



**SUMMER
READING
SERIAL**



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CHAPTER FOUR

The Capture

Bobby Jenkins sat on the edge of the cot, head in his hands. He had no clue where he was being held. After being roughly bound and blindfolded, he was tossed into a car trunk. It had been impossible to keep track of the turns.

He was afraid the only thing keeping him alive was the fact his abductors hadn't retrieved the cell phone.

Apparently convinced he was harmless, they had removed his restraints once he was in the room. He paced the floor when he was first locked up, but he grew tired rather quickly and decided to just sit.

He thought about his parents and how worried they must be. He wondered if Luke or Ethan had made it back to let everyone know what was going on.

Heavy footsteps near the door jerked Bobby from his train of thought. He looked up as the handle turned and a giant of a man stepped into the room. Wide shoulders and bulging biceps threatened to rip apart the shirt clinging to his frame.

"You need a drink or anything?" the man asked. His voice rivaled the deep rumbling of thunder. "Want to use the bathroom maybe?" Bobby shook his head. He was very thirsty, but refused to show any signs of weakness.

"Come on, kid. I can get you a Coke or something. What do you want?"

"I just want to go home."

"Well, that's not on the menu right now. Are you hungry?"

Bobby didn't answer. His stomach growled at the thought of food. If he gave in and asked for something, then it would strengthen any mental control over him they already had. The last thing he wanted to do was show any sign of weakness.

"Fine, suit yourself." The man turned to leave.

"Wait," Bobby pleaded. "At least tell me why I'm here."

"Sorry, kid. I can't do that. You're on a need to know basis, and right now you don't need to know."

"It's the cell phone, isn't it?"

"What cell phone?" The man stepped further into the room nearly extinguishing the already feeble lighting.

For the first time in his short life, Bobby wished he was big and strong. The man would have snapped him in half like a string bean if he tried anything. "I took the SIM card out so my friends could give it to the police. I'm surprised they haven't found this place already."

The giant chuckled, although it sounded more like a garbage disposal than a laugh. "Good try, kid. Maybe you could be a little more creative next time."

"So, why is the phone so important? There must be something valuable on there for you guys to go through this much trouble."

"Need to know basis, remember? I'll come back later and see if you've changed your mind about something to eat or drink."

"Can't wait."

The man left and once again Bobby was alone with just an old cot to keep him company. He found it disturbing that the mention of police only made the guy laugh. Maybe there was nothing on the phone after all, or maybe they didn't need to worry about the police.

If the SIM card was blank, then whatever they were trying to retrieve was on the phone itself, stored on the internal memory chip. Curiosity nearly ate him alive as he considered all the different possibilities.

Footsteps approached the door again and Bobby assumed it was Paul Bunyan coming back to kill all the remaining light in the room. The steps weren't as heavy as before. Intrigued, Bobby stood to his feet and waited to see who it was.

The door opened and a girl, probably no more than a couple years older than him, entered. She closed it behind her making sure not to create any noise. Bobby could only imagine the stunned look on his face as she turned toward him.

"Hi," she said. "My name is Amy. What's yours?"

"Um, Bobby. My...my name is Bobby."

"It's very nice to meet you, Bobby. Have they hurt you at all?"

"Not really. They've pretty much left me alone."

Had he fallen asleep and this was all some kind of dream?

Logic argued against what he was witnessing with his own eyes. It just didn't add up. Had the door been unlocked the entire time?

"Well, that's good," she replied. Her soft voice blended with a comforting tone. "Here, I brought you something." She pulled a water bottle out of her jacket pocket and offered it. Bobby snatched it out of her hand and tore off the lid. He threw back his head and gulped the liquid down, nearly choking himself in the process.

"Whoa, slow down. You're going to make yourself sick."

Bobby finished off the water and wiped his lips. "Who exactly are you again? How did you even get in here?"

Amy smiled and sat down on the cot. "My dad owns this building and I have a key to every room. I saw those men bring you in here and figured you might be thirsty."

"Wow, thanks. I wasn't expecting to see someone like you around here. Where is here by the way?"

"This is the basement level of the Charleston Hall Apartments. This used to be a storage room but obviously that was a long time ago."

Bobby sat down next to Amy. He sensed an inner toughness hidden just below the surface of her pretty features. A deep sadness reflected from her hazel eyes, betraying her beautiful smile. He wanted to hear her story and see what she was all about, but time was a luxury he couldn't afford.

"Do you have a phone somewhere I can use? I need to make a call."

"Yeah, you can use the one in our apartment. We live on the second floor. Come on, follow me." She stood and walked across the room.

Bobby hesitated. "What if they see us?"

Amy smiled and his confidence began to soar above his doubt. She didn't have to say anything. He moved to her side as she cracked open the door and scanned the hallway. "Coast is clear," she whispered. "We go down the hall and up to the first level. Once we get there, we turn left and there are more stairs that lead to the other floors in the building."

Bobby nodded. His heart thumped furiously with a mixture of terror and excitement. Getting caught wasn't an option. If they would kidnap a twelve year old boy and keep him locked up in a room somewhere, then they were capable of anything. Guilt pulled at him for Amy being a part of his problem, even though she was solely responsible for the decision. He made a promise to himself to keep her safe.

They abandoned the storage room and hurried toward the stairs. They reached the first level and entered the hall. Amy pointed to their left and Bobby spotted the door leading to the main stairwell. He had it partially opened when she caught her breath in surprise. The next thing he heard was a man yell.

"You two! Stop!"

Amy shoved him through the doorway. "Go!"

Without looking back, Bobby sprinted for the stairs and climbed them two at a time. It was the second time he had been chased in one day. It was getting old. "Who was it?" he managed to ask between haggard breaths.

"I don't know," Amy replied, struggling to catch her own breath. "He didn't look very friendly."

They burst through the door on the second floor. "That way!"

Amy pointed down the hall and started running.

Bobby followed close behind. They reached apartment number 203 and Amy fished the keys out of her pocket. She fumbled through several before finally finding the right one. Bobby looked over his shoulder expecting the man to be right behind them. No one had appeared yet.

Amy opened the door and they rushed inside. She closed it behind them and secured the deadbolt. They leaned against the wall trying to catch their breath.

"Have...you ever...seen that guy before?" Bobby was finding it hard to talk and breathe at the same time.

Amy shook her head. "No. Never."

"Let's hope he doesn't know who you are or we're going to have company pretty quick." Bobby looked around the apartment but didn't see a phone. He had another thought. "How many floors does this building

have?"

"Five."

"Good. That will take a while to search. I'm hoping he didn't see us leave the stairs on this level. That will buy us some time. Where's your phone?"

Amy took his hand. "In the kitchen, come on."

She led him through the living room and into the kitchen. He had never held a girl's hand before but the sensation didn't bother him at all. Somehow, it comforted him more than anything. The phone sat on the counter. He picked up the headset and started dialing. His finger pressed 9, 1, and then he stopped.

"What's wrong?" Amy asked.

"I don't know. I was going to call the police, but now I'm not so sure I should do that."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. I can't explain it, but it just doesn't feel right."

Bobby knew that sounded ridiculous. He had already planned on calling the police to let them know where he was, but now it didn't appear to be the obvious choice. The feeling in his gut grappled with the logic inside his head that said making the call would be the best option.

Amy moved closer, concern clouding her features. "Are you okay?"

Bobby nodded. "Yeah, I think so." He hung up the phone, confused and unsure of what he should do next. He couldn't shake the feeling of dread that covered him like a heavy blanket. If Luke or Ethan were with him, they would know what to do. They always had the answer for any situation.

He looked at Amy. The concern in her eyes made him feel slightly embarrassed. He wasn't exactly Rico Suave when it came to girls. He didn't have a girlfriend and was pretty satisfied with it being that way. Ethan would have already been hitting on her, probably even while they were being chased up the stairs.

Bobby smiled at that thought and the uneasiness began to lift. Amy grinned and took his hand once again. "We're going to get through this, Bobby. I know we are."

"You're right," Bobby replied. "Thanks for getting me out of there. You're very brave."

For the first time since they met down in the basement, Amy's head dipped and her cheeks turned a rosy shade of red. "Nah, anyone would have done the same."

Bobby doubted just any stranger would have helped him at all, but he decided to drop it. He picked the phone up again and started dialing.

"Did you decide who you need to call?" Amy asked.

Bobby nodded. "Yeah, I'm going to try my friend Ethan first and if he doesn't answer, I'll call Luke. I want to see if they made it back so I can let them know I'm alright. Hopefully they can tell me what's going on."

He dialed Ethan's home number and waited. It rang three times and the answering machine picked up. Maybe they were over at Luke's house trying to figure out where the boys were. He hung up without leaving a message and called Luke.

A sudden pounding on the front door startled them both. Amy's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates as someone on the outside started kicking it in.

"Hello?"

"Luke! It's Bobby!"

"Bobby? Where are you?"

Amy grabbed his arm. "We've got to get out of here."

Bobby gripped the phone so hard his knuckles faded to white.

"Luke...Charleston Hall...they're after us!"

He dropped the phone and ran after Amy who was heading toward a window and hopefully a way out.

COMING NEXT WEEK:
CHAPTER FIVE

The Search Is On

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