



SPOILER EDITION!

This is the spoiler cheat sheet, which is basically questions submitted to me that contained spoilers, an upcoming scene, etc.

Don't tell Mr. Blackbourne.



C. L.

General Series Questions

1. *When will book 6, Push and Shove, of the Ghost Bird Series be released?*
 - A. June 2, 2014
2. *What order will the guys have their own books?*
 - A. I don't really know until I start on them, but I know book seven will focus on Silas. They are not in any particular order at all and once we run through all the boys, we'll shake things up and mix it up again.
3. *At some point, will Sang get a pet?*
 - A. Maybe? She's barely got a home now, so bringing in a pet at the moment may be too much. Perhaps in the future when she's settled a bit.
4. *Will there be a legal marriage between Sang and any of the guys?*
 - A. That's way too far into the future to determine at this point. We're still trying to get to that first kiss. Hang in there.
5. *Is Karen gay?*
 - A. Yes.



6. *You said that the books are going to span over a few years, so I was wondering what their Christmas might be like. Will they even celebrate Christmas? Are any of the guys religious enough to go to church or have some special tradition? Anything on what that holiday might be like, even if it takes a few books to get there, would be great?*
- A. We will see Christmas by book ten or eleven (or twelve). It depends on the guys because the books move really slow.
7. *Will each of the boys past be revealed in future books? I am curious as to what happened to the boys and how they met and became friends.*
- A. They'll go through this a lot as we progress. Sang wants to know, too. She'll start asking.
8. *Will there ever be a scene where Sang swears in front of them and it is really awkward?*
- A. Probably not. At least not in the near future.
9. *Is Sang ever going to need "girl stuff" around the boys?*
- A. This is surprisingly a popular question and gets asked a lot. The issue will come up but the guys aren't going to be surprised and it's no big deal to them. For example, Kota's pretty trained in these situations; his mom and sister live with him. Nathan likewise through being around Kota's family.
10. *By any chance was Mr. McCoy an Academy failure or rejected completely from the program?*
- A. No. Mr. McCoy would never have made it past registration.
11. *When does Sang learn all the academy secrets (in what book #?)*
- A. There's kind of a lot. So it'll take a while. She'll know a lot more by book nine. Maybe not all the finer details.
12. *Does Kota's mum have something to do with the academy?*
- A. No. Erica thinks of the Academy as an important part of Kota's life, but still considers it just a school.
13. *Will we meet the other ghost bird?*
- A. From book four? Sang and Kayli will run into her eventually. This bird is going to be curious about her progress.
14. *Gabriel has cut the guys hair for a long time but who cuts his hair?*
- A. His step-mom, Pam.
15. *In one of the books, forgive me I can't remember which, Sang said that she was named after her grandma and I am assuming it is her dad's mother as you wrote in another cheat sheet that she doesn't know anything about her mother's parents since they don't keep in touch. My question is, why did her dad choose that name if he wasn't close to his mother?*
- A. It was Mrs. Sorenson's idea when Sang was brought to her by Mr. Sorenson. Part of this was spite for bringing her a baby she didn't want, because Mr. Sorenson didn't like his parents.



16. *Will Sang ever join the Academy? Does she have to try multiple times to get in, or does it just take her a while to get in?*
- A. The process is long and complicated, but Sang will get there eventually.
17. *Does Sang find her mom's grave?*
- A. That's really far down the line. Eventually.
18. *Do other Academy people know about Sang, other than Dr. Phillip Roberts team?*
- A. Dr. Robert's team only. Any other Academy members know of her and that she's on the 'closed adoption' list. But there's a lot of those in the Academy so they won't get interested unless something happens to draw their attention.
19. *Why is Marie so happy when Sang is being punished?*
- A. She sees Sang as the reason why her parents are the way they are. And the truth of it is, she's right. Sang is a reason (not her fault, but she is the reason).
20. *Who does Silas live with?*
- A. His father and his brother.
21. *What's hidden in the shed?*
- A. Sang's history. Sort of. It's complicated. Just clues but she won't be able to piece them together. None of them will. Only her father knows.
22. *Will Sang and Marie ever meet their father's "other" family?*
- A. Yes. Eventually.
23. *Why did Nathan's mom leave and will she reappear sometime in the future?*
- A. She left because she was abused and she ran away from it. She'll never return.
24. *Does Sang ever get abused again in the series?*
- A. Yes.
25. *Do the boys ever get really mad at her? And I don't mean afraid for her safety, I mean like really mad or pissed at her?*
- A. They'll have spats now and again, like North and Sang in book four, or Gabriel and Sang in book five. They get over it pretty quickly.
26. *Does Sang go to live with one of the guys later on? And if so, who?*
- A. Yes. She'll filter in and out between homes.
27. *Will Sang's issue about not eating that much be addressed?*
- A. Yes. Mr. Blackbourne meant every word he said.
28. *I was wondering if you had any thoughts about creating a prequel to the series. I think it would be really cool to learn about how the boys met or some adventures they had before Sang got involved with them.*
- A. I don't have any current plans to write a prequel, but we will learn about how the boys met along the way.



29. *Will Sang ever become good at pickpocketing?*
- A. Sang will discover talents (like nail painting!) and she has many secret talents she is starting to reveal (being able to navigate!) but pickpocketing and lying are two of many she is not good at. Can't be good at everything.
30. *Why is Hendricks so determined to get the Academy boys out of his school or will that come up later?*
- A. This will come up a lot later, but basically he's doing bad things and they're an unknown to him. He doesn't want things to mess up and these boys being around complicate things.
31. *Does Marie care at all about Sang and is she jealous that Sang is friends with the guys?*
- A. She doesn't like Sang or the guys. She's not going to murder Sang in her sleep, but she wouldn't blink an eye if Sang left and didn't come back.
32. *What do the characters at the top of the A Report Logo on the March 2014 newsletter (and here on the cheat sheets) mean?*
- A. The Japanese is, "Girls are stupid; throw rocks at girls." Only Academy girls will appreciate this so I thought it'd be okay. A little shout out to Nathan for that.

The Scarab Beetle Series/Series Crossover Questions

33. *Will Sang and Kayli meet? Will they ever work together with their respective group of guys? Will there be any crossover between the teams?*
- A. They'll cross paths but they won't know who each other is for a while. There may be singular guy cross overs (like Marc in book five) but I can't cross over whole teams. Kayli and Sang would have fits.
34. *Are you going to cross the teams from Thief and the Ghost Bird in Book 6?*
- A. I don't know how often either team may cross paths, if ever. The Scarab Beetle series was designed to explore the Academy outside of what Sang could see from her limited position. Really, I just put them into position and they all wander around where they want to go. If they bump into people along the way that happen to be from the other team, I mention it. But I usually don't know until someone (like Silas) gets mentioned or shows up for a scene.
35. *How did Kayli's mother die?*
- A. Illness. She got sick and died. With only Jack working a really poor paying job, and no insurance, there was little they could do. And they all blame themselves for this, including Jack.
36. *Why does Kayli have a scar on her butt? What happened? Did she lie about the other scars?*
- A. She didn't lie about her scars, which is why she felt compelled to be silent about the ones she would have lied about. Her scars are either from where she said, her father, or past boyfriends. She'll talk about these eventually, as Axel hasn't forgotten. He wants to know.



37. *Do we find out what is up with Kevin and his girlfriend's issue that happened at the end of Thief in the next book?*

A. We will discover more about Kevin as we go along.

But personally, if my boyfriend had a job at a 'prep school' and was gone for odd hours at night, I'd be a little on edge, too. Secrets, kept even for good reasons, look horrible when you're on the outside.

38. *Do the Scarab Beetle boys have he is/she is phrases too?*

A. They don't have the same things but I already gave a lot of them to you guys in Book One. These will get more developed as we go.

♥ Marc: Her echo. The past doesn't define him.

♥ Blake: Worthy opponent.

♥ Raven: The Fierce Bear, or you can always use Raven's choice of words, too. Professional Russian

♥ Corey: Innocence that masks his brilliance.

♥ Brandon: Passion from pain.

♥ Axel: The calm that hides a storm.

39. *Who was the blonde girl in Kayli's kiss scene?*

A. Blondie in this scene is just a walk-on roll. Don't worry about her. Poor girl just got it bad and was being a dummy.

40. *Can Kevin even leave the team at this late date? They've graduated; they consider each other family don't they? Or is that just our other boys because their own birth families weren't so stellar? At the very least, they all say 'academy for life' and Axel very clearly states that they can't work by themselves, so Kevin has to stay right? And make peace with Kayli, though with him having a girl outside of the team, he would be outside of this love pentagram, I wonder what his reactions are going to be like.*

A. You can choose to change teams or quit the Academy at any time. Family is a choice on both ends of the spectrum. You have to be accepting and your team has to accept you. Teams can change, and sometimes they do because of circumstances. And yes, they consider each other family, which is why it's very difficult for anyone to break away. Not saying Kevin will, but it is possible.

But teams are together because they want to be there. Sometimes their "real" families aren't like in the Ghost Bird Series where they were mean or what not. Sometimes you just grow apart. Or not. Some family members are still around. Like Kota has Erica and Jessica. That doesn't make Kota's loyalty any less to his team.

Once you're in the Academy, you're in. They are as loyal to you, even when you can't be to them. Either adopted, closed adoption, full member or 'retired member'. Sometimes they're loyal to you even when you don't know it was them.

But Kevin's very much devoted to the Academy. In one way or another, he will be around.

41. *In Thief, Kayli says that Wil travels 2 hours to get to school. The way it's worded makes it sound as if he is attending school in Goose Creek. Also, she says that it's better than going to the scary dangerous school that is closer (I'm assuming that is Ashley Waters). So what school is Wil actually*



enrolled in? and is he actually attending right now? I know he's showing up at Ashley Waters, but is he enrolled there?

A. He is enrolled in Ashley Waters for morning classes and has special permission to be dismissed after school.

42. *When Kayli was thinking about Wil being stuck on a bus for 2 hours to get to school because it would be too difficult to get him transferred, and also the closer schools were crazy dangerous?*

A. Ashley Waters is one of many schools in the area that gets some of the worst kids bused in from other schools. The 'other schools' are in places like North Charleston, poor parts of town, very rough. Ashley Waters is technically in Goose Creek, and has a lot of local students who are actually pretty good but are forced to deal with these street kids from North Charleston, thanks to Mr. Hendricks's wicked plans.

43. *Does that mean that other schools are more dangerous than Ashley Waters or did he manage to transfer himself without her knowing?*

A. So ship a bunch of 'the worst kids' from other schools into a semi-better but overcrowded school and chaos happens. Other schools may have shipped their worst out, but they still have a lot of crazy students. The whole school system is dealing with a lot of problems.

But for the Academy, you start somewhere. They're starting with Ashley Waters because of the rumors they've heard about Mr. Hendricks and their own suspicions.

44. *Do you think Wil is really missing? Where the heck is he staying if not at the hotel, and why not tell Kayli? Also, it didn't seem like she knew about his job at the cell phone store, or wouldn't they have had more money than they did?*

A. I know where Wil is, and he's missing to Kayli. She doesn't know about his job. She doesn't even know he takes off early from school, like he's told Sang. Pay attention to the differences between what he tells Sang and what Kayli knows about him.

45. *In chapters bullying/how to ask a boy for help, when Marc put Kayli in his bed then said he was going to tell the guys something, what did he go to tell them?*

A. They were talking about what to do about Kayli, since they knew stuff she didn't. He was telling them she has to stay with them now. They all pretty much agreed, but they were working out the details as to why she should stay while they continued to spy on Coaltar.

46. *Love the number on the room for Kayli, Wil and dad. 221B. I wonder if it is on Baker Street.*

A. Yay! Someone got the 221b reference. Later they call her Sherlock. Small things.

47. *Those people in the village would have been out of luck if Blake's plan worked.*

A. They've been out of luck from before this. An offshoot faction of the cartel took over that village a year ago. And now the cartel will be after them for what they've done.

48. *So seeing as they destroyed the JH-14 in Thief, and it's effecting kids in Book 6 of Ghost Bird Series, what is the overlap time-line wise?*

A. They destroyed the anthills, but they never went after the ants. It would have been impossible to track down all those individual sales.



49. *I like that Kayli didn't automatically want to join their team. I'm glad she went back to the hotel to try to work out her life. But I'm also glad she's got a brain to go asking for help when she needs it, not too much pride!*

A. Yeah I didn't want to make her out like she was gonna mooch off the team. And then she went back and then "emergency" and this will force them to spend a lot of time together while this is going on.

50. *Did North take JH-14 in Forgiveness and Permission?*

A. Yes.

51. *What if the drug that North accidentally took was an earlier batch of JH-14?*

A. It was JH-14. Early deliveries. When new formulas are created, 'teasers' are given out.

52. *How did it dissolve in Sang's cup so fast?*

A. It's a crystal powder. It can be smashed together into a pill with a pill maker if someone carrying it does it. But the loose packed pill would soften a bit. It's why he felt 'something' when he swallowed, like a pill. Ingesting may cause different reactions than trying to smoke it or inject it.

53. *So I do disaster planning and response. My area of focus is health and medical. Can I say that I was surprised at how pertinent the issue was in Thief! I just worked on a similar 'outbreak' of a tainted batch in Colorado late last year....did you get the idea from the media?*

A. There have only been a handful of this type of situation so far, but they will be getting worse. I don't watch the news, but I hear things. One of my editors actually commented on the topic. She used to serve the warrants that were issued to do raids at places to get these synthetics. But I've seen these synthetics around and I've seen the results. The things people will do to themselves for a high is crazy.

54. *We recently had hundreds of patients present at emergency departments over about a three-week period ranging in age from 13-76 due to a bad synthetic drug...and pot is legal here.*

A. That's crazy! I'm like Kayli, why get the synthetic? But that stuff they're producing, I'm not really sure where it is coming from. I blamed the cartels in the book, but again, I wouldn't think they'd want to draw that much attention to their operation.

55. *Is it an Academy requirement to have cameras in your home and have wires on you? Or does it just depend on the team?*

A. The wires are usually inside their phones. The cameras are dependent on if there's a security reason to have them there. In places where there's a higher risk, there's more cameras. Nathan's house has a number of them, as does Victor's. Usually boys who are younger, living with relatives that could be threatening have more cameras. If it is like the Scarab Beetle team, they're less likely to have cameras, since only trusted Academy people live there. But all of them are able to use cameras if they feel they need them.



56. Could you please explain what a closed adoption means, and is there another type of adoption either group could apply for?

A. An adoption by the Academy means you are taken care of.

If you are adopted:

If you're in school:

- ♥ There are tutors free of charge for any classes you may be having trouble with, and they will monitor your progress.
- ♥ They will provide opportunities to work study in areas you are interested in.
- ♥ If you have any family problems, they will fix them.
- ♥ You are encouraged to apply and automatically hired in places under Academy control.
- ♥ If you're working hard and still can't afford things for yourself, those items will be provided.

If you're out of school and an adult:

- ♥ They will work from their end to get you into a job you are seeking
- ♥ If you are struggling with income, they'll send expert accountants to train you to manage money
- ♥ They will monitor your neighborhood, and try to get you to live nearby other adopted members
- ♥ They will ensure you get regular pay raises and have plenty of opportunities to move up as desired
- ♥ If you're ever fired for whatever reason, they make sure you're hired elsewhere quickly
- ♥ If an emergency happens, they'll show up

The goal being that you'll be safe no matter what. You'll always have a job. You'll always live in a safe place. As far as they are concerned, they will do everything in their power to make sure you have a safe and peaceful life.

This is how other members of the Academy can work and concentrate on their jobs, knowing that their families and loved ones are taken care of. When your family can't be there for you, the Academy always will be.

But if you're going for a closed adoption, that means something else:

- ♥ Other Academy members can't approach your person without requesting permission from the lead team
- ♥ Introductions have to be made with the lead team present (On any official Academy business)
- ♥ It's usually for when they feel a special person needs extra care because they're going to know about the Academy and its existence. So they don't want outside members of the team coming in and spilling the beans on areas of the Academy when this person may not be prepared for it. Or they don't want to just start spreading info to anyone.



But if you were going to want to make a certain person a member, you have to change the status to 'applicant', and then 'recruit' if they pass application. This can be expedited under extreme circumstances. It is rare this is ever granted. In most cases, if there are extreme circumstances, the Academy will intervene directly and there would be a trial to assess the situation.

Past book questions

57. *When Sang accidentally sprays Mr. Blackbourne thinking it was Victor what were his thoughts? What was he thinking when she did that.*

A. Nice shot. Did she just jump over my car? How in the world did she do it so elegantly? Is she hurt? Nope, not hurt, she just sprayed me with water.

He pretty much says what he thinks. He considers her for gunmanship training.

58. *In the fourth book when Nathan, North, and Sang are at the party playing foosball, Nathan calls her peanut, North then asks him to repeat himself. What did he hear the first time?*

A. Penis. It's what his mind reverted to when he didn't hear the whole word.

59. *How did Blackbourne catch them sneaking into the principal's office? Why was he there?*

A. He heard from someone within the Academy that there were odd things going on. He was sent in to investigate, found the boys and took them on as his team.

He identified them from the start. They looked suspicious. ;) His problem was he didn't know if they were troublemakers or what their intentions were. That was the problem and why the Academy looked into it.

60. *In the A chapter why does the woman in the picture look haunted if everyone is so happy?!?!? Are we going to have a chance to meet this bird? I'm worried for Sang!*

A. She was smiling, but her eyes were haunted. Like kids whose parents died or something. They can smile, too, but their eyes can still look different. She's happy, but a lot has happened to her and her guys.

Sang will run into her eventually.



Bonus scenes!

Warning – these are drafts and have not been edited.

Spoiler Scene from Push and Shove

From a chapter entitled: The North Shore

He marched toward his motorcycle, parked alongside a few cars close to the edge of the diner's parking lot.

“Where are you going?” I asked, starting to follow.

“I need to take you out of here. This whole day has been a disaster. It's about time I kept my promise to you.” He opened up one of the hardcover saddlebags on his bike. He pulled out a black leather jacket and a helmet. He returned to hook the jacket around my shoulders. I slipped my arms into the sleeves as he zipped it up. “Keep your legs close to the bike and you'll keep them warm.” He plopped the helmet on top of my head and fixed the strap. He released me so he could straddle the bike. He pushed his foot on a lever and the bike roared to life. He kicked the stand away and when he had the bike balanced between his legs, he held a hand out, palm up, in invitation.

I wanted to stay. It felt wrong to run off with North when Silas was out there and needed me, and Nathan ... I didn't want to leave him alone with my mess. What about Kota and the others? I wanted to help and didn't know how, didn't know what to suggest. The terrors of the evening had gotten to me.

It was North's intense eyes that lured me. He'd asked me to trust him. I needed to.

I hadn't been really alone with him for a couple of weeks. The last time we were together alone for any length of time, I had slept at his house, and ever since we had been so busy. Nervousness threatened to consume me but I tucked it back. I couldn't hesitate now.

I dropped my hand into his. He guided me to sit behind him. I tugged my hair clip from the back of my head, and twisted my hair into a bun at the base. I just managed to reclip it when he started backing up. With a loud roar of the engine, the motorcycle zoomed out of the lot.

I held on, my hands finding his chest. When the bike straightened on the road, North's hands found mine. He drug them down until I was holding him around his stomach. I guessed he was telling me he preferred I held on there.

I felt his black T-shirt billowing a little. I imagined he must have been cold. His jacket kept my back and arms warm, and the bike did warm the inside of my legs. The breeze blowing around us stung at my cheeks and at my calves. I tucked in close.

North pulled onto the highway, and he started heading east. I couldn't look around him to check his speed, but he drove faster than Luke had when I'd ridden with him.

I tucked my head into his back, clung to him. I closed my eyes a lot.

Even with the roads fairly clear, it was forty minutes before he pulled off the highway. North took a road past a sign that said Folly Beach. When he started across a long bridge that looked over a marsh and part of a river, he slowed enough that I could sit back a little without



fear of flying off the back. My insides started to flutter more at the heavy salt taste thickening in the air.

Folly Beach's main road was clustered with boutique shops, a couple of restaurants and bars. A couple of bars were open still, but nearly everything else was locked up. I imagined late October wasn't exactly the best time for tourists.

North took the road to the end, and made a left. I grasped at North's stomach, leaning back a little to try to look. There was a large hotel, followed by condos and houses on stilts. I stared at the homes, wondering why and how they built them on top of those frames like that.

It was another couple of miles before North finally stopped the bike. My legs and stomach were a mess of excitement and from the vibration of the bike rattling through me for so long. North leaned the motorcycle slightly. He clutched at my hands on his stomach, pulling one away to urge me to climb off.

I stood, with knees shaking and my skin electrified. I turned, seeing North had stopped because the road had ended. In front of us was a barrier, with iron beams blocking the way, and a bright yellow warning sign to stay out. Beyond it was a road that appeared to twist into the darkness beyond two large sand dunes.

North turned the motorcycle off, kicking the stand into place before stepping away from it.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"You'll see," he said. He turned, glancing down at me. He removed my helmet, putting it back into his bike. He studied me for a moment. He turned, and squatted. "Climb on my back."

I wanted to tell him I could walk, but he seemed to have something in mind. I eased over, encircling my arms around his shoulders. His hands found my thighs and he lifted me as he stood. He walked around the iron barrier, ignoring the warning signs, and followed the road between the sand dunes.

The moment we were beyond the dunes, the street lights fell behind us and the only light was the moon, almost full and as bright as I'd ever seen it. A million stars tried to compete with it.

North continued down the path despite the low amount of light. Surrounding us was what I thought at first were just random walls built into the sand. When he turned a bend in the road and I caught the shapes from a different angle, I realized they had been buildings, and now was only rubble. Iron bar framework had twisted against time and weather, holding up the last of concrete walls. There were heavy cracks in the foundation, and sand had collected in the corners, windswept in from the dunes.

"What happened?" I asked in such a quiet voice. I was sure I was just whispering. I didn't see anyone else around.

"A hurricane," he said. "One blew through here and took out nearly half the island."

"Hurricanes?" I asked. I was from Illinois. The worst we got were tornados. "They don't have those in the fall, right?"

"There's a few weeks left before hurricane season is over," he said. "But I doubt we'll see another one this year. You'll have to wait until next summer."

"Have you ever been through a hurricane?"

"Yup," he said. His fingers tightened under my thighs and he hefted me higher on his back. "Look ahead."



I leaned over his shoulder, feeling the gruffness of unshaven skin at his cheek. I breathed in his musk on top of the heavy salty breeze sweeping around us. Even with the moon glowing above us, I couldn't tell what he wanted me to look at. It was a mass of shapes.

North climbed a short sand dune. Out amid the black was a particular shadow, a singular, slim building stood out among the slopes of sand.

When he got to the top of the dune, the sand stretched out at our feet, meeting dark waves, barely distinguishable in the moonlight. The building stood out alone atop a tiny island about a hundred feet from the shore. It was too small to be of any use that I could imagine.

"What is it?" I asked.

North's fingers rubbed gently at my thighs, massaging. "It's a lighthouse," he said. "It used to be attached to the island until a couple of big storms wiped out this part of the island."

"Oh," I said quietly. Now that he told me what it was, I realized I probably wouldn't have recognized it in the dark, since the light was out. "It's kind of lonely."

"Not now," he said. "We're here to visit." He marched forward, until his footing became unstable over the uneven sand. He moved away from the road a little, finding a small patch of sand to stop, and he knelt. "Want to climb down?"

I released his shoulders, and he lowered until I was standing. My shoes sunk into the sand. The wind swept over my face as if I were back on his motorcycle. I hugged his jacket around my shoulders.

My eyes caught on the water. Even in the dark, I could see the movement, and was dazzled by the crashing sound, and the rich salt taste in the air. The moonlight made the water a darkened blue and gray. The distance we had made from other people seeped in. I grasped at North's forearm to balance my footing in the uneven sand, and to feel him nearby. I was a little taken aback by the scenery and from the overwhelming sensation of being the only two people in the middle of nowhere. "What is this place?"

"They call this the North Shore," he said. "So I claimed it." He knelt down, dropping onto his butt into the sand. He found my hand and tugged at me. "Sit and stay a while."

I started to kneel, but North redirected me. He positioned me between his legs in the sand. He planted his legs on either side of mine. He eased me back until I was relaxing, my back against his chest, and he planted his chin on top of my head.

I stared off into the distance, and every moment I did, I lost a little bit of my voice, and my thoughts went with it, until there was only moon and stars and waves from the ocean, and a lonely lighthouse in the distance. Rocky, the party, the chaos at school, everything started to settle and quiet and the nerve wracking panic ebbed away with the tide. My fingers drifted down, brushing at the sand and feeling the texture between my fingertips. While I'd felt sand before, it took me a while to think of this sand as being from the ocean, and what I was seeing before me was so big, bigger than what I'd imagined in my head as the ocean to be. Pictures, television, never did it a bit of justice.

North seemed content with the silence. It reminded me of the time we'd spent on the roof of my parents' house. It felt like almost a lifetime ago now. I'd been much more intimidated by North back then. With his intense dark eyes and his tall, strong body, he'd been the hardest out of all of them to even begin to feel comfortable around. When I first met him, I'd never trust him to climb on the back of his motorcycle to such an isolated spot. North. The ferocious protector, and ever surprising guardian.

As if aware I was thinking about him, his palm slipped over my arm, smoothing down the outside of his jacket over me. "Are you warm?" he asked, his voice taking a raspy sound.



I started to nod, but realized he probably wouldn't notice. "Yes," I said.

"What do you think?" he asked. "I know it probably isn't the best time to visit. It's probably better during the day."

"It's perfect," I said, surprising myself again at calling one of his dates perfect before I could think of anything else to say. "Do you come here a lot?"

"Haven't been here in a while. We've been busy."

I felt my cheeks warming. "I heard that's happening a lot lately. Something to do with a girl."

North grunted, the warm puff of air meeting the back of my scalp. He dipped his head, and his nose buried into my hair. "Not just any girl."

My lips trembled as I tried to think of something to say. I stared hard after the lighthouse and the waves, finding it suddenly difficult to focus when I was feeling North at my back. "Oh?" It was all I could manage.

His hand found my hip, and it weaved its way between the jacket but above my shirt. I sucked in my stomach a little in surprise, but his palm smoothed over my shirt, above my belly button. "I'm not complaining," he said. "Although keeping up with you is turning into a full time job."

"Sorry," I said.

He chuckled, and his hand at my stomach brushed slightly from side to side. He tilted his head, and his other hand found my chin, directing it to where he wanted. "Look," he said. He pointed out toward the east, at the expanse of ocean. "Can you see it?"

I thought at first he meant the stars, until a red light flashed a good distance away. I squinted, wondering if I'd been seeing things, but the red light returned once, briefly, before disappearing again. "What is it?"

"A ship. Probably a couple miles out."

"That far?"

"It's a pretty big ocean, Baby."

I watched out at the water line, occasionally catching the red light again. Sometimes a white light joined it. I touched at the sand below us, crumbling it in my hands, letting it filter through my fingers. It kept me grounded when my mind was dreaming about ocean waves and ships.

"We'll go out one day," he said. "Silas and I were talking about a boat."

"Like that one out there?"

I felt his lips against my head turning upward and I sensed he was smiling. "Maybe something a little smaller. Something to sail around the coast. Maybe take it over to Europe one day and see France and Greece and home again."

"Home?" My heart suddenly faltered. We weren't home? Home was with us, wasn't it?

"Germany," he said. "Where I was born."

I blinked against the wind that picked up, but my mind was trying to sort the information. "You were born in Europe?"

"Yes," he said.

"I never... I thought... I mean for some reason I thought you were from here."

"Because I don't have an accent?"

I nodded a little. "I suppose that's it."

"I grew up around military bases. My father insisted I was taught English." His lips lowered until they met with the back of my head. "Sang," he said against my hair.



“North?”

He breathed in against my hair, lowering his face until his mouth met my ear. “Do you like me?”

I couldn’t help my smile. “Yes,” I said. “Do you like me?”

North’s hand at my stomach tightened. His lips moved against my ear, but sounds didn’t come out. When moments passed and he didn’t answer, my heart wanted to stop. What was wrong? Why didn’t he say yes like he usually did?

“Yeah,” he said, with a heavy sigh that blew my hair against my neck. “Yes, Sang Baby, I like you. Probably a lot more than I should.”



If you’re new to The Academy and would like more spoilers and to meet some other people who also enjoy them, there is a special Forum that includes a group of fans. I am active in this group and answer questions there, but beware—parts of the forum are full of spoilers.

<http://theacademy.invisionzone.com/>



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