell Chinese food. I need to find that Chinese food and eat it. And when I do, there better be a fortune cookie in there. What's my fortune going to be?

Fayth...holy shit its Fayth Armstrong.

“Hi guys!” The familiar voice said. They all stared at her. She was smiling...The Youngest universal billionaire, owner

to Armstrong Next, was smiling. At them.

It felt like a sin to be staring at her right now. As if someone was going to jump out and arrest them for the simple action. However the familiar face ushered them to walk in, to come closer.

And so they did.

“What’s wrong?” Fayth asked, questioning their perplexed expressions.

She hadn’t heard.

Fayth looked at them now worried. Now to think of it, she wondered how Charles knew where she was. Had it been Vivian that told him?

“You haven’t heard?” Katerina began talking. Her voice shook with inferiority.

“Heard what?”

“You were one of the three pageants that made it to the last stage of the contest. Someone traced back your picture and found out that you were both Rihanna Gessner, who was also Fayth...Ar–Armstrong.” She stumbled at last.

Fayth’s eyes opened widely. In her head, her brain swore like a sharp sneeze.

“So—So John knows?”

She didn't deny, they realized. It really, really is her.

Katerina nodded.

Connor stared at Fayth and looked away. He had considered whether to come or not many times before he finally made the decision. He realized that he would need to face her at some point, and might as well do it when everyone else was. Yes, he argued and kicked the alien, whom he realized now, must be the most perfect thing life ever conceived, but that doesn't mean she didn't do it either.

He felt embarrassed, but he felt more piqued than anything else.

And to think, he had completely pulled away from her when he saw her outburst back when Katerina's birthday party took place. He couldn't look at her without feeling freaked out anymore. She wasn't the bubbly person he thought she was. The confident nonchalant girl who so easily dodged his punch when they first met, she had become a psycho he didn't want anything to do with anymore.

And now. Now, well, shit happens. He lost something that could have been absolute perfection to his life. He lost the only thing he can never have now.

Kurt stared at Fayth with so much admiration. How had she pulled it off? How did she fool an entire population of well sourced students, with incredible connections, to think that she was a person that she was, then not? How did she play out a person with so much enigma. Was she that desperate? And why, why go through so much and for what goal? To think... Fayth Armstrong, whom many dwell over the fortune under her feet, had once told him to be less dead. To live more. Advice, she had given him advice that he now treasured more than life.

“So, that was your name?” Devon asked, smiling and nodding his head in approval, glad that he was right. Fayth Armstrong. He now knew the real name of the girl that once taught him what his dream should be. He had asked for it so many times, but she always refused to give it to him. She’d ignore him every chance he could. And now he knew why. She was too tight for his bullshit.

“I’m sorry for pulling the wool over your eyes during that certain time period. It was something that I personally needed to do. And I hope all of you forgive me for my heedless actions. It was the least of my intentions to purposely deceive you and had I known I’d form a close relationship with all of you, I would have been more honest as soon as I was capable of doing so.”

Strangely, Fayth didn't feel as scared as she thought she'd be when she's faced with the truth of her real identity. It had always been Lexis. He was the only one that made her feel insecure about the real person behind her mask. And now that he knew, nothing else mattered.

The door opened and Fayth's ears stretched as she stared at the person by the door. Everyone turned back to look, then with goodbyes and apologies, they began making their way out, saying their polite hellos to John Ellis.

After everyone exited, John, who didn't remove his eyes from Fayth, slowly began walking in.

"Fayth Armstrong?" He gasped in shock.

"Hello John." Fayth said, smiling, relief washing through her chest at the expression he held. It was good to see. Almost too good.

"My god..." He breathed. "It really is you."

He heard her voice. He heard it this time. The situation had been too uptight back in the beach house when she had given that lecture about what's important. He had been completely engrossed in his anger and hate toward his son that he completely let it over his head that the voice that was talking belonged to the one girl he had been desperate to add

to his family tree.

And how he had treated her that day. The idiocy he had. How incredibly ignorant and insane he was, he admitted to himself without pause.

“It is me John. Lexis Ellis’s fiancé. Fayth Armstrong.”

“What do you mean?” John choked.

“Lexis and I, we’ve decided to get married. However, it won’t be for you. In fact, it would be more for us and Dawn than anyone else.”

He couldn’t even comprehend or be happy about what she said. He knew it no longer concerned him, the life of his son. It will no longer benefit him from the massive corporation his future wife will have. He could only drown in misery as he slowly realized that he’d lost both a son and a potential business partnership. A dream he endlessly tried to reach for.

Lexis, who had been standing by the doorway, walked past his father and stood next to Fayth. Kneeling in and kissing her forehead, he said. “Are you ready to leave?”

She looked at him and nodded.

Lexis grabbed the suitcase she had put together and

slipped his other hand in hers. As he past his father, he calmly said. “Hunger for money is a lonely life under the deep sea of selfish desires. You die without feeling the simple happiness of breathing air.”

Chapter Eighty Six

Life was back on track, drifting by day after day. It was completely different now for Fayth. She no longer sat in an empty large home, waiting for Vincent to come back from overseas from a two month trip. She no longer wasted her time doing evil things. She saw life in a bright comprehension, facing it every day with a smile and a sunlit home full of ideas for her new family.

She now lived with Lexis and Bubbles in a cute home near Dawn Academy. Dawn, who was getting ready to go to pre-school next year, stayed home with Fayth nearly all the time. They would wake up together, and Fayth would proceed to give Dawn a bath. And after eating breakfast together, they would wait for Lexis to come back from his Medical school.

It was such a different way to live. Having to wait for a husband to come back. Or to take care of a child. Even to make sure a house is fully inhabitable is such a time consuming part of her life now. And she loved every part of

it. She loved Lexis, and so loving everything that came with him only made sense to her. She loved that she'd see him when he walks in through the door at six o'clock sharp. How he undoes his jacket and sits on the couch. How he watches Fayth move around the house. How he acts like he's not watching when Dawn embarrassingly touches Fayth in sensitive places, without her acknowledgment of course, but still obviously uncomfortable either way.

And that's another thing. Since they've been married, Lexis hadn't laid a finger on Fayth. He was able to so easily tell that Fayth was petrified to the bones of the idea of marriage. She was a virgin and he loved that about her. He understood her fears. He was studying to be a doctor so he knew exactly what she was going to go through on their first night, and it seems like she had searched it up or had a somewhat clear understanding of what it'll be like for her. He was able to see the fear that crosses her eyes every time they sat alone together, with Dawn sleeping in Lexis' room. Or every time he flirted with her. She was terrified of the unknown, and to her, being a wife is something she never prepped for nor had a single idea of what a married life would be like, for her more than him. She didn't know what he'd expect physically, or what to expect from him physically, and that nearly drove her out of the house more

than once.

It's why she never wore anything feminine anymore. In fact, she would often go to Lexis' room and pick out sweat pants and a large long sleeve shirt, feeling much more comfortable and safe in them instead. Those alone were warning signs for Lexis.

Sometimes, however, like today, the weather didn't permit her to do so during the day. So while Lexis was out, she'd wear an off the shoulders permanent rose crop tee, with sports shorts that let her legs breathe. She'd never wear such an outfit outside the house. Nevertheless in front of Lexis. And he had gotten used to her overly sized draggy clothing, so she was more than okay with being like that for now. And Lexis...well Lexis...

Fayth was sitting on the large kitchen floor, kneading dough in a clear plastic bowl. She wanted to make meat pies as a side dish for tonight's dinner and it was her first time trying. That's another thing she found that she entirely enjoyed now living in her new life. Cooking. She took it as a hobby even when she didn't have to. Sometimes her tries would fail massively, and rather than hearing comments or unhappy expressions from Lexis, he would tell Dawn to enjoy it and he'd eat it without a single complaint.

It made Fayth's heart flutter every time.

The front door closed. Lexis walked in and slipped his shoes off by the door. He walked across the living room, hearing Fayth's humming come to a pause as she wondered who had entered. In his black blouse, with a gray coat vest and gray slacks, Lexis walked into the kitchen, hands in his pockets.

For a long moment, Lexis paused, a cold chill running down his back as he stared at Fayth, sitting on the kitchen floor with more skin showing than he'd ever thought he'd see any time soon. He had forgotten to tell her than he was going to be finishing early. Little did he know he would get this surprise as the aftermath of that. Had she worn little to nothing while he wasn't home all along?

Fayth was frozen. Her entire body shrunk down to a pea size as she stared at Lexis, then quickly she dropped her gaze to the bowl and resumed kneading the dough like it was all okay. She couldn't treat the matter uncomfortable. She was his wife for god sake and it would be the most childish act, not to mention how awkward, to be overly innocent right then. So instead, she swallowed her beating heart and hoped he'd leave the kitchen soon, in hopes to grab the nearby robe and casually put it on.

He didn't leave the kitchen, he came in front of where she sat and laid back against the counter.

Lexis hadn't changed. He wore the same cold passive expression from before like always, barely said enough words in a day to make up a paragraph. Took care of Dawn like she was his everything. Then went to sleep in his room with Dawn while Fayth went to hers.

"How was school today?" Fayth asked. She hated the sound of her voice. He could hear what he was doing to her body by simply standing there.

"It was interesting." He answered. Her eyes couldn't leave the bowl. His eyes couldn't leave her. He knew how uneasy he was making her feel, but it was nearly impossible to move his gaze an inch away. "Dawn's sleeping." He suddenly commented. He didn't know why the words came out then, but he wanted to make a point to her, hoping she'd help.

Instead, her face flushed, and she dropped her head down while kneeling forward, making a curtain of brown hair fall around her face, purposely hiding her heated expression from him.

However doing this, the front of her shirt fell forward, exposing entirely everything under for his eyes to see. He

held onto the kitchen counter, his muscles flexing as his eyes shamelessly checked her out. It was his first time seeing her like this...

Fayth stood up, needing the butter from the fridge, she made her way to it, feeling Lexis' eyes walking her there.

She opened the fridge and looked around for the butter, bending down to check if it was in the bottom door drawer.

Her breath hitched as she felt Lexis bend over above her. Anthony was right. Lexis was the biggest flirt there is. There were times he would flirt in the absolute most random and unexpected ways. Like how he was now. And Fayth knew he was in a way flirting with her now, but she couldn't do anything about it. The way he knelt in, the way his hand aimlessly and slowly scanned the refrigerator, whilst taking his time. She knew he was pushing her to the edge.

She held in her breath. The front of his body closed onto hers, and her heart began to beat unsettlingly in her chest. The cool air from the refrigerator didn't help at all in calming the heat radiating off her face, eating her alive with the shyness that overwhelmed her. When she no longer was able to hold in her frenzied emotions, which nearly knocked her off her feet, she straightened up, planning to turn around and face him with his straightforward flirtation. It made her body

confused and bothered. The feeling scared her.

However Lexis, who sensed her straightening up, quickly grabbed a mountain dew can and had already began walking back to the kitchen counter, this time, he sat on top of it, then quietly opened the can and watched Fayth as she went back to kneading the dough.

She'd steal glances at him every now and then, checking to see if he was still there, and her face would immediately flush as soon as she'd see him. Every time. And every time, Lexis felt even more attracted to her.

"Do you want to check on Bubbles?" Fayth asked him, hoping he'd leave her alone long enough to put something more covering on.

He sipped from his drink and looked off out of the window, where the sunlight poured in heaps. "She's fine."

Fayth looked up at him again, feeling a little less tense with his eyesight somewhere else.

I'm being unfair to him. I barely know what he wants and I'm sure he hates our marriage for being so lacking. He had waited for how long now, and he didn't get anything from his wife like a normal husband would. He's being considerate of me, and I'm barely unselfish of his needs as a man.

However, the idea in itself is embarrassing.

Lexis rubbed the back of his neck. "I presume Dawn needs a sibling at some point."

With eyes wide open, Fayth dropped her head, letting her hair fall like a curtain around her face again. What she really was trying to do is hide her shocked expression. Her lips were ajar, her breath uneven. As soon as she understood what he was saying, what was there between the lines, her face flushed, the heat behind it beaming a mile off her skin like a red stop sign.

With that, the front of her shirt became exposed again, and Lexis' mindset no longer entertained his patience.

"Fayth?"

She looked up at him, her heart squeezing then taking off in a sprint at the mention of her name. She can never get tired of him saying it.

"Come with me, there is something I want to show you."

Her heart beating in her ears now, Fayth stood up slowly and washed her hands under the sink's faucet. Lexis jumped down from the counter and ignoring her wet hands, he slipped his fingers into hers and pulled her with him slowly, his eyes studying her expression the entire time.

They walked up the stairs, and Fayth stared at Lexis' tall masculine figure with a tight feeling in her abdomen. There were so many things to worry about. So many thoughts that haunted her with their never ending questions, leading her to a dark alley of fear in her head. However, for a somewhat settling reason, them being shared with Lexis made them to some extent easier to conquer.

He walked inside the guest room, pushing the door behind them to close. Then letting Fayth's hands go, he walked backwards and sat on the edge of the bed.

His voice was low, a barely visible smile on his lips. With alluring eyes, he said. "Come here."

Barely able to breathe, Fayth slowly walked toward him, then with her nerves shooting all over the place, she sat half way farther than him on the bed. "What is it you wanted to show me?" She was breathless. She didn't know why, but it felt right and wrong in that moment.

Lexis straightened enough until he was able to slip and slide closer to Fayth, now with barely any space between them.

Her heart nearly exploded.

She stared at his face, his unreadable piercing eyes, his

gritted jaw, his soft hair falling on his forehead and nearly touching his eyes. Then her gaze dropped to his lips, which, in that very moment, held a breathtaking smile.

"Innocence this pure should be illegal Fayth." He said, holding her cheeks in his hands and kneeling forward. He never thought someone who had been such a bad and sinful person could be such an innocent being all together.

Nearly lost in all there is and what was, Fayth gave in. She was his wife. His life long partner. Whether it be today or a month from now, a familial life was bound to happen between them, and right now, nothing sounded or felt better. She had missed this, quite possibly more than he had.

He wasn't certain if she was keen about the matter and because of this he was hesitant.

"We shouldn't..." She breathed.

Her fingers slipped on top of his leg, the tips gently gliding on the fabric of his slacks.

Their desires were mirrored.

He slowly knelt in. "You're right...we shouldn't."

Their eyes locked as they promised each other one more thing.

I won't hurt you.

I won't stop you.

Fayth swallowed back her furious heart as he knelt closer. In that single moment all her thoughts disappeared behind a cloud of smoke, and she began to slowly drift forward, their breathing already caressing one another—

The door creaked open. And Bubbles blonde hair stuck in from around the door. "Daddy? Fayth?"

THE END.