i'll fight for the spot to be in your life

by aaliyrah

Summary

She seemed evenly surprised as me, only brows furrowed while her head turned painfully slow towards my direction. "You actually give a damn about what's happening to me?"
"Hey, c'mon, not everyone's heartless."
To that, she snorted. "Is that scientifically proven? It’s a shame that I don’t always believe what I hear."

Or

Chloe has been pressed into coming along-side with her best-friend to a party that wasn't quite suited for her, but she finds a girl that unraveled memories in her past that she never wanted to encounter again. As their relationship's journey becomes more and more obvious that it wasn't fit to be just an average adventure; but it was a friendship that never should've happened,

Their accidental bond between them says otherwise.

- Hipster!Chloe
  Punk!Max
  Hipster!Rachel
THIS IS BASICALLY A(N) UPDATED/REBOOTED VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL POSTED IN FANFICTION.NET THAT WAS CREATED A YEAR AGO. my writing was shit and had very fast-paced relationship builds back then.

there are most likely to be plot holes! please point them out to me so i can explain them, or fix them. though, some of them will be cleared up at the ending notes.

[i will be uploading each chapter everyday(?) up until chapter 5]

EDIT - 9/2/16 - re-editing i again tomorrow! the writing is shit on this one.

EDIT - 9/4/16 - did itttt

See the end of the work for more notes
a little heartbreak

Chapter Summary

Chloe's world turns upside-down by just seeing a little red.

Chloe's Apartment.

Chloe's P.O.V

When you’ve been occupied with nothing but deafening bangs and screams with your name along the lines in every sentence, nonstop, within a minute, a moment of silence would start to sound unusual for you. It seems scary even; like something’s...wrong and out of place.

I should be happy that she seemed to stop trying to convince me, but…not right after a pre-wave of suspicion. Her banging did end suddenly out of nowhere.

To which, I was glad that I didn’t do an early celebration for the mute silence, because she started knocking again after a quick break or something. Even though I saw that coming, I couldn’t hold the groan against my breath from her stubbornness. Her determination is annoying me to hell.

“Chloe Elizabeth damn Price, you’re gonna give in sooner or later because my ass is gonna stay here until you open this damn door!” a muffled voice says behind the door.

“And my ass is gonna stay here until you’re ‘fashionably’ late for your party!”

“Pfft,” Rachel spits and temporarily stops knocking. “Like you can wait in there all night.”

“I’ve stayed in my house for almost the whole summer last year Rachel; I think I can stay a night in the bathroom.”

“But not with my screaming ass you won’t.”

“Oh boy, you dare challenge me?” I spit in sarcasm before turning the tide of my tone. "Rachel, I'm not going! No means no, just leave me the hell alone!"

"But no means yes in this situation and you’re fucking coming along with me, Price. Get. That. Ass. Out. Here!” With each hitting period, there was an earthquake of a bang that vibrated my already
sore spine.

"You can just convince your other friends, you know that?" I said, trying to get my voice through the thundering banging. "Why go there anyways when it's not your thing? Or so I hope it's not."

"C'mon, we've been stuck in your apartment for days, Chloe. We haven't communicated with anyone except ourselves! Social media can only take us so far."

"And social media is my limit, Rachel I'm not as social as you."

"And I'm not even social. That's sad, Price."

"Says the one who got invited to one of those god damn cliché alcoholic-college parties. How did you even manage to score an invitation to one of those, did they even look at your choice of clothing?"

"I shouldn't be offended by that, but I somehow am." I could practically hear the eye roll at the beginning just from Rachel’s tone of voice.

"That wasn’t meant to be taken as an offense, but I’m somehow glad you took it that way.” I took a pause before speaking her next statement. “And there’s a limit to the types of people I can handle socializing with; you know that, Rachel. Being a party animal and a drunk pleeb isn’t on my list.”

There was a long sigh as my answer. I could see her pinching her nose from here.

“Look, if socializing is the thing that’s pulling on your damn chain: who said you had to separate from me? God knows you never do in social events,” Rachel mumbles the last sentence before continuing, “you can follow me around and not say a word unless necessary. I only want you coming along because I can’t do this alone; I’m a tad bit less intimidated when I know there’s a familiar face around, and I know damn well you know the feeling too.”

My shoulders slumped as I released an annoyed sigh through my gritted teeth.

*You just had to add that last sentence, I thought, rolling my eyes. Come on, Price. It's just one time...and you’re done.*

“Basing on the…rather eerie silence, I’m guessing that hit the spot?”

Groaning, I persuaded my legs to lift up my whole body again, and prepared myself to the upcoming smug face Rachel probably has on her if she was able to hear the shuffling through the door.

I twisted the doorknob and pulled it, revealing Rachel with that predictable expression and an additional crossed-arm pose with all her weight on one leg.

Her mouth sculpts into a grin when our gaze met. "Had your fun in Chloe's Cave?"

Sidestepping her teasing question, I furrowed my eyebrows when I took in her choice of clothing; flannel and ripped jeans...that’s new to her taste.

"Uh…have I been taking to a whole ‘nother different person?"

With a half-hearted laugh, Rachel responded. "Yeah, I went shopping while you were hanging out with Kate. I kind of like this style and might keep it. And for this thing," —she rubbed her earring —"I found it somewhere around my bed. But the pair wasn't anywhere near it and it wasn't a big deal to find the other. I like this the way it is."
"Yeah, I guess we both agree on that. Anyways, since this is some party, and I know my style is forbidden in there. Got anything for me by chance?"

"Well duh, did you even see the extra bag I got?" She pointed to her bed that laid a plastic bag; a skull tank-top was peeking through.

_is she...is she serious? It was already impressive enough that she managed to pry me out of the bathroom, but I'm not wearing that._

"That...doesn't seem like my style, Rach," I said while I rub my forearm, visibly intimidated.

"Dude, and so is this," she gestured to herself. "You're already in this deep, and I'm not letting you back away now. C'mon, let's just see if it fits."

"Rachel—"

"Ugh, Chloe," she interrupted, stretching out the words. "You're so god damn whiney. You took enough of my time by fucking making me chase you around the fucking room and persuade you to get out of that fucking bathroom and I'm not letting you get away because you don't want to wear the fucking clothes."

"Geez, did I strike a nerve or something, god damn," I said, recoiling my head back from the sudden F bomb.

"I'm not letting you stall either, so there's no other option, Chlo." With a languid attempt, she tosses the bag of clothes onto my hands. "Now get changed, hippie."

_I agreed to this bullshit. Might as well go all the way instead of beating the bush_, I thought while glaring at the bag stuffed with clothes.

Uh..wow.. I thought in tone of amazement. _Who even am I right now?_

A necklace dangled around my neck that was laced into three bullets with a skull tank top that exposed my black bra. I tried countless of times to try to hide them into the straps but they demanded attention, so I left it as it is. Rachel bought me an identical flannel so she could mute out the complaining I spat out about the tank top; to which she got frustrated at when I saw that I was good. She also bought me a replica of faded rip jeans, only light blue with some suspenders strapped around the pockets.

_Psht...if only my parents could see me now. They'd cry until they've cause a world-wide flood._ I attached a blue beanie to my head while I formed a smirk at my last thought. When I was satisfied that the mirror wasn't lying to me, I escaped the bathroom and met Rachel at the parking lot, a smug smile plastered across her mouth when she detected me strolling by.

She was about to comment on my outfit or something until I lift up my right hand, stopping her from speaking right on time that she only sputtered a stutter. "I know. Let's just get this over with so I can lock myself in my apartment again."
She rolled her eyes from my rude intro, and gestured me to come closer. "C'mon you punk, I'd like to be early for this. I didn't get invited for nothin'."

"For real? You want to be early? I never thought I'd hear the day you'd be invited to parties like this, but this is a whole new level: you saying that you want to be the first guest there instead of being purposely late," I said in disbelief. I can't understand why she sounded so eager to come. "And who invited you anyways? I can't believe they think you're one of those party animals."

She flashed me a transformation of an emotionless glare to a skeptical smile. "You'll never know what you'd miss out. And, the guy that invited me is kind of the reason."

Now I was curious. "Hitting the bad-boy phase already?"

Rachel seemed to get through the filter of my message and answered with an elbow to the ribs. "Shut up! But from a different perspective, yeah. I like the dude," she says with an unshameful grin at the last fact. "I never knew I'd fall for those types of guys."

"What do you mean? What 'type' is he?"

"Not the gentlemen kind you'd expect at first, but first expressions can really be deceiving..."

"Rachel, stop dropping hints, just tell me! That only feeds my curiosity," I replied with irritation and rattled her upper arm. "C'mon, there's no punishment on telling me."

Rachel gives an airy laugh before brushing my grip off her arm. "Man, you're really nosy Chloe."

"Oh please, like you wouldn't be if I had a crush?"

"That's...a good point."

"Jesus Rachel, stop stalling! Just tell me, there's nothing to be embarrassed about."

"Then there's a reason on why I'm stalling if I'm not telling you," she says, her voice surprisingly barely above a whisper.

"What? What do you mean; I'm not a person to judge, Rachel. You know you're my best friend."

She sighed and her pace suddenly stopped. "I know; I just don't know how to say this, really. I was surprised to hear this myself, and I don't know how you would react."

"Only one way to find out." I took a step forward to her. "You can trust me, you know that?"

The silence that she left as an answer was painful to manage. I really want her to trust me on this, and I'm getting more nosy by the seconds passing.

After a quite few seconds of choking silence, Rachel sighs before deciding to speak. "He's...a drug dealer, Chloe."

I nodded with acknowledgement and lips pursed inwards. "Cool."

WHAT?!

She seemed surprise from my relaxed reply. "Really? That's it?"

"Yeah. What, you think I was going to over react with this?" I said with a cocked eyebrow.
"Uh, yeah, who wouldn't? I mean, come on, I like a drug dealer Chloe!"

I shrugged. "Love is love, Rachel. I didn't expect this, but we all have our perspectives on people."

HER PERSPECTIVE IS SHIT.

"Uh, wow, Chlo. I'd never expected this from you. Remind me to never doubt you ever again," She says with a rather embarrassed-sounding laughter.

I smiled, swathing my arm around her neck and created a pace for both of us to follow. "Noted."

I'm going to tattle this shit with everyone.

Party.

My eyes examined the room while my back was leaned into a wall, with thumbs dangling from my jean pockets and an index finger rapidly tapping into my hip. It seemed to convince the bystanders since they didn't ask what's the matter or anything, which peeled off some anxiety that was already on my shoulders. I'm seriously at the edge of a melt down if I can't find a room to vent in; acting can only satisfy my nerves so far; the iris within my eyes are probably even trembling right now and my palms are starting to feel wet and slippery.

Why am I panicking? Probably because I've lost a familiar face from the sea of strangers around me.

Wow, who would've thought she didn't keep her promise when her lover-boy is nearby? Rachel, where the fuck are you? My panic is starting to become visible as my right heel is beginning to bounce rapidly while my nails are scraping against my jeans.

I took out my phone, swiftly scrolling through my contacts until I found our chat.

Chloe: Rachel

Chloe: Rachel

Chloe: Rachel

Chloe: RACHEL!! Where the heck are you???

Chloe: This is NOT funny I swear I will leave you in this party if you’re messing with me right now
Chloe: RACHEL FUCKING AMBER DO YOU HEAR ME

Chloe: RACHEL

My thumbs were blindly texting by the last text. I didn't want to bomb her phone any further because of my rising anxiety, but I was starting to think that I could kill for a peaceful atmosphere and that might not even be a fucking hyperbole anymore.

My eyes scanned the area, seeing if I could find a spot that isn't occupied by anyone. Bodies and hands traveling around the air were blocking my sights of any doors—until a couple of strangers drifted away, revealing an exit.

I didn't care if it was a closet that was stuffed with materials or not, I needed some space before I embarrass myself by crying or something.

My legs automatically reacted with a neck-breaking pace that was masked into a speed walk to the direction of the white door. The people seemed to sense my presence since they repelled away from my path.

I rudely brushed a couple of shoulders until I was met with the door, which I practically ripped out of the wall when I opened it. I slammed the door shut and turned around to catch a sight I hadn't notice before.

Oh. Fuck.

There was a body that sat in the toilet seat, her spine was pressed against the tank and their heels were resting on the 'corners' of the rim. Elbows were on top of her knees with a bottle in her hands while her head was dipped down between them. She didn't seem to notice I entered her scene, but their head came up a little when I slammed the door, only to go back down.

I heard a barely audible sniffle with faint words. "This room is occupied."

"Uh...the door wasn't locked," I replied awkwardly and hesitantly. "I'm sorry, sh-should I go?"

She laughed in a drunken matter and her head lifted high enough so I could see a visible water line around her cheeks and bags under her eyes. "Nah, I needed company after all this shit." Her tone was slurred.

"Obviously. You look like a hot mess," I found myself saying. Surprisingly, I didn't stop myself from the lines of; "Want to talk about it?"

She seemed evenly surprised as me, only brows furrowed while her head turned painfully slow towards my direction. "You actually give a damn about what's happening to me?"

"Hey, c'mon, not everyone's heartless."

To that, she snorted. "Is that scientifically proven? It's a shame that I don’t always believe what I hear."

I didn't know what to say, so I just invited the silence to flood the atmosphere. At least that gave me a little time to investigate on her persona a little more.

Her appearance was an identical tank top as me with black bra straps showing; only the design of the top was different. It was a doe kind of like Rachel's, only hers was a realistic style instead of cartoonish. She also wore the same jeans as me, same fabric straps from the pockets, but her jeans were
stained black with a couple more straps wrapping around her thigh. Her brown Chuck Taylor boots were faded and beaten up; it looks like it's about to fall apart. Her hair took the shape of a short haircut with a tiny pony-tail and bangs swiped to the side that was long enough to frame her face. It was also dyed red from the bottom, transforming into pink from the top. The side of her neck was inked and so was her right arm, and the design was twigs taking the shape of tangled vines and in the center was a doe with a butterfly landing on its right ear; along with puny sized butterflies around it. Her neck just had a massive fucking blue butterfly on it.

After some moments of painful silence, she broke it with a sigh, "As...far as I know, and letting you know: It's just one bad break up. I'm not going to spill much into detail with a person I don't even know."

I was about to introduce myself until her hand shot up. "Don't even bother. I wouldn't even remember your name after tonight."

I frowned, which she didn't care to comment on. My frown transferred into a concerned one when the girl tried standing up, to which she almost fell down until my arms shot up for her support.

"God dammit," she mumbled when I led her to the sink. Her digits ripped into the side of them, transferring her arm that was around my neck towards the other side. "You got 'a car?"

"Excuse me?"

"I want to go home, you dumbass. I can't drive there, for obvious reasons." She shot me a glare when her tongue slipped into the word 'dumbass,' which I flinched at.

"Uh...where do you live?"

"Where do you live?"

"What?"

"I won't give you my address, you're a fucking stranger."

"And it's okay for you to know mine?" I spat back.

"Does it look like I give a damn? I want to get out of this hellhole, and I know you do too," she replied with venom in her tongue. Her words might as well shoot bullets at this point.

And I didn't want to argue with her, since it was true. I've wanted to get out of this pit ever since I laid my eyes on the house. She’s probably the only excuse for me to leave appropriately.

So, I gave in with a sigh. "Fine, I'll take you to my apartment."

Chloe's Apartment.
A strand of hair tickled my cheek, causing a prickling feeling which I furrowed my eyebrows at in response. The golden ray of sun broke through my eyelids; causing them to brutally close tighter. My hand reached for a blanket to cover my head and....wait, a blanket?

My eyes shot open when I noticed my body was bundled into soft wool. I propped myself with one elbow and noticed the unfamiliar room I was surrounded in.

Well...not really, my vision still fucking sucks. It's all a blur, but I didn't recognize the colors or anything.

Where...the hell am I? I scanned the room until my eyes was met with a girl who was sitting upon a couch with a coffee in hand; which she was staring at. The steam splashed into her face, creating some moist skin.

I squinted when my vision was blocked with blur again, to which I rubbed my eyes that was followed by a groan.

That captured the blonde's attention. Her eyes were locked into me, an eyebrow raised. "Oh. Good morning." Her attention went back to her coffee. "Hope my bed was comfortable...you have a hangover?"

"Way more comfortable than mine, actually," I replied honestly that was followed by a yawn. "And no, I don't feel anything...weird and relieved."

The girl grinned. "Good. Glad to hear that my struggles of forcefully making you drink water was somehow worth it."

I snorted and gave a sarcastic-sounding "Thanks." And she only nodded to that.

And after a few moments of silence, I struck up another conversation. "So...I was drunk?"

"And sobbing your ass out," she finishes with a sleepy voice, lazily stirring the tea spoon inside the rim of the mug. "You begged...no, forced me to take you to my apartment. I agreed since I also didn't want to be there and that hellhole didn't seem to help you out either. it was a win-win situation."

"Sobbing my a—? Oooh...shit." Memories came gushing in at mid-sentence. The sudden silence and the plate-sized eyes that were probably plastered on me gave a concerned look on the blonde's face.

She stood up with her coffee in hand, taking a step towards me. "Hey, are you all right?" she asked with cautiousness filling in her voice. I didn't say anything for moment. The pang of confusion that the memories scratched onto me flooded my functioning emotions.

I waited until she was a meter away with her rear sitting on her ankle to say anything. "Hey, did I tell you why I was sobbing my ass out?"

"Uh...no. Not all of it though—"
"What do you mean by ‘all of it’?"

"Well, you told me it was a bad break up thing—"

"Ugh, that's already too much information for you to know," I said through my hands with a soft *plop* sound when my upper-body rammed back into the mattress. "And I thought my drunk ass would already know that—"

"Look, could you at least give me the opportunity to finish one damn sentence?" I blonde said with a surprising harshness in her tone that made me peak through my fingers.

*I'd be more intimidated and respectful if she didn't look like a damn child in those pajamas…*

Speaking of her appearance, she modeled a black t-shirt with three baby chickens in the center with the word "ROCK" above them that was paired up with *very* short black boxers.

*It's....cute, I guess. I'll give her that.*

"Okay, sorry. I'm not a person that really knows the word 'respect.'" I lowered my hands down to my sides to prop myself up once again. "I didn't even ask your name, too. Pardon my manners, Miss…?"

I waited for her to finish my sentence. It only took a few seconds for her to generate a polite response. "Chloe. Chloe Price."

I smiled. "Nice to meet you, Chloe Chloe Price." I shot out my hand. "I'm Max Max Caulfield: The Punk with the Reputation. Delighted to meet your acquaintance."

I managed to get a weak chuckle from her with my frivolity manner and I grinned at that.

*Score!*

When her laughter quickly died out, she gave me her coffee. "Well, Max Max Caulfield, I don't know if you like coffee or not, but I prepared this for you."

*Well, I'm not a big fan of coffee but it's sweet that she…wait did she just say…?*

I furrowed my eyebrows with disbelief and lifted my upper-body a little higher. “Uh, come again…?"

Chloe raised an eyebrow. “‘Well, Max Max Caulfield, I don't know if you like coffee or not, but I prepared this for you.’ Is that clear enough?”

“‘I prepared this for you…’ is she fucking with me?"

"For me?" I stretched my neck towards her when my throat hit the word 'me,’ and my index finger stabbed into my chest. "Are you serious?"

Chloe lifted an eyebrow. "Who else would I prepare this for, an imaginary friend?"

"Who else would I prepare this for?" Those words hit me harder than it should have. To others, it wouldn't be a big deal and they'd already have grabbed the cup and gave their thanks to them at this moment.

But for someone like me? As far as I know from my friends that seen me drunk, I could be a pain in the ass, but a stranger that witnessed *only* my bitchy and disrespectful side offered me coffee? In
As far as…basically everyone can tell: I’m not really familiar to random acts of kindness or small gestures. I actually can’t remember the last time someone did that…besides this moment, of course.

C’mon, say something you asswipe! At least a "thank you"!

I pushed myself to speak, but my mind wasn't ready for a reply. "I—uh, uhm," was all that I could process. After that fail attempt, I cleared my throat and reached out for the mug. "Uhm, thanks hippie."

God dammit, Caulfield, since when did you shitting stutter?

She giggled from my attempts to which, I plastered on a playful sulk frown, but it only lasted for a second until I chuckled along. She handed me the mug, and I moved to transfer it into mine. While I was examining the rim of the mug and moved it in other angles to avoid spilling coffee in her mattress, she rested her elbows above her thighs and rested her chin against her palm, watching my movement.

When I was in the middle of consuming the liquid, Chloe spoke. "You hungry, Pinky?"

I almost spat the coffee out like it was venom, but I swallowed in time.

Pinky? Jesus, this girl is full of surprises.

Forcing the liquid down my throat, I coughed faintly into my elbow and faced away to face the wall. I turned to face her when my small coughing fit was done. She's looking for a response from me.

"Sorry, you just surprised me from the nickname."

She shrugged. "Reddy, or Red doesn't seem too fitting." Again, she asked: "Are you hungry?"

"Um, now that I think about it, yeah; I am," I replied while aiming the mug to my mouth again. I sipped some in before I could ask her; "Why?"

Chloe got up and towered over me with eyebrows furrowed and she looked at me like I was stupid. And running through what I just said, I wouldn’t blame her for that.

"Why? I mean, you just woke up and you didn't eat anything as far as I know." She walked into the kitchen while she was still responding to my question.

I stayed quiet for a while until my eyes proceeded to grow when I knew what she was doing. "Wait, you're serving me breakfast in bed?"

She looked up after she held up a plate and smiled at me. "Well, I didn't ask you to get up, right?"

My body automatically responded by lifting my upper-body until I was sitting up and sat in front of Chloe's direction, crossing my legs while holding the mug between my heels with two hands bundled around them. "Dude, you are literally my favorite person right now," I said with a childish grin on my face.

"Glad I earned the title." She hands me a plate of pancakes with golden syrup racing down the brim with a friendly smile.

The sight made my mouth water and I traded my coffee with her, staring into the ponds of honey.
"Good, cause you *fucking* deserved it."

After I finished the demands of more pancakes and coffee that Chloe started to reject, I pushed breakfast away and decided to learn more about her. I found out that we had some things that I never thought we'd have in common. The likes of movies, shows, idles, and the list will go on!

I also find out that she goes to Blackwell, some private senior high school that I got kicked out of for graffiti in the dorms and *inappropriate comments* towards basically anyone familiar within the school’s grounds.

"You *seriously* don't think that drawing a *penis* at the back of Blackwell won't make the staffs mad?" Chloe said in a *really?* voice and expression while squeezing in a chuckle in the middle of her question.

"C’mon, at least I have sense of humor!" At that, Chloe laughed and covered her mouth while leaning back. "The old place needed some decoration anyways."

"I agree with that, but not a bunch of dicks would help bedazzle the school."

"We all have our opinions, Price."

“And your opinion is shit.”

"Hey! Watch that potty mouth."

As much as I wanted to stay, I needed to bail. When I checked my phone to see what time it was and told her I needed depart, I could've sworn I could detect the slightest frown that was tugging on the corners of her mouth. Though, it only happened for a moment until she pursed her lips in a straight line and tugged her head to the direction of the front door with her arms wrapped around her chest.

Even though she did a good act of playing normal, I can sense that she was down from the lack of emotion in her smile, so I tried to bring the light back up. "Promise to keep that pirate booty safe? And you can take that out of context if you’d prefer that," I said in a gaiety matter with a sly wink and grinned when Chloe managed to chuckle.

"All for you," Chloe says with an impish smile.
I cocked an eyebrow. “Which way did you take that pun?”

“Which way you wanted me to take it.” Chloe smirks after that. "And assuming from your pinkish tint, I think I knew which way you thought of."

*What?*

I felt a cheek and turned my back to Chloe, earning a snicker from the girl. "That's just my automatic go-to choice if it involves something inappropriate."

"Penny for your thoughts?"

"Go fuck yourself, Chloe."

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*Chloe's P.O.V*

When Max left the area, my smile wavered a little on the corners. I wiggled my toe on the ground to sway myself left and right in the swivel chair for a moment, trying to shave off the feeling of being left alone.

*Might as well check up on Rachel. I haven't heard from her since last night,* I thought, standing up when I mentioned her name in my head. I peeled my phone off from my back pocket and scrolled down to our chat.

**Chloe: Rachel? You there??**

I stared at the phone for a solid minute before I gave up and dangled my arms to my sides. *I was never this desperate for hanging out with someone. I'm usually happy when I have no plans…but I just feel like socializing today.*

When I was making up a conversation in my head, I went back to the swivel chair and spun myself a couple times to the point when I was starting to get dizzy. I transferred to watch out on a window to try to distract myself from the thoughts of missing Max, or Rachel. When I pulled a chair in front of the window to sit on, I rested my chin on my palm and watched the scene below me.

*Cars, trees, some puddles and...red hair?* My upper-body leaned closer on a particular person that caught my attention. *Max?*

The figure stopped mid-step when Chloe thought of the punk's name. Max turned around to the entrance with a face of realization. Her mouth was filled with gritted teeth and her hands turned into a fist a second later.

*What is she doing?* Chloe thought when Max started to walk back and forth until her pace came to
an end. She looked down for a moment while nibbling her index finger until she reached down in her back pocket to snatch her phone. Her thumb flung up every time she scrolled down into her sea of contacts until she halted it and her expression turned into a confused one. Max tapped the screen and held her phone with two hands, madly bashing onto her screen.

*Jesus, what is she so—* Chloe’s phone vibrated in her lap. Her head sharply turned towards the direction of the phone and grabbed it, seeing a notification on the screen.

**Pinky: who dis?**

*Oh, right. I gave her my number when she was asleep. Good thing thumbprint scanners exist,* Chloe explained in her head. She started to type.

**Chloe: First mate at your service.**

**Pinky: whoa, chloe? how did you get my number**

**Chloe: Thumbprint scanners. Great invention.**

**Pinky: ok, smartass i get it. ever heard of personal space?**

**Chloe: You technically asked for it.**

**Pinky: that’s your excuse. you knew i was drunk.**

**Pinky: glad you did though**

**Pinky: man, i freaked out for a second cause i remembered that i didnt ask for ur number.**

I looked up at the window and saw that Max was smiling at her screen while biting her bottom lip. I grinned at how she looked like a child in the middle of a parking lot.

**Chloe: How come?**

**Pinky: i wanted to keep intact with you and i didnt want to come running back to ur room and ask for it.**

**Chloe: Why didnt you want to come back?**

**Pinky: damn, you ask a lot of questions**

**Pinky: i didnt want to look like an idiot**

**Chloe: First of all, that was only 2 questions. Secondly, you’ve already done that.**

**Pinky: fight me hippie**

I giggled from her silliness and looked up at the window again to see that she was smiling from ear to ear. *She's such a fucking child.*

**Chloe: Is that a challenge?**

**Pinky: all right whatever**
Pinky: hey do u still have that swivel chair?

Chloe: Not like I just threw it away when you left. Why?

Pinky: can i have it?
all she ever wanted to be is normally insane.

Chapter Summary

Max decides to hang around Chloe's room after she goes back to the house where the party was hosted to find out what happened to Rachel.

Though, Max found more about Chloe than what Chloe knows about herself and Rachel combined.
She then decides to vow to strengthen their friendship.

Chapter Notes

sorry for not uploaded "daily." i was on vacation and we didn't bring the laptop that had the chapters in it, so yeah.

there'll probs be another upload idk

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Chloe's Apartment.

Max's P.O.V

I walked through the halls of the hotel with my thumbs secured in my pockets while whistling an unfamiliar tune. My eyes scurried across the digits printed onto the doors while my walk rearranged into a gallop-like pace with my heels bouncing on every step.

*Uh..Room 221, Room 222, Room 223...Fuck. I'm lost.*

My pace halted when the memory of Chloe's room number was forgotten. I reached for my back pocket and pealed my phone from its place, pulling the screen to my eye-level and swiped down to our latest conversation that was a day ago.

*Yesterday | Unknown: Max, what makes you think that I'd give you my chair just by asking that?*

*Yesterday | max: u could've been a sweetheart and just gave it to me*

*Yesterday | Unknown: It's my favorite chair, though.*

*Yesterday | max: its mine, too*
Yesterday | Unknown: You've only been to my room once and you're already picking your favorite furniture?

Yesterday | max: hey that chair can fuckin spin

Yesterday | Unknown: You learn something new each day.

Yesterday | max: ur dead meat, price

Yesterday | max: also what's ur room number again?

Yesterday | Unknown: I don't want to be dead meat, so I won't tell.

Yesterday | max: cmon don't be a dick chlo.

Yesterday | max: is it room 666 or some shit

Yesterday | Unknown: Just because I didn't give you my chair, doesn't mean I'm instantly Satan.

Yesterday | Unknown: Also, this apartment only has 355 rooms.

Yesterday | Unknown: And it's Room 219.

Yesterday | max: now that wasn't so hard was it?

Yesterday | max: ill be visiting in some times. Talk to u in a bit

Yesterday | Unknown: TTYL.

I wonder what she means by 'TTYL'? I don't want to look like a dumbass by asking her, though. I'll do some 'internet research' when my bidness is done around here, I guess. Also to rename her contact name. Anyways, it's Room 219. fuck, I missed it.

I peeled my eyes off the screen and looked at the door on my left, checking the platinum plate that sculpted the numbers '227.' At least I didn't wander off like an idiot too long.

I walked in reverse for a couple of steps while putting my phone back in its place before completely opposing my last pace to turn around and scan for the room numbers again.

Oh, there she is. 219, right? I thought, while I stood there for a second, staring at the digits marked into the plate attached to the door. I shrugged off the disapproving thoughts and pounded on the door with the side of my palm. I stayed frozen like death until I heard the faintest shuffling noises from the other side. Stepping back with my hands back into my pockets, I focused on the muted footsteps that
lurked behind the walls.

I barely left the door swing fully open to take a step in. "Hey, Can I chill here for the—woah," I said, interrupting myself and took a step back when Chloe's body triumphed my petite one, swallowing me whole in her shadow. "Jesus fuck, you're tall."

"You just noticed that today?" She replied in a frivolous tone. When I looked up at her, she gave me a reticent grin that I can't figure out. A mask, or a truthful appearance?

I decided to brush it off and gave a smug smile in return, patting her shoulder when I passed her tall figure. "I'm not an observer," I say when I plopped down on her swivel chair. I spun around once and stopped to see Chloe's expression betraying a hint of worry.

Though, I didn't want to point it out. "So, about this chair," I said instead, resting my elbows on the armrests with my digits meeting together and spread away; in a devilish matter.

"I'm not liking that impish smile.." Chloe muttered while walking towards me, only to sit with her legs crossed in-front of the chair. "And again, I like this chair too. You're not taking the swivel chair, for the 100th time, probably."

"What, do you have some kind of superpower that could allow you to read minds?" I said in a frolicsome matter, contagious enough to make Chloe sculpt a beaming smile that was just so damn adorable.

"Want to test my mad powers?" She said with a merry tone.

I lightly chuckled, standing up from the swivel chair and moved it back to sit in-front of Chloe with my legs crossed and pulled one knee up to rest my chin upon, bundling my arms around it. "I'll be proud to be your first subject."

"My only subject," Chloe corrected, earning a laugh from both of us.

When the air was dipped in silence, Chloe put a hand on top of my head, tilting her down and closed her eyes. I dipped my eyelids down and after a while, Chloe spoke. "Mm, you're thinking that.." she said, stretching the words. "This idea is stupid."

I grinned. "Ah, so you do have mad-powers, Che." I could sense the faintest blush painted on her face when she managed a chuckle from the new-founded nickname.

We both opened our eyes in identical timing, and I flinched back from how close our faces were. Chloe raised her eyebrows from the sudden movement.

"Uh, sorry. We were closer than I thought we were."

She smirks. "Yet, you didn't see me flinch way."

"What do you want, an award? A kiss?"

Chloe huffed and smiled, creating chaos with her hands scattering my hair, making me whine. Her smile extended to a grin and she stood up. "The second option sounds better, to be honest. They're both awards anyways."

The playful glare I bored at the back of her head vanished when she spoke, and I rose my brows.

....What?
"What are you, fucking gay?" I teased, with a little bit of curiosity on her answer.

"Oh shoot, you got me. What gave it away, my undying love for you?" I don't know why I had a little disappointment from the sarcasm in her voice.

Her back was facing me so I didn't fight back the blush on my cheeks.

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. Jesus, why do you always have to read comments in the wrong way? That was a fucking tease not a flirt, what the fuck Caulfield, she's not fucking gay—

"Hey, do you remember the address to the party like..two days ago?" She asked, dawdling to her closet.

"Two days ago? That felt like a thousand years ago, really," I replied with a reticent tone, covering my current abashed statement while scratching my head. "Uhh, didn't someone text you the deets?"

She stopped her browsing and her movement was gone; she's completely still when I announced 'someone'. I was cavalier in the situation because I didn't know what was happening, so what's to be sorry for? I didn't bother to produce an "Are you okay?" but I gave a worried stare that she couldn't see.

I was about to ask until her head started nodding. "Yeah. Yeah, someone did," she says, trying to hide her sorrow from in her voice. She took out her device from her back pocket and stole a peek to look at me; giving me a fake smile that was still taped onto her when she was scrolling through her contacts.

I was a second away of giving out a facetious statement until I stopped myself when I realized that it would make things worse.

I should treat this seriously...this could be sensitive or something.

So instead, I mustered the pinch of courage I had left and asked: "Don't give me that smile, Price. You seem out of it," I said ruefully.

"Yeah, sorry," she said in a plain matter, oblivious to my worry. "It's a friend from the party. She didn't return my calls or text; not even a visit." Chloe took out a t-shirt that was stained with a skull, placing under her armpit while her other hand brushed along the fabrics of shirts, nit-picking the minor errors from the designs.

Now that she mentions the party, I got'ta ask.. "Who's the party-pooper that invited your ass there, anyways?"

Now that it was spoken publicly, it didn't come out as I planned.

Shit, I didn't mean it like—

"The ass invited my friend and she dragged me along. If he invited my hipster bullshit, then the dude's trying to mess around with their parade." Chloe replied; with no betrayal of sorrow leaking in her voice.

God, her mood swings are confusing me to hell.

I still felt like I caused annoyance in her emotions, but I forced out a small chuckle. "When you're gone, I'll be keeping the chair warm for your return."
She turned her head to me when she was done browsing her closet and made a believable smile. "Don't break anything."

I held a palm up. "No promises, Chlo," and we shared a laugh.

*Your poker face is legit Price, but I know something’s up.*

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I bounced around in the swivel chair, twirling with a toe on the ground as my anchor as I sway myself to and fro while I waited for Chloe to change into her punk outfit. Fiddling with my phone, I re-read old and recent text messages until I got to a chat that caught my attention and furrowed my eyebrows. I squinted at the sight of the words, trying to regain the blurred memory from that night.

2d ago | nate: max meet m—

"BOO-yah!" A voice said, interrupting my reading that was followed by a deafening *bang* that seems to vibrate the floor.

My heart jumped and I was taken aback from the surprise, my nails digging down where my heart was suppose to be beating. *"Jesus fuck, Chloe!"

She entered the scene with her shoulders bouncing from laughing; a hand on her stomach and her smile was the light source of the room. "Oh my dog, that was so worth getting out of my comfort zone."

I couldn't feel my heart at its place for a moment and I sighed in relief when I felt it beating in a dawdle pace. "You're an ass."

"I don't feel guilty for it yet," she replies, her smile never going down a price. (*no pun intended?)

I rolled my eyes and snorted, turning off my phone and threw it at a nearby couch, leaving the swivel chair and pushed Chloe to the door. "All right, up and at 'em; you got some bidness to take care of, Sherlock."

"Aye-aye, Watson," replied Chloe with a flippant manner, allowing me to push her towards to door.

I managed a chuckled; even with a light pond of visible blush was emerging in my cheeks.

When we arrived at the door, I tugged at her shoulders; making her stop. My hands left her to open the door. "Got your phone? You could text me when you're done with your 'investigation.' I wan 'a show my first mate somethin'."

"Yeah, I have my phone,"—Chloe reached for her back pocket to reveal it—"And I might as well tag along," she said with a smile. "Talk to you in about 30 minutes or so? Don't break anything, for the second time please."

"Ouch. You don't trust me, Price?" I said, leaning on the doorframe with my hands secured in my pockets; a smirk smothered on my face.
"We've known each other for literally three days. Slow down, Max," she chuckled, walking past the doorframe. "You can prove yourself worthy if I find my room all in one piece. But right now, I need to go and I can't talk much right now, so text me!" At the last sentence, she's practically running away, her frame shrinking by the seconds with her voice taking up a notch of volume.

I rolled my eyes and cupped my hands around my mouth. "C'ya too, hippie!"

When her figure vanished from taking a sharp right, I could hear a barely audible 'text me, you doof!' from her direction. I smiled, getting inside the room and closed the door.

I galloped towards the couch with hands secured, reaching for my phone when the screen suddenly came on with one notification.

Now |Unknown: You didn't break anything yet, did you?

Shit. Forgot to change her name. I'll fix it now, I guess. Smiling from her text, I quickly changed her contact name and madly bashed on my screen.

Now |max: im not that destructive dude. in some occasions.

Now |chlo: Was that last statement typed on purpose to stare me?

Now |max: chill, i wont be a total bitch aite.

Now |max: except your chair is in the same room.

Now |max: with me.

Now |max: right now.

Now |max: alone.

Now |chlo: Down, Max.

Now |chlo: I'll deal with you later, it's dangerous to walk and text.

I snickered, thumbs dashing across the keyboard on my screen until I saw Chloe typing.

Now |chlo: And if you're gonna call me a goodie-toe-shoe, might as well delete your text right now.

My eyebrows rose. Seriously, do you have some mind-reading superpower shit?

As a lady I am, I tucked my phone down my pocket, browsing Chloe's puny bookshelf.

Do Chloe's emotions have a mind of their own? Because I swear, it's like Inside Out in her hea— whoa, what have we here, Price? My fingers brushed past some torn books, revealing a hidden book that wasn't like the others. It was dyed as black material, colorful papers sticking out from the edges. What caught my attention was that it was labeled as 'Diary' in the front, getting me into my nosy statement. She...she wouldn't know. Unless there's some hidden cameras around the corner or something..is there? I was about to check the corners of the room, until I shook the thought off. God, when did you get so paranoid?

My fingers gripped the covers, pulling it off the shelf and claimed a seat on the swivel chair. I think this is the reason why she had that worried look on her face..I was close to the bookshelf after all. At
that thought, I started second guessing myself. Should I? The results were unanimous when I weighed the pros and cons, but my nosy trait pushed me on. God fucking dammit.

I abused myself verbally in my thoughts when I opened the journal, immediately feeling guilty, yet it seems like some of the burden that was laid on my shoulders flew off.

I took a deep breath and read the first page.

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**July 10th, 2008**

My name's Chloe Price. And my life has been officially dipped in shit. Good enough introduction for you? I hope so. But the question is; why am I even here? Like, writing all this shit down? I should be in bed or something, it's three in the morning. And here I am, thinking, "What a great day to start a diary!" when I don't even know what to write after everything happened all at once. I can't even force myself to be mad at them to begin with. I tried giving burdens in their shoulders when all they did was try to comfort me. Their words were bullshit, but I didn't know how empty I felt without those lies trying to blur the pain. Now look at your fucking life, Price; look what you've caused in everyone's lives. Your help is hurting, but you're denying shit. Denying the advice that would've helped everyone. Would've help yourself. Now that I realized this, I can start over. Save your breathe, Chloe Price; don't ruin another friendship.

Below the entry was a picture of, I guess, her friends. One guy and a girl; not including Chloe. Their arms were swathed around her, while she was rubbing her forearm. Chloe painted an awkward, shy smile while the others beamed with a grin, their heads tilted towards her with the guy's arm out of the frame that reached out to the picture, like taking a selfie. The girl posed with a 'rock out' sign with her tongue exposed.

What surprised me was that Chloe drew a big red X in everyone's face, and on top of that, scribbling their whole head; including hers. Because of that, I couldn't recognize her friend's features. What only showed were bits of blonde hair that came from the girl's head, with chestnut hair mixed with dyed jet-black poking out from the stains of markers from the boys' scalp.

 Damn, Chloe. What did you do? Or.. they did.

On the tip of the bottom left page, there was a doodle with blue stained paint spreading across the page. Artsy feature, I guess. The doodle marked the three friends following one another in a straight line with their arms outstretched for balance on the railroad tracks. Black ink covers the details above their chin, and a red one slashing across the doodle and across a written message that says 'BEST FRIENDS FOREVER' and replaced with dark ink that wrote **THEY'RE POSERS**

What? Didn't they comfort her? Err, with lies? Jesus Chloe, you're life isn't as perfect as I thought..

The next entry was writing in red ink, unlike the last one that was used with black. I guess she edited her doodles after this entry. Judging on the red ink that's written on all of them..
August 1st, 2008

Hey, Diary. Long time no see. It's nearly been a month since I've updated this crap. How'd you like the first entry? Crazy right? It doesn't all make right away, so I guess it sounded like nonsense,—to that, Max nodded in approval—S'cause I don't want to retell that fucked up story.

Oh, and speaking of a fucked up story, guess what? (—) you sick fuckers.

Ink concealed the words behind their names, preventing me to take a peak.

Did you not realize how much we all did meant so much to me? All of those moments? You lied to me for years and suddenly, you drop another bomb on me when my dad fucking dies? You both were my only anchor when he left me and I depended all my happiness to you only for it to completely vanish. I don't care if I couldn't remember the horrible things you've done to me, but that's just not acceptable. And you said it like it's completely normal, not even giving a fuck that I stood there with tears and doubt. The cops even gave me the evidence, like I wanted to grip on the memory that you held me captive. Stupid fuckers. I burnt the folder, but something just clicked inside me. Those were photos of us; when I was full of light and my life was perfect. When you guys actually gave a rats ass about me, or at least pretended to. So, I kept the folder, even though it was almost devoured by ash. Dog, I wish I wasn't this generous to people like you. I hid it somewhere, but I'm not reminding mysefl where. I want to forget that folder and everything that happened today. Maybe even looking at this diary would give me a pang of sadness, so I'll probably hide this for a couple of years until I completely forget about it and somehow find it again. Maybe even make a note for myself: "Chloe, don't look at the two other entries. Don't get nosy, please don't do it." It may seem stupid, but I'll do whatever if it helps me from forgetting this day. I'll find you some day, diary. Soon enough, I just might be able to pull off a perfect enough mask for people to find me as an innocent nerd.

It took time for me to translate the sloppy handwriting to actual English. When I reached the end of the entry, a mammothic amount of curiosity came impacting in me, but I couldn't move my finger to turn the page. I was just dumbfounded from the new information I had to Chloe's past.

Jesus fuck Chloe..I'm so sorry. I thought my life was shit just because of a fucking breakup..which, I have to talk to her about..but how am I suppose to act like everything's normal after all of this?! For now on, I'm never leaving her side. Even though if this was like..years ago, I'm positive that she's starting to remember shit. Depending on today, I guess.

I turned the page, finding two empty pages. Huh? C'mon, I'm positive that she found this and already made like thousands of entries. She probably skipped a couple of pages..

Passing some filled lacuna of entries, I finally spotted some ink in the past five pages.
January 12th 2013

Wow, looks like I found you, diary. For how many years have you been lost? Five years, right? Well, good thing Rachel got her nosy trait from me. She found you lying somewhere below my bed mattress. Wonder how that got there...but anyways, looks like past Chloe really didn't want me to sneak a peek from the past two entries. I respect myself, so I didn't. I don't know if Rachel did; probably not. But I did take a peek at the first entry date; 2008. Dang, you're old. I'm surprised you haven't fallen apart yet. Gee, I don't know what to actually write instead that we finally found you. After all these years (you're still Max Caulfield). So, I guess I'll write an entry for Rachel and Kate. Rachel and I met in Blackwell; she was my first friend. I still have to thank Mr. Zander for pairing us in art. It was an awkward introduction for both of us, s'cause she was known for her shyness, and I was known for invisibility. At least she had the courage to start a conversation, and it skyrocketed there. Later on, we've been inseparable and joined a sweet girl named Kate Marsh in our circle of friends. When we added her along, we've been doing tea sessions while talking about art and photography on a daily basis. When we found out that she took violin lessons, we planned to come in her dorm room just to play music; since I play the acoustic. Rachel's there for her joy of music —and again, we're inseparable! There's another guy that comes along the road and joins in sometimes, but that's for another story.

The thought of Chloe forgetting all of the pain brought a little tug on the corner of my lips.

It's great that she starts her life over and find friends that actually care...but I don't believe in happily ever afters that come this quick...even after five years.

There was a picture of Chloe and two girls next to her. One with amber, straight silky hair and the other with dirty blonde hair that was shaped into a bun. The amber girl made a smirk while the blonde made a shy smile, with Chloe beaming a grin. *Huh..Chloe had long hair before?* I examined the picture a little more; mostly focusing on the two girl's features. *Err..which one's Kate or Rachel? Uh, I guess the blonde, pale one is..Rachel? What does a Rachel look like, exactly? Whatever, she'll drop some hints on who's wh—*

Bzzt.

Bzzt

My phone got me to close the journal immediately, sharply turning my head towards the couch, where my phone was hidden. *Huh. That was thirty minutes already?* I put the journal back in its place, burning all the evidence that points to my snooping before answering the text message.

**Now | chlo:** Max, you there?

**Now | max:** where else would i be? U done with the case?

**Now | chlo:** Not exactly. I didn't find anything useful there, since the owners wouldn't let me in.

**Now | chlo:** You still want me to tag along your adventure you mentioned?
I thought about her journal for a bit, my smile faltering from the memory of the possibilities from what Chloe experienced. *Yeah..but a tiny little change in plan..you deserve better, Chlo.*

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**Parking Lot.**

*Chloe's P.O.V*

I waited for Max to respond to my text, knitting my eyebrows together when she didn't answer immediately.

*I mean, it's not a hard question Max..*

I stood in the middle of the parking lot, searching through every window that was attached to the apartment, until my eyes halted when I spotted a specific person with red hair visible near a window. *Max, what's going...Max?*

I could barely see her smile falter when she stared at her screen, her face made a sulked expression. Max looked behind her, locking her sights to my puny bookshelf until she looked back to her screen, her thumbs swiping through.

**Now | Pinky: yeah, ofc. where r u?**

**Now | Chloe: Parking lot. Get your ass down here.**

From that, I watched Max rip her head away from the screen to the window that exposed her, immediately spotting me. Max's hands were cupping her face when she pressed forward to the window, her grin extended in size. I smiled and chuckled from her rapid waving that died out when her figure vanished to the door.

I stood there with hands secured in my pockets, lost in thought. *That wasn't a hard question Max. I know you snooped around in my room. I would let that slide unless you found...*

My eyes widened when I realized something.

*My..diary..I was in full panic now. My diary...my diary! She found it! Fuck, no wonder why she looked so sad when she looked at my fucking bookshelf, she read the first two entries! I should've kept that note, fuck!*

I wanted to pace around to push my anxiety down, but I didn't want Max to question it; so I pulled off a calm and awkward standing poster when I found her petite figure through the glass entrance. *Play it cool. Play it cool. Don't question her now, just..wait, Price.*

"Aye, Detective Clover, how's it goin'?" Max said in a jolly voice, galloping to my direction. "Ready to jet out 'a here? Small change of plans where I planned to take you, though."

"I wouldn't care where we go now; I need a break from all the arguing I did for my investigation," I answered with a convincing tired sigh while trying to matching her pace to walk beside her.

"Ah. Then care for splish-splash?"
"Splish-splash?"

"You sound like you don't know what I'm saying, Chlomydia." With that, she blocked my path and crossed her arms. "Yay or nay?"

I was taken aback from the surprise blockage, so I took a step back and stammered. "Uh, w..we don't have swim suits with us—"

"Easy problem. Skinny dipping."

My eyes widened while I could feel a visible puddle of blush emerging from my cheeks. "W-what?"

She smirked. "You heard me. Skinny dipping."
"Max, I—"

"Chloe, I'm not letting you back down. It took most of my time to actually make you say 'yes' and I'm not spending more to convince you again," Max said with an abusive tone, harsh enough to make me flinch when she sharply turned her head to me as her tongue slipped into the word again. "If it means to force you into this shit, then fine. You're coming with me, enough said."

Max sat on her ankles, a knob in her eye-level with a bobby pin in hand that she fished in her pockets. She gave me a glare that was exploding with contemptuous and irritation: more than enough to fill me with fear to continue arguing.

When I was visibly frightened by her, her glare transitioned into one full of guilt. "I…Sorry, Chloe. It's just that I'm excited to do this with someone, for the first time in ages. I still remember the blast I had the last time I've done this." Max's face turned doleful and her voice dropped into hushed volume along her last sentence, lowering her glare.

"...Ah, so I'm not really your first mate?" I said, trying to sound oblivious from her quick transformation of anger to sulk.

I could barely detect the slightest lift from the corner of her mouth that was barely visible to the human eye when I forced out a believable dry chuckle.
Max didn't keep the conversation going. Instead, she focused on picking the lock of the Blackwell entrance to the pool, looking more neutral than her saddened state. I stood behind her with my hands covered by my front pants pocket, double checking if anyone's around the abandoned school area now and then.

While I browsed through the empty windows with my eyes, the sound of a door unlocking peeled my attention off from the windows, finding the sight of Max standing up and twisting the knob from one of the double doors.

When she stood up, she looked at me with an ardent grin. "Looks like I spent enough time with Frank."

I tilted my head and furrowed my eyebrows from the mention of an unfamiliar name. Max just dismissed my confused look with a wave of her hand. "It's nothing important. C'mon, I'd like to do this when step-douche isn't patrolling this area!"

With that, she gripped my hand with both of hers while walking backwards towards the double doors, tugging me along, her childish grin still beaming.

"Your step-dad works here?" I question while she practically dragged me inside the building.

"Uh, I don't have a step-whatever," Max answered with an acerbic tone. "Step-dad and step-douche are two different things. His name is Dennis: the head security of cactus's cause he teaches everyone to become a prick."

*Oh. He's that paranoid ass who wants to install cameras around the campus. Calling parents or step-parents by their first name is really rude, but I can see why she calls him step—*

"Holy shit!" Max tugged on my hand harder than she should have and sent me fighting for my balance. She side-stepped and grabbed the back of my t-shirt just in time, one of her hands still attached to mine and I felt her squeeze it a little. Max dragged my back to my feet, finding me with my cheeks dipped in visible pink.

She smiled. "It's nothing to be embarrassed about, we all trip from time to time."

I forced out a laugh. "Yeah...I know."

Max patted my back, her finger tips slipping away from mine when she went ahead of me. "Come on you slow ass, I ain't gon'na be here all night."

I huffed and shuffled behind her while rubbing the back of my hand with my thumb. Max suddenly stopped and turned to me on the balls of her heels, an impish smile tapped onto her mouth.

And I cocked an eyebrow.

"Okay, Chloe," Max says, stopping in the middle of the girl's and boy's locker room. "Time for a little test. Do you have a vagina," she gestures towards the girls restroom and gestures to the boys after, "Or a penis?" She stopped her motion to look at me, waiting for a response.

"Max..."

"What?" she says with a snicker, "I wouldn't know. I never exactly got in your pants yet."

"Yet—?"
"Do you have a goddamn penis or vagina Chloe, nothing more nothing less," Max interrupts with a rather high voice, "or do you want me to look and determine myself?"

My cheeks were beaten-down red and my eyes went wide that it made it look like my iris shrunk, my head recoiling back with my eyebrows cocked up. "No! N-no, I most definitely have a vagina...

"Pfft. You're fucking adorable." Max's smug smile turned into a grin as she entered the room I decided. "A'ight, I'ma see if the pool is heated."

I stood there for a moment, dumbfounded and abashed with cheeks still ignited of red. How mature of you, Max, I thought as I entered the boy's locker room instead. Just...Whatever. I'll buy a little time by searching the lockers for a little bit. I go into the girl's locker room almost every day, so it's kind of...monotonous, I explained to myself when I started browsing opened lockers, trying to steer my thought somewhere else.

I came across a locker that was no doubt Warren's. Not the design of the locker, I doubt you can design them, but what was inside. There was nothing occupied in the locker, but a picture that he developed. It was a selfie of him, but squeezed in a photoshoped picture of me behind him, smiling at the camera.

I was definitely not there when he took this. I wonder why he added me on though, I questioned in my head, putting the picture back inside and closing the locker. I don't want to snoop around too much and leave Max hanging. She really wanted me to tag along and almost destroyed me when I tried backing off, too.

As I started a conversation in my head, I made a gallop-like pace when I exited the room, spotting Max sitting beside the pool with her hand inside the water and made waves.

"Yo, Chloe, try finding the lights for the pool; it looks dark as fuck here even in the daylight," She said with eagerness.

"Care to help?" I said with a raised brow.

"I don't think you're desperate enough to ask a senior drop-out for directions to a school you're familiar with, Max. I'm sure you can find it." Her attention was brought back to the water, drawing above the surface of the liquid.

I hesitated to ask the question that was in my head, but I wasn't comfortable with her plan. "Hey, uh Max?"

"S'up, hippie?"

"D.. Did you say that we had to, um.. Skinny dip?"

"Well, I didn't say that it was a requirement...but I didn't say that it was optional either," she replied, shaking the liquid that stuck in her hand. "But, I guess it is if it saves my breath for convincing you to stay."

Max had a hint of sorrow in her voice leaking from her emotionless reply. I was almost confused when I caught it.

I had my answer, so I nodded and left to find the lights. But one question developed in my head from her response; was she looking forward for me skinny dipping?

I furiously blushed when all the evidence I received pointed to yes.
The glimpse of sadness in her eyes.

The wisp of sorrow in her voice.

And the lack of emotion in her smile.

*No, no, no. She's just sad because... Of other things,* I tried convincing myself, even though there wasn't *anything at all* that would make her blue because I asked the question if skinny dipping was required or not.

*Whatever, I'll try to find the light switch. Good thing I go to Blackwell, otherwise we'll be stuck in here trying to find it,* I say, trying to distract myself.

I went into the office, immediately finding the switch as I entered the tiny room. I pressed a button, inventing a loud sound as it switched on.

When the pool brightened, Max got up from her spot, grinning at the sight of the running water. She went out of frame of the window while taking off her shirt in the process. I caught a glimpse of her naked back, and I automatically turned around to prevent it from coming in my field of view. My cheeks burnt from the sight, but it lasted only for seconds when I calmed myself down. I took a deep breath, hearing a splash behind me afterwards.

My head turned around, catching Max's head above the surface. From the reflection of the water, she *certainly* was skinny dipping. I nibbled my lip while I shuffled to the exit of the office.

Max caught the sight of me and gave an eager smile. "Aw man, this still feels like a massive hot tub! Joining the swimming team doesn't seem that bad as it sounds anymore if the water feels like this all the time," She says, fiddling with the liquid. "Too bad I got expelled before I had the chance to try this out."

I didn't say anything. I just smiled.

"Are you gon'na join me hippie? There's room for everyone y'know," she said, lowering an eyebrow.

I responded with silence, giving her a smirk in return.

She gave me a smirk of her own, bending her elbows to her shoulders and made tides towards my sneakers.

I stepped back, avoiding most of the splash. "Hey! Don't be a dick!"

"I'll stop being a dick if you stop being such a pussy," she taunted.

I laughed, giving in with a sudden wave of bravery. "That's a done deal, Caulfield." I proceeded to peel off my shirt, until a swivel chair came to my attention. I smirked, capturing an idea.

*Okay, Max. I'll join in. But not without style.*
I didn't think she would've given up that easily with my taunting, but I'm not complaining. I wanted her to join, and it surprised me that she even had the bravery to strip in front of me. My cheeks started to burn when I caught sight of her black bra, immediately turning my head at the other direction to give her a little privacy.

I waited for a while to start hearing the soft *thud* of clothes being dropped. But what I didn't expect was hearing footprints getting softer and softer from a distance. I forced myself to look at her, seeing that she was heading towards a swivel chair.

*What the fuck is she planning to do?*

I was about to question her until she gripped the back-rest of the chair and turned it around, dragging it along behind her. She caught my confused look and gave me a grin instead of an explanation.

I started to realize what she was doing when she dragged the chair along with her a couple feet away from the pool. My chin dropped into the water, creating a gaped expression when my prediction was true.

Chloe laughed while she came lightning speed towards the pool with the chair as the lead. "*Bombs away!*" she cried as she was satisfied with the speed she was going at and sat in the swivel chair while it came running towards the pool.

I swam fast enough to get away from her in a desperate close call as the chair and Chloe came crashing down and swallowed them whole into the water, creating a mammothic splash.

*Jesus fuck!* I thought when the splash drenched my hair.

The swivel chair came above the surface first, with Chloe following up after a couple of seconds, strands of blonde hair blocking her vision.

"*Damn* dude, you know how to make an entrance!" I said in amazement, still awed by the action that came from the shy geek I knew.

"I take advantages when I see one," she grinned.

She dipped her head down the water again, coming up a second later but wiped her short hair back, dismissing the blockage of hair strands that covered her face. Her neck went around in circles, cupping water in her hands to splash the back of her neck to her shoulder.

"*Gosh*, I really needed this today. I haven't felt this relieved in *forever,*" I heard Chloe say, pushing her legs above water and floated with her arms outstretched.

I rolled my eyes and replied sarcastically. "Oh, and *thanks,* Max." I smiled when Chloe rewarded me with a giggle. "Hey, was there a swivel chair in that office? I want to try what you did."

She hovered back to her feet, raising her eyebrows at me. "I think I just destroyed the last one in here. They're not a big fan of chairs that can spin."

"*Tsk.* They haven't changed a bit. All these Blackwell hilly-billies aren't any fun."
Chloe made an offended look and made a wave, earning her a cry of surprise from me. "Hey! I'm right here!"

"I don't see anything in my statement that would offend you!" I replied before returning the attack, my smile extending when her laughter filled the room.

We laughed every time we drenched each other, soon becoming war when I discovered there were water guns nearby. We started acting like this was a real warfare; hiding from one another and ducking behind objects. *(Because I was skinny dipping and was fully exposed, I had to change back into my under armor since Chloe wasn't really looking forward to seeing me nude because we've known each other for literally three days, really)* I've also added the pool noodles when I spotted them laying on top of a chair, grinning in delight when *pirates* came in mind.

As Chloe approached my hiding spot, I jumped in her way, startling her and got a yelp. With a devil-may-care smile, I hold two pool noodles and offered her one. She returned a smirk when I handed her the noodle, taking a step back with two firm hands gripping them. I mimicked her actions, only difference is that I held the noodle with one hand while my body faced sideways, the noodle pointing at Chloe's abdomen.

"En garde!" I roared, claiming to be the first one to strike.

With the sheer of Irish luck Chloe has, she side stepped in time for repelling the strike in the abdomen. I reeled the noodle back to my side before Chloe could manage to strike it. Taking steps towards her, I was in full attack while she was on defense. Swaying and stabbing my noodle towards her figure, she deflects every blow with hers, taking steps back every time I try to close the distance between us.

I didn't realize what her plan was until she was successful.

Her reversed steps were making her way to a water-gun she left behind. She took a peek back every once in awhile and started to crouch when she was near it. Her form got me confused, giving Chloe the opportunity to strike my abdomen surprisingly hard when my guard was easing down. I put a hand on the area that she struck, my back hunched.

"Shit!" I mumbled when I was hit.

By the time I was able to look up; Chloe had her water-gun in hand, aiming at my head. Before I could run, she pulled the trigger: causing water to block my vision. I cried in surprise and took steps back in reverse, trying to wipe the water away before Chloe could make another move.

I was far from prepared.

When I was in the middle of smearing the water off, I felt a sharp *push* in my stomach, sending me flying to the air. It only took me a second to realize that Chloe tackled me into the pool.

The last thing I heard was her laughing with my screaming mixed in, drowning both of our voices when we hit the surface of the pool. The water slowed our motions, and I still felt Chloe clinging onto me.

When the small of my back hit the base of the pool, Chloe and I started to float to the surface. The second my chin was above water, I took a sharp inhale from the lack of air. I coughed while Chloe held into my forearms and laughed behind my shoulder, I wrapped an arm around hers, coughing at the side of my fist with my other hand. Chloe's forehead rested on my shoulder when her laughing fit was near to an end and started lightly coughing.
"Jesus fuck Chloe, I'll give you that round this one time," I said and started laughing…

…Only for it to die down quickly when Chloe lifted her head: revealing that our heads were centimeters away. Our noses almost touching. Our smiles faltering when we realize the close distance.

It happened again: that moment in her apartment, where our faces were inches away, but it's centimeters now.

And I didn't flinch back. Not this time. I did something different.

My hands controlled themselves to her shoulder, tracing down all the way to hers without rush. I intertwined our fingers, lifting them above the water painfully slow. What surprised me was she didn't struggle away from my grip. She stayed still, allowing her to become a ragdoll. She even locked her fingers in mine, creating a light blush in my cheeks and a light smirk that didn't last long. I pushed myself to keep going further: she didn't seem to mind.

Though, it was Chloe who did the next move when I was struggling what to do next. Her head leaned forward, our foreheads lightly colliding. I heard her process a deep breath, while tightening her grip in mine.

Fuck. It's so tempting.. I thought, biting the corner of my mouth as I stared at her lips.

Her mouth pulled into a light smile when she realized what I was staring at. My eyes widen and my cheeks were furiously burning when I saw her lean in painfully slow. She stopped mid-way when the sides of our nose were meeting, waiting for me to close in. I hesitated for a second and then moved in; both our eyes were slowly closing when the distance of our lips were getting tighter and tighter. My head tilted a bit when I closed in, the wetness of her lip brushed against mine and I opened my mouth at the last second…

…Then the sound of a door opening echoed in the room.

"Max!" A booming voice yelled, startling both of us and sharply turned out head to the sound.

Chloe and I pulled away from each other when the sound of another came ramming in. God fucking DAMMIT!

Step-dick entered the area. I snarled at the sight of his blue uniform behind the double-door windows. When our glares collided, I grind my teeth together, my eyes filled with hatred.

"I should've known. What the hell are you doing here?" Dennis says, entering the scene, his eyes widening at what he saw. "And why is a swivel chair in the pool?!!"

"It's none of your god damn business, Dennis," I replied with venom in my tongue, my voice growing aggressive when I hit business. "Fuck off."

"It is indeed my business that you broke into the school pool that I work for, for a swim with another one of your punk friends," he replied, barely letting me finish my final statement.

I looked at Chloe, her teeth chewing into her bottom lip. I glared back at Dennis, seeing that his fists were clenched.

"Get out of there, now."
There goes our fun. I thought in a harsh tone when we were forced to evacuate the pool. Dennis glared at Chloe when she was on dry surface, their stares were locked into each other when Chloe passed by Dennis. She turned on the ball of her heels, revealing her glare. She dropped it when her eyes were locked on mine, her lips pursed inwards with her arms crossed.

I didn't make the effort to give Dennis a glare of my own and turned at Chloe's side with a hand on a hip. "Just get on with your lecture, Dennis—"

"You have to learn that it is very disrespectful to call me by name," Dennis started, taking a step towards me.

"What, you think step-douche is better? My fucking pleasure then," I answered without missing a beat, snapping my head up at him with a look that could kill. "You have nothing better to say so just leave us—"

"You think I'm going to let you get away with this that easily?" he interrupted with a harsh laughter. "If you think that I would let you off the hook like the last time you've done with this Megan—"

"Don't ever speak of that name ever again."

"—Then you're wrong," Dennis continued. "Even if that was years ago, you think that this replacement would be your ticket to leaving here without worry—"

"She's not a fucking replacement you dick!" I say, releasing my overcrowded anger inside me and took steps forward.

SLAP!

I reeled back a couple of steps while I held the burning area on my cheek with two of my hands. The sound echoed through the hallow room and filled the silent environment.

When I stumbled at the last reversed step, it surprised me that the mute was broken by Chloe. "What the hell?"

I glanced up, my hand still trying to heal the cheek. Chloe went in front of me with a hand shielding me from Dennis as she came closer in his space.

Dennis was surprised from her action and took a step back until he regained his guard up. "Who are you?"

"Does it even matter?" Chloe said, almost interrupting him with acid spitting in her voice. "What matters is that you just abused your own step-daughter and you're not even fucking guilty about it?"

Dennis stuttered, trying to drop the subject. "Missy, you need to show some respe—"

Chloe interrupted with a bitter laughter. "And you don't think you need to show some humanity towards anyone? What do you know about respect when you just fucking slapped your wife's child? In front of me, a friend to your step-daughter? You think its fine to just hit them when they defend
one of their friends?"

"She doesn't have friends—"

"Is that how you talk about your fucking children?!" Chloe said in outburst, making us both flinch. I watched Chloe verbally abusing Dennis in awe with eyebrows raised, the pain on my cheek slivering away from the entertaining show happening in front of me. "Are you just ignoring the fact that I'm here, defending her even if it means risking my 'spotless' Blackwell record? Congratulations, you're not the fucking first one," she sneered.

Dennis clenched his fists, with his teeth gritted. His guard didn't falter, but he struggled finding a good reply. His muscles relaxed and his face softened in the slightest way. Chloe and Dennis stood there, sharing daggered stares for a moment until Dennis shifts his eyes towards me.

"I'll be continuing this discussion at the house, Max," he replied with a surprising tone of calmness until he converted his attention to Chloe which transitioned into a harshful one. "And you. I hope this is the last time you will ever be seen in Blackwell school grounds. I will be talking with the principal."

Chloe's heated glare didn't ease when she was threatened. Her and Dennis stood there in intense silence until he went back to where he entered. I was still awestricken on what I experienced even when Dennis left.

Just as I was trying to spit a reply, Chloe uncrossed her arms and looked at me with eyes full of worry. "That fucking paranoid ass. Are you okay? Does it still sting?" she says, stepping towards me and put a hand on the side of my neck while she dismissed mine that held the place of the burning area for a replacement of the spot.

"Don't worry about me, Jeez, Chloe. You should be worried about Dennis," I said while forcing a chuckle when her thumb rubbed against the red puddle on my cheek. "I'm surprised he left with no bruises."

She softly laughed, cupping my cheeks. "I can see why he's a fucking cactus now."

I chided in with her light laughter, holding her forearms when she held my frame. "Glad we see eye to eye."

With that, she swallowed me in her hug, throwing her arms around my neck and forced me to take steps back to regain balance. My arms bundled them around her waist with my forehead resting on her shoulder as we stayed frozen in place.

And I'm glad I found someone like you.

---

Chloe's P.O.V
As much as I didn't want to let go, I just remembered that we were in our under armor. Not that it changes anything, but I felt my cheeks burning furiously when I felt her moist skin connected to mine.

I broke the hug with an awkward cough. "I think we should get changed now and come back to my place. I'm freezing my ass here," I replied with a forced laugh.

Max smiled up at me, but didn't speak a response. Instead, she traced the path where her clothes lay, but she snatched my hand without warning before she went. I lightly blushed, smiling like an idiot behind her.

Hand-in-hand, we walked together on the short path to the corner of the pool: where our clothes lay. She lets go of my hand to lift up her shirt, bending down to gather up the rest of her clothes. I mimicked her actions.

"Blegh, I feel so sticky in these clothes," I thought out-loud, to which Max giggled at.

"You look cute with your hair soaked in chemicals." I smiled with barely visible pink cheeks. "Says you."

"Says the Chlorine," Max replied, having a delayed-laughter at her own formed nickname. "You bet your ass I'm keeping that!"

I sighed, forcing the laughter down in my lungs. "Think you're so clever?"

Max, still laughing from her silly nickname she gave me, pulled me to the little space we had between us with her arm wrapped around at my waist. "Yes. I do."

I grumbled when she started snickering as we exited the area in the boy's locker room.

__________________________________________________________________________

**Blackwell Parking Lot**

"Wow, it's already this late?" Max says as we headed to her truck in complete darkness. "We bought a lot of time then."

"No wonder I'm this tired," I said with a yawn interrupting my sentence.

"Then we better get moving before you pass out on me, Price!" Max replies as she stops in her tracks and walked back to me to grab my hand.

_She's been grabbing my hands lately.. Not complaining though_, I thought as she dragged me to her truck with a sleepy smile on my face.

Max helped me in her truck, gripping my hand that was around her neck when I struggled to take
foot on the base of her truck from my unfocused and dark vision. The stars that were painted on the sky weren't helping me regain energy.

She helped me by hauling me up to the seat when I got my footing in place. I held a hand up to stop her from doing my seat belt, which kind of surprised her but didn't question it. Max shuts the passenger door, going around the truck towards the driver's seat.

When she arrived by my side again, she stole a peak at me when I looked at her in the corner of my eye, my smile drawing one on her face. Her attention went back to the road when the engine started, the car rumbling as it did. The last thing I remembered was exiting Blackwell's school ground before darkness completely blocked my vision.

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*Road to Chloe's Apartment*

*Max's P.O.V*

I couldn't focus on the road as much as I wanted when Chloe's head came crashing down on my shoulder after a minute or so of driving. I pursed my lips and forced a smile down when I can hear her soft breathing that tickled my ear. Shrugging the shoulder Chloe was on, I gently put her head on my lap instead as I try not to wake her up. I peek once in a while at Chloe's unconscious form, smiling every time she shuffles in my lap. My hands rested on the sides of her neck, rubbing circles in them with my thumb.

*Couldn't wait till you got home, huh?*

When I stopped in front of a red traffic light, Chloe's head went up in my lap, startling me. I looked down on her, seeing that she was trying to find another position to sleep on. She hits a ticklish spot from time to time and I try not to twitch at the prickling feeling by squinting a bit. It's...really distracting.

When I zoned out looking at the traffic lights, a loud *honk* made me flinch. Blinking my focus back at the road, I see that the traffic light swiped to green.

Chloe's head flung up when I flinched, her eyes barely opened and her hair was chaos when she pulled her blue beanie down to her lap, rubbing her eyes at the process. I scowled, reeling my window down with an arm out the window that exposed a middle finger.

I held it out until I heard a barely audible 'just fucking go already!' that was drowned in all the other overcrowded noises.

"Fuck off!" I screamed when my head poked out of the window.

*Jesus Christ, what the fuck do you want from me, world?* I reeled my window up again while I hit on the gas pedal.
I looked at Chloe with an apologetic smile. "Sorry. A little road rage."

She waved a hand as if dismissing my apology. "It's fine. I didn't want you to carry me all the way to my apartment because of my unconscious sleeping ass. How long till we get there?"

"Well, you don't live very far from Blackwell so you won't expect an hour or even a few minutes of time left before we reach your apartment," I explained.

"Oh. And um...Max?"

"I'm listening?"

"Did you read my diary?" She questioned in a surprising tone of deadpan.

I almost made us crash when I heard her question and I quickly leading the truck back to the previous lane I was in. "Uh, excuse me?"

"Did you read my diary?" She repeated again with a wisp of force in her voice. "Did you read the first two entries?"

Since she didn't let me answer her first question, she already knew that I had. So there's no point of lying to her anymore.

I let out a puff of air before answering. "Yeah."

I prepared for demons to force her mouth open and haunt me with guilt, but her response was different than the others I thought of. "What did it say?"

I was bewildered from her reply but I didn't hesitate to answer her question. "Just your…past and whatnot."

"Is that it?"

"Look, Chloe, I don't want to spill everything to you when you can barely even stay up. I'll tell you tomorrow, capeesh?"

It took her some moments to process a reply, but she eventually huffed and laid back on her chair with lazily knotted arms. "Capeesh."

---

Chloe's Apartment

I practically had to drag Chloe to her room since her sleepy ass is malfunctioning from the drained energy. Opening a damn door was harder than it should've been.
"Jesus fucking Christ can you at least help out a shorty here? You fucking weigh more than me," I said with frustration while I try to hold Chloe up and open the door at the same time.

She lifted some of her weigh up, which gave me a flood of relief. "Sorry, sorry."

I didn't give her apology a notice and gave her a huff instead. Sliding the key inside, I turned the knob and swing the door open, letting Chloe enter first.

She immediately went in when she heard the door open and plopped into bed with a muffled groan. "Finally."

I lightly smiled and stepped inside, closing the door behind and slid at the side of her bed. "Damn. You're drained out completely, dude."

I was about to mention the 'kiss' we had in the pool until I caught myself barely in time. Pressing my lips together when the heat rose on my cheeks, relieved when I saw her back facing me with her limbs sprawled out of the bed.

"Uh, anyways. Get in bed sleepyhead. I'll be here till you fall asleep."

Her head lifted up with her eyebrows furrowed. "You're gonna leave?"

"I have a home, y'know?" I said with a forced laughter. "That prick is waiting for me there so—"

Chloe immediately sat up, grabbing my forearm. "You're staying here."

"Uh, pardon?"

"We can deal with that paranoid ass tomorrow. I want you to stay here."

"But you both are already mortal enemies and I kind of cost you your scholarship in——"

"Black hell?" She laughed bitterly. "Did you see any guilt in my face when I stood up for you? I saw this coming, and if that was a problem that I actually gave a damn about, I wouldn't have done what I've done. We're dealing with that dick together. You're staying here."

I was...speechless, to say the least. I couldn't control my mouth to give out a reply. She has completely changed in a total amount of three days. Her bravery was taken up a shit-ton and the fucks she gave subtracted to fucking zero. The punk outfit she has worn all day seemed to possess her personality in a slow process, but I'm not complaining. I like it when she gets bossy. Surprising and all, but a little hot.

I coughed, and stuttered a reply. "Um, thanks..thanks Chloe."

When the fuck did I ever stutter like that?! Are we starting to switch personalities or some shit?

Chloe gave a sigh of relief and mumbled. "Whew, thank Dog." Her form was visibly relaxing. "You can sleep at the couch, or with me. The bed is big enough for two people."

I smirked. "Sure. Your bed it hella comfortable anyways."
it's a reunion of a lifetime

Chapter Summary

Max and Chloe face their demons from their pasts together, but Max's hell is in another level that no one can help her with. Even Chloe is helpless to this.

Chapter Notes

I'M SORRY FOR BEING A LAZY ASS. HERE'S THE MOST JUICY PART, AND PROBABLY THE LONGEST CHAPTER OF THE STORY SO FAR

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chloe's Apartment

Max's P.O.V

When a splash of sunlight broke through my eyelids, I felt a rush of frigid air. I shut my eyes violently with my hand searching for a blanket to bundle myself around.

I didn't feel soft wool, but I felt fabric at the tip of my finger tips to my surprise. I furrowed my eyebrows when I blindly explored the area more, finding out that they were jeans.

Huh?

My hand stayed still when I felt a heated palm on top of it, fingers locked.

"Morning, Max," whispered a hushed, sleepy voice. "Slept well?"

I tried opening my eyes, squinting from the golden ray of light that leaked in the windows. Seeing my hand on someone's thigh that was intertwined with another pale hand, I looked up to see Chloe giving me a drowsy smile that rose in one cheek.

I tried mimicking it while giving her a frail squeeze. "Mm, I haven't properly slept like that in years."

I saw Chloe knitting her eyebrows together. "Properly?"

"Well, probably because I never had a human teddy bear to cuddle with before," I said with a teasing voice while I scrunched up my nose.

Chloe looked down and smiled, chewing her bottom lip while her pond of blush was slightly visible through her strands of hair. "Uh, yeah I have the tendency to do that a lot."
"I don't mind that."

Chloe humphed. "You're the first to say."

I rose a brow at that. "Finding that hard to believe, hippie."

She shrugs, her index finger tapping on the surface of my hand. "Doesn't make that any less true."

I didn't make any witty remark to that since it was true. I didn't have any argumentative thing to say anyways so I said: "Well, more for me then," and transferred my head on Chloe's lap, breaking off the hold of our intertwined fingers. "Least then I'll feel somewhat special that we only share this between us and no one else."

Chloe let out a soft chortle. "You basically are—" to that, I smirked "—so you're excused to feel that way."

"Thanks, Che."

Chloe responded with an accepting hum, twirling a pack of my hair into her finger.

After that, there was just silence other than the birds pitching tunes outside and a couple cars waltzing by occasionally. With Chloe experimenting my hair and sometimes accidentally massaging my scalp, I started to get woozy again just enough to breath out a sigh that relaxed all the muscles I didn't know I was holding in place. By habit, my finger started to trace ghostly patterns on Chloe's jeans, outlining the patches and lines it already possessed while also making my own swirls and shapes on some empty areas. I felt Chloe's stomach slightly jolt at the back of my head from an airy chuckle she did, which flashed a smug-ish smile on me momentarily.

Chloe stopped clawing on my hair and switched to drumming her fingertips on my scalp, occasionally squeezing and scraping my head. That only continued for about half a minute before her hand abruptly halted and just rested close to my right temple. Her breathing made a leisure pumping rhythm for her stomach, slightly shifted my head forward everytime she inhales and vice-versa. It helped, at least for me, make the moment more calming and peaceful.

But we can't stay in this moment forever.

So with all my willpower, I lifted myself up to sit up with a groan, leaving a cold imprint on Chloe's jeans. Shifting my legs to dangle at the side of the bed, my hand balls up to a fist against my mouth for an up coming yawn. "What's for breakfast?" I ask while still yawning, combing my hair with my fingers as well. "Or are we gonna go hunting for it? You still got your punky disguise on."

Chloe mimicked my move and transferred her legs to the edge of the bed and stood up, responding, "Oh yeah, we're going somewhere for breakfast today, I'd like to see some of my friends. Maybe I'll even introduce some to you." While she answered my question, she moved to her tiny bookshelf, taking a familiar black book with her.

Then I noticed what it was.

Ooooh shhiii—

"You promised to talk about this, remember?" She said, shaking her journal in her hand to get my attention.
I grind my teeth together. "How could I not?" My voice trailed off at the end of my words, worry overflowing me from the thought of dropping forgotten memories in her head. "Let's just get breakfast first; I'm not really looking forward to saying all of this."

"Then don't," she said, grabbing her blue beanie.

"Eh?" I responded, bewildered from her deadpan performance.

"I can read them myself. I don't want to drop stress on your shoulders."

"Wait, but are you sure—"

"Do you want to say them yourself?"

"Well—"

"Of course you don't, don't even try to make an excuse," she said with no emotion what-so-ever. "I'll read it in the café, all right?"

"Damn, someone didn't get their bitchflakes on time," I replied with my elbows tucked in and palms open, surprised with her sass.

"It's the company I keep." Chloe adjusted her beanie blindly and pursed her lips, heading out the door. "Come on. I don't like to keep people waiting."

---

**The Butterfly's Café**

**Chloe's P.O.V**

"Dude, are you in a rush or something?" Max said, with bits of force in her voice. "Slow down, man."

I stop in my tracks, waiting for her to reach my side to start my pace again. "Sorry, sorry. I just really want to get there to see what happened from my past."

"Why not read them while you're walking?"

"That's dangerous, dumbass." I waited for a moment for a teasing statement from Max, but surprisingly I was greeted with silence along the way, so I decided to add on: "We're almost there anyways."

As my fingertips touched the entrance of the double doors, I lightly put force into my hand to make an opening inside the building. I put my back against the door to make space for Max to enter, following her when she was inside.

The sound of a bell tingled through the building that caught the attention of a worker, who smiled at me. Her dirty blonde hair into a messy bun with a blue apron that swaddled around her hips with a name tag pinned into her chest that read 'Kate Beverly Marsh.'

She gave me her heavenly smile with her elbows on the counter. "Hey, Chloe. What are you doing here?"
I created my own smile from the merry tone in her voice and walked towards her. "Hey! I came for a visit. Plus, my tea isn't professionally handled like yours. I also wanted to introduce you to someone."

I looked back at Max, putting a hand on her back to push her to Kate with a small amount of pressure. Max stumbled in her footsteps from my sudden movement but caught her balance afterwards.

Kate's eyes widened from Max's appearance. Her tattoos and taste of clothing stood out and her fragrance that lingered in her skin was a sharp inhale to the nose along with her colorful stained hair.

"Oh uh, hello. Max, is that right?" Kate asked in a shy matter, her hands linking together in her lap.

"Caulfield. Max Caulfield, Miss…" Max's eyes squinted at her name tag that was stitched onto her apron, slightly leaning in for a better view of the small font. "Marsh? Ms. Marsh. Kate Marsh. Uh, Beverly Kate Marsh—I mean Beverly Marsh. Kate. Yeah. Is—is that right? I don't really, uh, have the, the uh strongest of…sights or eyes or… pair of…eyes?"

Kate giggled from Max's attempt of matter, nodding her head of approval. "It is, 'Ms. Caulfield.'" Max chuckled, her cheeks glowing pink while she processed a crooked grin. "I prefer Max."

She shot an open palm towards Kate, who hesitantly linked their hands together and shook. "And I prefer Kate. Nice to meet you, Max."

Max was about to respond, until her mouth was left hanging open instead of speaking a reply. After a quick moment, her jaw started moving. "Uh, you too. 'S a pleasure."

Their hands stopped their motion for an instant. Max's sudden bashed yank back surprised Kate, smiling later on when she noticed the burning in her cheeks. "I guess you're not used to friendly introductions?"

"Yeah, something like that," Max responded while running her fingers in the back of her hair.

Kate's adorable giggle lightened the room with her smile, attracting some more from a few customers nearby and flicked some of the awkward burdens from Max's shoulders. "I guess you're not used to friendly introductions?"

"Yeah, something like that," Max responded while running her fingers in the back of her hair.

Kate's adorable giggle lightened the room with her smile, attracting some more from a few customers nearby and flicked some of the awkward burdens from Max's shoulders. "I guess you're not used to friendly introductions?"

"Uh, do you have any Lipton—?"

"Yo Kate, there's a spill in one of the tables," A voice called out behind me.

Max and I tracked the voice down and turned out hears in identical timing, finding a girl with jet black hair that had additional red highlights. She wore a replica of the blue apron which Kate wore, and has thin rimmed glasses along with her hands, her arms were covered with dirty plates that twitched from her movement. I recognize the girl's face: Brooke Scott.

"Uh, which table?" Kate asked, her elbows leaving the counter.

Brooke shrugged. "I don't know, the table with coke all over it?"

Kate smiled from her comment, leaving the counter with a towel in hand. "Ah, that table." Before she went, Kate put a hand on Brooke's shoulder and leaned in, her lips connecting to her cheeks momentarily which brought Brooke's cheeks to lift up. "I'll be back in a minute Chloe," she said to me as she passed Brooke's shoulders.
I gave a slight wave that she didn't see with Max following my motion.

"All right Chloe, and Chloe's friend," Brooke said as she took place of the register with the plates dismounting her arms, her voice dropping when she mentioned 'and Chloe's friend.' "I'll be taking over Kate's spot for a bit until she's finished with the table. So, what would you like?"

"Mint tea and…Lipton?" I answered with doubt in my voice from the last order. I looked at Max to get her approval, to which she nodded. "Yeah, Lipton."

"Isn't that in—?"

"Hey, are you and her dating?" Max asked. Her interruption made her curiosity evident.

"Pardon?"

"Kate and you? You and Kate?" The punk replied while pointing directions towards Brooke or Kate when she mentions their name. "Like y'know, a thing?"

"Depends if that's a problem with you. Why ask?"

"Kate wore a cross on her neck. Religious stuff?"

"Ah. Well, long story short, yes, we're dating and yes, she's religious. Christian, to be specific," Brooke answered while she lightly tapped the buttons on the register. "Katie's bisexual, surprisingly not surprising," she added, smirking from her reversed sentence.

Her and Max lightly chuckled with me giving a half-hearted laugh. "I haven't even known you for like…an hour," Max said as she looked around for a clock. "But I already know for a fact that we'll get along just fine."

"Well, you and I might hit it off in a couple of minutes, but Kate isn't the person to be so open so quickly."

"I'm surprised that she's open enough to kiss you in a public place."

"I mentioned she was bisexual, didn't I?"

"You didn't mention about her parents."

"Ah. Well, she didn't give two shits when she came out to them, probably because she knew her parent's wouldn't kick her out, at best. But I knew for a fact that when I left, they gave Kate a long lecture or tried telling her that it was a phase. Still, she came to school like everything was fine, and she was open with our relationship from that point on."

"She sounds like a keeper."

"Matter of fact, she is," Brooke says, crossing her arms and gave a cute smile when her eyes locked on Kate, who was wiping a table while she glanced and smiled at the customers that were repeatedly apologizing for the spill. "All right, enough about Kate. Find a table you two, I'll be back with your orders."

As Brooke's figure disappeared into the staff's kitchen quarters, I followed Max to a booth at a corner. She slid in with her feet taking over the seat next to her, giving me an obvious choice to take the seat in front of Max.

As soon as I sat down, she removed her feet off of the cushions, leaning into the table.
"Psht. Looks like you didn't want me to sit next to you, Caulfield."

"Hey, dude. I didn't get to know that girl's name. Y'know, the one with the cool hair?" Max asked, with a confusing tone of excitement.

"Brooke Scott. She's one of the waiters," I answered plainly, putting the journal on top of the table. The excitement in Max's grin faded and her eyes were filled with worry when realization hit her. "Chloe?"

*Jesus, don't make this harder than it already is.*

"Max, I'll be fine if you would stop making me worry about this," I said, a little too harsh and immediate than I intended it to be.

Max seemed oblivious about it though. "Whatever helps, I guess," she deadpans, her back crashing against the backrest of the booth, arms crossed.

Our stares collided for awhile, filling the gap between us with intense silence. Max's face softened every time she realizes I won't back down until she decided to leave the booth.

My eyebrows furrowed when she stood up. "Max—?"

"I'm going somewhere else before I try to convince you not to do something you'll regret doing later on." She didn't give me a chance to speak before her pace increased speed towards another empty booth.

I sighed, finding the diary at the corner of my eye. My curiosity was skyrocketing along with the fear of what was inside.

*It's just two pages. Get it over with,* I said, trying to convince myself. My hand felt heavier than it usually was, but I managed to lift it up the table. I slipped a finger below the cover and swiped it open, finding smother of ink.

_July 10th, 2008_

*My name's Chloe Price…*

---

*Kate's P.O.V*

"There you go, all finished," I said in a cheery voice after cleaning a puddle of coke. "You can sit back down."

"Thank you. Again, we're sorry about the mess. That's the second time in a row already," a woman said, her voice filled with embarrassment and a worried expression like I wouldn't forgive them.

"It's not like the spill would shut down this café. It's nothing to worry about, miss," I replied the same
reply from her previous continuing apologies.

"Okay," she said, with her face at easement. "And we're almost done with our food. Can you bring us the bill now, please?"

"Sure thing, ma'am," I say while giving them a smile before leaving.

When I was on my way to my original position, I saw Chloe in a booth sitting alone with no motion what-so-ever. Her friend wasn't there, but was at another booth at the other side of the café.

*What's going on?* I asked to myself. Curiosity flooded over me and I decided to investigate.

Going over to Brooke, I immediately asked, "Brooke, can you hold my spot for a little while longer? And bring the bill to the table I just finished cleaning?"

"Sure thing Katie," she says without questioning as she looked down at her phone.

Leaving the towel on the counter and marking Brooke with a kiss on the forehead, I left with free hands towards Max.

Max's attention was latched onto Chloe with her heel bouncing anxiously. She didn't seem to notice I was in her space since her eyes never left Chloe.

I waited there, not wanting to startle her by any chance until after a while I felt awkward standing there to wait for her to notice me. I hesitantly cleared my throat, seeing that her heels halted in position.

Her head turned to me with her eyebrows raised. "Kate?"

"May I sit?" I asked politely.

Her answer was hesitant, but she motioned me to sit in front of her. Her attention was still on Chloe when I sat down, like I wasn't there at all.

After moments of unbearable silence, I broke the ice. "What's going on with you too?"

"Nothing," she said plainly, but a little too quickly that it was suspicious. "Why ask?"

"Well, you guys aren't really sitting together."

"Is that a problem?"

"Of course it is," I said, surprised from her quick reply. "Friends sit together, not apart. And it also looks like you're trying to bury a hole through Chloe's skull with a stare like that. What's happening?"

Max pursed her lips, but her eyes didn't connect with mine and her heel started to grab its motion back, leaving a trail of blur when it bounces. "It's complicated, and we're actually fine. I'm worried, that's all."

"From what, Chloe reading her diary?" I said with doubt in my voice.

That's when Max sharply turned her head towards me, making me flinch. "It's not the damn diary." I was offended from her choice of words, but it didn't stop her. "It's what's in it."

"Oh," I said, suddenly feeling uncomfortable around Max. It was when I realized what she was so
worried about. "Is she reading the entries?"

Max lifted an eyebrow. "She told you about it?"

"I'm sure you've already read some of her entries in her diary, because you know about the them. I was in it," I said, smiling from the thought that someone wrote about me. "She told me about Rachel finding it."

"Oh, yeah. You and Rachel were in it. No wonder you looked familiar."

My smile faltered a little when Rachel was mentioned. "Yeah. I don't know what happened to Rachel, though. She isn't answering Chloe's or my texts for days now."

"At least it wasn't Chloe who disappeared."

"Excuse me?"

"If I knew Rachel, I would care more for her disappearance. Chloe is all the matters to me in this topic, okay?"

Max wasn't as friendly as I thought. I shouldn't be surprised since I expected this from her appearance.

But something came in mind by the realization from her words. "You like her?"

After my sentence, Max was completely frozen in one frame. "What?"

"You like her," I said with more determination. I grinned when I saw Max turn away with an unconcealed glow of red in her cheeks. She pulled up a middle finger, surprised myself that I giggled when she did.

"Whatever, Marsh. I'm still confused about—"

"Max," a voice called out that startled both of us. We turned our head to see Chloe hurriedly coming to our booth. "We have to go," she said in an uneasy voice. I noticed her knees were unstable with her eyes made out of glass.

"Chloe—?"

"Now." With that, she gripped Max's wrist and yanked her out, dragging her behind Chloe. I was left there, bewilderment from her entrance.

Chloe lets go of Max's wrist when she was on her feet, rushing towards the entrance of the building with a neck-breaking pace of power walking. Through the glass, I could see crystals tracing down Chloe's cheeks with her eyes temporarily dyed in red while Max tried keeping up.

"Chloe? Chloe, wait!" I heard Max say when she exited the building, almost tripping when she left.

Customer's eyes were locked into the exit where they left, murmurs of confusion passing along. I was glued into the seat while I tried processing what happened. Brooke had the same expression of bewilderment and her attention was brought to me, trying to find a clue what happened. I couldn't utter a reply.
"Chloe slow down, Jesus Christ—"

Chloe turned to the balls of her heels, revealing red eyes and waterlines. "What?!

I took a step back, surprised from her sudden action and booming voice, but I kept a straight face. "What were you trying to do, make a fucking show in there?"

Chloe bitterly laughed. "Oh, so you thought that I would handle all of this bullshit and make it out in one fucking piece, huh?" With her height advantage, she towered my body, making me back up. "You think that I would come out here with that same emotionless fucking smile like everything was fine and we could continue pretending like we have perfect lives? I just remembered memories that I wanted to forget, and you thought that I would handle this?"

"Who was the fucking person who warned you?" I said, shoving her. "Who was the goddamn person who told you not to do it? Who was the person who offered to tell you about it than you reading every single fucking detail of it? Who was the person? Who the fuck was it?!" I barked back at her with my lungs burning.

"And who was the person that didn't want to bring more shit on your shoulders, huh? I didn't want you to read it because of yesterday—"

"What does this have to do with yesterday?"

"Megan."

I completely shut down after the mention of Megan. It's pathetic; shutting down when you hear a damn name you never want to hear again. My eyes probably lost their color and my skin tone probably brightened to pale. Anger left me and sadness entered in, lowering my guard down with my clenched fist becoming weak and my glare transferring down to the ground.

"What does she have to do with us?" I asked in my fragile voice, trying to rekindle my anger again. It's better than being blue.

"Something happened to her that's happening to our friendship, and you're afraid of letting it happen again."

"How the fuck did you know that?" My bitterness coming back with the heat of flares visible in my eyes as I looked up at Chloe again. "I didn't write it on any shit, I never spoke of that name for years, and I never discussed this with anybody."

"Oh come on," Chloe interjects, barely letting me finish. Her hands flew up in the air as if I was oblivious on the main details. "The incident at the pool yesterday when the king of cactuses showed up. You two babbled about Megan long enough for me to figure it out, and the way you got furious on Dennis when he brought her up. You took Megan at that pool before; you've been caught by him too. We're doing the same shit you've been doing with Megan, purpose or accident, I don't know if that matters and I don't fucking care either way. And he even mentioned about me being a replacement—"
"You're not," I interrupted with poison in my tongue. "You were never a repla—"

"Did you like her?" Chloe randomly asked, taking me to surprise.

"Excuse me?"

"Did you like her," Chloe asked again with more force.

She waited for a reply, but I didn't give it to her. The answer was becoming obvious enough when I stayed quiet, so what's the point then? I lost my shot, anyways. We stood our ground as daggers shot out of our glares to wait for one to surrender.

Then Chloe forced out a sigh and dropped her glare, looking a bit more relaxed. "Let's just go," she said, her disappointment and sorrow evident in her voice.

Chloe turned her back to me, walking ahead. I stood there to tame my anger and a pang of regret overcame my emotions when Chloe's pace was dawdle with her head down, dragging her blue beanie down to stuff it in her front pockets as she scratched her scruff, a barely audible snifflle came in my ear shot.

I unclenched my fist and took a deep breath, following her.

_Sidewalk to 'American Rust'_

"Do you want to talk abo—"

"No," I immediately replied at Chloe's cautious request. "No. I don't."

But the silence between us was thicker than I wanted it to be. It's like Chloe was becoming a stranger that I can't trust anymore. I wanted a conversation that will last, but the only option of having that to happen was to talking about Megan. I want our friendship to stay endless, so why am I so hesitant on talking about her?

_I don't want anything happening to Chloe, and this entire bullshit déjà vu thing is happening to her, too. If she wants to pry, this is her bad karma._

"Megan," I hesitantly started, cringing on how painful my tongue felt when the name slipped out of my tongue for the first time in years. "She was my best friend. _Was,"_ I repeated, making the details more evident. "We met at this bar, and I was fucking out of it. Or at least, that's what she said. I woke up in her bed and she was there, explaining on how she found my drunken ass and me asking for a ride to her place."

"Kind of like how we met?" Chloe added, giving me a sudden twinge of fear on how we would end up.

"Yeah, sort of. But it was for a different reason," I explained. "It was the day that my mother decided to bring a Nazi home to live with us. I decided to bail and cry on how my life is so miserable somewhere else. Thus, bringing me to the bar." I waited to see if Chloe was going to add anything on, but she didn't. So I continued. "After her explanation on how I ended up in her place, we chatted, had breakfast and I left... Without me knowing her number."
That's when Chloe stopped dead at her tracks and I had to yank myself back from her sudden action. I was confused then scared from the sudden temperature drop in her skin, her whole body losing their color.

"Chloe?"

"Is our friendship déjá vu to yours and Megan's?" Chloe asked hurriedly, her eyes begging me to say 'no.' "Is it? Am I going to end up like her? Wherever she is?"

"Chloe, slow down. It won't happen," I say, trying to calm her down while I grabbed her shoulders and looked at her dead in the eyes. "Nothing will happen to you, you hear me?"

"Max—"

"Nothing. I'm not letting anything similar happen to you. This world can go fuck itself if it means I have to trade every damn soul just to keep you as a friend."

"Max, something will happen to me I-I know it—"

"I will not let anything fucking happen to you, do you fucking hear me?!" I roared and shook her shoulders, stopping Chloe's eyes from dripping.

Chloe's figure couldn't stop trembling, and her eyes were coming to a shade of red. Her cheeks were soaking wet as droplets of tears bombed down to the concrete of the sidewalk.

I grabbed a handful of her t-shirt and yanked her down at my eye-level, making Chloe's eyes increase in size. "If you end up gone, sleep isn't a thing to worry about," I say in a low voice. "I will not eat, I will not rest, and I will not let anything distract me until I fucking find you. What are you so afraid of?"

Chloe didn't answer me immediately but her eyes never left mine, either. Some of her fear left her as her face softened with her trembling body soothing its motion.

It was when I let go of her t-shirt she spoke to me in a soft voice. "What happened to her," she asked, in a 'more of a statement than a question' voice.

"…When we got out... Of the Blackwell pool," I started weakly, sounding like I was in tears. "We went back to my truck. And then we drove to her house… and... and..." Nothing came out of my mouth to carry on the story. When I try to pull back the memories, they were all a sudden blur.

Chloe waited to see if I would continue, but I didn't. "And?" She pries, urging me to say the rest.

"That's... That's all I remember. After that, I woke up on her floor with a massive head-ache and she was gone. I tore up Arcadia Bay finding her ass and I was so desperate on finding her that I printed out fliers and placed it everywhere on Blackwell, since she went to school there. I had no luck there so I covered Arcadia Bay with them after two weeks. I've been doing that for almost a year, until I've...lost hope in finding her. Crying my ass off when I thought she was… somewhere six feet under Arcadia. I thought that our friendship was different since... Since you weren't missing today. I thought the world finally gave me a break. Gave me fucking peace for once."

"You…you gave up on her?"

"Everyone else gave up in a fucking month. Give me a break Chloe," I shot in a vicious voice. "I've been traveling Arcadia from head to toe for so fucking long that I can make a mental map at the back of my head with every tiny detail I've seen. I know that she didn't leave me here, stranded in Arcadia
Bay while she lived the American Dream in L.A. Who would do that to their own fucking best friend that they've known for years? I'm sick of this fucking place!"

My voice broke as it trailed into the end of my speech and I practically screamed at my last statement. A bead of water escaped my eyes as an explosive to the ground, creating a wet splash when I slashed my tightly clenched fist into the air at my side when I roared out 'sick.' My sharp inhales and silent weeping were the only things that were speaking between me and Chloe. I stood there with white knuckles from violently balling my knuckles while droplets of tears leaked out of my eyes, creating flat puddles into the concrete of the sidewalk.

I felt pathetic sobbing over memories that I haven't cared to remember. I felt weak when I finally broke my tears free from years of holding them in. I felt helpless standing there while I stared at puddles of destroyed tears. I felt…

*Free.*

Free from my burdens.

"You'll see her again," Chloe said, immediately lifting my head up from the sudden disrupt of silence. "Sooner than you think."

That's when I lost it.

I didn't care how ridiculous I looked in the middle of the sidewalk, I lost my stability to do anything. To function right.

My legs lost their anchor and turned into jelly, clinging onto Chloe's shoulders for dear life. I dragged her down on the floor with me with my face buried into her t-shirt, drowning all the noises away with my weeping. Her arms were bundled around me with her chin on top of my head while I showered her clothes in tears, almost ripping them apart from my barbaric grip latching onto their straps.

"Where is she…?" I whispered to myself, barely able to get my question through my muffled sobs. "Where is she?"

"You'll find her Max," Chloe replied, her sorrow and heartache spilling from her masked emotionless tone. "You'll find her."

My body shook each time I swallowed a gigantic inhale through my lungs, hiccups forming when I release them. Chloe rocked back and forth, restoring my stability along with the comforting hushed words she filled in my ears.

It was probably a solid hour of muffled weeping in Chloe's clothes after I was finally restored back to my feet. Chloe helped me up and I gave her a half-hearted smile in return. I wiped snot away from my nose with the back of my hand and tried cleaning the mess I've left on Chloe's shirt.

She gave a light chuckle when I attempted to clean her shirt and dismissed my hand. "I've worn this shirt for two days in a row now, I needed to wash this anyway sooner or later. I'll clean it when I get home."

I nodded, not feeling the urge to use my voice yet. After I smudge tears and snot out of my face, I wiped the palm of my hand on my shirt, later gripping Chloe's wrist. She cringed at how cold my fingers felt, but didn't pull back and allowed me to drag her along.
I felt Chloe's weight increase when I went pass the rusted fences, giving me the hint of her hesitation.

"Is this...What is this?" Chloe asked, her head twisting around in curiosity of her new surroundings when I let go of her wrist.

I turned to her and gave her a ghostly smile. "Welcome to American Rust. My home away from...home," I said, surprised on how deep and raspy my voice sounded when I addressed my little statement.

Though Chloe didn't mind it, her eyes were still roaming around. "Raw and rough…It suits you," she commented, her attention back at me and gave an adorable smile.

I smiled and took it as a compliment. When her attention was back at American Rust, I wagged my finger at her, motioning her to follow along. She didn't hesitate to follow me and lunged forward when the distance between us was too large.

I headed to an unfinished shed, which I label as "home," that was drowned in faded graffiti and swallowed in dust. I heard faint footfalls behind me receding in silence which got me to turn around in confusion.

"S'up?" I asked, my voice still holding an extensive spot of hoarse and depth. I had to clear my throat immediately after speaking.

"Is that your house?" Her voice held a fragment of sorrow when she spoke while effortlessly hovering a finger at the shed.

I pursed my lips and walked towards a gap in front of the shed, which was the entrance. "Come on in. Don't be shy."

I entered and embraced the wooden bench that occupied a corner. The bench had an ocean blue couch cushion with a thin sheet of wool below it that held the design of red and black plaid. My crash wasn't softly handled since the bench wasn't stuff with fluff, which meant I wounded my hip bone when I impacted. I pretended to be bluff and sucked up my painful cry, turning until I was lying on my back and lifted my upper body, propping myself with my elbows.

When Chloe slowly emerged in the entrance, I gestured to an abandoned dark red airline seat that was next to swallowed up table with magazines. "Take a seat, Peete."

Her pace was painfully slow, so I killed time by reaching out to a pizza box on the table that was occupied with a red ash tray with the words OREGON printed in bold, snow letters.

I took a fresh joint next to it and when I reached for my lighter in my back pocket, I caught a sight of Chloe facing a wall. My hand stops mid-way of reaching my lighter when I saw her hand travel across an old graffiti.

MAX WAS HERE

Megan was HERE.
A ghostly smile sneaked into my mouth when memories of Megan and me in this shack. "This used to be our hideout," I commented, getting Chloe's attention. "We went through so many things together. Thick and thin."

Chloe looked at me and I looked at the graffiti. She didn't say anything until I heard her give out a huff. "Getting mushy on me, Max?"

Giving her a half-hearted smile, I transferred my attention to her, faintly smirking. "C'mon, I'll tell you more," I responded, slightly side-stepping her teasing.

I took out my lighter and held it up to my joint, seeing Chloe's hand slightly hesitate to her messenger bag while looking at the empty space below Megan's graffiti message. Her hand stopped and then dismissed her thought, going to the seat I ordered her to occupy.

My eyes followed her when I lit the tip of my joint, rolling it around to get it evenly burnt. Chloe sat down and she started scanning the shack with her fingers exploring the magazines on the table.

"So, you got any questions about my fucked up life?" I asked while I rolled my joint, seeing Chloe convert the center of her field of view to me. "Megan? Step-douche? How I got into drugs? We got all the time in the world."

Chloe's question didn't come immediately, but she managed to get one in thought. "How long have you and Megan been friends?"

"5 months," I answered a little harshly, colliding my reply in her question when she was near to the end. "Next question?"

"Seems descriptive enough," Chloe said dully, raising an eyebrow.

"Look, I don't like talking about...her, okay? I'll answer other questions that doesn't require that betraying bitch," I replied, almost interrupting with a rude tone. "Now, what else do you want to pry on?"

I rolled the joint into the fire a little more until I was satisfied with the color of coal black converting into spots of grey ash. When I took it out of the flame and secured my match into my previous back pocket, Chloe spoke.

"Betraying bitch?"

I looked at her, joint in hand with a softened angry expression. I took a deep breath and huffed out, sharply turning my head down doing so. "You heard me correctly, right?"

"Wasn't she your best friend?"

I scoffed. "Yeah, was. Until I found out that she has been lying to my fucking face. Look, I get different perspectives of her depending on what memories I think about. I could say she's a downright goddess to me and then the next moment, she can be Satan's favorite little devil."

Chloe stayed quiet for awhile to wait for me to continue. So I did. "I'll confess. We were dating. For almost four months."

Chloe's head shot up when I said my confession, her eyes were increasing in size within mere seconds. "What?"

"Yeah, I'm gay. Surprise, surprise." I couldn't hold back the sarcastic comment, my joint shooting up
in the air along with my hand waving along.

"No, not that," Chloe corrected. "I'm confused on why that you call her *best friend* than girlfriend then."

"Because she doesn't deserve the fucking title." I had to resist squishing my joint from my up-rising anger. I sucked up air, slowly releasing it to tame my rage and took another puff of my cigarette before speaking. "She lived a double life. One with me, one with another douche. She's been with another fucker before we even met. I've figured it out before the day of our 'break-up' when we went to the bar where we met and, luckily, she was the one out of it while I didn't really drink that much. I was gonna take her home, after checking what time it was. My phone was dead, so I got her phone. It was 9 P.M and I was gonna put it back in her pocket until, luckily, it buzzed with a new text notification: 'Babe, where are you?' from a guy named 'Eric.' I was surprised and in denial, so I decided to pry when she had her brain back. I stayed in her house and put her to bed while I snooped around in her room, finding pictures of them together being more than friends. So yes, the bitch was cheating on me…and on *him*, too, I guess. After that night, I've been cursing at her with questions, to which she tried to side-step. I tried stirring up an argument until I heard the door open, and it was that douche, Eric. They were supposed to go to this skate park together with some friends as he said, and that's when I flipped. I informed him that I was Megan's girlfriend, that's when he sided along with me, and Megan had a *lot* of explaining to do. She stayed quiet, and that was when Eric just ran off. Megan tried saying that she was sorry, but I didn't accept her fucking bullshit so I just went home."

"The *fuck*? That's…That's messed up, Max. But I can't see how you still wanted to find her after you knew that…"

"It's because I knew why she was dating Eric. The guy was fucking in love with her, Chloe. He even *forced* her to be his girlfriend when Megan didn't return his feelings. Megan didn't have a father, and all she had was her mother, so Eric took advantage of that. Her mother was weak to the bone, and couldn't survive without Megan. Eric threatened to *kill* her mother. Kill her for an *abusive relationship*! She *had* to say yes, Chloe. He wasn't fucking around. Of course, she had to stay silent about this, which is why she didn't say anything before. She also had to keep our relationship a secret, unless…"

My voice trailed off. Realization struck me after listening to my words, and my hands went lose, wobbling my joint up and down between my fingers.

*Un…unless…*

"..Max?" I heard Chloe getting up from her seat, cautiously coming to me. "Are…Are you okay—?"

That was when I leaped to my feet, feeling a hand brush along my shoulder when I rushed to the entrance of my shed, letting my joint fall on the ground.

"Max!"

My feet progressed faster, wanting to escape the voices in reality and in my head.

*I killed Megan*, replayed in my head stinging my eyes with crystal, fresh tears. *I killed Megan. I killed Megan. I killed Megan. I killed Megan. I killed her family.*

If I could've kept my mouth shut. If I could've controlled my anger. She would've been alive. Still alive. With me. If I hadn't told Eric that I was her girlfriend. If I kept our relationship a secret. If I knew Eric was a psychopath. If I charged my phone after we left. If I respected Megan's privacy. *If I could've kept my mouth shut, Eric wouldn't have killed Megan's mother. I could've saved someone. I*
could've saved her.

I killed her mother. I killed Megan. I killed someone. No, not someone. I killed two. Why did I just figure this out?

I was weak to the knees, and I didn't have any support to be my anchor. My eyes were blurred with tears, and my sanity was to the peak of breaking. I wanted to scream, but my throat was silent. I wanted to drown in tears, but they all went down one by one. I wanted to escape, but reality is always behind me. I want Megan back, but heaven wants to latch onto her.

I wanted forgiveness. Was that too much to ask?

I wanted a normal life. Why did you choose me to be your toy?

I wanted happiness. Why give me suffering?

I want to blow this town. Why are you being so generous to it?

I turned back to the shed, seeing if Chloe didn't follow me. Her blue beanie floated across a window, later replaced by blonde hair as she pulled it down to run her fingers into the tangles.

I turned my head back to stare into nowhere, and that's when a thought came in mind.

If Megan was still alive, I would never have meet Chloe.

If Megan was still alive, we would've been strangers.

If Megan was still alive, those moments between us were fantasy.

If Megan was still alive, we would never know each other even existed.

It was like an exchange: gift for a gift.

Death gets Megan, and I get Chloe.

Death gets an angel, for an exchange of another.

Chloe got me to smile and fall in love again, just in three days. She's the only happiness in my life when things went to hell.

The thought of Chloe got me to grasp onto the wisp of sanity I had left and pull it back. The dam of tears stopped leaking, and my knees were strong enough to lift me up again. I lift my head up again, and my mouth traced a ghostly smile.

We went through so much for less than a week together. I didn't want to waste it all for nothing.

As I slowly went back to reality, the sound of rocks rumbling with the sound of muffled screaming was the first thing I heard that got me to snap my head back.

Chloe emerged from the shed…with two other guys in black outfits. Their faces were covered from the shadow of their hoods, along with a ski-mask, and they were way taller than Chloe.

Chloe was strapped down with an arm, as a hand was covering her mouth with her feet rapidly kicking as motions of blur followed along. Her eyes were covered in fear as she spotted me, along with the two others.
"Hey!" I screeched, knocked out of my surprised position that was now leaded by hatred and fury. "What the fuck?!"

"Run!" The man roared, tightening his hold on Chloe, which got her to squirm even more. "Run, you fucking bastard!"

As they attempted to run, I was already dashing towards them, my feet barely touching the ground.

The man who had Chloe was at a dawdled running pace from her feet flying, though the stranger with free arms came running towards me with a crowbar, giving one of them time to escape.

He swung at my head as I had a wisp of luck; a strip of rusted metal touched my forehead when I ducked. I bounced up again, spinning to his figure with a fist to his throat when our balance was back in identical timing.

When my knuckles connected to his throat, I heard an immediate sharp inhale of air, his upper-body almost touching the ground with one of his hands digging on his neck. His grip was loose enough for me to make a move, giving me the opportunity to steal the crowbar from his hand.

When I succeeded, his bent position was slightly straightened, his head perking up. I wasted no time to bash the side of his head with my new melee, his body crashing against the rock that made a slight groan from the impact.

I didn't give hitting him again to make sure he was unconscious a second thought when I remembered one of them had Chloe, which got me into a mad dash towards a black car from a distance.

When I got there in mere seconds, I saw Chloe becoming limp with a needle injected in her neck. Her feet slowly stopped twitching and her head was dangling from one side, eyes open, but not awake.

The sight caught me off guard, making me drop the crowbar with my whole body losing its color. I lost all my senses for a split second as the sight of my best friend's rag dolled body hanged in my thoughts. Everything went black, and I wanted to shut down when I saw that I was too late.

The sound of the crowbar impacting the ground got the attention of the kidnapper that got the fire inside me ten times bigger. My clenched fist turned my knuckles white which got me to think that I might impale my palm with my fingers. I pushed my legs over it's limit, hovering over the ground and dashed towards the stranger with my eyes turning fiery red from anger. I didn't stop to get the crowbar back and decided to use my fists.

As the kidnapper's fear was evident through his mask, he struggled to get something out of his pocket, from holding Chloe with the other hand. When he effortlessly dropped Chloe down at the side-walk with a dull plop without guilt, it fueled my anger like my whole body was on fire.

I was a foot away from him with my fist in position until I heard a deafening sound that got me to stop.

_Bang._

I felt an open wound below my shoulder that got me to twist down onto the concrete. I crashed down beside his feet, with my eyes directly at Chloe's dead ones. All my anger was replaced with fear when I felt a thick substance of liquid come pouring down to the ground as the pain kicked in. But I couldn't hold the wound and bawl in pain when I experienced the color of Chloe's eyes fading.
"Fuck," I heard the man mutter under his breath. "Empty already? C'mon, I *swear* I only used three bullets," he said to himself.

I mustered all the strength I had left to turn my head, seeing that he was right above me with his gun laying on his palms. His teeth were grinding together while he twisted and turned the pistol, later shaking the ground by stomping in frustration.

"*Dammit!*" He shouted with his hands above his head as he did a short walk forward. He then looked straight at me in the eye with a sharp turn in the head as he pointed at me. "You're damn lucky that you didn't end up with a bullet stuck between your damn brains. But you just ran out luck. Soon, it will be your blood next."

With a thread of strength left, I wasted it on giving a glare, dropping my head back to the side as blood overflowed the rim of my bullet hole.

My eyes followed the stranger's actions when he picked up Chloe, mounting her on his shoulder. My fingers twitched and fought to reach out when he placed her at the back seat, later dropping into a numb state when they slammed the door shut.

The pluck of strength I had was enough for me to attempt to sit up, rolling to my back while I held my dead arm. I stood up with my knees; my upper-body having the weight of gold bars got me to bend over with my forehead touching the ground. My lungs demanded immediate air just when I move my wounded arm the slightest bit.

As I pushed myself up with one hand, a sharp impale to the stomach got me to tumble back down to my side, my mouth mimicking a silent scream along with a precipitate need of swallowing air and a bit of tears welling up around my eyes. "Hey! Stay the *fuck* down!" A voice roared out. "You're not going anywhere with any information of what you saw. Your job is to bleed to death, no other option."

My teeth were exposed as I gritted them together, air passing through them from my heavy breathing. I didn't obey his commands, and tried to attempt standing up again, rolling to my undamaged arm to prop myself with.

Though, it wasn't a blow to the stomach, but to my sides which got me to tumble down again. "Are you fucking *deaf*, girl?!" He said in a deafening voice of volume. "*Stay! Still!*"

The golden sun rays permitted me to look, forcing me to flinch as I tried looking at the masked-man. The shadow of his hood and the coverage of his ski-mask blocked any identification of who the guy was, except for a split second, a strip of blue eyes were the only evidence I saw.

His foot then hovered above his heel, placing them on top of my bullet wound. The slightest touch of his rubber shoe sole was enough to make me beg for mercy. My lungs were ripped apart along with my throat breaking as I screamed past through them, arching my back with my hand desperately trying to dismiss his foot. His ski-mask was shuffling into a form of a smile, seeming satisfied when he saw tears reigning and sprawling down my cheeks.

When he lifted his foot up, his sole left a bloody circle that he rubbed onto the concrete of the sidewalk, transporting the mark onto the ground. "Who am I to tell," he muttered under his breath,
voice converting into rasp. "I know you won't stay here. But I know you won't go to the cops, either."

He sat on his ankles as he was above my head, inverting his image to up-side down in my perspective.

He then took off his hood, his blue eyes now evident from the help of the impact of light rays in his back, creating a faded shade in his front. Then, he gripped the top of his ski-mask and pulled it off, revealing the smirk he held behind.

His face was familiar, and I couldn't fight for air anymore. My lungs were completely dry, and my pain vanished from the surprising impact he offered.

He leaned in close, his grin increasing from ear to ear as his nose dipped in centimeter by centimeter until his eyes were the only thing in view for me.

"I know you wouldn't. Right, Autumn?" my father said.

Chapter End Notes

clarification: Max's birth/real name is Autumn, but she illegally changed it to Max.

i quickly skimmed through this and made some major/minor changes to the original chapter. i have a feeling there are plot holes and need some more clarifications to this, so comment any part you're confused about and i'll try to make up something in order for that to work, lol
beauty masked within insanity

Chapter Summary

Filler chapter, seeing things in Chloe's perspective and knowing Max's father more.

Chapter Notes

IM *CLAP* SO *CLAP* SORRY *CLAP*
im a piece of shit thanks,
i'm working on another fic tho
soooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo
dont forgive me
bc i dont deserve it
also this chapter is seriously straight out of the original one, with no edit or such, bc im
too friggin lazy to look over it
imsorry

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Flashback**

*Chloe's P.O.V*

"Max!"

*Her shoulder impacted mine and flung me away to repel from her path as her eyes were shielded with fluid that hung down to her chin. Her feet made the ground quiver like a small earthquake with every footfall she creates that connects to the ground. I had to increase the velocity of my usual stride to keep up with her breaking pace.*

"Max, wait!" I roared, demanding her attention that was blocked by her wandering thoughts.

*My stride converted to a sluggish one by the time I reached the doorframe when I realize there was no point on chasing Max if she wouldn't take the opportunity to stop and listen. Her stubbornness would only invent chaos if I take the chance to try and melt her mammothic breakdown. The safe option was to let her be.*

*But I had the temptation to tug myself away from my position to swallow Max whole in my arms when I saw her knees slowly losing their satiability with her shoulders drooping down. Her eyes dipped down to the rocks and her figure was in a deadly solid appearance. I guess her thoughts took advantage of the tiny wisp of sanity she had.*
She's fine, I say, trying to convince myself. She's just...she's fine. I don't want to make matters...she's fine...it's fine.

I wasn't fully convinced, but I couldn't stand the sight of Max fighting to hold onto the strip of control she has left that I had to come to a quick conclusion.

My teeth were tearing into the surface layer of skin in my bottom lip when I paced around the little space provided in the shed. My digits ripped the fabric of my beanie off of my head while my other ones traveled through the tangles of my hair as I inhale in a bubble of sky in my mouth.

I stopped dead in my tracks when I thought I had an idea, only for it to become a burden in the back of my thoughts. That only satisfied my anxiety further off the charts and urged my fingers to tug on my hair. It took dozens of rapid inhales to collect enough of my stability to convince my nails to plummet down to my sides.

Calm down, Chloe, I said to myself. She'll get back to her feet eventual—What the hell?!

"Mmph!"

"I got her," a voice informed in a thunderous whisper. "Now what?"

The man concealed my mouth in a deft method that no matter how harsh I strive to break out of his grasp, I couldn't. He prevented my screams to be heard and converted them to muffled cries that no one could pick up and restrained my waist from fidgeting, along with my arms.

"Isn't it obvious enough? Move your ass!" a ruthless voice bellowed in a murmur. "Max will be back in no time, we can't stay here!"

"Right. Got it," he replied in a perplexing winded tone.

Max? They know her? And...that voice...It sounds so familiar...

My feet lashed out in a hasty behavior with my heel whacking an area above the ankles of the kidnapper, making him huff a grunt from the stinging impact.

In return, his nails gashed into my skin and hauled my head back to his shoulder that his huffing breath was palpable in my neck. "Hold still before I decide to bash your head with a fucking crowbar," he croaked in a fuming voice. "You're already in this deep and you want to test me?"

"Psst!" the coldblooded voice intruded. "She's getting up! Stop bluffing and let's bail!"

My shoulders started to jerk and jolt when he concluded his report. I'm leaving? What is this fucking act? What does this have to do with Max? Where the fuck are they taking me?!

"Jeff, this would've been way easier if you brought the drug along."

"Yeah yeah, like there would be another opportunity to sneak in here without getting her attention. And I told you not to call me tha—!"

Suddenly, everything became a white static noise when I progress what they've spoken. Drugs? What are they planning to do? And his name is...Jeff? He really sounds fami—

The crackling of rocks got my thoughts to drain away from my attention and I realize that we've got passed the door frame. The muted sound of rocks hissing got the two kidnapper's heart to stop when they spotted Max's figure suddenly at a halt. Everything was at rest, settling in one frame, and the
men didn't take the opening of making a run for it.

It was only for an instant that the world was taciturn: overflowing with stillness. Until my instincts took over, making the atmosphere plump with my smoldering lungs that only came out as a hushed scream along with my feet airborne.

In the twinkling of an eye, I detained Max's attention and got her head to revolve back. Her eyebrows were creased with her eyes bleached in crimson red, along with soaking cheeks were exposed. In a flicker, her face twisted into a baffled expression, altering into a frightened one when I fought restless in the man's grip.

Max stayed in terror for only a blink until she was infuriated with clenched fist. In duplicate timing, the men recoiled back when she snarled in a piercing voice.

"Hey! What the fuck?!

"Run!" Jeff barked in command. "Run, dammit!"

Max already had an advantage to take the lead and made a frenetic dash towards me. But when Jeff ran towards Max, a rusty crowbar was divulged in his hands when he sprinted on the way to her. I was desperate to pry away from his grip when Max and Jeff were swallowed whole in the horizon, making me unable to see what may happen.

"Girl, I mean it!" the man shrieked in my ears when we arrived at a black vehicle. "The more you move, the better it is for pain."

I ignored his warning and continued to jolt around, able to get my jaw free and gnaw an area in his palm. My teeth had to sink in for a second for the man to heave his hand back and growl in a hasty way.

"Missy, that was your last mistake!" he shouted, tucking in his elbow when he set his arm on my neck, strangling me.

His other arm left my waist, giving me the freedom to kick around and trample on his feet. But when I take the opportunity, he tightens his arm around my neck, which forces me to sharply inhale to acquire air and attempting to drag his arm down with the two of mine. I've fought to struggle out of his grip and tried to take no notice of his rigid death grip. It wasn't an effective method.

My breathing became hoarse and it was harder to obtain air when I kept kicking. I tried to convince myself that it was worth fighting for: to keep going. My life could be on the line. But not even immeasurable amount of cheer and encouraging thoughts couldn't lead me to brawl on.

When my feet finally became stationary, an indistinct sigh came from the man, along with a muttering 'Thank fucking God,' followed. He was pleased for a moment until I began trying to pry his iron-like grip in my throat, along with my shoulders jerking and twitching.

Soft rumbling was at earshot when I stopped wrestling with the man's grip momentarily, until it vanished within an abyss when the man said something impossible for me to hear under his breath.

The fight in me was kick started when the man's palm was back in my mouth. "It's all right, this will be slow and painful, Miss Price."

Miss Price—?

"Mmph!" A jagged sting was bonded within my neck, giving me the tingling thirst for freedom I
needed.

Though, it was already too late.

My eyelids were starting to feel like concrete: I can't pry them open any longer. Everything was being replaced by black. My feet were fighting to feel control, and my head weighed more than it usually does, dragging it down to dangle.

My eyesight was converting to reality, and back to black: everything was flickering. At this point, I couldn't move a muscle, and the battle in me was absent. Everything was a blur, and the lock of hope I had gone astray. I came to a concluding thought that my future was in an abyss that couldn't be hauled back.

Until a vague sight came into my vanishing senses.

Max..?

She stood in a frightening pose with a hammering chest and a crowbar at hand. Her eyes were layered in a scarlet red color that was brimmed with soaring ferocity and disgust.

Max's eyes were voyaging through the sight and her attitude altered into daze and heartbreak when her eyes met me. The warm color of her skin slumped down into a frigid pale and her jaw was unclenched. The fury in her eyes was replaced with packed depression that slipped down to her cheeks.

My memory can only linger onto the remembrance sound of the diminishing crowbar that echoed through my last vision.

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**Junkyard**

**Max's P.O.V**

"D..Dad?"

"Not so fast, sweetie," My father suspends in an imperturbable manner with an additional engaging smile. "I've missed you too."

"Wh..what?"

"I'm sure you have many questions on how I'm still here, right?" He says in that same tone. "Don't worry honey; I'll try answering them along the way."

"Along the way..?"

"Why, you thought I was going to leave you to rot here? My own daughter?" He tenderly laughs. "Why would you think I would do such a thing to you? Besides, there are other…entertaining things I can do with you and Miss Price."

"You shot…You shot me…"
"It was for self-defense, sweet-heart," he virtually barges in. "You were about to hit me. If there was any other way than a bullet, I would've chosen it. But there was only a gun, my little angel. And my hands were full to use my fists."

"Don't call me that, you motherfucker," I sputtered in a fatal, hoarse voice. "You drugged my friend!"

"Oh," he simply says with a kindhearted act. "My mistake. I always aim for your friends, do I?"

"What?"

He looks at me like I was ill-advised to the situation. "You haven't caught on to the pattern yet?" He adds on a hearty chuckle. "My my, Autumn. Looks like I underestimated you—"

"Don't call me that, you sick bastard," I snarled.

But he detained a hand up when I finished speaking. "You haven't kept up with my victims, I suspect," he went on. "You haven't paid attention on my picked subjects, you haven't given the names plastered on the news a second thought, and you haven't suspected anything happening to your friends before the disappearance of Megan. As a matter of fact, you only cared for one person."

He gave a push on his knee and stood up as his skeptical smile was still detectable through the casted shadows. "Alexis Joles, Samantha Higgins, Jesse Wellner, Amanda Zamora, Zachary Willis," he wandered on, circling around my limp formation has he gradually goes through the lists of names bit by bit. "All of these names, all of these people, all of these victims… Do they mean something to you, Autumn?"

I didn't want to remember. I didn't want to even try. I didn't want to feel like I was the one who caused all their deaths.

But…

I'm starting to remember. Cloudy memories. Of who they are.

Not only that, but the miniature memory gap I thought I had, that was actually an immense memory gap, returned.

Alexis Joles, a girl who gave me my first batch of cigarettes.

Samantha Higgins, a girl with colorful strings of language always tied around to her tongue.

Jesse Wellner, a boy that has an uncontrollable frenzied mouth that loves science.

Amanda Zamora, a girl with immense bravery.

Zachary Hills, a boy that taught me how to skate board.

"I can create a dozens of perpetuity lists of names, sweetie," he interrupts. "These were wonderful souls. They were so pure and innocent. But you've never ceased to think about their existence, do you? Of course, I can see your explanation: you do love picking favorites. Their avengement would only be crowned after you found Megan." His bogus smile weakened at the mention of her name. "Your sweet… little… angel."

His eyes trekked to the car, glaring what was occupied inside. "And I see that you've finally replaced your queen."

"I did not… favor Megan," I tussled to speak as the memories became a little more clear. "I cared for
all of their disappearance! I cared!"

"Don't play stupid with me, sweet-heart," he managed to disrupt in a kind voice. "You managed to stay calm through Alexis disappearance, you managed to sleep through Samantha's absence, you managed to stay happy from Jesse's department, you managed to keep smiling after Amanda's perish, and you managed to keep skating after Zachary's last breath. But you never managed any of these after the realization of Megan's state. What signs did you show that you cared for them?"

"It's because of Alexis' death, I got to stop smoking for almost two years," I informed. "It's because of Samantha's death; I started to get creative with my words. It's because of Jesse's death; I always skip science. It's because of Amanda's death; I got to take risky chances that I would've never agreed with. It's because of Zachary's death; I don't do tricks, I don't showoff, I don't rekindle with the friends I skated with. Every god damn board, every god damn piece of fucking wood will rupture me."

Because of a miracle, I wasn't loaded with fright: only anger. I take no notice of the painful situation I was in, and influenced myself to struggle sitting up. "And you did this to me! You did! You gave me so much death that I cracked. I fucking cracked! The only reason why I acted insane when Megan died was that I had enough of everyone disappearing from me! I couldn't handle it anymore! I can only handle so much of acting like I have a phony happy life, and giving me five deaths of my closest friends is more than enough to destroy someone. Barely anyone can take the pain of two best friends, and you chose to give me five. Five! You thought that I was the actual heartless-creature I pretend to be, and you tested me. Again. And again. And again. Just to see me crumble. Why are you doing this?!"

"Why am I?" he sharply injects in a hushed voice. "Why am I?" He gives out a chuckle. "I really did underestimate you, you dumb fuck."

Even though his cruelty has elevated within minutes of discussion, his words were beyond on what I expected from a father that I used to love.

He saw me flinch, and gave a sympathetic smile, but his eyes were still filled with the same murderous desire. "I'm sorry. That didn't come out right. What I'm trying to say is that it's fiercely surprising to me that you forgot what my disorder would be capable of in my control. Didn't you notice my actions around Megan, when she is on our property? Around you? Even if you knew what I had, you thought I have control over my morbid jealousy? Control is a fictional thing, Autumn. No one has it."

His speech was at halt, and he started to pace back and forth in a painfully slow matter. I didn't interrupt the noise of tapping footfalls though. My eyes were only plastered on him with a glare as if every motion he did was enough to throw me to the edge.

He kept that pattern going until his feet discontinued. His body was in a form of a statue until his head turned its attention to the car, commanding his legs to scurry to the passenger door.

"You know, I've always been a selfish person, Autumn," he continued as he searched through the car from the passenger seat. "I wanted you all to myself when you were born. I didn't even want your mother to hold you. I get jealous every time she does."

His shuffling halted for a second then continued his search through the car, only a little more frantic. "If I didn't have that string of control I had for the past years, I would've ended up telling you that you never had a mother before."

My body suddenly bolted into a position where I was bent down, kneeling as I covered the hole
through my shoulder. "You would've killed her?"

"You're lucky that I didn't, you son of a bitch!" He bellowed and swiftly swirled around. "You wanted it to be your mother instead of Megan? You wanted that?"

His brutal ear-piercing sentence didn't affect the fear I had. What got my heart to start-jump into a throbbing pace was the needle in his hand.

"I can never wrap you up, Autumn," he continues in an eerie voice as he proceeds to walk towards me. "But you can be predictable at most times. That could be an advantage for me."

"What?"

"I figured out a fraction of what your pattern is, sweetie," he confesses as he kneels down in front of me. "You do like playing favorites, as said before. But it's never a certain person. It's always back and forth to another. And that pattern, is my list."

"Your…list?"

He gives out a muted chuckle. "Oh Autumn. Always have a train full of questions."

"It's Max, you bastard—"

"But do you know why I started this lifestyle?" He continues as he ignores my correction. "Because I came to a conclusion that I should let go of my control. Because I realize that control has created my cage. And I set myself free."

"Just get to the point—"

"It's because of Megan, Autumn," he says, as his fatherly act slipped. "She was the reason why Alexis Joles and the others ended up 6 feet below ground. She triggered the monster that I have become. And I have yet to thank her for that."

Instead of interrupting his explanation again, I let silence seep in, and waited for him to continue.

When he was convinced that I would stay quiet, he continued. "Though the problems of my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder prevented my hands from getting dirty. That's why it's useful having a loyal servant around.

"You see, I planned on killing Megan in the first place instead of Alexis. But after you came home with a pack of cigarettes exposed in your pockets, schedule changed after I decided that Megan would have to wait. After I killed Alexis, I…strangely enjoyed it. I enjoyed this lifestyle. I finally felt what life feels like without control. It was marvelous. It was spectacular. What triggered me to test you was the hint of sadness in your eyes. I craved it. I craved seeing the transportation of my sadness to yours. I wanted to see you suffer after you abandoned me. After you relied on your friends for support and not your own father. So I killed. And killed. And killed. After the only one left was Megan. And her death was special. Even after seeing you break down, I couldn't stop. I needed more. The only problem is that I've killed all of your closest friends. There was no one else left. No one else…until one person…came to mind…"

His voice trailed off as he stood up, an insane smile plastered on his face with his miniature pupils visible.

"Me," he whispered.
After minutes of silence, his frenzied laugh appeared. "Me!" he started again. "Me, me, me! Hahaha! ME! I killed myself! I lived! I died! I lived again! Me, me, me!"

His voice amplified as his laughter began piercing my ears and his form began to bend over, holding his knees for support while his shoulders were twitching and bouncing from the cause of his amusement.

"A-a-and you!" he says, squeezing audible words in-between his hilarity. "You were downright destroyed! DESTROYED! After 5 years, I still follow you! I follow and kill! I follow and kill! You're losing your colors by the minute! I love it!"

His sick laughter didn't come to a halt after minutes when his back suddenly straightened up, a crazed grin was splashed onto his face. "Oh, your reactions are truly priceless. The conversion of your light to dark cause and effect was inspiring. Addicting. I still feast upon them. Schadenfreude is the beauty masked within insanity, is it not? You get to see the world in a different perspective. Worry isn't a thing in your book."

His eyes were glued somewhere beyond the horizon in front of him. He looks…oddly free. "And sweetie." He says it in the same insane expression on his face, but with a mysterious add of a softness in his voice. "There's just one…tiny…problem. "I'm still obsessed. Still thirsting. It's a drug that I can't put out. That I don't want to put out. I need more. More."

"And what my problem is? I don't know how to feed it anymore. I've killed Alexis, Samantha, Jesse, Amanda, Zachary, Megan, and myself. Is there anyone in this world you care about? Anyone else? Vanessa Caulfield? Frank Bowers?"

"Please don't hurt anyone anymore," I squeaked. "I'm tired. I'm tired of all this. All of this death."

"My words won't do shit to you but please…don't hurt Chloe. Not another. I can't take this…" The thirteen-year old me reappeared, and caused my eyes to become glass. They poured out all at once, and the bravery I had was gone. My palms reached the concreate of the sidewalk, and my head hung down. Bombs of liquid splattered along the path as my lungs inhaled sharp gasps, letting out a weep. "Please…not Chloe…not her…not her…"

My sobbing was the only thing audible in the scene. Ryan hadn't said a word yet, and I'm covering the sidewalk with my tears.

Why am I even begging, I began to doubt. Why would he listen to me? He wants pain, not mercy, you stupid shit.

When my sobbing came to an end, I felt a finger hooked onto my chin and pulled it up. "Oh honey." A pout emerged from him. "I'm not going to give it up that easily."

"But," he starts, getting my attention. "There is good news to all of this."

"I will stop, Autumn. I won't hurt anyone anymore after these victims."

"Victims..? There's another one besides Chloe you're going to murder?"

What surprised me was that his smile lowered, and his eyes seemed…sad. "Sadly, to you, yes. After this, I'll have to start a new identity. Always on the run."

"Who's the other?"
When I asked, his smile completely transitioned to a frown. His expression seems real this time, actually showing emotion. Which got me really curious.

But he didn't answer. He just…stared. Like he was buying time.

When I was caught off guard…

That's when his hand punched my shoulder that had the bullet wound.

The pain was unbearable, and I was knocked back with his heel onto my stomach. The pain brought me to wound my lungs and scream. It didn't satisfy me anyways.

I felt a plastic glove concealing my mouth and another at my head, pushing it so it's leaning to my shoulder.

And a sharp stinging sensation was injected on my neck. My mind managed to stay focus for only a couple of seconds until my vision started to render everything fuzzy. I didn't have the energy to fight back, and the pain from my shoulder was gone. I started to get lightheaded as my head began to droop down so my cheek was impacting the concrete.

"I'm sorry, Max." His voice was mixed with a hint of sadness and regret. "There wasn't anyone to take your place. I'm so sorry."

"You're…not…sorry." I tried to reply with my weak lungs. It only extracted a little strength, so I doubt that he heard the last word.

Or possibly my last words.

---

**Flashback**

"Hey."

"Sweetie? Do you want anything?"

"No, no. I'll be fine. Thanks, dad."

"Of course. My bedroom is always available. Come by when you need anything."

"Thank you."

"Sleep tight, kid."
"...Dad?"

"Hm..? Oh, you actually came. Uh...what time is it?"

"I dunno."

"Hold on...let me turn on the lamp.

Uhm, okay. Can you read the alarm clock?"

"Yeah, it's...1:02 A.M."

"Dang. It could've been better if you came right away when I told you.


"Snacks sounds...good."

"Sure. We don't have any snacks though. But, um...

Okay, I'll tell you what. I'll get dressed and drive to the grocery store to get snacks. You can wait, right?"

"We don't have any? Oh no, it's okay dad. We can watch television."

"No, no. It's all right. The weather is fine, and a gas station is nearby. I can buy some chips, some soda, and some gum."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, yeah it's no hustle. I can weather a storm."

"Okay..."

"Sweetie?"

"Yeah?"
"You'll be okay."

"I hope so too."

"Hey, hey. Don't cry. I'm not hoping. I'm believing. Now give me a hug before I go."

"Love you."

"I'll be back shortly."

Chapter End Notes

Soo..here are some of the disorders I used for Ryan Caulfield:

Schadenfreude - joy in the suffering of others

O.C.D (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) - a disorder of the brain and behavior. Both obsession and compulsion.

Morbid/Extreme Jealousy - lack of trust, the extreme feeling of not wanting to share, etc.

Compulsive Lying Disorder (Not mentioned) - someone who lies with ease and finds comfort with it.

Dunno if continue? I have an unfinished chapter 6 already in my desk, and it's probably like, 1/4th, 1/2 done?

End Notes

Punk!max's hair was inspired by one of rippedkatemarsh's [http://rippedkatemarsh.tumblr.com/] posts.

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