

## Chapter Eight:

### Kidnapping is Not for the Faint of Heart

*Written by: Jay Mosher*

My head throbs with an agonizing headache.

I stay very still. I keep my eyes squeezed shut.

There are goosebumps covering my skin, and my stomach clenches with anxiety. I don't feel the comfort of Clay's jacket anymore.

I'm scared to open my eyes, but I eventually do.

My heart pounds weakly in my chest and is barely an inkling of a feeling compared to the pounding of my migraine.

I've been tied to an antique wooden chair. I pull at the ropes but they cling tightly to my ankles and wrists. Red lines have already appeared around my limbs.

My vision is slightly blurry as I force myself to look around. It's completely dark, except for a few slivers of light that fall through the cracks in the ceiling above me. The rest of the space is filled with dark shadows of furniture and music stands. I realize with a jolt that I'm in the pit under the stage.

"CLAY!" I scream, my throat burning at the sound.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," a voice says from somewhere in the darkness. I squint and look as far as I can turn my head, but I can't make out my captor in the black. "I prefer to keep things quiet."

I don't recognize the voice from the cast or crew. It's higher pitched with a very thick British accent. Whoever it is must have been hiding their accent during the show.

"What do you want with me?" I ask, keeping my voice as steady as possible.

The feeling of despair has spread from my stomach to my entire body. I feel like a brick in an ocean. There's no option other than to sink.

"I have some questions for you."

"I don't answer questions from people who kidnap me."

"Then think of me as a friend," my captor huffs. "I need to know what you've found during your little detective shenanigans."

I fidget with the ropes. “We haven’t found anything.”

“I’m not stupid. I can tell that you’re lying.”

I bite my lip. “I’m not going to tell you a damn thing. You kidnapped me.”

“I’m doing what’s necessary.” The sound of footsteps fills the empty space. “Haven’t you had to do something unsavory before?”

“Being petty and resorting to kidnapping and murder are two entirely different things.”

They chuckle. “You’re very feisty. All I want to know is whether or not I can pay my bills; that’s all. There’s no tricks here. I’m not going to hurt you. Just tell me what you and your friends know.”

“Seeing that my partner is on your hit list--no, I don’t think I will.”

My captor is silent for a few long moments. “I know who you’ve been questioning. Does anyone strike a chord with you?”

“Do you ever think about the lives you’ve ruined? Or the pain you’ve put people through? Are you telling me that this is much better than having a desk job?”

“You know nothing about my life, sweetheart. So don’t even try with me.” They laugh again. “It’s just a job. I’ve been doing it for a long time--runs in the family actually.”

“Great. So I’ll put you on the list of the worst people I’ve ever met.”

“I’m truly honored.” My captor pauses. “Now, where were we? Right. Just between us pals--who do you think I am?”

“A horrible human being.”

“It’s just a question. It wouldn’t hurt you to answer it.”

“No.”

There’s more footsteps across the floor. “Fine, fine. I can see we’re going nowhere with you.”

My heart pounds faster in my chest. I take a deep breath. My life is about to be over, but all I can think about is Clay. I try to picture them in my mind, sitting on our couch with a worn book and Hershey snuggled up next to them. I try to remember the scent of their cologne and the deep color of their brown eyes.

“Go ahead,” I whisper. “Get it over with.”

“I’m not going to kill you.” A breeze brushes against my cheek as my captor walks by. I can’t see them in the darkness. “I don’t kill innocents; only the people I’m paid for and those

who get in the way.” A door creaks open from somewhere far behind me. “You’d do best not to become one of the latter.”

It slams shut, and I am once again alone in darkness.

“CLAY!” I scream until my voice breaks. “HELP!”

I don’t stop until my voice is raw and I can barely speak. Tears roll down my cheeks. I struggle against the ropes around my wrist. I don’t know how long it takes, but eventually one of them comes loose enough for me to slip my hand out.

I untie the ropes and run.

All I can think of is Clay, and whether or not I’m too late to save them.

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