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THE CLASSIFIED PAST
by
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Prologue

I always thought I was a good man. A man incapable of inflicting physical or emotional damage. That was before I met a group of eccentric classists who broke my moral compass. My name is Baldrick Bennett. I was not privy to the planning of our dear friend's murder, but I had a hand in what came after.

Chapter 1

The county of Cambridgeshire was not a place I had ever visited. I hadn't even ventured into the counties neighbouring it. From the day I was born, to the day I was applying for universities, there was only one option for me. Oxford. It was the university my father went to, and his father, and his father, and his father, and.. You get the gist..Day after day, as I walked through the halls of my family's alma mater, my will to live slowly ebbed away. My grades were dwindling and every moment of silence was filled with my father's monologues of what a disappointment I was. The sole highlight of my time there was the elective class I had chosen - Ancient Greek. I was fond of literature in highschool and I hoped this elective would be enough to help me through the mind numbing lectures of supply and demand. I was sorely mistaken. The decision to switch my major to English Literature midway through the semester came easy. The decision to infuriate my father and transfer into an insignificant liberal arts college in Cambridgeshire was down-right effortless.

Arbury College of the Liberal Arts would not have been my first choice of universities. It was not grand like its great neighbour, Cambridge, nor as well known. I like to think it was a moment of nefarious temptation when the forgotten brochure caught my eye. And it was divine intervention when my application for the Ancient Greek elective was rejected. I should have taken it as a sign and left it alone.

"Professor Octavian is very particular about his students and I am afraid his class is already filled up." The admin said as I waited patiently for her to sift through her stack of papers.

"There are still some spots available for French or Spanish."

"But Greek is the only ancient language I am proficient in. Is there any way I could persuade him to take me in?"

The admin peered up from her glasses, “I am sorry my dear, Professor Octavian has a specific requirement for his students. Each year he gets a stack of applicants, and only 5”, she lifted her fingers up for emphasis as in case I didn’t get the point “get picked. You will have better luck choosing one of the other languages I mentioned.”

“I will try my luck with the Professor.”

With that, I picked up my things and left the admin office.

Chapter 2

Octavian Owens was a simple fellow who enjoyed the peace and quiet of having a corner of the building to himself - The Annex. He was wealthy to say the least, and had an air about him that made you want to please him. The first time I met him was the day I begged him to take me on as a student. He took one look at me, "I have no space for an extra student. I limit myself to 5 and that's all I can manage." His students chuckled as they watched Professor Octavian slam his office door shut on my face.

I made a few friends in the 2 weeks after that incident. Friends is a loose term, they were freshmen in my dorm. We ate our meals as a group, we said "hi" as we passed each other in the hall, but what were we really? A random group of people held together just by the fact that we did not know anyone else. During one of our awkward lunches, I broke the ice by asking about Professor Octavian. Most of them had heard of him. All of them had something to say. None of their accounts matched, but each was more bizarre than the other. One heard rumours that he never got a degree. Another was sure he was a great philosopher in his forties. One thing for certain, was no one knew the criteria he used in selecting his students.

Edward (Teddy), Frank, Freira, Dorian, and lastly, the one who seems to centre every conversation, Enzo. Enzo was always impeccably dressed and carried himself with a sophistication and poise that belied his young age. There was an air around him that made me certain he was a force to be reckoned with and I had yet to learn that those who underestimated him often found themselves regretting it. The more I heard about Octavian's treasured pupils, the more it peaked my interest. Not to suggest that I had an unhealthy infatuation with the lot. My coursework was keeping me busy, and the more I fell into the

routine of my classes, the less time I had to think about Octavian Owens and his pupils. That was mostly true, until a peculiar incident occurred.

It was a Tuesday afternoon, and I was in the library, photocopying pages from a book I don't remember. It can't have been anything important if it was not retained in memory. What I do remember, is that the temperatures had begun to fall and it felt nice to be in the cosy comforts of the library. It would not stand against the vast one at Oxford, but it had a charm to it no doubt. My gaze landed on the couch I was sitting on, it was a simple couch. Deep brown made of leather. You could tell by the wearing of the material that it had seen better days. You don't really think about the furniture in a public space, how many have used it before you, what stories would it tell if it could speak? My mundane thoughts were interrupted by an exclamation from the back of the library, with an instant "Shush" from everyone else.

Curious to know what was going on, I made my way towards the hushed whispers and rustling papers.

"You're both wrong," Frank said, his voice dripping with contempt. "The verb should be in the subjunctive mood."

"No way," Freira argued. "It should be in the optative. I looked it up in the lexicon and that's what it says."

"You're both wrong," Teddy chimed in. "It's the imperative mood. I'm telling you, I've got this."

I watched as they continued their hushed argument and heard myself say before I could stop myself, "Have you considered using the infinitive mood?" Teddy and the twins look up in surprised silence. "It might simplify things for you and eliminate the need for some tense changes."

Teddy tapped a finger on his chin and said “That actually isn’t a bad idea. I think we should go for it and call it a day.” The twins nod in agreement. “My name is Teddy, what is yours stranger?” I offered my name and he extended his arm to shake my hand. Frank rose from his seat and offered his hand too, “I am Frank, and that is my twin sister Freira.” Freira smiles and gives me a wave.

“You’re the one who came by to ask about the Greek class weren’t you?” Freira asked. “How long have you been studying Greek?”

“About a year,” I replied.

“You’re pretty good at it, shame that you are not in our class,” said Teddy, “Get a bouquet of flowers, a box of chamomile tea and tell him how much you love Plato and he will not be able to resist having you in his class. Trust me.”

I took his word for it. I bought the bouquet and the tea and went up to the Annex for the second time since I transferred to Arbury College. I knocked on Octavian’s door, once, twice. At the third knock, he finally appeared, his brows scrunched in frustration.

“Hello sir, do you have a moment?”

“Are those for me?” He points to the flowers.

“Indeed they are, I’ve got a box of chamomile tea too, I thought we could have a quick chat if you are not too busy.”

“Alright come on in.”

I left the Annex 2 hours later, exhausted by listening to Octavian’s monologues and exhilarated that I managed to get in his good graces and transfer into his class.

Chapter 3

One might find it interesting to think about how the definition of a “friend” evolves as we grow. When you’re a child, the kid in class who lets you borrow a crayon becomes your “best friend” just from that gesture alone. As an adult, it takes much more than lending a writing instrument to be considered a friend. Teddy was my friend. He was the one who helped me charm Octavian into becoming the first sixth member of his elite class. He was the one who nodded along and made me feel included amongst a group so tight knit that I could not help but feel like an outsider. He invited me for lunch and paid for my meal - which was a nice gesture considering my father refused to give me a penny outside of my tuition fees. I did not think much of it, I was just glad to finally have an honest friend. I am not implying that our friendship was perfect, nothing really is perfect. And the foundation of our seemingly perfect friendship began to crack as Teddy’s cadence turned into slurred speech and a flask; his treasured companion. It started the first night he knocked on my door with whiskey on his breath and eyes with scarlet veins. I helped him onto the armchair in my dorm room and in a second he was asleep. The next day, he woke up with a hangover and a vendetta against the rest of our friends. His words were sharp, though his speech was loose with liquor. Every opportunity to start an argument was seized, and they were usually broken up with me pulling Teddy away from his latest victim. The reason for his sudden change in behaviour was something I would not come to know until it was too late.

Oblivious is a term that has been used to describe me more often than I would care to admit. I knew Teddy was going through an internal turmoil, but as his actions began to border psychotic, I chose the path of ignorance. It was easier to chalk his bad attitude off as stress rather than confronting him for his actions. It was also easy to do so when I had the attention

of Freira as she asked me the question that left me speechless. “Will you pretend to be my boyfriend?”

I looked at her stunned, “Why?”

“My ex; and don’t bother asking who it is because it is none of your business, but I need to make him see that I will not be pining after him the rest of my life and maybe if he sees me with someone new he will finally realise what he has lost.”

“Oh so you want to make him jealous and regret leaving you?”

“Precisely, so will you do it?”

She waited patiently, her eyes wide with hints of hope and anticipation for my answer. To this day I cannot comprehend what went on in my head as I made the decision to say, “Sure”. She leaped into my arms, gave me a kiss on the cheek and thus began our fake affair.

My days began to blend into a blur of classes, impromptu pub meetups, and keeping up the act of being the best “boyfriend” I could be. On a much needed mundane night of quiet reading, a knock on my door brought me out of the encapsulating novel. Thinking it must be Teddy after one of his wild nights that could potentially lead to alcohol poisoning, I opened my door to see Freira standing there. I gestured for her to come inside, it was not uncommon for her to visit me as a way to pass the time and make it actually seem like we are a couple. We have grown close if I do say so myself, I could even say she has become a closer friend to me than Teddy. With his ability to piss off everyone in a room, it was becoming increasingly difficult to defend him. While Enzo and Frank are hard shells to crack, talking to Freira comes easy. She sits on my bed, a dazed look on her face.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

“I need to tell you something because the weight of this secret is too much,” Freira lies back and stares at the ceiling. I sit down next to her as she describes to me the events that occurred months back. She was in the Annex with Frank and Dorian. Enzo came in with a

clear bag of leaves and determination in his eyes. He convinced them that this tea was special, it was meant to bring clarity to your mind and help you transcend beyond your physical body. Everyone was mesmerised by his speech. Enzo had a way of making everything he said seem desirable. And that was exactly what he did that led them to an empty farmland they had never been to, build a bonfire, and drink the tea one sip at a time. Freira says she does not recall much of what happened after she drank the tea. The only thing she remembers is the farmer; dead beside them as they woke up from the high. Dorian screamed, Frank spoke incoherently and Enzo sat staring at the body.

“Will you all just shut up for one second?” Enzo mutters, while the others continue freaking out. “Just shut up and let me think!” He screams. They fall silent.

“We have to get rid of it. Bury the body.” He said, not as a suggestion, but a commandment. And that is exactly what they did. Tears were streaming down Freira’s eyes as the story came to an end. To say I was speechless would be an understatement. I gave her a hug, hoping it would give her some comfort. Her forehead fell on my shoulder as she continued to cry.

Chapter 4

I could feel Freira's desperation, her fear, and I knew there was nothing I could do to console her. I could not believe what they had done, but I knew the only person to blame was Enzo. Freira lifted her head from my shoulder.

"Teddy knows, and he is blackmailing all of us, making us pay for his things and even completing his assignments. He says if we don't do what he says, he will go to the police."

"So that is why he has been behaving so strangely with you all?" I asked.

"Yes," She responded.

"Woah, that explains a lot."

"I just needed to get this out, I don't know what to do and how to behave and it is driving me insane. Frank is not the same after that night, Dorian keeps making jokes that are too close to the truth that I fear someone else might find out." She rambled on.

"How did Teddy find out?" I questioned.

"I don't know, I don't know anything other than we are all utterly screwed," Freira gets up, "please don't tell anyone what I have told you tonight, I know I can trust you, you are a good friend and thank you for listening." With that she gets up and walks out of my room.

Frank was a young man who towered over all of us. He did not have the air of sophistication and importance that Enzo had, but he did hold himself with a sense of haughtiness, as if the very act of acknowledging my existence would sully his reputation. He never spoke to me, and his gaze, when it fell upon me, would be one of disdain. I could not help but wonder what transgression I had committed to earn his contempt. I had thought we were getting along but I was sorely mistaken. Much like how Teddy never missed an

opportunity to strike at the others with his words and actions, Frank never missed an opportunity to make me feel like an outsider in Octavian's class. What differed in this scenario was I had no idea what I had done to deserve this animosity. However, I decided not to let it get to me. I had bigger things to worry about, like Teddy's blackmails, Freira's crumbling spirit and everyone else's slow decline into insanity. I was lost in thought when Enzo pulled me aside after one of our lectures and said he needed to speak to me urgently. He dragged me by the arm to the corner of the hallway like a child being put in time out.

"I heard Freira spilled the beans on what's been going on. Tell me what she said to you," He demanded.

"She told me you got them all high and a farmer was found dead when you woke up," I whispered, confused by his interrogation.

"Oh of course she would pin it on me, did it ever occur to you that perhaps she was so distraught because it was *her* fault we got high in the first place?"

"No it can't be. She told me you brought the tea."

"No you oblivious moron, it was her, she brought the tea, she made us drink it and for all we know, she killed the farmer too."

Never did I think that I would be caught in such a situation. The man I thought my best friend was blackmailing my friends and the girl I thought innocent may be the culprit of a heinous crime. I did not know what to believe. I shoved Enzo away and went back to my dorm, refusing to speak to anyone. I was in desperate need of some time alone. I kept my distance. I went to Octavian's classes in silence. Freira tried to approach me, but I came up with any excuse I could to rush off and go back into the quiet of my dorm room. I should have known that the troubles of my friends would catch up to me eventually.

The rain pattered against the windowpane, a constant and melancholy drumbeat that set the tone of most of my nights these days. The sky outside was a deep shade of grey, the

clouds heavy with the promise of more rain to come. Inside, the dorm room was dimly lit, the only light coming from my desk that cast a warm glow. I could not shake the feeling of isolation, but I knew that those I had called my friends were not who I thought they were. A tap at my window brought my solitude to an end as I saw Freira standing outside it. She tapped urgently, begging me to open the window. Though I had not said a word to her in days, it did not mean I stopped caring for her. Not wanting her to fall sick in the rain, I opened my window and let her in.

“Okay I know it was not fair of me to drag you into this mess but I really need you to stop avoiding me and talk to me. What is going on with you?”

“Nothing, I just need some space, this is all too much for me to handle and if you consider me a friend at all, you would leave me be.”

“Come on Rick, don’t be like this.” She was the only one who called me Rick.

“Frieria, just leave me alone,” I open the door to my room and make her leave, locking the door behind me. I thought that would be the end of it. But the next time one of them would come knocking at my window, it would be the most disastrous day of my life.

Chapter 5

I had always been content with a solitary life. I enjoyed the peace and quiet; the freedom that came with not having to answer to anyone. But soon, I had begun to feel a sense of loneliness creeping in. I realised I missed the camaraderie of my friends. The laughter and the conversations, I even missed Teddy's drunken babbles. Much like the night Freira had come knocking at my window, I was completing one of Octavian's assignments when a knock at my window caught my attention. I moved my curtains to find Teddy leaning against it with his trusty flask in hand. I open the window and he stumbles in, almost knocking the lamp off my desk.

"They're all in on it, Baldrick, they are going to kill me just like they did the farmer," He slurs incoherently.

"You're being paranoid Teddy, the farmer was an accident."

"You have no idea Baldrick, you don't know how psycho they are."

"What brought this on? Why do you think they are going to kill you?"

"Enzo told me to meet him at the old college building that no one goes to. Why would he want to meet me there? I am telling you he is trying to kill me."

"You are drunk out of your mind Teddy, I am sure he just wants to talk, how about I follow you? You should not be walking around by yourself in this state anyways." With that I put on my coat and dragged a tipsy Teddy to the old college.

The old college stood tall and imposing, its once grand facade crumbled and decrepit. The windows were boarded up, and the doors hung off their hinges, a testament to the neglect and disrepair that had befallen the structure. The stone walls were covered in a thick layer of grime. It was eerily silent, the only sound was the occasional creak of wood and the rustle of leaves in the wind. It was as if the building itself was sighing, mourning the loss of its former

glory. It was a haunting reminder of what once was and what could have been. I walked up the decaying steps. Enzo had told Teddy to meet him at the top floor of the building. As I took another step up behind Teddy, I had a gnawing feeling in my gut that something was wrong. Perhaps Teddy was right to be paranoid. Lost in thought and the deafening silence, I did not realise when Freira had appeared from the side and dragged me behind a wall. She kept her hand on my mouth and put a finger to her lips. I looked around to realise she was not alone. Dorian and Frank were by her side. The only one missing was Enzo. Realisation dawned upon me that I should have just stayed in my dorm room.

The sound of Teddy tripping grabs Freira's attention and she lets me go. I stand there, listening with the rest of them. All we could hear was the muffled argument between Enzo and Teddy. The air around us stood still as we tried to make out the words, but they were too far for us to hear what was being said. A hard thump brought everyone running towards them. I followed suit, not knowing what was waiting before us. I saw Enzo first, and then the empty space where Teddy should have been. The feeling of dread was suffocating, like a heavy blanket draped over my shoulders, weighing me down. My heart was pounding in my chest, and my palms were slick with sweat. Every sound seemed amplified, every movement exaggerated, as everyone stared out the window at Teddy's unmoving body. The panic rose inside me like a tidal wave. They had really just murdered Teddy. And I had become a witness. I couldn't think straight, my mind was consumed by a jumbled mess of thoughts. What are we going to do? What am I going to do? They are going to get caught. They can't possibly believe they can get away with this? The farmer was one thing, this is a friend, a classmate who Enzo just pushed out the window. I did not think twice before pulling my phone out of my pocket and called Octavian for his help.

He arrived just as everyone had recovered from the initial shock and were arguing about body disposal. Dorian and Enzo thought they should leave the body as is to make it

look like he jumped of his own accord. Freira thought they should give him a proper burial because he was still our friend and deserved to at least be put to rest considering they just killed him. Frank's idea was to crush his teeth and burn his body to hide all traces of Teddy's identity.

"You called Octavian?! What made you think bringing someone else into this was a good idea?" Enzo screamed at me.

"Don't speak to him like that, he is clearly the only one with some sanity left in his head. What the hell have you guys done?"

"He deserved it, he was blackmailing all of us, it was the only way to shut him up," Enzo argued.

"Well now you have put yourself in an impossible situation haven't you? Did you guys even think through what would happen if you got caught? Everyone step away from the window and let me think."

We stood around, watching Octavian pace back and forth.

"Okay, his body will be left here, since he was already drunk, it looks very much like he stumbled and fell. You all knew he was troubled, if anyone asks, he was acting weird and was drinking daily which is quite true and would be corroborated by anyone outside of this circle. You will come back with me to the Annex making sure no one sees us. We will be staying there tonight and that will be your Alibi." Octavian commanded.

We followed Octavian wordlessly. The disappointment and anger in his posture spoke volumes. The sound of our footsteps echoed through the empty halls, and I couldn't help but feel like I was being led to my own execution. We moved around the Annex silently, each lost in our own thoughts. We took turns laying out the blankets on the hard wooden floor, each one providing a small measure of comfort in the chilly night. Enzo and Dorian took the library nook, while Franke Freira and I were in the middle of the Annex. Octavian stayed in

his office. We were all exhausted, and the silence was only broken by the occasional sigh or rustle of fabric as we settled in for the night.

I was jolted awake by the sound of Dorian's voice, he was crying out in his sleep. I groggily sat up, rubbing my eyes, trying to shake off the remnants of sleep. Frank and Freira were fast asleep, most likely too tired from the night's events to wake from Dorian's cries. I tiptoed towards the library nook and saw Dorian thrashing on his blanket, sweat glistening on his forehead. I moved to get closer and offer some comfort when I noticed Enzo behind him, holding Dorian in his arms. He seemed to be whispering soothing words in Dorian's ear. The tenderness in his touch and the look of concern on his face, made it obvious that there was something more than just friendship between them. Not wanting to intrude, I retreated back to my blanket; mind racing with questions and curiosity about their relationship.

Chapter 6

Freira wakes as I settle back into the blanket.

“What’s wrong?” She asks.

“Nothing, go back to sleep,” I whisper.

“Hey Rick?”

“Yeah?”

“I think Enzo killed the farmer.”

“What?”

“He came up with this entire Teddy plan and I swear i’ve been getting flashbacks to that night, and I know you think it was my fault, Frank told me what Enzo has been feeding you and I swear to you I had nothing to do with that night other than my bad decision of following Enzo into the field. You know what it’s like when Enzo wants to do something, we all kind of just follow suit.”

“After what I witnessed tonight, I believe you.”

“We didn’t know what else to do, Teddy was driving us insane.”

“Just go back to sleep, we can talk about it tomorrow.”

Freira snuggled in and soon the sound of her even breaths lulled me back to sleep too.

Teddy’s death was ruled an unfortunate accident. The investigation concluded that he had met his end by falling from the window of the old building, his mind clouded by drink. The level of alcohol in his blood was alarmingly high, and thus deemed an accident. The memory of him would forever be marred by the manner of his death, and the thought that it could have been avoided had I let him sleep off his paranoia rather than bring him to his slaughter, weighed upon my conscience. The loss of him was a gaping wound. Though he

was not his best self in his final moments, he was truly a good friend for the short time that we were friends.

The guilt that I bore over the loss of Teddy was an overwhelming burden, one that I could not seem to shake. Every waking moment was consumed by thoughts of what could have been done differently, what actions might have averted such a tragic outcome. My funds were dwindling, with everything that had been going on, I had no time to find a part-time job in order to make some money. Even in his final days, Teddy was leaving money around for me, ensuring I had enough to sustain me. In my desperation, I hatched a plan to blackmail Enzo. I knew he was wealthy, I knew it would be a betrayal of trust but the weight of my financial burdens and the knowledge I had of his part in Teddy's demise clouded my judgement. I could see no other way out of this predicament and I proceeded, knowing full well the danger of the path I had chosen to take. The guilt and desperation were overwhelming, and I could only hope that this action would bring me the reprieve I so desperately sought.

I knocked on Enzo's door, my hand shaking with nerves. He opened the door, and I could see the surprise on his face as he saw me standing there.

“What brings you here, old friend?” He asked with his usual condescending smile.

“Enzo, I need your help,” I said, my voice barely above a whisper. He gestured for me to enter and we sat down on his couch.

“What is it? You seem troubled,” he said, his voice laced with mock concern.

I took a deep breath, trying to steady myself before I spoke. “I am in dire straits, financially. I have no other choice but to turn to you, Enzo. I need \$2000, and I need it now,” I said, trying to sound as composed as possible.

Enzo's expression turned cold, “I see. And what do you propose I do about this?”

I hesitated for a moment before continuing, "I will reveal the truth about Teddy's death to the police if you do not give me the money."

His face went pale, "You wouldn't dare," he said, with aggression in his voice.

"I would do whatever it takes to survive," I replied, my voice filled with determination.

"Do you honestly think blackmailing me is a good idea? Have you not learned a thing from our dearly departed friend Teddy? You do know there is a legend that death comes in fours around here and if you test me, perhaps I may decide that you should be the third," Enzo threatened.

"Just give me the \$2000 and I will leave it at that, I know you have the money so just hand it over and we can forget this conversation took place," I retorted. My heart pounded in my chest.

Enzo stared at me for a moment, the weight of my words sinking in. He got up and went to his desk, returning with a check for \$2000. He threw it at me and demanded I get out. I did as I was told.

Chapter 7

The camaraderie that once bound us together was now a distant memory. We had become bitter rivals, constantly at each other's throats, tearing each other down. The once lively discourse on Ancient Greek had now become a drunken, destructive force. The bottle of liquor flowed like a river, and tempers flared with each passing round. We had become slaves to our vices, unable to tear ourselves away from the destructive patterns of paranoia we had set. I was looking for a book in the library nook of the Annex when I heard my name being spoken in hushed tones. Curiosity piqued, I drew closer to the open door to Octavian's office, and I couldn't help but overhear the conversation within.

"I assure you, Octavian, he is the one to blame," Enzo's voice was filled with malice and vindictiveness.

"Are you certain of this, Enzo?" Octavian's voice was sceptical.

"Absolutely, he had a hand in Teddy's death and now he thinks he can blackmail me for money? I won't stand for it, I won't let him get away with it," Enzo spat.

"Are you out of your mind boy? This madness has to end now," Octavian said in frustration. "I have handed in my letter of resignation, I am done with the lot of you and I will not be dragged into the mess you have created for yourselves."

I felt a cold sweat break out on my forehead, my heart pounding in my chest. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, Enzo was trying to make me a scapegoat for Teddy's death even though I had nothing to do with it. I knew I had to act fast before it was too late, I couldn't let him destroy my reputation and ruin my life. My eavesdropping was interrupted as Dorian burst through the doors, his face pale and filled with fear.

"Frank has Freira tied up in his room and he refuses to let her out."

Dorian and I stood before Frank's door, our hearts heavy with fear and our hands shaking with adrenaline. Inside, Freira was being held hostage, and time was of the essence. We charged the door with all our might, the wood splintering and cracking under the force of our bodies.

Chapter 8

Frank stood in the middle of his room, gun in hand. Freira was tied up to his desk chair. Frank's voice rose in a manic monologue, filled with obsession and madness.

"She's mine, can't you see that? She's always been mine," Frank ranted, his voice filled with a dangerous intensity. "But you, you had to come along and try to take her away from me. But I won't let that happen, I'll do whatever it takes to keep her."

Frank pointed his gun at me. That's when I realised, the ex that Freira had been talking about, was her none other than her twin brother. I could not believe this. My stomach churned, and I had to clench my jaw to keep from retching in disgust. I looked over at Freira, her eyes were wide, her mouth closed by duct tape.

"I'll kill her before I let you have her," Frank continued, his voice filled with a determination that chilled us to the bone.

"Frank, please, put the gun down, and let her go, she can be yours as long as you put the gun down," I pleaded, my voice shaking with emotion.

"Liar, you all are liars, and murderers," Frank screamed.

"Stop this nonsense Frank," Enzo appears by the broken door.

"This is all your fault Enzo, and Baldricks, everything was fine before you two came into our lives." Frank carried on.

Adrenaline coursed through me as I ran to grab the gun out of Frank's hand. Dorian immediately went to untie Freira and get her out of there. Frank aimed the gun at me, pulling the trigger. Before I could react, Enzo threw himself in front of me, shielding me from the bullet. Frank stood there, staring in shock at the sight of Enzo lying on the floor, blood pooling around him. I could see the realisation dawning on Frank's face, the weight of what he had just done, crushing him. This was not like the farmer, nor was it like Teddy. In that moment, I lunged forward, grabbing the gun from Frank's hand. It went off, the sound of the

shot ringing in my ears. Frank stood there, staring at me with a look of disbelief before collapsing to the floor, the bullet finding its mark. I stared at the scene before me, Enzo lying on the floor, Frank dead on the ground, the gun still smoking in my hand. I looked around and realised we had drawn the attention of the entire dorm.

Chapter 9

The investigation into the deaths of Frank and Enzo had come to a close, and the ruling was self-defence. The eye witnesses had watched me defending myself against Frank, and the gun records showed it belonged to Frank. Though the legal aspect of the case had been resolved, the emotional toll it had taken on us, was immeasurable. We had all been close friends, studying under Octavian's tutelage, now we couldn't even look at each other without an immense feeling of guilt and shame. We had all been affected by the events that had transpired the past year and we knew that we could never go back to the way things were before. Freira had switched her major to Psychology, Dorian to Philosophy, and I had made the decision to stick with English Literature but switched my language elective to Spanish. We all went our separate ways, trying to make sense of what had happened, and trying to move on with our lives. The memory of Teddy, Frank and Enzo, and the guilt of it all stayed with us, a constant reminder of the destructive power of anger and obsession. Perhaps the legend Enzo had spoken of this place was true after all; deaths did come in fours.