

*"Are you aware of what you make me feel, baby?
Right now I feel invisible to you, like I'm not real
Didn't you feel me lock my arms around you?
Why'd you turn away?
Here's what I have to say:*

*Why should I care?
'Cuz you weren't there when I was scared
I was so alone
You, you need to listen!
I'm startin' to trip, I'm losin' my grip
And I'm in this thing alone"
~ "Losing Grip" Avril Lavigne*

I sighed and looked down. "Yeah, you needed me and I wasn't here. I'm sorry...I didn't think, I just reacted, and my first reaction is to run...always has been...but it doesn't change how I feel about you and it doesn't mean I love you less."

"So you want to work this out?" Hunter asked.

I nodded, "Yeah, I do. I love you Hunter and I really don't think I could live without you...not after everything we've been through." I looked at Hunter. I knew what was going on. He wanted to be strong and push me away because I hurt him. It was as natural to him as running away was to me. "Sweetheart, don't push me away...we both know what you're doing. I'm sorry I hurt you...I can't even imagine what you're going through...knowing that Lilianna date raped you after everything you went through with Mr. Jackson...then I take off...I'm so sorry baby...I should have stayed with you."

He took a deep breath and started to cry.

I pulled him close to me and held him. "You were there for me when that creep James raped me...I never should have turned my back on you."

"I missed you so much...and the idea...what is it about me? Why did it happen to me twice? I was a fucking Ranger then and she still date raped me!" Hunter cried.

I started to cry too, "I know sweetie, there was nothing you could do though. She drugged you. But I know how you feel. I felt the same way when James raped me. I should have been able to stop it, but sometimes it just happens and we can't stop it."

"Like you leaving? How could you Michelle? You had to know this was killing me...you had to know I needed you and you left anyway!" he cried.

I took a step back as I felt more tears falling from my eyes. "I'm so sorry. You're right. I never should have left. I came back though...I came back for you...I came back because I love you..."

"You love me?"

"You know I do!"

"Do I? Is love taking off on a person when they need you most?"

"I'm sorry! I didn't know what else to do! I wasn't here for you when I should have been but I'm here now, hoping it isn't too late...I promise you, I won't leave again."

Hunter sighed. "I do need you."

"And I need you. We need each other Hunter. It's always been that way."

"Come here...we've both made our share of mistakes...let's just move on." He said pulling me into his arms.

"Yeah, but you've always been there when I needed you." I said resting my head on his chest.

"Not always, or did you forget how I turned on you after I found out about Savannah...but that's beside the point. The point is we're here for each other now."

I nodded. "So, how are you going to deal with all of this?"

"Well, I'm hoping Arissa will stop her manhunt for you but if she doesn't the Rangers will deal with her. As for what Lilianna did...I'll have to get past it...focus on what I have now, not what happened then."

I hugged him tight, "You have me now...you always will"

Stacy

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"You can't seriously expect me to hand over my company to you." Dad said.

"I can if you want to stay out of prison." I said.

"Stace..."

"Father, I can't do anything unless the company is mine. Now are you going to sign it over to me or not?"

"Well..."

"You have three seconds to decide then the offer is void and I'm gone for good."

"Stace..."

"Two seconds..."

"You can't be serious."

"One second..."

"Stacy..."

"Oh, time's up. See ya Trent." I said getting up and heading for the door.

"No...ok fine! I'll sign it over to you."

"I thought you might." I said calling in the lawyer. He witnessed the signing of the papers. "You've done the right thing Dad." I said heading out. I had a ton of work to do.

Derek

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"You know, we really should have said something about Kevin sooner." I said.

"I know...but who could have known someone would OD? And in my hood if you nark then you die...it's not something I think about doing." Chris said.

"Jesse is so lucky." I said.

"I should have talked to him more...I saw him sitting awake that night."

"Doing what?"

"Writing in his journal."

"You think he wrote anything about why he ODeD? Like if it was on purpose?"

"I don't know man, it's a personal thing."

"I'm gonna look...if it will help him it'll be worth the trouble." I said as I picked up Jesse's journal. I read the last entry. I was shocked at what I saw. "Oh my god..."

"What?" Chris asked.

"You have to see this...Jesse's OD wasn't accidental. It was a suicide attempt." I said.

"Should we show this to Hunter?" Chris asked.

"I don't know...I guess so...Hunter should know." I said.

Chris nodded. "OK, let's go."

I closed the book and Chris and I snuck past the search team and went to the Bradley house on the other side of campus and knocked at the door.

"Just a second!" Michelle called. I'd never admit it but I was glad the Bradleys were back together. They were turning out to be like second parents to me. They finally opened the door. "What are you two doing here? You're on dorm lock down."

"I know, but you and Hunter need to see what we found." I said holding up the book.

"What's that?" Hunter asked.

"Jesse's journal." Chris said.

"I know it's private but we thought maybe it had a reason for his ODing and it does...it looks like it was a purposeful OD...it was a suicide attempt Hunter." I said.

"What? Let me see that." Hunter said.

"Calm down...come in boys and have a seat." Michelle said letting us in the house. We all went inside and I handed Hunter the book. He read it. "What does it say?"

"Well...the second paragraph says 'Then to top it all off I'm the Blue Ranger? Could anyone be less suited to be a

Ranger? I'm not a team player, I'm not brave, I'm not a skilled fighter, I'm not a hero. I'd give anything to just end things...but I don't think I have the guts to take my own life and so far Arissa is failing at killing me so I'm stuck.' And then the last line is 'Why can't Arissa just kill me and get it over with...if she doesn't hurry up I might get the guts to take myself out...'. I think you boys are right...Jesse did this on purpose. He knew what he was doing and he wanted to die." Hunter said.

"Oh god..." Michelle took the book and read the whole thing. Tears fell from her eyes as she read. "This is horrible."

"Yes it is...we just have to reassure Jesse he's important to us and he is loved." Hunter said.

"Thank you for bringing this to our attention." Michelle said to Chris and I.

"Yeah, you know we don't condone invasion of privacy but under these circumstances you did the right thing." Hunter said.

"Thanks." I said.

"So did you two fix things?" Chris asked.

Michelle looked at Hunter.

"Yeah, we're working on it...we'll be fine though. We've been through too much to give up on each other now... besides, I don't think we could survive without each other." Hunter said putting his arm around Michelle. She smiled.

"Now you two better get back to your dorms." Michelle said.

"Yeah, you're still on restriction." Hunter said.

"Ok, we're going." I said.

Chris and I turned to go back to the dorms.

Beth

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Tommy finally brought me out of the cell and into a meeting room where my parents were waiting for me. I sat and waited to see what was going on.

"OK Beth, here's the deal. Cathy told us where she got the drugs from...she also told us neither of you knew what was in the bag when you planted it. It doesn't excuse you but I've managed to get you off with 1 year probation and 6 months community service." Tommy explained.

"She's lying! She knew!" I cried.

"Beth, enough! Take whatever punishment you're getting." Dad barked.

I sighed, "OK, where's my community service?"

"Starlight Academy." Tommy said.

"You've got to be joking. That the school for messed up kids." I said.

"Yes it is, you're going to help those messed up kids." Tommy said.

"I think that's a great idea." Mom said.

"I agree." Dad said.

"OK fine...what will I have to do?" I asked.

"That's up to Michelle and Hunter. You report there five days a week after school and Saturday morning and do whatever they give you to do." Tommy said.

"WHAT?! You've got to be kidding!" I cried.

"Erica Elizabeth I suggest you take this punishment with a good attitude and realize how lucky you are." Dad said. I could tell he was dead serious.

"Yes sir." I said softly

"If you understand the terms of your sentence then you're free to go." Tommy said.

"Let's go home. You may have your court sentence but your punishment at home still needs to be dealt out." Mom said. I sighed and left with my parents.

## Harley

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I had been out by myself, letting the surplus of sisters I was getting sink in. I finally decided to go back to the Academy and when I got there everything was in a state of quiet chaos.

"What's going on?" I asked Josh.

"Jesse ODed and is in the hospital. Turns out Kevin Carter had a stash everyone knew about. Hunter is pissed no one

said anything about it so everyone is on bunk restriction and Hunter has the rest of us searching for any other stashes.” Josh explained.

“Oh my god...is Jesse gonna be ok?” I asked.

“Yeah. He’ll live...he got lucky.”

“Oh my god...what can I do to help?” I asked.

“You can help Tamara and Julia search the girl’s dorm if you want.”

I sighed. “On it.”

I went to the girl’s dorm and found the dorm monitors.

“Hey Ju Ju.” I said.

“Hey, you’re back. Missed ya Airy.” Julia said.

I laughed, “Never thought I’d say this but I missed you too. What can I do to help?”

“We’re doing a mattress search right now, you can help with that.” Julia said.

“Ok.” I said.

“Have you met Tamara?” Julia asked.

“No.” I said through my teeth.

“Oh...you should. She’ll be your sister soon. Tamara Kingston, this is Harley Bradley. Harley, this is Tamara.”

“Harley *DeSantos*-Bradley” I corrected.

“Right...I’ll be a DeSantos soon too.” Tamara said.

“Oh?” I asked.

“Well with Rocky adopting me, only seems right to take his name. I’m really excited about it. I never had a sister before.”

“And you still don’t. Rocky is my dad, not yours. Get that through your head.”

“Whoa...Har...” Julia said.

“What? She comes here and thinks she can take my place with the Wild Cats and with my father? Not gonna happen.” I snapped.

“Newsflash, I did it to help you out! And Rocky isn’t your father, Hunter is. Rocky is just a nice guy who didn’t disown you. He’s not even your adoptive father.”

My eyes widened and I felt my fury raging. “I’m so fucking sick of sisters popping up out of nowhere! You are not my sister Tamara and Rocky is not your father! He is mine! Legal or not, he raised me! You ever suggest he isn’t just as much my father as Hunter is again and I will personally take you out!”

“Is that a threat?”

“No. I don’t make threats, I make promises...remember that.” I said storming out of the dorms. I was speed walking across campus when Josh grabbed me from behind and pulled me backwards.

“What’s your hurry speed demon?” Josh asked.

“I’m going to the track. Let me go!” I commanded.

“Um, sorry, you’re not going to the track when you’re this upset. You’re going to tell me what is going on then you can go riding.”

“No. Let me go!” I screamed pulling away from him.

“Harley!” Josh called.

I ignored him and kept going. I ran in the house.

“Dad I want the keys to the truck!” I cried.

“Where are you going? And why do you look ready to kill someone?” Dad asked.

“I’m going riding so I don’t kill someone.” I said.

Dad got a worried look but I knew he could relate to riding out anger. “Ok, here’s the keys. Just be very careful.”

“Thank you. I will be.” I said as I went outside and loaded my bike in the back of the truck.

I got to the track and started riding around the track. With each lap I let out a little more of my anger out. I was coming around for my 10th lap when I saw another rider on the track. I sped past him and at the end of the lap I stopped, signaling the other rider to do the same. I knew who he was. I watched as he stopped and took his helmet off.

“Well DJ, I was beginning to wonder if you fell off the face of the Earth.” I said angrily.

“Sorry about that Har...stuff at home got intense...my sister got arrested and it’s just been insane. I’m glad you’re ok

though.” He said.

“Don’t give me that crap about Beth being arrested, that happened AFTER I was already better. You weren’t there when I really needed you!”

“I know...I’m sorry. I can make it up to you.”

“Too late DJ...it’s way too late. It’s over.”

“Over? Har, don’t...we can work this out.”

“No, we can’t...get lost.”

“But Har...”

“No buts. I fell for lines with Jay, I won’t make the same mistake with you. I’m leaving before it gets worse.” I said.

“I’m not Jay. Don’t treat me like I am.”

“You’re right...you’re not Jay. Jay would have at least been there for me when I was recovering.”

“I said I’m sorry.”

“Don’t you get it?! Sorry doesn’t cut it DJ! It’s over. Accept it! Move on! I have!” I cried.

“Har...”

“No more discussion! It’s over!” I cried putting my helmet back on and going back on the track. DJ did the same and tried to pass me. I kept ahead of him. He was really pissed when I wouldn’t let him pass me. After 5 laps we stopped.

“What the hell Harley?!”

“If you can’t keep up then go home. Leave the track for the true riders.”

“You want me gone? Fine! I’m gone!” DJ cried as he loaded up his bike and took off. I hit the track again and sped around trying to find myself.

Stacy

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Now that I had the company I decided I had two things to do. Tell off Nikki and fix the company. Before any of that I decided I needed to sleep. I went back to my parents’ house and went in.

“There you are! I was wondering what happened to you.” Mom said.

“Just had some things to do. Where’s Conner and Josh?” I asked.

“Starlight. Helping with a search there, one of the kids smuggled some drugs in so they’re searching to see if anyone else got anything in.” Mom said.

“That’s horrible.” I said.

“Yeah it is...you sister is upstairs if you want to go talk to her.”

“I think I will. Love you Mom.”

“I love you too sweetheart.”

I went upstairs and found Anna in bed.

“You ok?” I asked.

“Fine...you look horrible though.”

“Thanks kid...”

“I’m serious...what happened?”

“I pulled an all nighter trying to find a way to free my dad.”

“Trent doesn’t know how lucky he is to have you. So did you find a way?”

“Yeah...sure did. Turns out Nikki was blackmailing him to take the fall for her. She was driving not him. She was using some of what she knew about the company as blackmail.”

“And you figured a way around this?”

“I figured out a way to fix the company. I was up all night crunching numbers but I did it.”

“But you can’t do anything. You’re not on the board.”

“You’re right...but I am CEO.”

“WHAT?!”

“As of today I’m the new CEO of Trent Fernandez Industries. Dad signed over the company to me...after a bit of convincing.”

“Stacy! How could you?! CEO? That’s everything you never wanted!” Anna cried.

“I know...I’m just gonna head up the company long enough to get it going again. Chances are Dad will spend at least 6 months in jail. When he gets out I’ll turn the company back over to him and I’ll go back to my life and graphic

designing.” I said.

“No you won’t! You’ll get roped in just like Anton roped Trent in.”

“That won’t happen! I got it under control.”

“Sure you do.”

“Damn it Anna! Just chill out! I know what I’m doing...you’d do the same for Conner.”

“I wouldn’t have to. My dad wouldn’t be involved in anything illegal!”

“Well good for you. My dad is...that doesn’t mean he’s not my dad still or that I love him less.” I said turning and leaving the room. I went in the room I was staying in and practically fell on the bed.

Beth

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I got home and sat on the sofa as I waited for my parents to hand down my other punishment.

“Beth, we can’t tell you how disappointed we are but we’re sure you know...” Dad started.

“You’ve let your quest for popularity go too far. You caused Anna some serious trouble and could have ruined her life...your own cousin.” Mom continued.

“All because she’s different from you and you were afraid of what those differences would do to your image.”

“You need to learn family is much more important than your social status.”

“Please, just don’t make me give up cheering.” I begged.

“You haven’t heard?” Mom asked.

“Heard what?” I asked.

“Because of what happened the school has disbanded the cheerleading squad until next fall. Even then there’s no guarantee anyone currently a part of it will stay a part of it.” Mom said.

“What? That’s not fair!” I cried.

“I’d say it’s more than fair.” Mom said.

“Agreed. Now as for the rest of your punishment, you’re grounded for the next 6 months.” Dad said.

“Grounded from what?” I asked.

“Everything that doesn’t include community service or family. You can go with Josh, Harley, or your brothers to go see Anna perform. You can hang out with any of your cousins or brothers. You can talk to any of them. Aside from that you are to go to school, do your work at Starlight and be at home. We reserve the rights to check up on you, read your e-mail or IMs, and listen in on your phone conversations.” Dad said.

“You’re only allowed out with Noah, DJ, Josh, Anna, Savannah, Stacy, and Harley.” Mom finished.

“But Stacy and Harley aren’t family.” I said.

“Stacy is family because Kira is family and Harley is practically family and will probably end up being in charge of you at Starlight.” Dad said.

“Harley isn’t even close to being family!” DJ cried as he stormed in the house.

“What happened?” Dad asked.

“She dumped me!” DJ cried.

“Why?” Mom asked.

“She says I wasn’t there for her after the accident.” DJ replied.

“She has a point. You did avoid her.” Dad said.

“I don’t believe this! My own parents are taking her side!”

“Well she’s right DJ. You weren’t around when she needed you. Can you blame her for breaking it off?” Mom asked.

“Forget it! Obviously you guys love Harley more than you love me. I’m out of here!” DJ cried storming out of the house.

“He’s right, he’s family, Harley isn’t.” I said.

“Harley is like family and DJ is being unreasonable.” Mom said.

“Back to you though, do you understand your punishment?” Dad asked.

“Yes sir.” I replied.

“Ok then, go to your room.” Dad said.

“Yes sir.” I replied again as I stomped upstairs and fell into my bed.

Hunter

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“OK, we did a full search, everything looked clean. I think this was an isolated case.” Conner said.

“Good. Thank you for your help.” I said. I was in my office with the search team getting a report. I noticed Tamara looked upset. “Tamara? Are you ok?” I asked.

“Fine.” She mumbled.

“She and Harley got into an argument.” Julia said.

“Oh boy...” Michelle said.

“That explains why Harley took off so angry.” I said.

“She hasn’t gotten back yet?” Josh asked.

“Not yet.” I said.

“Where did she go?” Michelle asked.

“Riding.” I replied.

“Oh great. I hate when she does this. She’s just like you, you both go riding when you’re angry and it’s so dangerous.” Michelle said.

“It helps to clear our heads.” I explained.

“She really is your daughter.” Michelle said with a sigh.

I laughed. “She’ll be fine. Anyway, good work guys. I appreciate it. Julia, Tamara, and Josh, please get the Wild Cats to make dinner, everyone can come down to eat then it’s back to the bunks and early lights out.”

“Not a problem...but when Harley gets back can you have her find me? I’m worried.” Josh said.

“Sure thing.” I said as I watched everyone leave. “What a day.”

“No kidding.” Michelle said turning and looking outside. She screamed.

“Mich? What is it?” I asked running to her side.

“I thought I saw him...he was looking in at us...” she said about to cry.

“Who?”

“James Calloway...”