

## Four or Dead by G O A Chapter 21 - 25

### Chapter 21

Asher...

Watching Emma walk off with the new kid had Logan in knots. Out of all of us, he could play off most of his emotions but when it came to Emma he couldn't hide anything. He was fuming and we knew nothing we said would calm him down. Emma had a calming effect on him and now she was walking off with some other guy. This made Logan murderous if the look on his face was any indication of the anger inside him.

"Dude, you need to chill, okay? If you go after that guy Emma will be furious." Leo reminded Logan.

Leo wasn't happy about this either but he was a lot calmer than the rest of us. Jayden and I were the silent angry type, so you would never know just how pissed we are until our fist connected to your face. Leo was unpredictable, one minute he could be chill and the next he would choke a guy until they passed out. He was a little all over the place but the calmer one.

Logan's anger only grew when we watched Emma walk into the cafeteria smiling and that same prick walking beside her. He was smiling down at her like she was heaven's gift to the world. Which she was but

he wasn't allowed to look at her like that!

He looked like that heart-eyed emoji and it was making my blood boil. I was keeping my emotions locked down but it was getting harder with our girl ignoring us and spending time with that pretty boy instead. He had that all-American football player look about him and he kept smiling at her. Who smiled that much? Finally, Emma turned and locked her eyes on us. She lowered her head but turned to the guy and said a few words before coming over to us.

"Hey," Leo said pulling her in and kissing her on the cheek.

She visibly melted into his touch and sensing it he wrapped his arms around her.

"I'm so sorry." She said into his shirt.

He pulled away and looked down at her. "Why? You didn't do anything wrong."

"I'm sorry I freaked out this morning and ignored you all. I was stuck in my head and I needed some time

to think." She said looking at the rest of us.

Logan looked sheepish and didn't move to touch her or say anything. She must have noticed because she stood and walked around the table to him. He turned his body to face her and she reached out to cup his

face. Logan's eyes fell shut and he leaned forward and wrapped his arms around her waist, hiding his face in her stomach. She cracked a smile and ran her fingers through

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his hair. Logan let out a sigh and pulled her into his lap holding her tight. He must have been feeling a lot worse than he was showing because at that moment he seemed truly terrified that he had screwed up with Emma for good.

“So the new kid huh?” I glared at Jayden for ruining the calm we just reached but he didn’t even notice.

Jayden barely gave girls a second look finding it a waste of effort, but Emma wasn’t just any girl. She was cracking that tough-guy facade he had going for him and it was letting out a slew of unexpected reactions. He had cuddled her the night before and that was not like him at all. He was falling deep and fast just like the rest of us, but he seemed testy because of it.

Emma looked over at him and offered him a sweet smile. “Kyle? He is so nice. We are project partners.”

“You guys looked like you hit it off.” Jayden added and again I shot him a look to be careful.

“Yeah, he is pretty great...” I watched her carefully and a smirk found its way onto my face.

She was trying to provoke Jayden and it was working.

Jayden scoffed. “I guess if you are into pretty boy jocks.”

“Well, he is exactly the kind of guy I had always imagined would come along and sweep me off my feet and run away with me.” Logan’s head shot up.

“What? You want to run away with him?” He asked and I shook my head.

She smiled down at Logan. “What if I did? Would you miss me?”

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She was good. Logan wrapped a hand around her neck and pulled her into a kiss right there in the cafeteria.

“I wouldn’t miss you,” Logan said pulling away a little. “Because I would chase after you.”

I almost gagged but that seemed to be exactly what our girl wanted to hear because this time she leaned in and kissed him. Now my desire to punch that jock had transferred to me wanting to punch my friend. He had shared more than one kiss with Emma while the rest of us barely spent one moment alone with her. Yeah, petty alpha male stuff I know but still, I wanted my chance to kiss her too if not more. She had come to me once and I had been hoping for more ever since. This girl had my head in jumbles and I just wanted a break from that.

Instead, I stood and stormed out of the cafeteria. I hadn’t realized really how upset I was until I did that and I was ready to leave completely when a soft hand reached out and slipped into mine.

“Where you off to?” Emma asked walking alongside me with our hands clasped together.

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I let out a sigh. "I don't know. I just needed air."

She looked up at me for a moment studying my face.

"You were upset about me being with Kyle too right?" She asked in her sweet honey voice.

I nodded. "I am not the jealous type but when I saw that..."

"Why would you be jealous?" She asked me.

I look down at her in disbelief. "You really don't know?"

She shakes her head. "Asher I am a mess and half the time I'm trying to keep my thoughts out of dark places. If there is something you want me to know, you need to say it. I can't know what any of you guys are thinking unless you tell me. Logan saying I belonged to you guys had me in a panic. I have only been with you guys for a short time and so much has changed so fast that I am trying to understand it all."

I searched her eyes and saw real sadness and confusion. She honestly didn't get that we were all under her spell.

"I have been hiding for so long and more focused on surviving each day that I don't even consider that someone might care about me. I am used to no one caring, so Asher I need you and the others to just tell me. What do you want from me? What do you want us to be?" We stopped walking and she looked up at me expectantly.

2

We were now standing at the end of one of the hallways and it was silent and private. I looked down at her

and tried to think of the best way to say everything I was thinking and feeling.

"We want you, Emma. Not for the deal we made, or because you want our help. We want you." I said

hoping she understood.

Her eyes widened. "Why?" She asked.

"I don't know truthfully. I think we were all captured by you that first day, but we knew you were too good

for us. I think that infuriated us and we lashed out. Also, I had to stay in Andrea's good graces and that

meant pushing you away. We saw how much Leo cared for you and we were a bit jealous of your bond, but

he knew he couldn't bring you into our world. Logan enjoyed flirting with you and I think it has always

been because he wanted you. You were like a fragile rose, beautiful and soft but could hurt us the moment

we grabbed on to you. Because we would want you so bad but didn't deserve you." I swallowed in

embarrassment.

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She smiled. "As much as you guys drove me crazy I think I knew you guys didn't want to hurt me. I think it hurt more that you guys watched Andrea and her friends hurt me and did nothing. But I don't want to live in the past anymore. I have seen who you guys really are and you guys are sweet and caring."

I grimaced at her words and she laughed. "You guys are also protective. All of that is new to me and

sometimes it's scary, but it's also nice. I don't care about what happened before now that I know this side

of

you. I want to be with you guys. I feel safe with you and if you really want me then I'm yours.'

I didn't need another word before I leaned down and crashed our lips together. She gasped in surprise but

I just pulled her closer. I needed this, I needed to feel close to her. I wanted to show her and everyone just

how

crazy I was for her. She was right, this had happened fast and hard but she wanted us and I didn't

care how we got here. She was ours just as it should have always been

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## **Four or Dead by G O A**

### **Chapter 22**

Emma...Present...

After Asher and I made our way back to the cafeteria, the boys had already finished eating and Leo had saved some food for me. I ate quickly, well as fast as I could with the boys hovering around me. It was so strange and it would take time for me to feel comfortable with it but I was learning. To have four guys dotting on me was probably every girl's dream, but to me, it didn't feel quite real. They were opening up to me, laying their hearts bare and I was still hiding things.

I didn't want to hurt them or add to their worries but I was falling hard for this new life and I knew I needed to tell them everything before it was too late. So the moment we got home I asked them all to sit with me.

"What's going on babe?" Logan asked and my face flushed at his words.

It was so strange to be called something like that without it being attached to a disgusting remark.

"There is something I need to tell you all and I had hoped that having my father thrown in jail would fix this but now he's out and it has me worried. I was having nightmares about it last night." I paused and glanced at Jayden.

"What is it?" He asked.

"I just want to say that I don't expect anything from you guys. If you decide not to help me regarding my father or don't want to deal with all my baggage I understand. Just say the word and I'll go." This had Logan shifting to object but I held my hand up to stop him. "I'm saying this because you all didn't sign up for this trouble when you took me in."

5

I looked at each of them to make sure they understood but they remained silent.

"Ok. During the summer my father told me he made a deal. A man he had done business with noticed me

at a party and wanted to ask me out to dinner. I told him I was a minor and that he would need to speak with my father. I knew my father would object since he had other plans for me and dating would put a damper on things. The man went up to my father anyway. They spoke softly to each other for most of the evening and when they were done my father had a smile on his face.

"He told me that the man was willing to wait until I turned eighteen in a few short weeks before courting me. I knew better than to object, so I nodded in agreement. The day I turned eighteen my father had me dress up and the man came to our house. He told me that the man wanted me to marry him and he would wait until I graduated before carting me off to New York to live with him. That day though he wanted to share a special

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moment with me and my father had me take him to my room. That's where he...he thought. us sleeping together and me being a virgin was a symbolic promise of the deal.

"I had hoped that my father being locked up for what he did to me would make the deal void, but then my father got out and I am afraid this guy is going to expect his deal to be fulfilled," I explained.

"What does your father get out of this deal?" Jayden asked.

"Five million dollars," I replied. [2]

The boys cursed and growled out their anger for a few moments before going quiet again.

"So you're worried that your father is going to come after you for this deal?" Leo asked trying to keep his voice level.

"Yes. But like I said I had hoped that he would rot in prison for a good long time and I would be forgotten by that pervert. Now I'm worried that my father will try even harder to get me back." I said with a sigh. "I'm sure this whole thing has only made him more angry and determined."

Logan stood and kneeled in front of me grasping my hands in his. "We won't let that happen, Emma."

I offered him a weak smile and reached out to touch his face. "I know you believe that, but these men have a lot of power. There is a lot they can do with that kind of money and I don't want anyone getting hurt because of me."

"So what? You want to surrender yourself?" Jayden asked with a snap.

I looked at him and could feel the anger radiating from his body. "I will if I have to. Don't you get it? My

life has never been my own but I can handle this. I have been living through it my whole life."

"Yeah, and you tried to kill yourself because of it." Jayden reminded me.

"I did because I had no one Jayden. No one to fight for me! No one on my side to protect me! I was alone

and I would rather be dead than live a life with that man or any man like him. But now I have all of you, so

yes I would turn myself over if it meant saving you guys. You didn't ask for any of this, so I won't ask any

more of you. The moment they threaten you I will leave." I said firmly.

4

"Emma I know it seems like that would fix things and it would be over but we can't just let you go. We want you here, it would kill us to just let you walk out of here knowing what is waiting for you." Leo said

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moving closer to me. 2

Logan still kneeled in front of me and was grasping my hands in his. 2

“Look Emmy none of this makes sense and I’m sure it’s not right the way we have come together like this, but we want you. All of us. We can’t lose you.” Logan said lowering his head and kissing my hands. 5

My heart melted at how soft he has become since things changed between us. It was like he had been trying so hard to hold back all this time and now that he didn’t have to pretend his whole soul was pouring out just for me. A part of me wondered if I was falling so easily into being with them because they were the first people to even show any sign of caring for me. So to feel and hear them letting all their emotions flood toward me, I wondered if it’s too good to be true. God, I wanted it to be real but how could anyone fall so hard and fast after the history we had. But it reminded me that there is a fine line between love and hate and it was clear we had lost sight of that line and now there was no going back.

I want them too. I need them but would it be fair to let them know that when any minute I could be pulled from their lives forever? I wanted to fight if that happened but I wasn’t sure if I had that kind of strength left. I was tired emotionally and my body wanted to give up and finally rest, and that was a hard thing to fight. Then I realized that if I ever did have to leave I wouldn’t want a life without them, so I needed to tell them just how I felt.

“I want you too,” I said locking eyes with Logan.

For some reason, I felt such a strong pull to Logan that I couldn’t explain. I lifted my hand and ran my fingers through his dark wavy hair. Then it turned to the others.

“I want to be with all of you. I don’t know what it says about us after everything but I want to be here. I feel like I belong here.” I admitted honestly.

Leo’s smile grew wide and he moved so quickly that I didn’t have a chance to react before he was standing. above me and turning ney face up at him. He immediately leaned down and kissed me so hard that I held my breath for a moment. Logan was still kneeling in front of me and my fingers were still tangled in his hair. As Leo’s kiss deepens and I accidentally clench my hand tight in Logan’s hair and making him groan. Leo doesn’t let me go through and I feel Logan’s hands gently moving along my legs and up toward my hips. Q

Their double attack made my body shutter. Leo pulled back and smiled down at me before leaning close to my ear.

“Let’s go upstairs. He whimpered into my ear.

I swallowed hard but nodded. He glanced back at Asher and Jayden and had some kind of silent

conversation that was concluded with a nod from Asher. Leo stepped back and Logan stood with my hands tight in his grip. He pulled me to my feet and started to lead me

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toward the stairs. Leo's kiss had made my head felt like I was floating in a cloud so I followed without protest. When we reach my room Logan leads me to the bed and pushes my shoulders lightly until I am seated on the edge.

"We will stop the moment you say so, Leo said. 3

My eyes were fixed on him as he moved closer and leaned down to capture my lips again. My eyes fluttered

closed as I got lost in him. I didn't even notice Logan moved until I felt his breath against the skin along my neck. I shivered from the sensation and a small whimper escaped my mouth but was muffled by Leo's

persistent attach on my lips.

Logan's hands were now resting on my hips and he moved them lower just a bit as his kisses moved lower on my neck. Something hits me though and I start to panic as memories flash through my mind. I stiffen

as phantom hands move over my body and the memories of those men become more intense.

"Emma? What's wrong?" Leo asked holding my face in his hands.

I let out a whimper and kept my eyes closed tight.

Logan hasn't removed his hand from me but has wrapped his arms tight around my waist.

"Emmy, it's us. It's just us baby." He whimpered softly into my neck.

I opened my eyes and looked at Leo. "It's you... It's you..."

I repeat those words several times and Leo nodded. "It's just us."

My eyes fall shut as I let out a shaky breath.

"Come on, let's lay down and just rest. Okay?" Logan said letting me go and scooting further back on the bed.

I take in one more breath before following him. He immediately pulled me into his arms.

"It's okay Emma we can move things as fast or as slow as you need." He said sweetly.

"I'm so sorry," I replied feeling the urge to cry.

The bed dips as Leo moves to the lay on the other side of me. He kisses me on the back of my neck before moving closer and rests his hand on my hip.

7

"You have nothing to be sorry for." He said. "Let's just rest."

I nod the best I can with my face buried in Logan's chest.

The room fell silent and soon I drifted off into a peaceful sleep tucked in between two of my Angels.

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## **Four or Dead by G O A**

### **Chapter 23**

Emma...Three Weeks Later...

Things grew quiet the last few weeks with news going around that Andrea was taking time off of school for a mental healing retreat. Her friends kept to themselves during her absence, only offering me the occasional look of disgust but not much else. I hadn't heard from my father either and that was what had me the most worried. My father was by no means a patient man, so the fact he hadn't come storming in at dragging me out had been a bit of a surprise.

Things with the boys had gotten a lot better though, and I was starting to become more comfortable with the idea of being a real part of their group. I was still nervous about pursuing more of a romantic relationship with them as a group because my mind couldn't wrap around the thought that they all wanted me. There was no way that was the case, and I wasn't sure how that could work.

Asher and Jayden especially confused me in this regard because they didn't really show much emotion at all, to begin with. They made it clear they wanted me here but as what I wasn't sure. Leo and Logan were the total opposite. They were very obvious about their feelings after that night together, but they have been patient with me about taking our time. 2)

I liked the way Logan and Leo wrapped me in their arms, it was something I had needed for a long time. I had been starved for any form of kindness and especially of physical interactions that didn't include pain. Logan liked to take me by surprise and steal a kiss at least a few times a day, but Leo was a bit more reserved and went for cheek kisses instead. Asher and Jayden spoke to me some but kept any physical contact to a minimum and far between, which I accepted.

The last couple of weeks I had made it up in my mind to find a way to pay them all back in some way, so I started watching every tutorial I could find on cooking. The boys were sweet enough to buy me a nicer phone and it allowed me to watch YouTube. They told me I didn't have to worry about cooking and cleaning for them but I figured it was the least I could do. So I buckled down and got to work on learning everything I could.

A morning finally came when I was sure I could make something. I woke up and shimmied out of my Logan and Leo sandwich to sneak into the kitchen and make breakfast. I hadn't been expecting Jayden to be sitting at the kitchen table when I arrived though and seeing him made me jump and a small squeak of surprise escaped my mouth.

My hand came up over my heart as if that action alone was keeping it from leaping from my chest. "God, you scared me."

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1

He looked at me and his mouth quirked up at the corner just a little bit. "What are you doing up so early?"

I smile and take a seat beside him. "I wanted to take a shot at making breakfast."

He lifted a brow at me. "Really? Can you cook?"

"I have been watching some videos on some simple recipes and I think I can do it if we have all the ingredients," I assured him.

"What will you make?" He asked me.

"Omelettes!" I replied with an excited smile.

He hummed in response. "If we don't have everything thing you need we can get them later so we have them for next time. Just give me a list."

I smiled. "Thanks! I'll try and work with what we have for now."

"Very well. He replied before turning his attention back to his phone.

I smiled to myself before standing and heading toward the fridge. That had been the longest conversation. we had ever had and it felt like a huge accomplishment. Ruffling through the fridge I found cheese, bacon, and eggs which were just enough for a simple omelet. I took everything out and set up my phone so I could watch the steps and follow them exactly. The kitchen was silent other than the sound of clanking utensils and the soft voice of the instructor. I brushed my long hair aside and started working, blocking everything else out.

I was too focused to notice Jayden had moved until his hand brushed back the small section of hair that had fallen over my shoulder. I flinched a little, and I turned to look at him. He nodded his head in a way to tell me to go back to what I was doing. I did so but my heart had started pounding loudly in my chest. We were so close and I immediately started panicking. I continued to mix the eggs I had cracked into a bowl but slowed when I felt his fingers thread through my hair. 2

"When my mother and father were first married my mom would always ask my father to tie her hair back when she was cooking. My father was confused at first because men don't usually carry hair ties around with them. But she kept asking every day, so my father stopped by a store on his way home from work and bought some thin black hair ties. He started wearing a couple on his wrists at times from that day on. So when my mom would ask for him to tie her hair back he would tug one off and wrap it in her hair. He did this every day and when I got older I asked her why she did this every day." He paused for a second and I waited desperately wanting him to keep talking.

"She said that a man finds a special girl in his life he will always look for a way to care for her. This small thing let my father show how much he cared for my mother. She said her father and mother did the same thing, and a small act like that made their relationship stronger. So after that, I also started wearing the ties on my wrists. A few times my father let me tie my mom's hair instead of him. For some reason, I thought that if I could learn to do more than just tie her hair back it would show how much I loved

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her. So I learned how to braid hair.” He continued but then fell silent.

“Is that what those things are on your wrist? Hair ties.” I asked.

“Yes. I never took them off even after she died.” He replied softly.

Silence fell between us again as his fingers weaved through my hair.

“My mom made me promise that when I met the right girl that I would continue the tradition. There was a girl that I thought would be the one I would share those moments with, but she was gone before I could. Now I am getting a second chance to keep the promise I made to my mom.” I swallowed hard as tears pricked my eyes.

When he is finished he let his hands fall away and I turned to look up at him.

“Thank you,” I said gratefully.

He simply nodded and we stood like that for a few seconds before he reached out and brushed his thumb gently across my cheek. I expected him to pull away but his hand lowered just enough to lay against the back of my neck. My eyes searched his for a clue at what he was thinking, but I never expected him to pull me to him and crashed his lips against mine. The intensity of it took my breath away and I could almost feel how desperately he had been wanting to share a moment like this with me. When he finally pulled away I looked up at him, my eyes wide. He offered me a small smile before his hand dropped away again and he took a step back.

“Just ask and I’ll be there to tie your hair back.” He said softly before turning around and returning to his seat as if nothing happened.

I, on the other hand, stood stunned for an embarrassing amount of time. The sound of footsteps coming down the stairs finally broke my trance and I quickly turned back to the omelet mix I had completely forgotten about. Logan came in and walked up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist.

“Hey, you! Whatcha making?” He asked resting his head on my shoulder.

“Breakfast!” I replied turning and smiling up at him.

He gave me an expression that looked both excited and surprised.

Wow! Can’t wait to try it!” He planted a sweet kiss to my cheek before giving me one more squeeze.

He stepped away when Leo came up on my other side.

“Morning Em.” Leo said leaning down and matching Logan’s kiss on my other cheek.

My cheeks flushed red once I was left alone again, and I had to force myself not to spontaneously combust so I could get back to cooking. 3

Asher came in grumbling a few moments later and continued his tradition of rummaging the fridge for a carton of juice followed by Leo going off on him for not using a glass.

When each of their omelets was finished I set one in front of each guy and stepped back to wait for their reactions. I was too nervous to eat myself, so I stood there waiting.

The silence following their first bite was deafening and made me even

more nervous.

“Wow! Emmy this is so good!” Logan spoke up first and I let out a sigh of relief.

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I turned to look at Leo next. "So?"

"Best omelet I have ever had!" He said with a huge smile on his face.

I blushed a little, but those two would say it tasted good even if it tasted like dirt. They were my sweetest angels and always said the sweetest things to me even if I didn't deserve it. It was Asher and Jayden's

reactions I was worried most about. I waited as they both took several more bites.

"Not bad," Asher said giving me a quick glance before continuing to eat.

I turned to look at Jayden and he offered me a nod of approval and relief flooded through me and I smiled

brightly. I hadn't realized just how nervous I was until I stood there waiting.

"Aren't you going to eat too?" Logan asked shooting me a worried expression.

"Oh, I was way too nervous to eat," I admit.

Logan shook his head and pulled me down on his lap. "We can share."

"No that's okay," I said trying to stand but his arm locked around my waist.

I let out a sigh but relaxed against his chest and picked up his fork. I cut into the omelet and took a bite, then cut off another piece and offered it to Logan. He happily accepted it and I did this several times until

then cut off another piece and offered it to Logan. He happily accepted it and I did this several times until the whole thing was gone.

The others finished eating as well and were focused on their phones, so I turned to look at Logan. "So? Since it's the weekend what are you guys going to be up to?"

Logan smiled down at me hugging me closer. "We're going to the garage today but Leo offered to stay with you."

"Would it be ok if I went with you to the garage?" I asked hesitantly.

Logan's eyes lit up. "You really want to watch us work on run-down cars all day?"

"Yeah, I would actually really like that!" I replied honestly with a hint of excitement in my voice.

"Okay. Let's go find you something to wear!" He said lifting me and setting me down on my feet again like

I weighed nothing.

Before I could even get my balance he grabbed my hand and rushed up the stairs with me stumbling

behind him.

What exactly did a girl wear to a mechanic's garage anyway?

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## **Four or Dead by G O A**

### **Chapter 24**

Two Years Ago...Emma...

Sophomore year. I was a fool to hope that after a year of catcalls and mean girls were enough and my tormenters would be tired of me and move on to another helpless victim. But no, as soon as I walked down the halls of our school my eyes land on them. Dark-clothed devils. They are called angels but they are. nowhere close to the creatures we imagine when that word is used. They are pure evil...at least to me.

"Ah, there's the little rat now!" Andrea called out, her voice echoing off the walls and hitting me like a bullet.

I keep my head lowered as people turned to look in my direction. No one spoke to me but I could hear them whispering and laughing as I walked past and reached my locker. My rushed steps were slowed though when a muscular arm dropped over my shoulder. "Sunny! Here you are." Logan said walking alongside me with the other Angels behind him. "You never change! Always so reliable. Same hair, same clothes....same everything."

I didn't risk a reply, I just kept walking. When I finally reached my locker I was able to move away from him enough to put my stuff inside and grab what I needed. He started to crowd me from behind and I clenched my eyes shut when his breath tickled my ear. Before he could say anything though he pulled roughly on the collar of my Jean jacket. "What the hell is that?" He growled out with pure anger dripping from his words.

I quickly pulled my jacket away from him and covered my neck once again, and I turned to face him with wide eyes. No one was meant to see it especially not them.

"What is that Sunny? Huh? Why do you have a hickey on your neck?" He yelled.

My heart started to pound so loud I was sure everyone could hear it and that was why everyone was looking.

"Tell me now!" Logan growled his voice warning me not to disobey.

"I-it's nothing," I replied with my usual soft shy voice.

"Nothing? That is not nothing!" He moved closer to me and tugged on the collar of my jacket again until the side of my neck was on full display to the Angels and Andrea's crew.

Andrea and her friends laughed. "Who would want to touch her filthy skin? Who knows what kinds of diseases she could have!" (2)

Tears were starting to blur my vision and I searched for an opening to push through and run.

"Wow Sunny who knew you were so easy. So what? You think you are too good to let anyone here touch you but you go give it away freely to another guy just like that?

Pathetic." Logan said harshly before storming off. 2

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Leo stepped toward his friend but sent me a smearing look before walking away.

Jayden passed with his usual cold angry expression that always had a way of making me feel small. Asher tugged Andrea against him and kissed her hard and knocked into me as they stumbled by not even bothering to break apart.

A shaky breath escaped my mouth as I did my best to hide the mark one of the men made on me. My father didn't give me anything to cover it with and he was furious when he saw it. The men are not supposed to mark me where it's visible but I was the one blamed. He punished me with a few lashes to my back, the ones now burning from the fabric of my jacket rubbing against them. When Logan had pulled on me he caused the fabric to dig just a bit more into the raw skin and now that they were gone I let out a whimper.

Most of the students who had stuck around for Logan's out burst had lost interest in me and moved on to whatever they had been doing before the show. I considered skipping my first class to avoid the angels and Andrea but I wasn't sure I wanted to risk my father finding out. So I took a deep breath before walking in and scanned the room for an empty seat.

The Angels sat at their usual seats in the back where I often sat but I spotted a free chair to the far side of the room next to the window. I kept my head down and sat down in this new seat. It was in the front of the row which I would try to avoid but none of Andrea's crew sat behind me so it felt safe enough.

When the teacher finally arrived I felt somewhat at ease that all of my tormenters seemed to be avoiding me. Maybe they thought ignoring me would play some kind of mind game. Like not knowing if they will come after me any second would put me on edge. I hated so much that it worked. The rest of the day I was looking over my shoulder wondering what they would do to me next. Logan seemed so mad and he could be unpredictable.

I left school that day confused when nothing more happened. My father never came home that night so I was actually able to get some sleep without my body being on high alert. The worst thing was being too relaxed and then being taken by surprise when your enemy appears when your guard is down.

The next day I found my dad passed out on the couch with his suit and shoes still on. His being drunk was never good since it only made him angrier and less careful. I did my best to sneak past him but I wasn't so lucky. The sound of me opening the door woke him and he sat up almost immediately.

"What are you doing?" He asked me, his voice deep from sleep.

"I am going to school," I answered lowering my head.

"Then why are sneaking around? Huh?" He growled out, standing and stalking toward me.

"I-I..." I tried to explain but he reached me with surprising speed grabbing me by the hair and pulled me

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close to him.

“Spit it out!” He yelled down at me tightening his grip.

“I didn’t want to wake you,” I said with a whimper.

His other hand came up to my face in such a gentle way but it lasted for only a split second before his hand lowered to my neck.

“Don’t lie to me.” His voice was calm now...too calm.

“I swear!” I replied quickly but he simply tightened his grip. “Please dad...people will see.”

He smirked. “Do they even care? Does anyone at your school even look? You are forgettable. There is nothing special about you.”

4

I tried to swallow and fight back the urge to shrink into myself at his words. He wasn’t wrong. No one at

school ever looked twice at me even the ones set on making my school life hell.

Because this wasn’t the first time my dad hurt me while drunk and didn’t care who saw it. When he was sober he was more careful

but drunk he had no control over his anger.

“No. They don’t care.” I tell him and he smiles.

“That’s right, so if tightened my hand just a bit more no one would care. Stay quiet and let daddy do his work. You are far prettier when you’re covered in black and purple.” He doesn’t lie, and he tightens his grip enough to make me gasp for air. “Hmmm...much better.”

His grip loosened suddenly and my body slammed down to the floor hard making my legs ache.

“Get out.” He spit down at me and I scrambled to my feet.

1

When I arrived at school I didn’t bother stopping at my locker and rushed to class early. I sat with my shoulders slumped up to hide the already darkening handprint. I buttoned up my jacket as far as it would go as well but a bit still showed above the collar. Keeping my head low and opening one of the books I always carried with me I waited for class to start.

The sound of Logan’s boisterous laugh caught my attention and I turned to look at the door. He walked in with a girl under his arm and when he noticed me looking at him he smirked. I didn’t mean to watch them. but my eyes followed them until Logan sat and pulled the girl into his lap and planted an intense kiss on her lips.

“Jealous Sunny?” Andrea’s voice whispered right against my ear and I flinched away.

“N-no,” I replied turning my attention back to my book..

“Guess he found a better way to spend his time than having to look at you.” She said with a laugh before sauntering off.

The teacher arrived a moment later and called everyone’s attention.

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“Ok class today I will be assigning the project groups.” My heart immediately sank because most of the teachers knew well what I had to deal with and none of them did a thing to stop it.

Our teacher read off the names of several groups before making it to my name.

41

“Emma Grace. You are paired with Logan, Leo, Asher, and Jayden.” My heart stopped and the class erupted into whispers and laughs. “Now get into your groups and discuss what roles you will take on.”

I didn’t move. I couldn’t. The blood in my veins had gone cold and my body wouldn’t move. Leo was the first to walk up to me and he pushed my books off my desk before sitting on it and turning to face the others who had moved closer to me.

“Well well, it seems like fate has brought little Sunny to us once again.” Logan quipped. “It’s not fate. It’s more like a curse. We can’t seem to escape her.” Asher said as if I wasn’t even there.

“We can’t depend on her to pass this so give her something simple.” Jayden orders.

“No, actually I think she could handle it all. Right Sunny? You would want to make sure we got a good grade right? So make sure we do.” Logan said before standing and striding over to the girl he had walked in with.

“See you Sunny. Don’t ruin this.” Leo added before leaving the classroom altogether.

“See you Sunny. Don’t ruin this.” Leo added before leaving the classroom altogether.

Asher stood too and walked over to Andrea picking her up and placing her in his lap with his eyes locked on me. Jayden gave me one last sneer before turning in his seat and turning his attention to his phone.

I stayed quiet until he turned to me once again.

“I don’t care that you do all the work but you will send it to me first so I can approve everything. I am not letting my grades slip because you lack brains. Got it?” He slams a piece of paper and a pen on my desk. “Write down your email and number.”

I glanced at him and hesitated for a moment. “My phone doesn’t get text messages and I don’t have an email.”

He immediately looked at me like I was crazy. He let out an exasperated sigh and massaged his temples.

“Fine. Meet me at the library Friday after school so I can correct your work.” He ordered.

“But the project isn’t due for three weeks.” I remind him.

“You have one.” He didn’t wait for a reply before standing and leaving just like the others.

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## **Four or Dead by G O A**

### **Chapter 25**

Emma...Present...

I had expected the garage to be more run down since it was managed by four high school students, but it turned out to be the opposite. The garage looked professional in every sense of the word and it was decked out in everything a mechanic would need in this line of work.

Logan wrapped his arm around me as I examined one of the cars that had its top opened displaying an intense amount of shiny metal. "So what do you think baby?" I blushed at the pet name just like every other time and Logan smiled just like always. He knew what he was doing but I admit I kind of loved the way it sounded. It made me feel like I was his and I liked that feeling. Leo and I had a past but his rejection was a hard thing to move past and still have that same level of familiarity intact. I forgave him but things were just different now. On the other hand, I was drawn to Logan so strongly that I was happy to just be around him.

Leo also expressed a continued aura of guilt that still caused a barrier between us. He was sweet and affectionate but he was still holding back. It was like he was finding who he was again when he didn't have to pretend to hate me. I understood that and I was glad to have Logan to distract me from any confusing feelings Leo caused in me.

"It's beautiful," I replied. "Do you guys just do restorations?"

He shook his head. "No those are for fun. Mostly we equip cars with unique add ons."

I looked to him, curious to know what that kind of work entailed. "Like what?"

He dropped his arm from around me and scratched his neck nervously. "Pretty much any requests a person may have. Bulletproof windows, speakers, lights, hydraulics, hidden storage compartments..."

His explanation trailed off but I had a pretty good idea what he meant now. I had been learning more about the boys based on some overheard conversations and comments here and there. I knew they weren't saints when I asked for their help but I only knew what they were into based on rumors like most people. Rumors that could possibly have been exaggerated.

I didn't want to assume the worst of them but I also didn't want to hope either. I had already accepted that once our deal was done that I would have to leave them and it would be too dangerous for them if I knew everything they did. It was better for all of us for me to remain ignorant of their activities that didn't involve my vendetta.

"That sounds pretty cool," I replied simply and returned my attention to the nearby car.

I reached out and ran my fingers along the beautiful dragon artwork along its side. "Who did this?" I

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asked.

“Asher. He has a talent for art.” Logan stepped up behind me and admired the work too.

“It’s amazing. Has he drawn anything else besides car designs?” I asked turning to him.

“Yeah!” He rolled his sleeve up and pointed to one of his many tattoos. “He designed this. He designed a tattoo for each of us.”

I moved closer and ran my fingers gently over the piece and Logan shuttered under my touch. He was

becoming more sensitive to my every touch lately and I hated that the reason why was because I asked for time. I knew guys like him were used to getting what they needed from any girl but I was holding back. Even though I would hate to see Logan with another girl, I wanted to let him know that he didn’t have to wait for me. They called me their girl but that didn’t mean they were bound to me in a way that made me their girlfriend. At least it wasn’t said, so I had no expectations to be treated as such.

I pushed those thoughts away and focused on the tattoo again. It was an image of a wolf surrounded by fire, and it was absolutely beautiful.

“I love it,” I said looking up at him and smiling. “It’s very you.”

“Yeah? Have you ever thought of getting a tattoo?” I laughed. Not ever.

“My father would never let me do that. He told me I was supposed to remain pure. No tattoos, no piercings, and no makeup.” I replied.

“Then why does he insist on covering you in scars and bruises?” He asked his voice growing angry.

I stepped closer to him and wrapped my arms around his waist. “I don’t know but I don’t want to talk about him okay? Let’s just enjoy today.”

He lets out a combination of a growl and a sigh. “Fine.”

I offered him a small smile and he grasped my face gently in his large hands before leaning down and kissing me. “We don’t have to talk about him but I would like to revisit the subject of you getting a tattoo. I think you would look hot with a little ink. And since you are a free woman now is the time to consider it!”

I snorted a laugh. “You would. But I’m not sure. I wouldn’t know where I would want it or even what design I would want.”

“Asher could design one for you.” He offered and for a moment I considered it.

My body was covered like a canvas of my father’s abuse. Why couldn’t I add a piece that would be mine, something I chose?

“Ok. Let’s do it.” I said before I could talk my way out of it and he let out a joyful whoop.

“Come on let’s go tell him!” He said before pulling me toward the side of the garage.

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We arrived at the entrance and walked behind the counter and through a door with several windows.

“Hey, Ash! Our little angel here wants to get a tattoo. Do you think you could design her something?”

Logan asked as soon as Asher’s attention was on us.

Asher turned his focus on me for a moment and something like heat pooled in his eyes.

“A tattoo?”

I nodded and stepped closer to him so he had to look up at me. “Will you design one for me?” I asked

sweetly.

He didn’t say a word at first but nodded and glanced over me before speaking. “Where would you want it?”

I shrugged. “I’m not sure. Any suggestions?”

He reached out to me and took my hand into his and turned it over. “Here.”

I looked down to see him pointing to the underside of my wrist.

“Okay. Will you be there? I hear it hurts a lot.” His eyes met mine again and he gave me a small nod before lowering his head and leaving a soft kiss on the skin where my tattoo would go. I shivered from the action. and tore my eyes away flushing from the intimate action.

I noticed then that Logan had left and closed the door behind him leaving Asher and me completely alone. I tried to pull my hand away from Asher but he held it tight and our eyes met once again. There was so much about him I still didn’t know, and most of that was what went on in his head. Logan was an open book and even though Leo didn’t show everything, he showed enough that he wasn’t a complete mystery to me.

Asher was different. Not as straightforward and he barely ever touched me, so this moment had me stunned.

“Asher...” I whispered softly, his name coming out more like a question.

He still didn’t let me go or pull his eyes away. Instead, he stood and moved closer to me until we were only a few inches apart. His hand held my wrist at the side of us and his eyes remained locked on mine. We were too close, and I knew by now that he didn’t particularly enjoy being this close to anyone. The only other time we had been this close was when the guys had saved me from the basement but after that, we remained a good distance from each other. He was closed off to me and I honestly didn’t know where I stood with him before that day.

5

That moment though had me confused as hell. There was a fire in his eyes I had never seen before and it was like a wall inside him had begun to crumble and the cold facade he always wore was falling away.

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