

# Young Volcanoes

*Also by Charlie Smith:*

*The Coffee Shop*

*Lenore*

*Letters to Singers*

*You, me and Infinity*

# Young Volcanoes



*By Charlie Smith*

Young Volcanoes

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Summary: A girl named Alex Garrison plans her bucket list, and along the way meets members of her favorite band.

(E-book) 1: Bucket lists - Juvenile Fiction, 2: Suicide - Juvenile Fiction, 3: Best Friends - Fiction, 4: Depression - Teens Fiction, 5: Lists - Fiction, 6: Death - Juvenile

Book design by Emily Taylor

*For the real Ali, Kayla, Hailey and Shane*

*Love you all.*

# Prologue

Name: Alex Garrison

Date: December 20

My bucket list:

1- Make the list

"Oh that's great, genius." My best friend Sam says.

"Shut up." I snap.

2- Be sassier.

"My God if that were a thing..."

I shoot him a look and continue the page.

3- Have sex

An awkward silence is in the air.

"Not with you." I say, and he nods. "Okay."

I swallow a lump in my throat, and continue.

4- Get a tattoo of a quote

"An AfterShocks quote, of course." I say, pointing to my endless collection of CDs and posters. AfterShocks is a boy band that I'm absolutely obsessed with ever since their first album. I know, I'm a crazy fangirl, but I won't kill you. I swear.

"Of course. And not our band" Sam says. "You know. The Pacifiers"

I smile smugly. "Right."

Sam Smith was in this emocore band called The Pacifiers based off of a song by Macey Martin. [cue meme the says Straight Outta His Garage]

5- Have a boyfriend.

6- My first kiss

7- have a baby

8- Go to an AfterShocks concert.

9- Date a member

"Write a member of the band. Not member."

"Why?" I ask.

He sighs, "I read too much smut on that fanfiction website."

I giggle and change it.

9- Date a member of AS

"Better."

10- Write letters to Juliet

11- sing with AS

"Geezus. AfterShocks much?!"

"Shut up." I giggle and look over at my poster of soul punk Fitz Barnes. Such a cutie. Out of all of Aftershocks, Fitz was my favorite. Of course, he was everyone's favorite, because he's the lead singer

12- meet Fitz Barnes

"Are you kidding me?"

"No. What did I say?"

".....Shut up."

13- Be nicer to people

I give him a death stare before he says anything.

After a while I come up with a little over 30 things for my list. I'll add more later.

"What are you gonna start with?"

"Dating a member."

He gives me a look.

"Of Aftershocks....no cause I'd have to meet Fitz first. OK, so Fitz, then date."

I crumble the first paper and start over:

*Name: Alex Garrison*

*Date: December 20*

*My bucket list:*

*1- Make the list*

*2- be sassier*

*3- Get piercings*

*4- Meet Fitz Barnes*

*5- Date Fitz Barnes*

*6- Have my first kiss*

*7- Have a boyfriend*

*8 -get a tattoo*

*9-sing with Aftershocks*

*10- Write letters to Juliet*

*11 -go bungee jumping*

*12- have sex*

"Shut up." I say to him.

He scoffs. "I didn't say anything."

"I could smell your judgements."

*13- have a baby*

*14- go on a no budget shopping spree*

*15 -Start a band merch collection*

*16- See The Pacifiers perform live.*

"Yes!"

"Shut. Up. Sam .."

*17- go to a warped tour*

- 18 -be part of a mosh pit
- 19 -be in a flash mob
- 20 -go to prom
- 21 -have blue hair
- 22 -volunteer at a children's hospital
- 23 -work at Hot Topic
- 24 -volunteer at library
- 25 -write books on fanfiction website
- 26 -be kissed in the rain
- 27 -Dance + sing in the rain
- 28 -Go an entire day without my phone
- 29 -go camping
- 30 -actually do these
- 31 - meet my internet friends
- 32 -travel first class
- 33 -become a mother
- 34- smash a pie in someone's face
- 35- spend a whole day sleeping
- 36 -Go black Friday shopping
- 37 -Jump in a pool fully clothed
- 38 -Have a lot of makeup (nice makeup)
- 39 -Have a large colour palette of eyeshadow
- 40 -Go on a stargazing date

"Well you can check off the first one." Sam says. I look at it.  
I take my blue pen and make a check

•1 -Make the list ✓  
Only a lot more to go....

## Chapter One

December 21

"Time to get up, Tina you fat lard."

Ever since I moved in with Sam when I was sixteen, he decided it was fun to play wake up Alex.

"Shut the frig up, Sam."

"Working on number two, or are you really like this?" Sam sits on top of me in the bed and bounces up and down like a friggin 5 year old. I groan and burp in his general direction. Last night we stayed up watching *Pretty In Pink*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Sixteen Candles*, so I was exhausted. I love Molly Ringwald. It's like an unhealthy obsession with her.

I have an unhealthy obsession with everything I like....

"....A little bit of both." I push him. "Now get up, I can't breathe."

He stands up suddenly, and immediately crashes on the floor. I laugh.

"You're Fall Down Boy!!!"

"Oh ha ha."

I swear, I lost it all.

"It's not that funny, Alex."

Tears are rolling down.

"Alex, Stop."

I'm gonna pee.

"It's not funny anymore," He says, "No, it's not."

That's when I have to run to the bathroom, slam the door, pull my pants down and pee.

Rule one: Never make someone who just woke up laugh. (They have a ton of pee stored up in there for hours #fyi #tmi)

Sam raps on the door. "You OK?"

"Yes! I just need you to stop being sassy."

"OK." He says simply.

"Oh why can't the world be like you."

He chuckles and then I don't hear him. After a minute or so, I check and see if he's there.

"You still there, Sam ?"

"Yep."

"Uh, you can go now." I hate when he does this.

"Why, can't you pee while I'm here?"

"Darn it, Sam! You know I'm bladder shy." I whine, "Please go away I've gotta peepee."

"Fine, fine, I'm gone."

I hear footsteps and a door close.

He left my room.

I let go of the pee I was holding in and glorious heaven yes.

I know, I know.

#TMI

.....

After I wash my hands, I get dressed in a T-shirt that says "Music is my first love", black skinny jeans, an AfterShock bracelet, and converse high tops.

I exit the bathroom, to see Sam waiting for me in the living room.

"Wanna go to Hot Topic?"

"Yeah. Then I can ask about getting a job. Kill two birds with one stone." Good thing I tucked my brown journal with my bucket list in my purse.

"What do you have against birds?" Sam asks.

I roll my eyes. "Let's go." We get into his red pick-up truck and I get buckled.

"Hey, you know what?" He asks me as he pulls out of the driveway of the house.

"What?"

"You can check being sassier off of the list."

I roll my eyes.

"You've proved your point. Check it off." Sam says, pulling out of the neighbourhood.

I open my journal to the next bucket item.

*2- Be sassier ✓*

## Chapter Two

We drove over to the mall, the crowd was typically hyper at this hour of the day, so it was packed full of cars. I was staring at my phone, playing *Candy Crush* and listening to Homesick for your Love, by AfterShocks, when we parked the car.

"Cmon." Sam tells me. "I called the guys. They're on their way."

The guys being Brandon, Rick and Damon. It was always awkward between Brandon and I, because he had the biggest stinkin adorable crush on me since we were little.

I didn't really I think I liked him back though. I hope he finds someone. Someone who loves him, and will take care of him. Love him.

We walk into the mall and immediately hit Starbucks like the Hipster girls that we are. Then we hit Hot Topic like the Emo girls we are. The guys meet us as we are poking around with the *MCR* stuff.

"Hey!" I greet them, as they walk in. Brandon waves, but is stopped by a mob of fangirls wanting his autograph. I hug Damon and Rick, who gives me a small smile. I feel really bad. First, I didn't understand why they had fangirls, and two, why didn't the fangirls want their autographs too?!

I think right after Sam, Rick is my best friend. He is kind of quiet and reserved but likes my company. I'm his best friend, and he's mine. We talk a ton, and hang out a lot. Finally Brandon gets by and hugs me.

"What's up?" He asks.

"Well, this girl has to get a job here." Sam says.

I roll my eyes at their confused faces and explain. I take out my bucket list and show them the whole embarrassing thing

Damon whistles. "Hallelujah. Gettin' some is one on the list!"

I sigh. And Brandon looks over. "Hey, dude, shut up."

"Yo. Sorry, dude." He apologizes to me, but I shake my head.

"No need to, bro." I give Brandon a death stare. "I put it on there for a reason."

Rick cheers and gives me a high-five.

We were quiet for a while. "I'm gonna ask for an application." I walk over to the counter

and ask for one.

Things are shaping up to be pretty awkward.

## Chapter Three

December 23

*Hot Topic* discounts are bæ.

I spent the day buying T-shirts, skirts, jeans, posters, bracelets, and finally went to buy some blue hair dye for the next thing on my list. By the time I got back, it was 5 and I was starved. I opened the door to discover Sam sprawled out on the couch watching my favorite movie, *Back To The Future*. I sit down next to him, noticing his cheeseburger wrappers and Sprite can.

"Got any more of those?" I ask, examining the bag on the coffee table.

"Just some french fries, you can have 'em."

"Thanks...What's going on with you?"

"Just.....nothing." He looks away from me, blushing. The only time Sam did this is when there was a girl.

"Who is it?" I smirk at him.

He shakes his head forcefully. "I'm not telling you."

"Why?" I frown.

"You'll make fun of me."

I giggle and raise my arm up in a swear. "I promise I won't."

He sighs. "You know that girl you met from the tour? She had a backstage pass?"

"Yeah, the short cute girl who was obsessing over Brandon? She kept calling him 'Beebs'."

"Yeah, her name is Kayla...."

My eyes get big. "You like a fan?! What about Brandon? Didn't she want Brandon?"

"Yeah, but....she came to like me more." He blushed.

"Why did you think I'd make fun of you?"

"Well.....well you know...." He stutters.

"Oh my God, I thought we were past this!" I started to get mad. He was talking about the time in 4th grade I made fun of him for having a crush on a girl. I mean c'mon. Everyone was. Boys were gross once upon a time ago.

"Well I'm not! You messed up any relationship I could have had with Sandy!" He shouts.

"She was a nose picker!" I scream at him.

"She was not!"

"She was!"

"You know what? Maybe we shouldn't be friends. You obviously were never sorry!"

I started shaking and crying, was this conversation real? "Maybe we shouldn't!"

I ran to the door and threw it open, it had started to snow, but I didn't care.

I ran out into the darkness. I ran till I was out of breath.

I ran until my lungs hurt, and I couldn't breathe.

He was being ridiculous.

Not being friends anymore?

I called Brandon and he came to pick me up.

.....

He picked me up at exactly six o'clock and kept trying to ask me what happened, but I didn't speak.

The clothes in my bag that I bought were ruined, along with the blue hair dye I bought, so this is just the greatest day.

15 minutes later, we stop at his house and he helps me out. He grabs my bags and takes me to the door, unlocks it and leads me inside. There's a fire going, so it's warm in here. Mickey and Jared are sitting on the couch watching Dawn of the Dead, because it's Christmas Eve, and that's just what they do.

They look over at me and Mickey gasps. "What happened?"

I keep shaking, cold from the snow, and chills from the warm fire. "N-nothing, just cold..."

Mickey comes over and leads me closer to the fire and Brandon goes to find me some warm clothes and blankets. Jarad scoots his boot over to me and warms me up with his blanket, still engrossed in the movie.

About 5 minutes later, Brandon comes back in. "There are some warm clothes on the bed for you. I fixed you a warm bath, so take a bath, and get changed. I'm ordering pizza."

Jarad squeals a "Yay." and Mickey laughs.

Brandon goes off to order pizza. I stand up and go to the hot bath.

I walk inside the bathroom and lock the door. I close my eyes, sighing at the conversation that was still playing through my head. Every second, I was feeling more and more despondent.

No, I'm okay, It's Christmas Eve, I'm going to be fine...

I peel off my clothes one by one and step into the bath. It gave me chills at first, but became relaxing. I duck my head under the water for a full minute. Just thinking. Whenever I wanted to clear my head of everything else and just think, it was then. I would focus on my heartbeat. The longer I counted to a minute, the more my heart was pounding, reminding me, 'Hey! I'm here!' I submerge from the water, taking deep breaths. I start singing as I bathe.

"It's a long summer stretched out. And your sister, well she nearly drowned. But I hope you can forgive meeee. I hope you can forgive meeeee."

Someone knocks on the door, just as I started belt out July 4th.

"Yes?"

"Are you coming out anytime soon, Alex Barnes?" Mickey teases.

"I'll come out in a minute." I giggle.

"Oh, and wash your hair. Jared has a surprise for you."

What the frick is the surprise that I have to wash my hair for?

I wash it anyways, with the shampoo that Brandon stuck in there whenever I came over. Honey I'm Strong by Herbal Essences. It was my favorite for my hair, it made it so...smooth, and silky.

.....

I smell pizza as I step out of the tub, watching the drain swallow the water inside. Mmmm, pizza. I dry my hair and body, and slip on the clothes Brandon gave me. It was a Dirty Dancing shirt, and some night pants. Smiling, I come out and see Brandon on the couch eating pizza, Jared is standing in front of a chair, with a table standing next to him. My hair dye is on it.

"What are you doing, Gerard?" I ask puzzled.

"I heard about your bucket list," He picks up my book, and I snatch it from him.

"Anyway, this was in your bag, so I was going to dye it for you."

"Oh...thanks." I look over to Brandon, who catches my gaze, but turns as if he hadn't. I roll my eyes and grab a slice of pizza, that by the way is delicious. Brandon always got onion, bell pepper and spinach for me. Believe me, I always hated spinach, but it's amazing on pizza.

I sat in the chair and bite into the pizza.

Jared starts in on my hair, wrapping a towel around me and slipping gloves on. He

takes a comb to my head, and gently glides it through my hair. The movie still plays and Brandon goes to take a phone call. Mickey hands me another slice of pizza.

As Jared guides his hands in my hair, I notice his scars on his wrists, which remind me of my own. I used to self harm until I went to rehab for it. Now, I'm stronger, and Jarad helps me out.

I take another bite of pizza and start paying attention to the movie again. Brandon comes back in the room. He looks nervous and shifty. "Brandon," I ask, "are you okay?"

He looks over at me, sort of dazed. "Yeah, I'm fine."

He looked anything but fine. Most of the time, I can tell when Brandon is okay, and when he's not. I never knew why; It was like a hidden talent. I didn't go any further in my investigation as to whether Brandon was actually alright. I just sat back, and let my hair be dyed.

## *Chapter Four*

*December 24*

I was starting to get very concerned. Brandon was getting jittery and I could tell he was trying not to show it.

I'm trying to focus on Jared's fingers in my hair, that are like magic. Rick popped out an hour later in some pajamas. This was not unusual, considering Rick and Brandon share an apartment. However, Rick came to sit beside me, and not Brandon.

The next movie Brandon pops in is this new movie called "Crazy=Genius" About a woman who wants her husband to do crazy things, because it's "genius" and he says "If Crazy=genius then I'm a rocket scientist." and his wife goes and makes him become those things. It's actually funny.

There is a scene where the guy says the something crazy=genius is if he were gay, and his wife makes him gay. Brandon shifts in his chair uncomfortably, and then the husband gets kissed by a guy he accidentally fell in love with. Rick shifts in his chair now, glancing at Brandon.

Something is up so far I can't even see straight.

The movie ends and Rick ask me what movie I want.

"I wanna watch The Br-" I was going to say The Breakfast Club, but it only reminded me of Sam.

Rick could sense something was wrong. I don't know if it's because we're close, or because he's so gay he can smell emotions, either way, he knew something was up.

"Wanna make pies?" He asks me.

Jared let's out a noise. "Her hair isn't finished yet."

So after Jared finished dying my hair, he insisted he clean it, cut it and style it.

"I love it." I gawk at my hair in the mirror. It was a pixie cut, that I've wanted since I was little.

Jared smiles and pats himself on the back.

"Pies." Rick says. "Now."

We go into the kitchen, and I put on an apron that says "Don't kiss this cook unless

you're in a band" and Rick's said "I'm in a band"

He got this as a way to torture me.

Rick starts on the crust, and I grab my camera. Rick and I made a YouTube account together, so we could be like *Dan and Phil*.

I'm Dan, he's Phil. Duh.

"What are we making today, Ross?"

"Pies, Garrison."

"Ew. Don't say that." I say, cringing as the camera rolls.

"Whatever." He's focused on the crust. I call Brandon in to hold the camera.

Brandon comes in, and he and Rick share a look.

Awkwardness.

But what's awkward?

"Brandon." I shove the camera to him. "Camera." He takes it and films.

After we goof around, we finally finish the pies.

"Mmm." Brandon says, eying my peach pie. He goes to take a bite, but I take it away.

"No! Peaches for me!"

Rick starts singing, "Millions of Peaches, Peaches for me, millions of peaches, peaches for free. Peaches come from a can, they were put there by a man, who works in a factory downtown."

"Not the time Rickroll."

"Give me a pie." Brandon whines. At this point, Mickey and Jared made their way in. I didn't even know Damon was here too, but here he is.

Here it comes.

"Okay, Beebs." I grab a lemon mirage pie and smash it in Brandon's face. "Pie."

.....

While Damon helped Brandon clean off (laughing his arse off), Rick and Mickey cleaned up the pie mess, and Jared cleaned up the hair stuff, I sat down and check some things in my journal.

*Work at Hot Topic ✓*

*Have a Band Merch collection ✓*

*Dye my hair blue ✓*

I giggle and add,

*Smash a pie in someone's face ✓*

No. Scratch that.

*Smash a pie in Brandon's face ✓*

## Chapter Five

December 25

I almost had a panic attack when I saw my hair. Then I remember Jared dying and cutting it. My head is spinning trying to process the events of today, so let me start from last night:

Brandon got drunk as heck as his Christmas gift. I drank until Rick said no more; which was of course, after Rick himself got drunk. Mickey, the not so innocent, took out weed and we smoked it.

"I'm so high, right now." I giggle. I'd never gotten high before. The first thing I declared was that we need to gather in a circle like I'd seen on *That 70s Show*.

"Honey," Jared said, "We all are."

"And it's called stoned, Dummy." Damon says. I keep forgetting he's here.

"Shut UP, Dall." Brandon yells. "God- ... darn it." He looks over at me. I didn't like cussing, so he never did, a lot...around me. Only when he remembers....

"It's okay." I say, "He's a dill hole." A chorus of "oohs went around the table. Rick patted me on the back. "Nice one"

I rolled my eyes. "I'm hungry. Who's going to get snacks?"

"We can order cheese burgers." Jared says. Sam was eating cheeseburgers....

"Um..." Everyone looks at me. "Okay." So we ordered cheeseburgers to be delivered (We had to give 'em some extra cash, but it was worth it.) The doorbell rang and I went to answer it.

"We wish you a Merry Christmas." The carolers began. I slammed the door. "It wasn't the burgers!"

Damon gave me a high five. "That should have been on the list."

"What?" I ask, totally oblivious to what I did.

"Slamming the door in carolers faces." He laughs so hard he clutches his stomach.

"Oh."

Damon and I grab some sodas, chips and ice cream and make our way back to the circle. The food comes, we give the guy some weed to keep quiet and as a tip, and start to eat.

"Yo." Brandon says. "We're out of sodas."

"Then go get some more, asshole." Mickey says.

"MICKEY!" We all scream at him.

"What?...What?"

"Here," Damon hands Rick \$50, "Go get some good stuff." He winked at him and Rick blinked nervously.

"Okay."

"You takin' Brandon?" Jared asks.

Rick and Brandon share a look. "Actually, Alex, you wanna come?"

"Me?" I say with a cheeseburger in my mouth. Everyone laughs. "Um...sure."

I swallow my burger, and stand up. I dust off my butt, "Let's go."

Rick's car is as small as he is.

It smells like Brandon and Rick mixed together. Like "The Best Friends" collection. Only at Macy's.

"What's going on with you and Brandon?" I ask.

"Nothing, he prob-"

"Rick." He looks at me a split second. "Tell me the truth."







"I got high." I blurt out.

He giggles. "I like her." He says to Brandon. He turns to me. "Where are those beers you had?"

Everyone cheers and we drink and get high, drink, eat, and get get high again.

We recreated Brandon's drunk history of AfterShocks.

"And so Fitz's like..."

Fitz gets in Brandon's face and says "WHAT'S  
GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO?"

Fitz reads fanfictions from my account and Rick records us.

"Ok, this one is from, ooh, nice name, PanicAtTheAli." Brandon giggles at the name.

"Cute."

Fitz begins to read:

"Are you okay?" He asked fixing his glasses." Fitz fixed his glasses and giggled. "Okay, you be you and I'll be me." He hands me my phone.

"Okay..."I'm fine." you smiled and and turned back to the teacher babbling on and on. 2:59. one more minute.....and.....3:00! You got up with Fitz" I stand up with Fitz. "and went to your lockers to empty them out." we mime getting stuff out of our lockers and laugh. I hand him the phone. "Babe, sooo." He looks at me, then grabs my waist. Rick and Jared cheer and everyone else laughs, we don't break character. "Steve 's having a party, we should go." Fitz pulls me closer.

"I don't know." I read. "I mean it's Steve 's parties, I mean crazy = bad stuff." I hold Fitz's chin.

"THAT'S MY SONG." Brandon says and everyone shushes him.

"But I thought you liked crazy? He kissed you." He says, then awkwardly mimes kissing.

I pull away and say "Mhmm true, okay, let's go, but I'm not drinking."

"Okay. Means I will." Fitz takes a beer and drinks it. He hits my butt and we get into a

mime car and "drive" to my place.

He mimes opening the door. "Brandon, come here."

He looks at the screen, "I'm not playing mom."

"You gotta."

"Fine." He gets a girly voice "There is my baby." He comes and hugs me.

"MOm." I mumble.

"What?" Brandon pinches my cheeks. "My little girl is an adult now...I remember you walking down that stage."

"That was last week." Fitz giggled out of character, and regained composure.

"Well, I'm going to meet your father, I'll be back later." Brandon took my purse, slung it over his shoulder and started walking.

"Wait, mom." Brandon stops sashaying. "I might come home late tonight. Fitz and I were invited to a party."

"Oh okay." Brandon reads. "Don't stay out too late and no drinking- well that won't be a problem." He broke character. We shush him. He sits down. "Oh wait, bye Fitz." He waves at Fitz in a flirty way. I roll my eyes.

"Bye." Fitz says.

"Finally, house to ourselves." I smile and sit on the couch, Fitz sits next to me.

"What now?"

"Netflix?" I ask. My eyes widen at the next few words.

"Yeah, sure, just Netflix." Fitz smirks and I mime turning on the tv.

"You put on AHS because you needed the last three episodes you wanted to finish.

"What time is the party?"

"Joey had told me 7 but Andrew said at 8 so I don't really know. Somewhere around there."

We skip a bit so we don't spoil anything for AHS fans.

"Skip, skip. OOH THIS IS INTERESTING, HERE." Brandon hands it back

I begin to read and regret it. "You slide under him so he's now hovering over you, he continues sucking on your neck making you moan."

Fitz blushes, but he lays me down and mimes sucking my neck. I giggle and moan.

"Oooh ahhh ohhh."

"He picks you up..." Brandon says, eyebrows raised. Fitz lifts me up Bridal Style and takes me to a different couch.

"Skip Skip.. Okay. You take off your shirt and throw it on the floor."

"Brandon." We say simultaneously.

"Fine...."

He hands it to Fitz. "We don't want to bother the neighbors..." He reads, blushing every second. "Juices?"

I take it and read it. "Oh my lord, skip to the end."

"You turn and look at the clock, and see it's 8:30. "Do you still wanna go to the party babe?"

"No I'd rather stay here with you." Fitz smiles and kisses my cheek, causing me to giggle like an idiot.

"Okay."

"And....end."

"Wow, that Ali girl sure is...."

"My best friend, so watch it." I say.

"Okay, okay, jeez." He smiles at me. I grin back at him.

"Okay, let's eat before that fanfiction becomes real." Rick says, snapping me back to reality.

You really can get lost in his eyes.

## Chapter Six

December 24/25 continuation

"So who wants to play Spin the bottle?"

"Brandon, you know that's not fair, I'm the only girl." I giggled hysterically, though it wasn't that funny.

By this time, being 1:30 in the morning, everyone wanted to play a game, because they- I mean we, we very much drunk and high, not tired.

Brandon got offended, "That's beside the point. That's an excuse. And....sexiest!"

Jared rolled his eyes, "It's not sexiest, it's feminist, get your 'ist' straight. Or at least, straighter than you are."

Rick's eyes grew big. No I mean literally, I saw them grow right in front of me. Or maybe it was the Ecstasy I took. Either way, they grew. "Brandon is straight." He defended.

Everyone looked at Rick for a moment. "How do you know?" Mickey asks. I get a chill, that seemingly came out of nowhere.

"I-I just d-do...I need a drink." And with that, Rick stormed into the kitchen, in search for a beer, and Brandon raced after him.

I'm starting to think two things..no three.

One: Rick is still hiding something, and I will have to ask Brandon

Two: Rick may not be half as drunk as the rest of us

Three: I am more than half as drunk as everyone, and I should probably find a bathroom.

I stumble my way to the bathroom and vomit. I won't spoil you with the details (though, I will say, cheese burgers are not as delicious looking after you eat it, as it is before.

I stumble out of the bathroom, and go to the kitchen, in search of some water to rid myself of the tangy barf taste in my mouth.

I can tell I'm still high, because I'm almost sure I see Brandon and Rick kissing in the kitchen.

Weird.

I pass them, and head for the sink. Brandon starts shouting something, but I can't understand him. My teeth clench, and I ask him to slow down.

"Will you tell anyone?" Rick asks.

"Tell anyone what?" I say, completely confused. But I did understand the side effects of Ecstasy, thank you mom, who got me a huge book called Think What Can Happen: Drugs.

DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ON THE "RELATIONSHIPS" ONE.

"About seeing us God Darn it!" Brandon snapped.

"Seeing you WHAT?!"

"Kissing." He seethed.

Oh

my

God.

"No. I won't tell." I said, more of a question in my head.

"Thanks, Alex." Rick said.

I can't think, I can't think.

My head hurt, my brain was confused. Then I started thinking about Sam. God, why did he do that? Am I stupid? Shouldn't it be so achingly obvious why he's mad? It didn't

seem reasonable to think that he was mad because of something that happened so long ago.

I don't know, I don't know.

I'm scared.

I'm

I

I'm scared.

I want someone to hold me, but there is no one.

I think I'm falling

But I might be hallucinating.

No.

My head is pounding so hard, it matches my heart.

I fell.

I'm lifted

I think

I don't know

I don't know

I smell

I smell

I smell something...sweet

Almost like a fatherly scent

It's close

no

It's next to me

It makes me smile

I think

I don't know if I am

I feel like I am

but

I don't know.

As I drift off into sleep, I'm thinking about mom flailing her arms at me, holding the book in her hand and asking "Where did I go wrong?"

I think of Sam .

Sam ...

No

No anxiety

Fitz

I smile

F I T Z

-----

I woke up this morning with these lyrics stuck in my head, playing over and over, with a

sinking feeling in my heart as to how true they felt:

*"Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger."*

Maybe I'm just crazy.

Well, I mean, I am crazy, but they repeated over and over. I couldn't get out of bed.

It was like I was stuck, No, I am stuck.

Finally I get sweaty, and go to move out of bed, when I hear Rick move in his sleeping bag.

What the heck?

Then I remember. Sleepover.

Last night was so crazy, I wasn't very sure it happened. But it did.

I knew because a cute little fedora man was sleeping soundly next to me. I smell something. Familiar...sweet?

Then Jared steps inside the room quietly, and I see a spatula in his hand. "Morning, sunshine, Pancakes or Waffles?" he whispered.

"Waffles." I whisper back, and he turns away, closing the door. I hear a "I told you so" and I'm pretty sure it was Jared talking to Mickey.

I sit up and close my eyes, head on the headboard. *'Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger. Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger. Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger.'* my mind kept going.

"Alex, there's more to the song." Fitz says, suddenly snapping me out of a daze. "It goes, *"Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger. Oh, we're fading fast, I miss missing you now and then."* He sings, and I think a little part of me died.



"You aren't dreaming, but you do need to get the whole talking out loud thing under control."

"Oh." I say. Holy crap, I can't breathe. I can't breathe, Oh Geezus.

"Hey," Rick says sleepily.

I giggle, "What happened to Rick Ross? From 6 in the Afternoon? The one who was chirpy?"

He shoots me a look, "That one was awake at 12:00 and had coffee." He sniffed the air. "COFFEE."

He rushed out of his sleeping bag and into the kitchen.

I thank God he was wearing boxers, though I did get a cheek peek.

Fitz and I laugh.

"So, I was told that, as your Christmas gift, we are supposed to go out....you know...on a date."

I blush. "Are you asking me out, Barnes?"

He blushes too, "Maybe."

"Well then." I say. "I accept."

Fitz was about to say something, when Mickey came in.

"Pancakes are ready -ouch!" Jared hit Mickey in the back of the head. He squeezes in.

"He means waffles."

"Not cool, bro." Mickey whines.

Jared whacked him again.

Fitz slipped out of bed, and I followed behind, cursing myself for wearing my "The Cat whiskers come from within" that came from The Dan and Phil shop, and not my "Are you ready for another bad poem?" T-shirt.

Fitz went to get his clothes to change later, and I went into kitchen, turned on my phone, and sat down.

Twenty new text messages:

*DanandPhilShop:*

Hello, Alex.

skip.

Brandon:

**IDK WHAT YOU THINK YOU SAW LAST NIGHT BUT IT WAS A MISTAKE.**

intriguing.

Brandon, Rick and you:

**Rick: What happened last night was a mistake, Brandon.**

**Brandon: It seemed like it meant something to you**

**Rick: Well, It did. A little**

**Brandon: How long have you....you know**

**Rick: Can't you just talk to me?**

**Brandon: NO**

**Rick: why**

**Brandon: because Alex saw us!**

**Rick: she said she wouldn't tell**

**Brandon:.....and she was high, she probably doesn't even remember**

Which is true, I'll give him that. I was high. I did forget.

But I'm pretty sure that dummy didn't know he sent those to a GROUP TEXT.

I check my other messages. One from my fanfiction website .

fanfiction website:

PanicAtTheAli messaged you:

OMG FITZ BARNES IS THERE?!

I giggle, and respond:

YEAH, wanna come over? BRANDON IS HERE, and KINDA....WELL, HUNGRY.

PanicAtTheAli: IF HE'S HUNGRY, I'LL BRING FOOD. ANYTHING IN SPECIFIC (:

Hmm, WELL, MICKEY MADE WAFFLES, SO HOW ABOUT SOME COFFEES?

PanicAtTheAli: OKAY, HOW MANY COFFEES IN TOTAL?

Hmm, THERE'S ME, RICK, BRANDON, HMMM....LEMME COUNT...8 I THINK

PanicAtTheAli: OKAY 8 COMING UP. MY TREAT (: BE THERE IN A LITTLE BIT

GREAT. BRANDON IS LOOKING FORWARD TO IT ;)

I giggle and text Brandon who is standing less than an inch away.

**My friend who wrote smut on my fanfiction website is coming over**

Brandon takes off like a jet and I laugh. Fitz comes over with two plates of waffles, wondering what's so funny. I show him my phone and he laughs too.

"Oh jeez. Is that the one about me?" Fitz asks, nervously.

I giggle at him, "Yes. She's also my friend Ali."

"...Okay....." He says uncertainly.

"She will make inappropriate, sarcastic but absolutely hilarious comments." He laughs and hands me the syrup.

"Okay. I trust you."

"Besides." I lean in giggling, as he shoves waffles in his mouth. "We're the sassy ones," I point to Jarad, "They're sarcastic." She points to Brandon, who appeared again in a "I love fanfiction" shirt (oh geez)

"Yeah." He giggles, "We are."

"What? No sassiness? You okay?" I poke him everywhere, just as he swallowed. He started coughing and Mickey wordlessly hands him some milk. He gulps it, and says "Thanks."

I take a bite of my waffle and grin at him.

"You," Fitz says. "Are going to be the death of me."

I smile. "I am."

A knock came, mere minutes later, and Brandon went to answer the door.

"Hi, I'm looking for -"

"Hi." Brandon said, flashing a grin.

"H-hi." She said. She had medium short hair, a cute bang to the side of her face, dark brown eyes, and some sunglasses. She wears them around and people think she's some celebrity. But she actually wears them because she doesn't like eye contact.

"Hey, Ali!" I run and hug her, and she is still staring at Brandon. He hugs her and they stand there awkwardly for a few moments, Ali making "I LOVE YOU SO MUCH" faces at me.

She holds up a bag, "I brought coffee."

## Chapter Seven

December 25

Ali's POV:

"I brought coffee."

I hear a scream from the kitchen, and look over at Alex. Rick fricking Ross comes and takes the bag from me.

"Mmm, chocolate caramel, my favorite." Rick kisses my cheek, and yells to everyone that he has coffee.

Rick Ross kissed my cheek.

I'm cool.

Brandon clears his throat. "Hungry?"

For love?

"Yeah, a little." I smile. Good, this is good...

"For love?" Brandon smirks.

"You guys really need to see a doctor about that." Fitz- Fitz Barnes?!?!?

"Um, hey, Alex, you didn't tell me your boy toy was here."

"Ali...he's not my boy toy." Alex blushes. Whoops.

Fitz looks at Alex, and grabs her hand. "We're going on a date today."

"Oooh." I giggle.

Alex blushes and looks at Fitz. "Coffee?"

"Coffee." He said.

"You guys are like *Hazel and Augustus*, Oh my God."

Fitz and Alex walk into the kitchen for coffee and Brandon leans in.

"Coffee, Madam?"

"Oui." I say, in a French accent.

He makes a gesture that says "lead the way", so I do.

Alex's POV:

Fitz lifted his cup, opened the lid, and the heat fogged his glasses. It was the funniest thing I've seen. Rick and Brandon sat next to each other today, probably trying to show they weren't mad at each other. But they kept looking at me, and that got annoying.

"You gonna eat that?" Mickey interrupts my thoughts, pointing at my waffle.

"Mickey, you fat lard, sit your butt down before it does it for you."

Oh no.

I know that voice.

"Sam ? What are you doing here?" Damon asked (I keep forgetting he's here.)

"I, uh, wanted to talk to Alex for a sec." He mumbled.

Fitz looks at me, "Who is that?"

"Ask Steve ." I say. I turn to Sam . "What do you want?"

"To talk."

I wait.

"In private!" He exclaims.

"Geezus. I'm going." I stand up, Fitz removing his arm from around me, that I swear I couldn't feel.

Sam and I walked into the living room.

"What do you want?" I hissed.

"I wanted to say I'm sorry." He looks down.

"Oh boo Hoo. What about?" I don't know what got into me.

"I'm sorry about the girlfriend thing. I was hoping you would want to...meet Kayla? She's super sweet, and I think you'd like her....you can invite your friend too."

"Her name is Ali." I defend.

"Ali. Invite her, and Brandon."

I smirk. "Triple date or something?"

"Something." He smiles softly.

I roll my eyes. "I missed you, Sam ."

He rolls his eyes. "I missed you too."

We hug each other and make our way back into the kitchen.

"You may speak to him." I say, and Rick speaks. "Everything good?"

I look at Sam , "Yeah."

( ^ v ^ ) ( ^ v ^ ) ( ^ v ^ )

"Where are we going, again?"

"I told you, it's called "Johnny's""

Fitz and I were on our way to a place called Johnny's that has nothing to do with their song What a Catch, Johnny.

"How can you not see that? It's What a Catch, Johnny." I say.

"It's just- I know the name of my song. Well, Steve's song. I do. It...this is different."

He finally stops, and we get out. It's a freaking seafood place.

It has a fish hanging that says "What A Catch!"

OH

MY

LANTA

NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SONG.

He orders a sweet tea, and I order a water.

The waiter gives us menus and is off on his way.

"I think I can kinda see what you meant."

"Hmm?"

"About this being like the song." He points behind me and I turn to see a picture of him hanging up.

I giggle, "Finally."

The waiter gives us our drinks and we order.

"I would like the Salmon." I say, handing Fitz my menu.

"I'll take the vegetarian fish sandwich." Fitz says, handing the waiter both menus

"Coming right up." He leaves to put in our order.

I start to giggle, "I forgot you were a vegetarian."

"All day, everyday." He giggles with me, causing people to stare. We don't care what they think, as long as it's about, as long as it's about us.

The radio inside the fish starts playing.

'Good afternoon Central Soul Punks, here's Tyler, with the news.'

'Thanks, Josh, there has been recent news of Fitz Barnes having a girlfriend. They say that he has been staying at a friend's house, and has been spotted with an ugly short girl.'

Well that's nice.

Fitz chokes on his drink. "SUGAR HONEY ICED TEA."

"What?" I ask, confused, not at the report, but what that statement meant.

He says calmly, "The initials. Spell them in your head."

Sugar= S Honey=H Iced=I Tea=

I think I got it. "Oh my lanta."

He giggles, and the report continues.

'Are they in a relationship, or is it taboo?'

You have got to be kidding me.

"I have half a mind to go down there and give them a piece of my mind." Fitz says angrily.

"But Fitz," I say giggling. "Then you'd have no mind."

He thinks about it a moment. "Oh." And he starts to laugh too.

"Excuse me," A man with dark curly hair and a British accent says, "Can you keep it down?"

"Sorry." I say. I pat Fitz's hand in order to say 'Don't get sassy', which may be impossible.

The waiter comes and delivers our food. Fitz thanks him and begins to eat. I close my eyes and bow my head, praying over my food. Then I start to eat.

"You, uh, you.."

"Yeah." I say.

"That's cool. I hope you, like, don't mind I didn't." Fitz sips his tea slowly.

"No it's okay." I bite into my salmon.

"How is it?" He asks, setting the glass down.

"Delicious." I reply, drinking my water. We sit in silence a few moments, just eating our food. I receive a text message from Brandon that says:

**I owe you one, thanks for Ali.**

Do I want to know?

Fitz laughs when I show him. "That was quick."

"Well, Ali's smart. She likes only certain people. And is sometimes very very evil. So if she's evil to him, he's doing good."

A new message appears.

**Nvrmind. I locked her in the closet because she shaved off some of my hair.**

"Well," Fitz says, almost dying of laughter, "I think he's the one."

"Me too." I say.

"That could be us, you know." Fitz says shyly.

"But you always playin."

"What?"

"Never mind. Fanfictions."

"You and your crazy fanfictions."

We finish eating a couple of minutes later and head to the mall.

We pass by Rue 21, where Fitz insist I try something on. So I go to the clearance rack, grab a pastel sweater

I then try on the dress:

"You look...."

"Ugly as heck, I know."

"I was going to say something along the lines of none of what you said. You look beautiful, Alex." Fitz says, with furrowed brows.

"Oh."

Fitz buys the items, after I begged him not to, and took me to Hot Topic.

These are the clothes I got. I got a tee shirt that said:

- I have more crushes on fictional characters than people I'm real life
- Are you fur real?
- Waiting for my prince in shining band tee
- I like my music loud

And then I got this really cool skeleton thing for my hand. It's my favorite thing ever.

Fitz said he was getting hungry, again, so after we checked out, we bought pretzels and Slushies at Auntie Anne's.

"Did you have fun, Alex?"

"Yeah. A lot of fun." I reply, slurping my blue raspberry slush.

"Do you want to...do this again?"

"You mean...a-another date?" I ask.

Fitz blushes and stumbles over his words. "Well, I mean, uh, if this uh, were a,uh date, I-I would like to do it, uh, again."

I lean closer to him, and feel his heart pound.

Bah boom, bah boom, bah boom, bah boom.

"I'd love to, Fitz."

He bites his lip. "Can I kiss you?"

I bite my lip hard.

He wants to kiss me?

I nod. "Okay."

And then our lips collided.

The rest is none of your business.

Okay, don't get mad, I know you wanna know, so I'll tell you.

But nothing happened.

We broke apart, exchanged "wow"s a lot, kissed each other a little better, and that's all to tell.

I mean there's more but, let a girl keep her secrets. □

## Chapter Eight

December 25

Fitz and I passed a tattoo parlor, and he asks me if I want to go inside.

"Um, sure." I say.

It smells like nicotine mixed with biker sweat and metal.

But something about it made my adrenaline pump faster.

We like through and look at different tattoos.

"I like this one." Fitz points to a Phoenix tattoo.

"Me too."

After poking around a little more, we go back to Brandon's house.

"Where is everyone?" Fitz ask walking into the living room.

"They went to go eat. Did you two lovebirds have fun?" Brandon asked, snuggling against Ali.

"Apparently not as much as you guys." Fitz said.

Ali giggled, "Brandon forgave me for shaving his head, and then..."

"We watched Netflix." Brandon said, smirking, "And chilled."

"Oh Chris Christie, Ali." I avert my eyes, as if they're naked.

"No, I mean we actually chilled."

"I DON'T NEED TO KNOW." I pull Fitz into Rick's room.

"What's wrong?" He asks.

"It's gross." I say, totally repulsed.

"Uhh..." He begins, "What is "Chill"?"

"Netflix and Chill, Fitz." He still looked confused. "You don't know what that is, do you?"

He shakes his head no. I lean in and whisper it to him.

His eyes grow wide. "So they...?"

"Yup." I say, silently cheering 'ALI DID IT WITH BRENDON!!!!'

"So they," Fitz turns on Netflix. "Turned on Netflix."

"Then....turned on."

Fitz looks at me, and I look back.

+++++

Wow, that was crazy.

No, unfortunately, we did not.

Sorry.

Brandon came into our make out session while Downton Abbey was on, so that was a...ahem, Killjoy.

Now I'm in the tub.

I keep thinking over and over, What would have happened if Brandon hadn't come in and interrupted us? By AfterShocks.

I start to laugh, and suds get into my eyes from my hair, so it stings, and I scream.

Brandon comes in, "What the heck happened, Alex."

"Brandon! I'm naked," I say, but I can't help asking him to get the suds out of my eyes.

He better not have an excited friend.

"Thank you." I say, after he wipes my eyes with a rag.

He turns his back, "Yeah, well you owe me one."

I sit back down in the tub, the bubbles covering me again. "What if you take me to get a tattoo?"

"May I?"

"Yes."

He turns around, "Really? A tattoo, Alex? You sure you want one?"

"Yeah. I'm ready for it." I smile.

"Okay. I'll take you tomorrow." He grins at me.

I grin back.

#####

After Brandon left, I step out of the tub, and lock the door. I dry off and change into my night clothes.

I walk into the room, brushing my hair, when Fitz steps out of the bathroom. "Hi." He says, awkwardly. Like I caught him doing something.

"Hiiii...." I say suspiciously.

He smiles, "Nice shirt."

"It gets better." I pull out some other shirts

"Wow. It did get better, not disappointed." He fold his lip over nodding.

I grin. "Wanna play a game?"

"What game?"

"FallOut 4."

"It has no relation to a certain band?"

"No. Jk. I don't have FallOut 4. I have Wii Sports."

He laughs at me.

We play Tennis, that I whoop Fitz's butt in. Then bowling, which he handed me mine.

But then I beat him at Baseball and Boxing, so it's okay.

"That's not fair. Rematch."

I hit pause, and the screen guy goes "TIMEOUT"

"Life's not fair."

He folds his lip over, "REMATCH."

"NOPE."

"REMATCH."

And in between the "Rematch!" And "No" our lips collided. His lips tasted like Colgate mouthwash, and it shocked me a moment how crisp they were.

I pull back for a second. "Fitz."

"Yes?" He breathes.

"Do you.....like me?"

"Yeah, a lot." He says seriously.

"Why?" I ask. I genuinely don't know.

He takes my hands, and kisses them. "You're beautiful, smart, caring and intelligent."

"You do know smart and intelligent are the same, right?"

"You prove my point."

"Sassfitz." I grin at him flirtatiously.

"I really like that nickname. Say it again."

"Sassfitz."

"Again!"

"SASSFITZ!"

"SCREAM IT FROM THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS."

"YEAH!"

"What?"

"Oh I thought we were, never mind. SASSFITZ."

And we basically chilled (literally, not Netflix and Chill) the rest of the night, then Fitz slept on the floor, Rick came back and slept in his sleeping bag and I fell asleep soon after.

## Chapter Nine

December 26

"Are you sure about this, Alex?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"Because your nails are digging into my flesh."

I pull my hand away from his arm, and say a quick, "Sorry."

"If you're not ready-"

"I am. I am ready."

I dug my hands into my pockets, and we walk up to the counter.

"Can I help you?"

"Yeah, she's here to get a tattoo." Brandon smiles at the man behind the counter, who was very scary looking and intimidating.

He grunted. "Which one, little Missy?"

ERRG I hate when people call me that.

"I want it to say "Aftershocks"." I say shyly.

"HAILEY!" The man called and a girl popped out of nowhere. She had a pixie cut like mine, except black hair, instead of red. She was about my height, but with a nose ring and a shirt that says "Done t(-\_ -t)"

She smiles at me, "Hey. You a newbie to this?"

"How can you tell?" I ask.

She points to Brandon's arm, which I apparently clasped on again.

I move my hand again.

"It's okay, it only stings for a while, but it goes away. This is my first one." She lifts up her sleeve to show a tattoo that says, "I ♡ Steve".

"As in, Steve Walker?" Brandon asks.

"Yeah, you know him?" She smirks, knowing exactly who he is, and that yes, he does know.

Brandon is oblivious to this hint. "Yeah, actually, he's my friend."

I roll my eyes, "Let's go before drama queen starts up."

Brandon whacks me lightly, "I won't be holding your hand anymore. Hmph."

He stomps off and we giggle. "Oh well."

Hailey leads me to a chair in the back, and gathers her equipment. "It'll be okay." She soothes.

"Okay."

+++++

OH MY GOD IT HURT.

Well, only for a little, BUT STILL.

I think it was worth it though. I hope Fitz likes it as much as I do.

"Woah, you actually did it." Brandon says, sounding impressed.

"Yup, and I didn't need you." I stuck my tongue out at him, and he does the same back.

"Are you two a-

"No." We say in unison.

"Oh." She smiles, "Okay, just asking. Friends?"

I nod at her.

"Well, Brandon, can you give Steve my number?"

"I can give it to Fitz to give to Steve ." I take it from Brandon. She smiles at me.

"Cool. Remember to put ice on it if it itches. Don't scratch it. Believe me. Don't scratch it."

We laugh and leave, after Hailey gave me her number and I gave her mine.

"That was fun." I say in the car.

"Next time I take you somewhere, I'm taking Ali with me."

I roll my eyes. "So you two..?"

"I don't know yet." Brandon says. Then he blushes. "I like her a lot."

I pinch his cheek. "You've got a cruuuush."

"Shut up."

And so I did. Well, and then he turned on the radio, and it was playing Saturday, so we sang.

"I'M GOOD TO GO."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Holy Smoke!" Fitz exclaimed when he saw it.

"You like?" I bite my lip.

"I-I- Yeah. I do." He smiles at me.

I smile back. "Really?"

"Yeah."

He kisses me on my lips and I wrap my arms around him, then the pain increases.

"Ouch." I wince.

"Oops." He says.

He moves me arm away, and kisses me again.

His fedora fell off, so he moved me, grabbed his hat, and slipped it on without removing his lips.

"I like kissing you." He says finally.

"I like kissing you, too." I giggle at him.

Rick pops in, "Hey."

"Hey, Rickroll." I say, sitting cross-legged on the bed with Fitz.

"I heard you got a tattoo." He says.

"Yup, look." I show it to him.

"Why didn't you ask me if I wanted to go?"

"Well I just thought-" but I cut myself off. I can't say in front of Fitz. I thought he wouldn't want to be with Brandon.

"I thought it would bore you."

"But we're friends." He cries.

"Well, next time I do something crazy, you come with me. Okay?"

He smiles, "Okay. By the way, we're ordering Chinese."

"Yum." I say, my stomach growling at that exact moment.

"Haha." Fitz says.

After the food comes, I tell Fitz about Hailey and how she wanted me to give her number to you to give to Steve .

"I don't know, Alex..."

"Is he not interested in girls?"

"OhmyGod. Yes he is."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I- I don't know." He sighs. "I'll give it to him."

"You don't have to." I say, trying to get it back.

He moves it away. "No, it's okay. I will....Er, was she cute?"

I move away from him, lowering my eyes. "Whhhy?"

"For Steve . So I can say " Yeah, she's cute." Cause remember, I wasn't there."

"Yeah, she was cute, but you know, I can't really say, cause I like guys."

"Still."

We finish our food and Ali and I play truth or dare with the boys.

"Truth or Dare, Ali." I say.

"Truth." She says. I look over at Jared who came back earlier, because well, food. And Mickey came with, because, well, food.

Jared nods at me, our secret signal for the question.

"Did you and Brandon actually Netflix and Chill?"

## Chapter Ten

Sam's POV:

Earlier: *December 26*

Kayla is coming over today and I'm so excited.

We hadn't seen each other in a few months, because of our concerts, and she has homework from college.

It kinda sucks dating an intelligent person.

Anyway, today, I'm picking her up from the airport, and surprising her with chocolates and flowers.

Jk, I'm surprising her with a French fry bouquet and some ice cream.

She'll love it.

#####

Ali's POV:

Brandon wants to talk.

I can't tell if this is, "I don't love you, I just wanted to get you in bed" talk, or "I really like you, will you go out with me?" talk.

Errg! Where's Alex??

++++

Hailey's POV:

Omg.

Steve Walker is standing inside my tattoo shop.

"Hi. I'd like a tat?"

\*internal screaming\*

"OK. What would you like it to say?" I ask, pretending not to recognize him.

He grins, "I ♥ Steve ."

Rick's POV:

I'm horny. Brb.

Brandon's POV:

I hope she likes me back.

I might just lose it if she doesn't. She's funny, sarcastic, stands up for people.

I really like her.

A lot.

God, I hope she likes me back.

Damon's POV:  
I'm hungry. Brb.

Jared's POV:  
none of your business, 'itch.

Kayla's POV:  
I'm seeing Sam today!  
I'm so excited.  
I pulled my hair back into a ponytail, and finished my airplane coke.  
"Attention passengers: we are about to land. Please follow the directions on your screen."  
I buckle my seat.  
20 more minutes till I see Sam (not that I've been counting)

Rick's POV:  
Better.

Jared's POV:  
Cats or gtfo

Ali's POV:  
I hope he likes me. Please don't let it be sex, please don't let it be sex PLEASE DON'T LET IT BE SEX

Damons POV:  
\*BURP\* better.

## Chapter Eleven

December 26, while Fitz and Alex were gone.

Ali's POV:

"Can we talk?"

I look up from my fanfiction Me, Myself and Fitz, and see Brandon. Uh oh. Time to talk.

"Uh...yeah?"

He takes my hand and pulls me into his room. He has a AfterShocks poster in the corner, a picture of him and Steve . Him and Sam in college, and the band. One of a girl, called... Sarah....?

The next thing I know, I'm up against a wall, and Brandon is kissing me furiously.

I kiss him back, not really sure what to do. I'd never had a boyfriend before. What do you do with it? Kiss him, and then throw miracle grow on him?

He wraps his arm around my waist, and pulls me close.

I let go of Brandon. "Brandon, what are you doing?"

He looks slightly embarrassed. "It was kinda easier to tell you I liked you when we were kissing."

He shoves his hands in his pockets, looking down.

"You- you like me?"

"Y-yeah."

"Well, you know what?" I ask shyly.

"What?"

I step on my tippy toes and kiss him. "I like you too."

We continue kissing and flop on his bed (after I almost tripped on Jarad's Converse) making out passionately.

He helped me take my shirt off, and I got his off and we kept kissing.

###

The affair did not take place. Though, there was a lot of pleasure.

We only got far enough for him to see me without a bra, but that's it. I have morals you know.

At least go on a date first.

Which is what we are going to do.

But I still don't know where Alex is.

\$\$\$\$

Kayla's POV:

"Kayla?"

I turn, and there he is. Spency-poo.

"Sam !" I run up with my suitcase dragging behind me.  
"Surprise." He pulls out a bouquet.  
"OMG ARE THOSE FRENCH FRIES?"  
"Maybe...?"  
I kiss and hug him, "Thank you, baby."  
He smiles into my shoulder. "You're welcome."  
I let go, and tell him I'm hungry. He suggest a restaurant, but I'm ready to go home.  
"We're all staying at Brandon's." He says.  
"We?"  
He explains it. But I recognize names.  
"Alex? Ali? Do they write fanfiction on fanfiction website ?"  
He frowns, "Yeah. How do you know?"  
"Because someone is always breaking the fourth wall." I start walking and Sam is behind me yelling, "WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?!"

Hailey's POV:

"W-what?"  
"I ▯ Steve . Will that be a problem?"  
"N-no."  
"Good. Cause I don't really want that. I want to see yours though."  
Steve says it so confidently, I roll up my sleeve and show him.  
"Cool." He looks down at one that is a Phoenix, on my wrist.  
"What's that one for?"  
I yank my sleeve down, "Just another tattoo."

"Why on your wrist?" He asks, concerned. He knew.

"I wanted it there. Can we, not? Just, tell me the tat you want."

He clears his throat, "Of course. I want one here that is a key and a keyhole." He points to his own wrist.

"Okay." I clear my throat and rub his wrist with an alcohol pad.

Alex's POV:

"...Love me longer than yesterday...."

Okay. So AfterShocks karaoke with Fitz Barnes, the freaking singer OF AfterShocks, may not have been the best move.

'NEW HIGH SCORE: MRS. Barnes.'

"Oh geezus." I blush. "Brandon put that in."

Fitz laughs, and hugs me from the side. "I don't mind. I like how it sounds."

"Oh..." A chill runs down my spine. "Your turn."

He picks my favorite song. Ignite our Love.

"I know it is." He says smiling, after I told him. "That's why I picked it."

I grin at him and he begins to sing,

"Long nights,  
Stretched out by long fights.  
Our love just ain't right.  
We need to ignite our love"

The crowd boos on screen. "Sorry, try again."

I think I died.

This is my death.

Fitz lost at AfterShocks karaoke.

Bye.

He's still standing there. Awestruck. Like 'How the heck did I mess up on my own song, that I sing.'

"Holy Smokes." He says finally.

"It's okay."

I boop his nose, and he kisses me. I kiss back and eventually, we are notching some headboards listening to Pacifiers' song "Girls have more fun without clothes."

-----

*Today:*

"Did you and Brandon Netflix and Chill?"

"Wh-who- who thinks that?" Ali asks.

"Everyone. Answer the question." Mickey says. Jared whacks him. "OW."

"No. We didn't." Ali says.

"Okay." I say. "I just wanted to know. You owe me twenty bucks, Jared ."

He forks it over.

"Seriously? Then what's with the crazy hair? OW, bro. Stop it."

"No." Jared whacks him with a pillow.

"Errg. Let's play I have." Ali says, frustrated.

Sam runs to get drinks, and Kayla goes with. I can't believe it's her! I met her on fanfiction website , and now we meet in real life!

How "I have" works:

We all get a drink. We each go around saying things like "I kissed a girl." and those who have, drink.

"Okay," Fitz says. "I'll go. I beat Fitz at AfterShocks karaoke."

"Fitz!"

"Drink up, Princess."

"You can wear the crown, but you're no princess." Fitz laughs at my remark.

I take a shot. "Wow. Smooth. Okay, my turn. I reenacted one of Ali's fanfictions."

Fitz and I take a shot, but so does Brandon.

"Brandon?"

"Huh?" He says.

"You reenacted one of her stories?"

"Maybe one." He grins at Ali, and she grins back.

"My turn." A voice says from the doorway.

We all turn and see Steve Walker, Hailey from the tattoo shop, Joey and Andrew standing there.

## *Chapter Twelve*

*December 28*

Alex's POV:

I ran towards the bathroom, but I don't understand. My heart was racing, my veins were pulsing. I could feel tears form. I wanted to lock myself in the bathroom, climb into the shower, let the cold water pour on my back and cry.

But I did understand.

This man is not who I thought.

He let this happen.

I'll never forgive him for this.

---

The days before: *December 26*

"My turn."

Holy smokes. The rest of fricking AfterShocks is here.

"Hey! I didn't know you were coming!" Fitz and Brandon said at the same time.

"Double jinx, buy me a soda. HA!" Brandon says.

"Hey Brandon. Just remember that you had nothing to do with the first two albums." I say, and Brandon frowns.

"YOU GONNA GO THERE PRINCESS?" Brandon shouts, and Steve winces.

"Be quiet, Brandon."

"Mom." He mutters and walks away.

"So this is Ali, Alex and...Katie?"

"Sure." Kayla said, starstruck.

Sam frowns, "It's Kayla."

Steve smirks. "I know."

I am still gawking at Steve, and Fitz laughs. What the frick is so funny Fitz? Its Steve freaking Walker. You have freaking eyes, man.

"Anyway, this is Hailey, and you know everyone else."

They mutter a few, "Hi"s, and Hailey rushes over to us girls. "HEY!" She says.

Ali looks confused, but Kayla and I squeal. Then Ali ask what the heck was up.

"HaileyUrie." I say, and Ali knows.

"PanicAtTheAli." Hailey says, giggling.

"LABeeboTea." Kayla says.

"BEEBO\_IS\_BAE." Ali says.

"Wut?" Joey asks, in sort of a daze.

"The fanfiction website." Fitz says.

"PattyCakes." I say, and Fitz blushes.

"How did you know that that was me?" He complains, "You have a ton of people who have usernames like that."

"But only they comment and vote so much. Well, and a certain person who I may not be able to say their names, but I thank them. Anyways, they don't accidentally slip up and say "THAT'S ME" when referring to Fitz, and then delete it."

"Smokes." He mutters and we giggle.

"STAhp I'm going to choke on my water." Kayla complains.

"Good."

"You WANT me to choke?"

"I don't know. I'm crazy." I laugh.

"Who's up for fro-yo?" Sam says.

"Woo! I am." Brandon shouts and grabs his keys, Ali, Kayla, Hailey and I all following.

"Uhh, don't you want to come with me?" Fitz says to me.

"Oh." I blush, stopping. Why did he want me to come with him? We aren't together.

Are we?

He grabs his keys and our cars are this:

*Brandon's car:*

Brandon

Ali

Sam

Kayla

*Steve 's car:*

Steve

Joey

Hailey

Andrew

*Fitz's car:*

Fitz

me

Heh, heh. I'm totally not nervous about being alone in the car with Fitz.

No! I'm not you are it's totally you and totally not me okay maybe a little but you can't prove anything.

Holy smokes.

I'm terrified.

He gets in the car, after he grabs his fedora, us being the last ones to go.

"So..." He says. He closes the door and looks over at me. He is showing no sign of moving the car, so I guess he wants to talk.

"So..." I drag out. I want him to just talk to me. Not be nervous. Even though I am, it's not because I'm scared of him, but because I'm scared of what he's going to say.

"I um, I wanted to say that... Uhm, the weather is nice." He says, nervously.

"I like you, too." The words just pop out of my mouth, before I tell myself not to. Darn you, Alex.

"You-You do?"

"Yeah. You said you liked me yesterday, so..." I say, regretting my words instantly, and turn away from him. He doesn't say anything. He starts the car and starts driving.

#####

"What flavor are *you* getting, Ali." Brandon says hopping up and down.

She giggles at him, "I don't kn- OOH IS THAT STRAWBERRY CREAM?!"

They run over to it, Brandon putting his mouth under the machine, and she pulls it down, causing it to go directly in his mouth.

"Um." The manager said, and Brandon said his mouth wasn't touching, so everything's okay.

Christ.

"Which one are you getting?" I ask Sam , and he shrugs.

"Which one are you getting, babe?" He asks, and looks around confused. "Where's Kayla?"

"Over here." She calls from the line of candies. He jogs over, and leaves me with Andrew.

"What are you getting, Alex?" He asks me, putting his cup to a "Chocolaty Goodness" flavor.

I grab a cup, and slip it under the "strawberry cheesecake" one. Someone bumps me.

"Sorry." I say, and he says it's alright.

I turn around and see a guy, about 22 or 23, and I stop for a moment. "Hey...you're Sterling, right?"

Sterling went to my middle school, when I was younger, and we hung out once or twice. Nothing big.

"Hey." He smiles. "How are you, Alex?"

He remembered me. "I'm good. Just hanging out."

"Cool." He nods. "Hey, I think I have your hat in my car. Remember, from the dance?"

I do remember. I gave him my hat to watch, and then my mom took me home early and had forgotten about it.

"You put it in your car?"

"I was hoping to see you again. You know, you just, up and moved, so I was never able to."

"Aww." I blush, looking down.

"You want it?" He asks me.

"Yeah, sure." I smile and set down my fro-yo.

He leads me to his car and unlocks it. He opens the trunk to reveal a box.

"Here it is." He says, reaching in and pulls out a gun.

"Sterling?"

"Get in the freaking car."

"I-I."

"Now!" He yells and I get in. Why did I follow him. Why did I let myself get trapped. I did this to myself. I deserve what I get.

He drives around a while and pulls into the woods.

He takes me out, still holding a gun to my face. I'm scared. My heart is pounding so much it hurts. I can't breathe.

And then he's stripping me. And touching me. I want to scream, but I can't, because anytime I whine, he slaps me with the butt of the gun.

It hurts, It hurts, I scream in my head, but he doesn't stop.

He puts his hand over my mouth and enters me, and I scream into his hand, tears falling down.

\$\$\$\$

Fitz's POV:

"Where's Alex?" Sam asks.

I hadn't even noticed she was gone. Wait, she went to the bathroom. I think.

"Bathroom?" I say.

"No one's in the bathroom." Ali says, coming out of it herself. "One person bathroom."

"Where did she go?" Brandon asks, and I hear a scream.

"SHE'S IN THAT CAR." Hailey screams.

"What?!" I jump to my feet and go over to Hailey, who's staring out the glass door.

I open the door and get in my car, roaring it to life. Brandon jumps in with me, before I can object.

"I'm calling Rick. Maybe it's him she's with."

I highly doubted that, but I didn't say anything, because we're all already worried. I had a lump in my throat, thinking how I'd let this happen.

I could no longer see the car, and I mutter a curse. Brandon calls 911, and tells us to go home and sit tight.

But I can't do that.

We all go back to Brandon's house in silence. Rick is here along with Jared and Mickey. But this was different. It didn't feel like we were banging out, having fun.

It felt as though we were waiting for the death sentence.

## Chapter Thirteen

Ali's POV:

I blame myself.

I should have seen her leave, or sense something was wrong. I mean, I'm her best friend!

I let her down.

Oh my God, she's God knows where, doing God knows what. Or being *forced* to do God knows what.

I'm a terrible person.

Brandon rubs my shoulder as I cry, cry hard. I sit up and shrug Brandon off. My cheeks were warm, and hot tears spilled into my lap. Brandon wraps his arm around me, and I look up at him.

He's crying too. I fall into his lap, and cry. He strokes my hair while I'm sobbing.

"Shh.." he coos. "It's okay..."

"No it's not." Fitz says suddenly, and everyone stares, because this is the first he's spoken since we all came back. He stood up. "It's all my fault. I should have watched her. Been with her....I'll never forgive myself." Me muttered that last part, and only I heard him. Before any of us can say anything, he left the room, and Steve followed him quietly.

Maybe he had heard too.

"I just wish we were all together. And we could have seen her...y'know?" Hailey wails, and Kayla balls with her.

"It's my fault. I should have stayed with her to pick out a flavor." Kayla cries. They curl into each other, crying.

"Guys." Sam says, hushing the whole room. "If anything, it's my fault. I-I know who she went with."

"What?!?" I scream, moving from Brandon's grasp, and standing up. I am now face to face with Sam, who hangs his head in shame.

"His name is Sterling." He explained, still staring at the floor. "When I was really mad at her, I was going to prank her with spiders and crap that she hates. Then I saw Sterling, who had been her friend and found out he moved back here. Anyway, he agreed to help prank her. I- I swear this wasn't the plan. I didn't know he would....."

Even though his voice trailed off, we knew what he was saying.

Mickey gasped suddenly. "You mean rape?!?"

Everyone stopped breathing a moment. Hailey and Kayla started bawling and Sam went over to Kayla. She told him not to touch her. He came over to me.

"When we came up with the plan, I was mad. I wanted to get her, because of what she said, I didn't think that-"

And that's when it happened. My fist connected with his jaw.

"Go to hell!" I screamed, and ran into Brandon's bedroom. I slammed the door, flopped on the bed and screamed into the pillows. Then I cried like I didn't care who heard.

*My best friend is gone.*

Fitz's POV: (While Ali was in the living room)

I disappeared into the guest room, and punched the wall. I muttered a curse, because it hurt me more than the wall.

"Are you angry, Fitz?"

I turn to see Steve standing in the room.

"Shouldn't I be?!" I yell at him, as he shuts the door behind him, and sits on the bed. "I should have been with her, and not hiding from her like a freaking idiot because I didn't know what to say after she said I like you. I should have paid attention to the fact she was leaving, and that she was leaving with a guy! I should have protected her!" I yell, and I feel the tears form.

I collapse on the bed next to Steve, and he pulls me into a hug.

"I-I just...I want to die, how bad I feel." I wince at saying that. "I'm not suicidal, or anything."

"I know Fitz. It's morbid thoughts. Not suicidal." Steve says, and I frown, not understanding. "Well, according to my therapist, 'morbid thoughts' are like: I want to die, I want to not be here. Suicidal: I am going to kill myself, just end it all."

And that made sense; That made me feel better.

I opened my nightstand and removed some Excedrin for my pounding headache. Steve watched me carefully swallow (two) the medicine, and gulp the water. I suddenly hear a scream, and jump up.

Steve opens the door, and pokes his head out. Joey comes over with wide eyes.

"It's Ali. She's super pissed."

"Why?" Steve frowns.

"Apparently Sam had something to do with the kidnapping." Joey said, and winced as I heard the words.

"I'll kill him." I say, taking off my fedora and shoving it towards Steve .

"Fitz, don't." Steve warned. I look at him and sigh. I put my hat back on, and went to go in Brandon's room. A hand stopped me.

"I wouldn't." Jared warned. "Don't worry. Brandon's in there."

I wonder if Ali's feeling the way I am.

Ali's POV:

"Ali, you maybe shouldn't have punched him. He already feels bad, and he's stressin'."

You're kidding me, right?

"Oh I'm sorry, Brandon." I say, my voice dripping with sarcasm. "I'm supposed to shower him with roses and unicorn farts, after finding out he was part of the plan to kidnap my best friend. Sorry, I must have forgotten."

Brandon sighs, running his hand through his hair, "Okay. I deserve that. But he blames himself. That's not good for any of us to blame ourselves, Ali. There's probably something we all could have done. We all should have seen her. Ali, we need to focus on what's important. Not whose fault it is, but how we will find Alex."

I cuddle into Brandon's chest. He always knew what to say. "Thank you, Beebs."

"You're welcome, Alicat. But it's true."

I smirk, "How did you know that was nickname?"

Brandon blushes, "Fitz's not the only one with a fanfiction account."

I snifle and roll my eyes.

I am falling in love with a doofus. #DoingItTheAliWay

Alex's POV:

*December 26*

Just let me die, let me die, let me die, let me die. I want to use that rope and just hang myself. Then I won't hurt anymore. Everything will be okay, maybe even peaceful.

Sterling said I wouldn't be going anywhere anytime soon. Anytime I messed up something, he punched me. When I cried in pain, he slapped me.

My body was bruised from my legs up. He burned me, cut me, hit me, and punch me. I felt dirty and abused.

I bet no one's even looking for me.

I wonder if Fitz even cares that I'm gone; if anyone cares that I'm gone.

Sterling put a tracker on me. "I'm going out for a bit, dollface." Which means that he's going to the liquor store. I was no idiot.

He kissed me roughly, and locked the door.

I ran into his warehouse and grabbed the rope off of the shelf. I grabbed the nails off of the counter, ripping my hand in the process. It stung, but I didn't care.

I nailed the rope to the ceiling, tied a noose and stuck my neck inside.

*Wait? What am I doing?*

*Even if Fitz doesn't need me, my best friends do, for Steve's sake.*

I removed my neck, and ripped the noose down.

*I will stay put until they find me.*

*Please find me.*

*Please be looking.*

## *Chapter Fourteen*

Steve's POV:

It's funny how I hardly knew this girl and I cared so much. This statement is pretty complicated, considering, I'm talking about both Hailey and Alex.

I walked into the kitchen to grab a beer, when I saw Hailey. She was hunched over the counter, beer in hand, crying. She gulped down the beer, and started on another.

"Hey," I said, pulling out a beer myself. "Are you old enough for that?"

Hailey scoffed, and drank from her bottle.

"You know," I say, unscrewing the lid, "It might be a good idea to lay off the beers a bit."

In response, she opens another beer.

I sigh and sip my drink. It went down the wrong pipe, so I started coughing. She hit my back, helping me cough.

"Sorry." I mumble, finishing my coughing. She shakes her head, and put her bottle down.

"No, I'm sorry." She says, pulling her bang back. It was then I noticed her eyes. Even though her cheeks were tear stained, and eyes were threatening her with more tears to fall, she was beautiful. And totally bad a\$\$.

"Why are you staring at me?"

"Huh?"

She chuckles, "You've been stuck on stupid, staring at me for like, five minutes. Is something on my face?" She starts touching her face self consciously.

"Why do girls always think that?" I ask her, and she looks confused.

"Think what?"

"That when a guy stares at them, they must have something on their face." I take a step closer to her. The water drips down from the faucet. "When really, they're staring in awe of their beauty."

Our faces were close, and my heart pounded. She licked her lips, locking eyes with mine.

"Well I'll have you know 99% of the time there is something on my face." She says in sort of a dazed whisper.

I grin at her. "I bet you're still beautiful with something on your face."

"Guys."

Hailey and I turned at the same time, and see Andrew standing there, pale as if he'd seen a ghost.

"What's going on?" I ask, worried Fitz had hurt himself.

Andrew didn't say anything. He just made a follow me motion. Andrew and I started walking down the hall to the bedrooms, when I noticed the Hailey was at my side, clasping onto my arm.

I wanted to tell her to stay in the kitchen, so she wouldn't see something terrible. But it would have no affect on her, so she stays.

He leads us to the bathroom, where Jared and Brandon are.

I step inside and see a body in the bathtub.

It's Kayla, with blood running down her arms.

Ali's POV:

"What's going on?"

Frankly, I was getting tired of asking. Mostly because I was thirsty, but also because I was tired of things going on.

Everyone kept whizzing past me, ignoring my question.

Joey runs by and I catch him. "Hey. What's going on?"

He looks scared. He inches out of my grasp. "It's Kayla."

He runs the way he was going and I grab Brandon.

"What happened to Kayla?!?" I scream.

"Come on." Brandon grabs my hand and leads me out into his car. I heard an ambulance in the distance.

Tears sprung in my eyes, "What happened to her?"

"S-she...." He took deep, shaky breaths, and continued. "She cut herself in the bathtub."

"What?" I whispered. More puddles appeared in my lap, though it wasn't raining. "Who found her?"

"Jared and then me. He, uh, knocked on the door, cause he had to, uh, take a piss, and uh, she didn't, she didn't answer."

I cover my mouth as more tears fell. This whole thing, it's bigger than all of us. "Is she...?"

"No. No. God no." He assures me. "We sent for an ambulance. They said we found her in time for them to help. She's just unconscious."

That's when I started to wail.

"Oh my God." I cried, and the water from my eyes fell faster. My head was pounding so loud, I'm sure Brandon heard it. Brandon held me, because that's all he knew how to do.

And we just stayed like that in the car, holding each other, until the ambulance arrived.

Kayla's POV: (While Ali's in the living room. About 1:00)

"You mean raped?!"

The words rang through my ears over and over. I fell into Hailey's arms and cried. I always hated crying, until I began to not care if people called me a "Crybaby". When Mickey said that, my heart was starting to ache more.

*If she was raped, it's my fault. I saw her leave. She told me she'd be right back.  
Something about a hat.*

*I thought she knew the guy, so I let her.*

*I'm such a terrible person.*

Ali stood up, looking extremely pissed. "How could you, Sam?"

"When we came up with the plan, I was mad. I wanted to get her, because of what she said, I didn't think that-

And that's when Ali punched Sam .

"Go to hell!" She screamed. She ran away so fast she didn't hear me clap.

*She's so savage.*

Brandon followed her out, and I stood up.

"How can you even suggest something like that as a prank? Kidnapping your friend to get back at her?" I spat.

"He was only supposed to scare her a little and drive around the neighbor-

Then I punched him. "You freaking filthy pig! I can't believe I fell in love with you!"

I started kicking him, and Joey pulled me off.

"Hey, we can worry about kicking his a\$\$ later, okay?" He glared at Sam, and continued, "We need to get ready. The cops are coming to talk to us."

"Fine." I mutter. I retreat to the bathroom, turn on the sink and splash water on my face. Turning off the water, I take a look at my reflection in the mirror.

My hair was dirty and everywhere, tears were stained on my face. I looked like a crazy person.

I lock the door, and strip into my bra and underwear. I run the water, plug the stopper, and step in, though it's cold.

The cold was relaxing to my body, though, because I felt feverish.

In the corner of my eye, I saw a razor.

*It's all my fault.*

*I should die, to make things fair.*

*I'm so stupid.*

I grab the razor, removed the blade, and began to splice open my wrists and arms.

*I'm a terrible friend.*

"Kayla...? You in there?...I, uh, I gotta tinkle." Jared said from outside the door.

My vision was blurring.

"Kayla, please, I've gotta go."

Even though I was losing consciousness, I rolled my eyes. *Classic Jarad* .

Then everything was dark.

•••

Of all the sounds in the world, they couldn't have picked a better sound to wake up to than beeping?

Whether an alarm clock, or hospital monitor, both noises waking you up in the morning make you want to shoot someone.

My arms stang and my head hurt. I felt a button at my thumb, and pressed it. I remembered faintly a nurse said it was morphine. Thank God.

"Kayla?" I managed to open my eyes and see Rick.

I may have smiled, but I can't tell, "Hey Ryo."

They have me on some killer (no joke intended) medication. I turn my head slightly, and see Hailey and Ali looking at me.

No offence to them, but out of all of my best friends, I didn't want to see their face as much as just one.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

*December 25 2016*

Hailey's POV:

It seems like I got here just a week ago, but it's been a whole year.

Let me catch you up:

Kayla came back home after she spent a month in a mental facility. Though she complained the whole time, she said that it kinda helped. Now she goes to therapy twice a week.

Sam is still being shunned, but mostly he's hiding from us. After Fitz found out what Sam did, he fell into a depression, and didn't eat or drink. He no longer sang, or smiled, or had much of an interest in anything.

The police have a lead as to where Alex is, as of December 15, but they don't know if, well, she's alive. After Fitz heard that, he cheered up a bit. He began eating a little, and drinking a little. But then today, he's stayed in bed. Because when he and Alex first met, it was Christmas.

Ever since Kayla's indecent, we've all been looking out for one another.

Rick became a P.I. and was hired to find Alex. Oh! Speaking of Rick, he and Kayla are together, as of March. Everyone, of course, thought he was gay. But it turns out, he's not.

Brandon and Ali are together, and have been dating since about January. Steve and Hailey are engaged, which was the awesomest thing. Steve took her to the mall, and inside Hot Topic, he proposed.

They haven't picked a date yet, because they- well we all want Alex there.

Hang on, I'm getting a phone call.

----

HOLY SCHMIDT. THEY FOUND HER.

They want us to ride down to a shelter and pick out which one is her, if she's even there.

Sterling has a secret warehouse where he had been keeping a schmidt load of women, and a few guys. Kayla, Ali and I are going down there. The guys didn't want us to go, but they knew better than to say, cause we would have kicked their nuts.

We've been training to kick Sterling's a\$\$ since February, with intense exercises, even fighting each other.

We all rode in silence to the warehouse location. There were police cars everywhere, but the people were all outside.

We start to walk past police, and go inside, but they stop us. "Ma'am, we have this covered. We have him surrounded."

"Yes, but what you need is us." Ali snaps, flashing her badge. He gives us a look, and then tips his hat at us.

"Thank you for serving our country." He says, and lets us pass. Kayla rolls her eyes.

"I'm getting tired of that. It's not like we're in the military."

"Fake IDs for kicking a\$\$ was the best idea ever." I whisper. In the warehouse, it was quiet and cold. "Okay, ladies. Tiptoe and find Alex. Free others along the way."

Ali and Kayla nod and we split up.

*You'll always remember us.*

Ali's POV:

The mission: Find Alex, and free everyone along the way.

If necessary, kill Sterling.

I tiptoed along the warehouse floor, making sure my badda\$\$ boots didn't make any noise. I saw a guy in the corner crying.

I ran up to him and removed the fabric from his mouth. "Are you okay?"

He's still crying, "Who are you?"

"Help. Come on, hurry." I answer and help him stand. "Run out that door and you'll be safe. Go, now."

He starts running and I run the opposite direction.

"Ali?"

I look over, tears springing to my eyes. "Who's there?"

"It's me, Ali. Turn around."

I turned around and I swear, I thought Alex was standing there.

"Alex?" I ask, tears beginning to spill. I hated that I could break so easily.

"It's me, what are you doing here?" Alex says, walking towards me. She engulfs me in a hug.

"I'm here to rescue you." I say, in my Luke Skywalker voice.

"You aren't doing any of that." Sterling appears out of nowhere, and snatches Alex, holding a gun to her head.

She starts to cry, "Go now!"

"No!" I scream. I lunge at Sterling and the gun goes off. "NO!" I scream again, and look over. Alex is fine, but she's staring at me wide eyed to see if I'm alright.

"Ali!" She screams, and I look behind me. Sterling is raising a gun towards me.

In a split second, I didn't even see myself do it, I shot Sterling in the heart.

"Ali. You're bleeding." Alex screams, and points. I look down and see blood gushing from my stomach. I put my hand on my stomach and collapse on the ground.

Kayla's POV:

I heard a scream and ran to it.

I'd already freed ten people, and I was about to help another.

I untied his ropes. "Go, go now." He runs and I run to the scream.

"Alex!" I yell, and Alex points to the ground.

"Oh my God, Ali." I say and rush over to her.

"I'm okay....trust me." She smirks, and then winces.

"ALI THIS IS NOT THE TIME." I yell, but I was glad to know she was conscious.

"Guys? Did you find- ALI!" Hailey runs over now, and we all carry Ali out.

Once safe outside, people cheer. We get Ali on the stretcher and get inside the ambulance with her.

"Guys." Ali says, and we all pay attention. "We're all together....finally."

We all looked around at each other, and she was right. We were all together.

Finally.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

*December 25*

Alex's POV:

"So what are you really?" I ask. We were in the hospital room by ourselves -Me, Ali, Kayla and Hailey- and I needed answers.

"We call ourselves the The AS Sisterhood. But some calls us Youthful Poison . We don't really care, they just know our symbol," Kayla points to her AS (AfterShocks) logo. "It means hope."

"So....like Superman's S?"

"Exactly." Hailey says, and she turns to Ali. "Told you."

"You were right." Ali hands her a Twenty.

"What just happened?" I ask, my eyes flicking from Ali to Hailey.

"Betting." Kayla answers. "Hailey's gotten into it."

"Steve taught me." She smiles. "I always beat him."

"Wait." I say, looking at Hailey with a smirk. "You and Steve ?"

She blushes, scrunching her nose up. "Yeah...."

"That's awesome!"

"We..uh..we're engaged." She says quietly, looking at Ali and Kayla.

My ears start ringing with her words. "Oh? That's... That's Awesome! I'm happy for you."

I clearly was not. How dare a year go past and I knew nothing about this.

"Hey, we weren't going to get married without you there." Hailey says, her eyes pleading for me to be OK with this.

"Yeah." I say. "No that's fine. Thanks."

I smile a little, and Hailey buys it.

She smiles back. "Thanks."

Ali peers at me, and then asks us to leave so she could sleep.

"Not you, Alex." She says. "Stay for a minute."

"O-okay." I say, and shut the door. "What's-"

"Are you okay?" She interrupted.

"I mean. I guess so." I didn't know how to answer, so much happened in a year.

"What did he do to you?" She asks sadly.

"I-I...I...can't talk about it."

She seemed to know exactly what it was I couldn't talk about. But it was more than that.

Her eyes start to water. "Okay...um, go home. Eat and get some sleep. I'll get better, don't worry."

"O-okay."

I stand up, and hug her. She winces a little, but doesn't say it hurts. I turn to walk off, and she grabs my hand.

"Hey," she says softly. "Fitz...he hasn't been doing so good. Go easy on him. And...I missed you so much, Alex."

I smile at her with watery eyes. "I missed you too."

She let go and I walked, wiping my eyes with the back of my hand.

####

"Hello?"

Hailey steps into the house and everyone floods her.

"Did you get her?"

"Was she there?"

"Are you okay?" Steve asks with worried eyes.

All was there except Fitz. I stepped inside, with a finger to my lips.

"Alex!" Rick whisper shouts and starts crying.

I hug everyone and ask where Fitz is.

"In his bedroom. He's been watching a blank screen all week." Mickey said sadly.

I ran to his room, and threw open the door.

That's when I saw it.

He wasn't watching TV. He was under a girl.

And I knew this wasn't his cousin.

I barely stuttered out, "Fitz" when the tears came and I ran out.

I ran into the bathroom, but I don't understand. My heart was racing, my veins were pulsing. I lock myself in the bathroom, climb into the shower, let the cold water pour on my back and cry.

But I did understand.

This man is not who I thought.

He let this happen.

I'll never forgive him for this.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

*December 26*

Alex's POV:

"I want you to train me."

I escaped from the bathroom, and avoided Fitz all day. I wanted to punch something, because there was a lot on my chest.

"Train you for what?" Kayla ask confused.

"To be an AS Sister."

She looks at me for a second, but understands I'm so very serious. "Okay. Come with me."

Ali was still in the hospital, coming home later today, so it was just me and Kayla. We hopped into her car and drove down the street.

She parked in the back of an abandoned building, and we got out. The inside of the building looked very *Agents Of SHIELD*-y. There were tons of punching bags and equipment.

"Where do you want to start?"

I slightly wish I had changed into something besides my "Thnks Fr th mmrs" shirt and shorts.

"Punching bag." I answer. She grabs some gloves, and told me to wrap my hands in this tape looking thing.

"Punch." She commands, and I lightly tap it.

"C'mon, it's not like you're punching Fitz." She says. What she doesn't know is that, I wanted to punch Fitz.

I punched the bag so hard, my fist didn't even start hurting until I fully processed that I punched it. The bag fell on the ground and I stared at it.

"Alex?" Kayla asked worriedly. "W-what happened?"

"I-I...just need to get some things out."

"Um, okay. I'll leave you to it, okay?" Kayla says, almost a scared look in her eyes. I ignored it.

"Okay."

She leaves, after telling me to text her when I was finished. I turned on my phone, that has been on my charger for a year. I open my spotify and play: PUNK ISN'T DEAD playlist.

Macey Martin starts to sing to me.

*Think I just remembered that I,*

*I think I left the faucet running.*

.....

*Why do I always spill?*

Tears ran down my eyes, and I push them away, punching the bag again, and again. How could he hurt me? I feel like I exposed myself to him, and he did this to me.

Maybe I'm just a crybaby.

----

Ali's POV:

It was four in the afternoon when they finally released me to the public. I immediately received a phone call from Kayla.

"Hello?"

"Hey, I know you just got out and all, but I am like, really sick, cause I don't know what Brandon put in those waffles this morning, but, well, let's just say some stuff came up."

"Okay, woah, slow down." I say calmly. "What?"

"Alex is at our 'gym' working out." She says slower.

"Why?"

"I'll explain later, can you go pick her up for me, pretty please?" Kayla pleads.

"Fine."

-----

"Hello?"

The ride in the car to the 'gym' was pretty painful, but I made it through. (Though, a few police officers gave me some looks. Screw you.)

"I'm in here." A small voice said.

I walk inside more to see a sweaty girl we call Alex. "Alex?"

"Hi." She says, her phone playing "Miss Missing You" and she's crying.

"What's wrong?" I ask, coming closer to her. My stomach had a wrap on it, and it wasn't bleeding, but it hurt so much, I wish it were bleeding.

"It's Fitz." She said. And then she began to sob.

"What happened to him?" I ask, and she goes from sad to angry.

"Let's just say," She began in a scarily angry voice. "He was coming faster than I was."

I thought about what that even meant, and then I understood.

"He...?" She nods and begins to cry again. "I'll kill that SOB."

"No!" She shouts, grabbing my arm. I hadn't realized I stood up until she grabbed me.

"Don't hurt him!"

"Why?! He hurt you, Lex." I yell, tears forming in my eyes. "You can't be a doormat."

"STFU!" Alex yells, and we both get silent.

She shakes her head and continues, "I should have known he would move on without me."

"But he didn't." I insist. "It must be some misunderstanding."

"It wasn't. There was a girl, and her hand was in places I've never been." She was sobbing.

"I'll kill him."

"Just let me cry. Don't hurt him."

So I did as I was told, and held her, as she cried.

Fitz's POV:

Ever since Alex left, I've gotten a stalker.

Not a cute and adorable teenage stalker I usually have. I really creepy teenage stalker who probably has a shrine of me in her closet.

She said her name was Elsa Ying ("Soon to be Mrs. Barnes." She had said.) and that I should love her because she said.

Sometimes she'd let her fugging self in. NOT COOL BRO.

(Ok, I'm never saying that again. But, YOLO. Holy smokes, I need help.)

I was taking a nap, because I've been exhausted, (Which Steve said is my depression and lack of eating, but screw that.) when that little bugger came in.

She came and tied me to the bed, and blindfolded me.

"You're gonna have a good time, Barnesy." She used her finger and traced my nose.

I, of course, was half asleep, so thought this was a dream. And since I thought it was a dream, I thought it was Alex. What? I'm a guy....geez. Anyways.

I smiled and mumbled, "Am I? Are you being naughty?"

She giggled, but it didn't sound like Alex. I definitely was dreaming. "Yes baby. I'm so naughty."

Ehhh.... I won't say everything...um I'll skip...and skip....annnd skip.

"Mmm, you tast-"

Annnnd skip.

"I love you, Alex." I said in mid groan.

"Alex?!" She yelled. "I'm not Alex."

"What?!" I tried to yank the blindfold off, but I was chained to the bedpost. "Who are you?"

"Elisa!"

"Fitz?!" I recognized that voice. It couldn't be.

"Alex?"

I heard a door slam and screamed. Steve immediately ran in and saw Elisa.

"What the-"

"Help me." I mumble. Elisa screamed and let go of...me. I could only assume Steve chased her out.

It must have been five minutes before he untied me, and covered me with the blanket.

I was already humiliated, so I thought *Why bother?*

"What the heck happened in here??"

"She...I thought I was dreaming, and it was Alex....." I mumbled, not looking Steve in the eyes. As if I were a little boy caught.....doing stuff, by his dad.

"I ran her out of town. Let's get you cleaned up." Steve stands up.

"Wait! Was...was Alex here?"

"Oh Christ..." Steve says grabbing a fist full of his hair.

"She was. Oh God... Oh Oh my God. She saw. Holy smokes." I cringed and buried my head in the sea of pillows. Then I cried. I cried as if no one could hear me.

She must hate me. And her fanfiction website friends must think I'm some low life scum. And possibly want to beat me with a baseball bat. (You know who you are.)

And now, she'll never forgive me.

## Chapter Seventeen

December 26

Alex's POV:

As I sat in my despair, I remembered my bucket list. I smiled to myself sadly as I open my brown notebook.

Name: Alex Garrison Age: 18 Date: December something

- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

A tear rolled down my cheek, and I continued.

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

Okay, Alex. I'm going to do it.

I'm going to finish my bucket list.....after I get drunk with Brandon, Rick, Kayla, Steve , Hailey and Ali.

Wow that was a crap load of people.

# # # # # # # # # # #

"What the f\*\*\* did that b\*\*\*\*\* do?"

Maybe getting Kayla, Ali and Brandon drunk was a bad idea. I called everyone to come to BAR-salona, and they came mere minutes later.

"Brandon, I told you already, it's nothing." I took a swig of my wine and let out a sigh. Ali said nothing, but kept drinking. I didn't think alcohol is such a good idea for Ali right now, but I didn't say anything. Brandon snakes his arm around Ali, and she moves around into his arm.

"Can we talk about something else?" Kayla ask, drinking her daiquiri. 'Like, we should play a game."

Rick snuggles into Kayla's shoulder. "You mean like, spin the bottle?"

I grimaced at the fact I was the only one who didn't have someone. "We can....."

"Actually." Steve says. "We should play I have never."

Hailey pats Steve on his muscular shoulder. "Yes!"

"Okay, I'll go first." Brandon says, removing his arm from around Ali, and sits up. "I have never....had sex in a bathroom."

A few mummies go around the room, and everyone groans. Rick takes a sip of his drink and says nothing. Kayla laughs at him, and he blushes. Someone comes through the door and leaves it open.

We all stare over at Brandon, whose eyes are wide towards the door.

"Go on, Bran." I tell him. "Do it."

"I-I can't.....not here."

"You can."

"HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF CLOSING THE DOOR?!" Brandon yells and the man gives him a strange look. "Oh well..."

".....imagine." I say.

Brandon doesn't get it. So Hailey says, "As I'm pacing the pews in a church corridor....."

"And I can't help but to hear...." Ali winks at Beebs.

"No I can't help but to hear an exchanging of words....." Rick says quietly.

We sing until our lungs give out, and drink too much alcohol. I kinda wish I were by myself, but that wouldn't be safe. Holy Ham Sandwich! My mom hasn't heard from me yet!

I sneak to the bathroom, under Ali and Kayla's close supervision, and check my now charged iPhone.

*1000 missed calls*

*Voicemail box is full.*

I check my voicemail, and hear my mother's voice:

*Alex! Please call me! Where the heck are you???? WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL????*

*Alex! Please don't be dead, you are getting an earful from me later.*

*Alex, baby, call me.*

*Alex.....I need to tell you.....your brother.....he....he has cancer.*

NO! Victor is only 7! Well, I guess now he's 8, but still, that's too young. I dial my mom's number and call her. Ali pops in with a quick, "Hey." but stops when she sees me. Her face crumbles.

"Lex? You OK?" She mouths.

I shake my head no, and she asks what's wrong. I pull a notepad out of my purse and write.

My brother has cancer

Woah. Oh my god, is he okay?

I don't know

"Hello?"

"Mom? It's Alex!"

"Oh my God." She moaned through the phone. "Alex, baby are you OK?"

"I'm fine, I guess, what happened to Victor?"

There's a pause in the conversation. "He, um, He..."

"He what?" My heart starts pounding, my head shouting NO NO

"He.....He only had a few months."

"Mom."

"He died on January 1st."

Fitz's POV:

I went to call Alex, but her phone was busy. Steve told me I should talk to her and tell her everything. I just can't believe the girl came back from the dead and found me like that.

I haven't dated anyone since Alex. I stopped singing or really doing anything.

I missed her.

I needed her.

I need her.

More than anything else.

## Chapter Eighteen

Alex's POV: December 25, 2017

Things have changed and it's not okay. I wish he had just told me what happened earlier, instead of now. It had just started snowing and I was hanging out with my new friend Halsey, drinking our hot cocoa. We sat in Starbucks, and the atmosphere was warm, and conversations were glowing.

Across from me was Ali and Brandon. It was almost a double date, minus the me having a date part. Brandon was stuffing marshmallows in his mouth, and Ali's nose was scrunched up and she giggled.

"Here, babe." He stuffs one in her mouth and she squeals.

"Oh my God." Ali hits his shoulder and he laughs. "Jerk."

"Butthead." She replies and then they kiss. Halsey and I just look at each other awkwardly.

Ali looks over at us. "Sorry."

"You remind me of that 5SOS song." Brandon says, and I try not to laugh.

"Which one?" She ask. "*Jet Black Heart*?"

"No."

"*Amnesia*?"

"NOOOO, I meant *She looks so perfect.*" He whines.

"I was gonna say *She's kinda hot*, but OK...." I say, and Ali giggles at me.

"I didn't know you were *Five Seconds of Summer* trash." Halsey says.

"Trust me," I reply to her. "I'm not. That doesn't sound real. Like, *One Direction* trash. You can't be that. They never throw anything away."

Brandon laughs so hard a marshmallow shoots out of his nose and into my drink.

"MOMMY FUDGER. BRENDON!"

"Sorry." He sheepishly says, sipping his hot cocoa.

I stand up, holding my purse. "Now I have to buy a new one. Be right back." I walk over to the counter and stand behind a man in line. He looked kind of cute. He was short like me, and was wearing black clothes, that made me bite my lip. Until I saw the fedora. He turned around, and thank God, it wasn't Fitz.

"scuse me."

"Sorry." I order a coffee, and tell everyone I'm going to head home early.

"Bridesmaid jitters?" Ali asks, referring to Hailey's wedding tomorrow.

I smile, "Yeah." I lie. But really, I needed to swallow some pills and go to sleep. "See ya."

"Let me walk you out." Ali says, standing. This wasn't an option, she had to. She worries.

We were almost to my car, when Ali says, "Kayla is moving her bed stuff in tonight, so you won't have to bunk together anymore."

Whenever I moved in, it was only a few days until Kayla did. Hailey wanted to, but with the wedding coming up, she figured Steve would want to live with her, BOOOOORED.

"OK.....Goodnight."

"Are you okay, Alex? You're a little jumpy." She places a hand on my shoulder.

"I'm fine....." She can see my lie in my mouth. "I'll see you later."

I unlocked the car and stepped in. Turning it on, I drive away. Ali waves bye, and I travel to *Books a Million*.

I was looking at *The Amazing Book is on Fire*, debating whether \$20 was a good price to buy it, or I should just get it from the library, (*True story, get it from the library*) when someone called my name.

"Alex."

I didn't want to turn around. I knew the voice. I hadn't heard the voice all summer when I went to Pacifiers' concerts. Or when I went to the Warped Tour (Tell you about it later, promise). The voice made my heart jump, and ears burn.

"What are you doing here, Fitz?"

## *Chapter Nineteen*

Fitz's POV:

"Alex."

She looked so beautiful sitting there reading. It was TABINOF (Aka, The Amazing Book is Not on Fire) and sipping a hot cocoa. Her hair spilled to her shoulders, and was curled. I could tell she was naturally curly, and it looked oddly beautiful as the color blue. Her eyes were focused on the many pages in the book, currently staring at Dan's head at the beginning.

Alex heard me say her name and she was paralyzed. Couldn't move from her seat. Sat there, eyes staring at Dan's hair. Unmoving.

"What are you doing here, Fitz?" She finally ask.

"I need to talk to you." I say, motioning to a chair to sit. She shakes her head at me, and points to the door. We walk outside, after she finishes her cocoa and grabs her purse, and head into the falling snowflakes.

I walked her to a bench, and sat us down. Lacing my fingers in hers, I begin to speak.

"You know it was two years ago today, that we met?"

Alex said nothing in reply, stared down at the white that covered the ground, but kept her hand in mine. Even though it was just a hand, I felt hope pouring through her fingers and nails, into me.

"It was snowing then, too. It's odd. Where we live, it doesn't usually snow, and it has these past few winters." I smile at her and she retracts her hand.

"I didn't see last year's snow." She growled, but it sounded more like it was sad, and not angry.

I move her face towards me and look into her eyes. "Alex. I never cheated on you." She moved her eyes away. "Can I explain? Please?"

A sigh escaped her throat. "Fine."

I told her everything. Pouring my heart out, and even spilling the humiliating one of me thinking Elisa was her in a dream. She seemed to understand, and started to cry.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" The snow was covering her hair and so the they all shook on me, when she leaned in to cry on me. "Why?"

"I-I couldn't." I explain. "I wanted to...so much. It just wasn't the right time. You were angry at me, and still healing from that S-"

"SOB." She interrupts, and I continue.

"Healing from that SOB. It wasn't the right time."

She looked into my eyes. "How is this the right time?"

"Today is important." I looked up to the sky, and pointed to the falling snow. "Because it's the anniversary of us."

She smiled at me. "...and...I hope.....the day you forgive me."

"Okay." In a swift motion, she grabbed my face and pressed her lips into mine. She tasted like chocolate, and my insides longed for more. I slide my hands to her back and press her closer, but there is no closer, only us.

It was only us for what felt like forever, and in a way, I think Ali was right. In a sense, we are like *Augustus and Hazel*.

*Okay will be our always.*

PS: Please don't kill me with butter socks and baseball bats. Love you, thanks.

## Chapter Twenty

"You have to get up, princess. I'm taking you shopping."

I open my eyes. 10:04

"Nooo. Early. Sllleeeep." I shut my eyes again, snuggling back under the blanket. Fitz pulls the sheets back, and I yell.

"Hey!" I scream. "I'm cold!"

He laughed. "I need you up."

"You better have drawn me a fudging bath."

"Draw you a bath? Um, yes, right this way Elizabeth Bennet."

"Ha ha." I roll my eyes, and get out of bed. "Coffee?"

"On the counter, Alex."

"Donuts?"

"We can get some while we're out. Now go!"

I do a happy dance and hope in the shower. Sugar fudge, it's cold water. Errrrrrrrrrrrrg.

Oooh hot..... Hotter.....Sauna.....

"Come on, Al, let's get a move on."

Whoops. Took all the hot water. Oh well.

"I'm coming."

"Hey," He said. "Lemme see you."

I giggle, "Ok."

He opens the door, as I trip coming out of the shower, pulling the shower curtain with me.

"Gosh jam it. So much for being romantic. Sowwy, you can see me naked another time."

He frowns sarcastically. "Oh no. I'll never get to see you naked."

*Whack*

"Ow."

"That was meant to hurt." I say. He rubs his arm.

"Only a flesh wound." He quotes. Nerd face.

I giggle, "Nerd. Let's go."

"Crazy?" He smiled sadly.

I grimace. "Too soon."

"Sorry-sorry."

We hopped into the car after I grabbed my coffee and sped to Donut Make Us Mad!

"Mmm." I chomped on my glazed Donut, while he ate his colache.

"Egg and cheese kolaches are better for you." Fitz noted.

"Duly noted." I licked my fingers, and he hands me a napkin. "They're clean."

"Nuh uh."

"Are too. See?" I lick his fingers. "Clean."

Fitz leaned over and kissed me. I'll tell you one thing: His egg and cheese kolache *was good.*

%%%%

"Rue 21 or Hot Topic?"

*Whack.*

"AGAIN WITH THE WHACKING?!?" Fitz complained.

Fitz and I were in the middle of the mall, between Rue21 and Hot Topic. I had to go to Rue 21 last, because Hunger Games. He put a hat on, sunglasses and a fake mustache for protection, but I told him to take the mustache off. He looked like Mario.

"Yes. Now shut up and take me to Hot Topic."

As soon as we walked in, people swarmed us. I don't know how they knew it was him, but they did.

"Hey, guys." He announced to the crowd, everyone sucking in a breath and holding it, like they do when HT accidentally plays *Welcome To The Black Parade*. "Can my girlfriend and I shop in peace? I'll be happy to sign merchandise of yours, but please, in a QUIET manner."

And his words rule. Everyone backs away, and let's us shop.

A small girl, brownish, but my colour, comes over and says, "Excuse me, my sister is a big fan of yours. Can I get you to autograph this picture?" She hands him a handmade picture of Fitz to him, and he takes it.

"I can't sign this. This is too.....awesome. May I keep it? I'll post a picture of it online."

She grinned. "Sure. My sister is gonna freak."

I pat Fitz (ha). "Freak in a good way."

"Oh okay." He turned back to the girl. "Can Alex get her number, or social media info so we can tag her?"

She gave it to me, said thanks and walked away.

"She was sweet." I say, lifting up a Nirvana tee. "You gonna post it to Facebook?"

He grinned. "Actually, I'll post it to Instagram."

A collective gasp goes around the room. When we look, they turn away. Some little fricker started playing WTTBP and everyone cried, not even paying attention to us.

Fitz bought me a *Beatles*, *Nirvana*, *5 Seconds of Summer*, *AfterShocks* and *Pacifiers* tee, and exited HT.

"Buy me a pretzel?" I pointed to Auntie Anne's.

He frowned. "Didn't you just eat?"

"Yes. Now buy me a pretzel."

He frowns again.

*"Please."*

"Fine."

So he pulled me to Auntie Anne's and bought me a pretzel and slurpee.

I dip the pretzel in the marinara and shove it at his face. "Try."

He opens his mouth willingly and I stick the food in. Fitz munches, nods in agreement that it is good, and buys himself one.

"Want to walk?"

"Sure."

So we stroll around the mall, waiting in lines, playing around, making out in front of the bathrooms, shoplift, (Ok, Fitz made me put it back, but steal. haha, I'm hilarious.) and buy clothes.

"Why do I need so many clothes?" I ask, my arms ripping apart because of the bags. He carries some too.

"I'll tell you in the car."

"Why?"

No comment.

I follow him to the car, shove the stuff in the back, sip the rest of the marinara (I'm weird like that) and sit in the passenger side. "So what, you taking me on vacation?"

"Actually." He says, starting the car. "I want you to come with us."

"Come with who?" I ask.

"Come with us on tour. AfterShocks + Girl."

## *Chapter Twenty One*

"Will you come with us and be AfterShocks + Girl?"

What.

WHAT.

W H A T.

"You mean be a groupie? Cause I'm already very much a groupie-"

"No." He laughs. "Come with...as my girlfriend."

What.

"Are you- you....I...we?"

He laughs again and turns on the radio. It starts blaring a song I knew but couldn't think of the name of right now. He wants me to come with him on tour.

Fitz told me that he canceled a bunch of tours because...well...last year happened. We can't take that back. He was so sweet. Everything that has happened reminds me of one of their songs.

*We are wild*

*We are like Young Volcanoes.*

At first I thought Fitz was talking to me, but actually, he was singing. He was holding my hands and singing to me.

*"When Rome's in ruins, we are the lions, free of the coliseums. In poison places, we are anti-venom. We're the beginning of the end."*

*"Tonight." I sang along. "The foxes hunt the hounds."*

*"It's all over now,"*

*"Before it has begun."*

Together we sang, *"We've already won. We  
ARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE wild. We are like Young  
Volcanoes."*

I sang background, *"We are, we are, we are."*

He turns down the radio. "What do you say, Lex?"

I am wild.

I am so effed up.

Fitz makes me feel a little beautiful. I belong in this group.

I sucked in a breath shakily, and answer. "I say yes."

\*\*\*\*\*

"OMFG."

"I know."

"OMFG."

"You said that already, Ali."

Alicat paced around the room (no ref to Brandon though. I asked) putting her hands on her hips.

"I told him I only go if we all go."

Ali rolled her eyes. "Bull. Hayley would already be going cause Steve . Pacifiers has a concert coming up too. Don't worry about me. You go."

"But."

"No." She covered my mouth with her hand. "Shhhhhhhh." I licked her hand and she squealed. "Jerkfacedarsehole."

I felt childish. "If you are, what am I?"

"Ok." She said ignoring my remark. "We need to get you packed."

"What?" I ask, suddenly concerned. "When is the tour?"

"They leave tonight."

Oh f

"Help me shove everything in here, douche."

"Woah there mini mother effer. I'll help, but no name calling."

I slow my roll. Calm. "Okay."

"Put on some music." She tosses some tee shirts in the suitcase I dragged out. I fished my phone out of my pocket, and turned on Spotify.

It started blaring Bowling For Soup. Ali looked at me shortly, and smiled.

We both sang, "DEBBIE JUST HIT THE WALL, SHE NEVER HAD IT ALL. ONE PROZAC A DAY. HUSBAND'S A CPA."

Brandon walked in, and sang too. We were NOT expecting this. "HER DREAMS WENT OUT THE DOOR, WHEN SHE TURNED TWENTY- FOUR."

"ONLY BEEN WITH ONE MAN, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER PLAN?"

All in all, it took about an hour to get everything packed. Fitz called and said that they were on their way to pick us up.

"Us?" I had asked, but he hung up. I guess he meant to say he was on his way to pick up Steve and me, because Steve was here, but then I realized. Steve wasn't here.

"Son of an American Idiot."

"What's wrong, sweets?" Ali asked with concern. Something else was in her eyes.

Deceit.

I have had my fair share of lying, and so has Ali. But she looks a certain way when she lies to me. Her face curls and she makes it look like she's in pain.

The first time she did it, I was twelve and she was thirteen. She had gotten her period before I did, and I guess she didn't want me to be jealous, so she didn't tell me. Even after she woke up in the middle of the night in pain, and blood all over her sheets. (Thinking back on this, makes me think of one, Macey Martin, (Google it) and two, how did she think it wasn't obvious ?) She looked me in the eye and said she didn't.

"Liar."

"What?"

I zoomed back into reality. Whoops. "You are lying about something. What do you know?"

"About what?" She asked, giggling.

"The tour."

Her her never waver from mine. She smiles at me simply, and says, "The only thing I know is that you're going to have a crap load of fun."

●●●●●●●●

Kayla

Rick invited me to tour with him and the band, so of course I said yes.

"Just remember." Rick reminded me. "She doesn't know, so you can't tell."

"Ryo, I know how secrets work. Like how you don't want me to tell Alex what you were doing in your sleeping bag at Brandon's house."

Rick looked around, looking paranoid. "Don't say that loudly."

I laugh. "You're horny. Everyone knows that."

"No. Everyone knows I'm gay."

"Excuse me?"

"What?"

"You're gay?"

"No."

K.

"It was a joke, Kay."

K.

"Let's go."

I picked up my huge suitcase with the words Nirvana>Yolo and headed into the band bus. Alex and I had matching suitcases. She wanted to assure me we were still best friends. I mean, she spends a ship load of time with Ali, I felt like the loser no one likes.

"Hey." Brandon greeted me on the bus. I smile back at him.

"Hey." Then a question pops in my head. "What are you going to do about no Sam ?"

Looking back on it, it was a simple question. So simple, it should have had an easy answer. But of course, everything was effed up.

"Um, actually." Sam stepped from the shadows in the bus. "Hi."

## *Epilogue*

### **Alex's POV:**

“Are you absolutely positive that you want me to come?”

Fitz laughs, with a dark chuckle. “Yes. Absolutely sure.”

I grin at him. “But I can’t even sing.”

He snuggles next to me. “Yes you can.”

I looked into his eyes, and knew I was done for.

“Okay. I promise I’ll come. But we have to invite some people.”

Fitz raises an eyebrow. “Who?”

I grin, thinking about my few fanfiction followers. “Oh...just some people.”

## Acknowledgements:

I first want to thank you, for picking up my book and reading it! I put lots of time and effort into the making of this book.

I want to thank my lovely friends on Wattpad: Ali, Hailey, Kayla and Shane. You are amazing!

I want to

.



## A short afterword by Ali Alvarez

Charlie Smith is an amazing person. Like, she was there when I needed her, and we've had crazy conversations, spilled secrets. But hey, that's what makes friendships strong. Girl, I love you, and I want you to never forget that.

-Ali Alvarez



# Charlie Smith

is a girl living in her own world. She writes on Wattpad, an app for newbie authors, and this is her first novel! She currently lives in Louisiana with her lovely family and two cats, Phoenix and Lucifer. She has had a bucket list since she was 12, and has never met her band member crush.

You can learn more about Charlie online at  
[CharlieSmithWrites.blogspot.com](http://CharlieSmithWrites.blogspot.com)

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Photo credit to Charlie Smith and Emily Taylor

**PRAISE FOR YOUNG VOLCANOES:**

# PRAISE FOR YOUNG VOLCANOES:

Charlie's story [Young Volcanoes] is AWESOME and amazing, honestly. It has the right amount of drama, romance, and comedy. I think the most important thing from the book is that they are all friends. Friendship is important and I think her story expresses togetherness and friendship. -Kayla (BEEBO\_IS\_BAE on Wattpad)

I'm going to reread this over and over until the next one, and nobody can stop me. -Shane (BeeboAteMyUsername on Wattpad)

Hahahahahaha \*cries while singing Welcome To The Black Parade\* - FallOutBoyForever1 (on Wattpad)