

'Hey.'

'Yeah, I've seen her hanging out with him a-'

'-rather be in a Library-'

'Mum told Dad to get it for me, but-''

'-yeah, Sir Adams is not looking-'

'I can't believe Amy-'

'I know right. It's unbelievable how-'

'Silence everybody!!' Julie said out aloud, her voice strangely echoing in the dusty little log cabin.

Everyone stopped to look at her immediately.

She wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her jacket and continued. 'I-I know you'll think it's the worst time to suggest something like this, but we really, really need to get our mind off certain . . . unexpected events. So who's up for a game of truth and dare?'

Edward grimaced.

'I think it's a brilliant idea actually.' Fred glared at Edward and then grinned.

'We're going to get out all your dirty little secrets, Ed. Is that what you're so worried about?' Fred drawled.

'Shut up, Fred. I didn't say anything.' Edward shot back.

'Great, so it's a yes then?' Julie quickly interrupted before a fight ensued.

'Yeah, come on guys, let's settle down in a circle.'

There were eight of us, including me. It was a perfect day to go for skiing. Clear sky, a light breeze, overall chilly atmosphere. It was an unusually nice weather actually, at this time of the month. Although, to me, the sky looked like an opaque sheet hung with a sense of gloom. Perhaps it was just my harsh memories somehow reflecting on my mood. But still, it seemed like the calm before a storm.

Anyhow, the snow was wet with more moisture and larger snow flakes which produced a crust on the snow.

We walked for a couple of miles to higher ground, looking for the perfect spot with the least number of people so we wouldn't be restricted in any way. I hung at the back of the group, like I always do, kicking randomly at snow here and there.

'Your watch was contagious, Ed. Mine's stopped too now. Look.' I heard Fred grumble from somewhere ahead.

'And mine too. What did you do, Ed?' It was Ricky this time.

'Yeah, what did you do, Ed?'

'Shut up, guys. You've all just got shoddy watches.' Ryan spoke up this time.

I smiled. Ryan always made me smile.

'I think it's a sign,' Amy's high pitched, squeaky voice said, ' - oh yes,' she added when all of us groaned for we knew what was coming. 'We shouldn't be here. We should go back. It's a sign that it's not safe for us here, something- something bad will happen to us, I am telling you.' More groans followed as she finished

Amy was clearly the superstitious type. It had a tendency to get annoying.

Therefore, she was just ignored as we trudged up along our uneven path.

I sighed and walked up to her. She was just a few steps ahead of me.

'Come on, Amy. I'm sure that's not the case.' I said softly, even as a sense of foreboding welled up deep inside me.

Amy just gave me a rueful smile and shook her head.

'Let's hope so.' She replied.

A strong gust of cold, late December wind blew past me and I shivered, in spite of the three layers of clothing I was wearing. With chattering teeth, and my head down I almost collided into Amy as everyone finally stopped.

I set my rucksack down and proceeded to take out my ski jacket. My heart thumped wildly as my excitement grew.

I was lying on my back, panting and out of breath, grinning broadly and gazing at the sky. I was tempted to make a snow angel when Edward pointed out how late it was. And it really was.

Everyone immediately started to gather their stuff and hustled around each other, talking noisily, laughing and shoving each other playfully.

I kept my distance from the noisy group and trailed along behind them, the snow crunching beneath my boots.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, almost like a flash, a storm approached. Thunder rumbled in the distance as dark, ominous clouds gathered overhead. That had been unexpected as the sky had been clear not five minutes ago. But now, it was dark and thick. The wind billowing around us like the tryant it was. It roared and groaned, promising to bend trees and splinter branches. The rumbling thunder, the howling wind and the rapidly growing darker atmosphere promised to bring with it mountains of clouds that reeked of evil.

Everyone had stopped, all with wide eyes, dropped jaws and fear writ on their faces.

'Come on guys, don't just stand there, we'll have to find shelter.' Ryan yelled.

'But where?' I heard Julie's whine.

'I saw a run down log cabin somewhere on our way up. But I don't remember where exactly.' Ryan told everyone as they made a circle around him. I moved closer too.

'But we'll have to go back up for it. Would that be safe?' Edward asked.

'It's a really long way down. I think we'll find that log cabin quicker if we split up and look for it. I don't remember it being that high up.' Ryan explained as the wind continued to howl around us.

'Will splitting up would be a good idea? We might get lost.' Edward interjected again.

'We'll go in pairs. The ones who find the cabin can signal to the rest of us.' Fred suggested.

'Yeah ,yeah, that'll be good.' Ryan nodded.

'No it won't, stupid. We won't be able to hear anything over the wind.' Edward frowned.

'Well you suggest something then.' Ryan said, irritated.

Edward frowned again, then took out his cell phone. He exhaled loudly as he unlocked it and looked back up at us.

'We've still got one signal. We could just call everyone over once that cabin is found.' Edward explained.

'Alright. I suppose that's fine.' Ryan nodded at Edward. 'Okay, let's split up then. Amy and Johanna you two go in that direction.' Ryan acknowledged me pointing towards West. I felt faint butterflies fluttering in my stomach. I always do when Ryan so much as looks at me. Pathetic, I know. 'Julie and I will go that way.' His finger was towards East. Suddenly the butterflies were replaced by a monster unleashing its wrath inside me silently. 'Ricky and Alicia, you guys go South and Edward and Fred will go North.'

'No way am I going with her!' Ricky cried, his finger fixed at Alicia.

'Yeah, no way am I going with him!' She fired back.

Ryan scowled. 'Then come with me, Ricky.'

'Much better.' Ricky said as he made a face at Alicia. She stuck her tongue out at him.

Children.

I saw Julie's face fall as Ryan joined Ricky and the monster inside me settled down for the while.

Amy came up beside me as everyone else paired up too and started to move in their assigned directions, but still up.

It was asking for strenuous efforts to walk on the thick snow against gravity with how exhausted we already were and it was also getting really tough to see through the billowing wind and snowfall.

'I dunno.' I heard Amy mumble. We were walking really close to each other.

'You said something?'

'I said, I don't know why, but . . . ' she trailed off.

'But?'

'I am having this feeling that . . . ' she stopped again.

'That? C'mon speak up Amy. What's bothering you?'

'Johanna, I follow my instincts because they are always correct. And right now, I have a really bad feeling about this. Like, as if it's my last night. *Our* last night.' She emphasized on our and looked at me. 'It feels as if we won't be able to survive this storm.'

I resisted the urge to snap at her.

'Stop fooling around, Amy, this is not the time.'

'I am serious, Johanna. Do I look like I'm joking?' She asked through gritted teeth, and even in this weather, I could see the tears in the corners of her eyes.

I was shocked. And scared.

'Stop it, Amy.' I did snap at her this time. 'You aren't getting anything from this except scaring the shit out of me.' I stopped walking and turned to face her. She stopped too.

'I'm terrified too.' Amy scowled.

I could see the fear though, it was all over her face.

'Well stop then.' I shook my head hard and stepped forward. 'If you stop feeling scared then I will too, and then there will be no point to it.' I told her firmly and motioned for her to start walking again.

She gave me glare and then abruptly stomped ahead of me. As soon as she was a few meters ahead, I saw her suddenly disappear.

I froze for a few moments, then slowly started to walk towards the point where she had vanished.

I abruptly came to a stop and gasped. The hill suddenly grew steep here. There was a downward slope for a few meters ending in a jagged cliff-like thin edge, then there was a straight fall to the bottom which I couldn't even see from here.

The horrifying fact was, however, that Amy hung from the edge, with just the tip of her fingers supporting her whole weight.

I hadn't even heard her scream over the wind.

I was rooted to my spot, completely unable to move. Amy wasn't looking at me as her fingers finally gave way, and she disappeared from view again, her scream, if any, still inaudible.

I still stood there, numb, silent tears falling down my face, unable to comprehend the enormity of what had just happened.

'Amy.' I whispered, half expecting her to reappear from the edge, as if it was all just an elaborate joke.

'Amy, come back please.' I said in a choked up voice, the words breaking at the end, as I fell down on my knees, still fixedly staring at the same spot.

'Oh my God.' Suddenly, my body shuddered with barely controlled sobs, and I cried and cried.

Amy was gone. Dead. Actually dead. But she was just talking to me two minutes ago. How can she just . . . just leave like that.

I completely broke down, whimpering and shaking and sobbing. It seemed like ages when my phone beeped, signaling the arrival of a message from whomever had found the cabin.

With tears still falling uncontrollably down my face and my body still shuddering from the force of my sobs, I pulled out my cell phone from the pocket of my jacket and unlocked it with jittery fingers. Sure enough, the message was from Edward, giving directions towards the log cabin.

Amy would have gotten the message too. Or would her phone have been crushed beyond repair, falling down from that height, just like Amy herself.

My stomach heaved and I almost vomited.

I slowly stood up on shaky legs, the task made increasingly difficult by the strong wind blowing around me. The storm was in full swing now, raging it's wrath on the world.

There will be a blizzard soon to, and if I don't hurry, I'll freeze to death here. I thought. But perhaps, that wouldn't be too bad. That way, I'll be saved from delivering the news to my friends.

The tears had stopped now, and as I steadily made my way in the opposite direction, I was numb again, unthinking. Emotionless.

Struggling through the storm, I finally spotted the silhouette of a small shabby cabin atop a mound of rocks and snow.

As I got nearer, I saw everyone huddled outside. Apparently, the place was locked and the boys were trying to break open the door.

I was almost by the group when I tripped and fell. I realized I didn't have the energy to get back up. Maybe I should just stay here and die. Maybe I would deserve that, for allowing the same to happen to Amy. Maybe-

'Alright there?' My morbid thoughts were suddenly interrupted. I looked up, and froze.

It was Ryan, looking down at me from an angle that made my heart pound.

'Yeah, I just-' I mumbled incoherently.

'Let me help you up.' He said, offering me his hand.

I swallowed the lump in my throat and took it.

With a quick heave, I was back on my feet, reluctantly letting go of Ryan's hand.

'Come on, stick close to everyone.' He said, motioning for me to walk with him.

'You try it now, Fred. I think my shoulder is dislocated.' I heard Edward say as he leaned against the front wall, clutching at his shoulder.

'Don't be such a drama queen, Ed.' Julie said, whacking Edward's shoulder.

'Ow!' He cried out. 'Be careful with that.'

'Aren't there any windows we can get in through?' Alicia asked.

'Don't you think I already checked that?' Ryan said as he came up behind her after leaving my side.

'Come on, Ed. Let's just do this together.' Fred suggested.

'Are you people deaf? I just said that I think my shoulder's dislocated.' Edward cried out.

'Fine. Let's just stay here in the storm and wait till it freezes us to death.' Fred muttered sarcastically.

'Just do it with your other shoulder, Ed.' Julie suggested.

'Are you guys sadists? Why don't you ask Rick or Ryan to do it?' Edward said, scowling.

'That's because we've already had our turns.' Ricky smirked.

'I've already had my turn too.' Edward shot back.

'You only did it twice, you wimp.' Ricky replied.

'Stop fighting, idiots. If you haven't noticed, we're standing in a raging storm. Come on, Fred. Let's do this together.' Ryan said, coming up to the front.

'Alright. On three.' Fred agreed. 'One . . . two . . .'

'Three!' Ryan shouted as he and Fred charged towards the door and hit it with full strength.

The thick wooden door shook on its hinges.

'Okay. One more time.' Ryan panted, rubbing at his shoulder.

They came back to the front steps, and on the count of three, dashed towards the door again.

Thankfully it gave away this time, falling down inwards with a loud thud.

Everyone was hurriedly ushered inside by Ryan and once we were all in, he and Fred lifted the door and put it back in its frame. Thankfully, again, it didn't fall back with the force of the wind.

The cabin was windowless and one roomed, with close to no furniture or anything else inside it. A half broken wooden chair was kept in front of the fireplace, in which lay a few pieces of firewood. Nothing else occupied the room.

I threw my back pack and sledges down in a corner and flopped down on the broken chair as everyone else settled around the fireplace. Ryan lighted the fire with the help of a lighter he coincidentally had in his backpack.

'Hey, where's Amy?' It was Ricky. I froze on the chair.

'Who was she with?' He asked, looking around at everyone with questioning eyes.

I couldn't help it.

'Me. She was with me.' I spoke up in a choked up voice.

'Johanna?' Ryan inquired.

'Where's Amy, Johanna?' Ricky asked.

Tears came rolling down my eyes as I shook my head silently.

'I'm sorry.'

'You're sorry? What do you mean you're sorry?' Julie asked in a frightened voice.

'Where the f*** is Amy, Johanna?' Ricky growled dangerously.

'She slipped, okay. She slipped.' I cried out. 'We were talking, and then she walked ahead really quickly, and then she slipped. When I slowly went after her, she was hanging on the edge of a cliff, by her fingers. I couldn't do anything. And then she fell. I'm sorry. I'm so so sorry.' I was enveloped by a fresh wave of sobs.

Everyone was looking at me with wide, horror filled eyes, and I sobbed harder.

'No.' Ricky whispered. 'No, no, no.' He shook his head and glared at me.

'No!' He shouted and stomped to the door, pulling it back down, then disappeared into the storm. Presumably to look for a friend whom he had known since kindergarten.

'Come back, Ricky!' Ryan yelled after him. 'It's not safe out there, the storm's getting thicker. Ricky!'

He called for him a few more times, standing by the frame of the door, then shook his head, and heaved the door back into place.

'What, so you're just going to let him go out there alone?' Alicia snapped at Ryan.

'We can't risk anyone else going out and getting lost. He'll come back once he's convinced she's not out there.' Ryan explained, frowning.

Ryan turned to me and sat down beside my chair, his knees propped up, and his arms encircling them.

'Please stop crying, Johanna, Alicia.' He said softly. Alicia had also broken into sobs by now. Julie was staring off blankly into empty space and Fred was just looking down at his hands, twiddling his thumbs, no doubt struggling to maintain composure. Edward's eyes were fixed on the fire, now fully blazing and crackling in the fireplace, and I could see silent tears running down his face.

'Please, it won't bring her back, and you guys will just exhaust yourself.' Ryan said in a placating tone, trying his best to remain calm, but his voice broke in the end.

I shook my head as I tried to control my sobs and wiped my face on my jacket sleeve.

'I'm sorry. I so sorry.'

'Johanna, nobody blames you. So please, don't say that.' Ryan murmured to me quietly.

'She-she said, that she had a bad feeling about this. That she felt as if . . . as if we, all of us, wouldn't be able to survive the night. And I dismissed her. And she stomped off. Then she slipped. Oh my God, I am so sorry.' I broke down again.

'Shit.' Ryan just dropped his head onto his knees and didn't answer.

It was getting colder by the minute and the fire didn't look like it could hold on much longer. It was a struggle to keep ourselves warm now, everyone was curled in on themselves to retain as much body heat as possible. Cuddling was out of the question, obviously. We all liked to have our dignity intact.

I could hear the roaring of the storm from outside which had intensified to an extent that it was making the cabin creek oddly. Curled up in the chair, now thankfully quiet, I thought about Ricky and why he wasn't back by now.

I felt myself sink into an uncomfortable hazy sense of state, for I knew what was coming. The impending was inevitable and I could sense it nearing. The seemingly empty sky that had stretched to infinity had been a sensory faculty of guilt. And now, its taps were open. Or it seemed to me. I'm sure I wouldn't be able to see the flickering stars outside that are supposed to be the sign of hope.

The storm brewed on and on, the clouds rumbling, the thunder rolling, the lightning striking and the snow ever increasing. promising nothing but winds to level even the mightiest of trees to the snow. I closed my eyes and felt the cold air hitting my face.

We all sat motionless, with placid faces, grieving for Amy, trying to believe the sour truth.

Finally, the silence was broken when Alicia and Julie struck up a conversation regarding the last topic you could think of. Homework. Gradually, the room buzzed with the voices of my friends, instead of the crackle of fire and the billowing of winds.

I had no idea how much time had passed when I heard Julie asking to play the game I have always hated.

I turned my head and saw that the fire had grown small. My eyes skirted over everyone's faces, and I begrudgingly realized that everyone seemed eager to play the game and we will be going through with it.

'Johanna?'

I turned to Julie.

'Come on down. You've been sulking there for long enough.'

It was as if someone had lightened a match inside me. I was suddenly furious.

'I wasn't *sulking*. Unlike you, I -' my hissed snarl was cut off by Ryan.

'Johanna. She didn't mean it like that. Honestly, we could do with a little less fighting right now.' He said, motioning me to sit down on the floor beside him.

I couldn't possibly refuse that. So I went. Without any more arguments. Totally ignoring Julie's snort.

'Ricky isn't back yet.' I said quietly, before they could begin the game.

'Yes. I'm worried, Ryan. Maybe someone should go look for him, now.' It was Alicia.

'We'll go check out on him in a little while. Let him be for the time being.' Fred replied before Ryan could.

'But-'

'If he isn't back in the next ten minutes, we'll go. Otherwise, I think Fred's right. He needs some time alone.' Ryan interrupted Alicia.

'In the storm!?' She cried, incredulous.

'He's not that stupid. I'm sure Rick's just brooding out on the front steps, or any where close by. He'll be *alright*.' Ryan spoke in a reassuring tone, more to himself than the others, it seemed.

'Do you hear yourself Ryan? If you think he's just outside, why don't you go and get him in?' Alicia hissed at him.

'Why don't *you* do it if you're so worried about him?' Ryan said tetchily, clearly pissed off now.

That was actually a rare sight. Mr. Cool-Smart-and-all-out-Nice-Guy never lost control like that.

'What?' Alicia said, her voice a high pitched cry. Incredulous. Furious.

'Guys, guys. Cool off.' Fred broke in before Ryan could say anything else. 'Didn't you just say we should avoid fighting, Ryan?' Ryan just frowned and turned his head towards the slowly burning out fire.

'Okay, look. That's one heck of a storm out there. Ricky was stupid to go into it. Stupid because of grief, but still stupid. So if we were to go out there looking for him and if we get stuck or lost, we'll have no one to blame but Ricky's stupidity.' Fred continued with his hands raised, palms facing outward, in a placating gesture.

Alicia was still tense, clenching and unclenching her fists, gritting her teeth.

'Um . . . Truth or Dare?' Julie spoke up timidly.

Alicia jerked.

'Fine.' She let out a terse reply. And then sighed.

'Fine.' She said again, softly, resigned.

Fred gave Ryan the thumbs up from the top of Alicia's head, Ryan nodded and gave a weak smile while Edward just rolled his eyes, seemingly exasperated by the whole situation.

Julie elbowed Edward, 'Ow!', then took out an empty water bottle from her backpack, set it down in the centre of our circle and gave it a twist. It stopped rotating with its head pointing at Edward.

'Okay Ed, truth or dare?' Julie asked.

'It's truth for me.' He replied, grinning.

'Ed,' Ryan began, after giving his head a slight shake, as if dispelling it of unwanted thoughts, 'What is the most expensive thing you have stolen from someone?'

'How offensive. You guys think I am a thief?' Edward mock gasped.

'Oh no, we don't think you're a thief. We *know* you're a thief.' Ryan replied, grinning now.

'Nice going, Ryan.' Fred smirked.

Alicia rolled her eyes, failing to ignore us.

'Hey!' Edward cried.

'Refuse to answer and you're out, Ed.' Julie warned, pointing a finger at him.

'You just made up that rule.' Edward said, scrunching up his nose.

'I suggested the game. I set the rules.' Julie folded her arms over her chest and gave Edward a haughty look.

Edward pursed his lips, then shrugged nonchalantly.

'I might have nicked Ricky's Rolex watch. The one his mum gave him last Christmas.'

'I knew that.' Ryan gave Edward a pointed stare.

'And you didn't tell us why? It could have spared me from being tortured by Rick's consistent wailing. He liked that watch.' Alicia grumbled.

'Oh pshh. He left it by the swimming pool at my farmhouse the last time he visited. He would have asked me about it if he cared so much. But he didn't even remember where he'd left it.' Edward told us.

'And you were never so noble as to give it back to him.' Fred said, grinning.

'Of course. You know me.' Edward winked at him.

'I hope you still have it. Because I'm going to tell on you the moment he comes back.' Alicia warned.

'Whatever. I don't care.' Edward muttered, though he clearly looked like he did.

'Okay, okay. Next.' Julie chuckled waving her hands at everyone, making us get back to the game.

She gave the bottle another whirl and this time, it landed on Alicia.

'Go ahead.' She huffed.

'Truth or dare.'

'Truth.'

I had a feeling Julie was going to be perverted about the next question, judging from the malicious glint in her eyes.

'Alicia, who here would you most like to make out with?' Julie asked, her lip curled in a slight smirk. I felt like smacking my forehead at her predictability.

Alicia curled up her nose in disgust.

'Of course you'd be interested in something like that.'

'Hmm. Now answer the question. We're waiting.' Julie urged. And it did look like the boys were waiting.

Even Ryan. I sighed. Alicia wasn't crowned Prom Queen twice for nothing. She was beautiful, with her thick waves of chocolate brown hair falling past her shoulders, large, almond-shaped hazel eyes, a wide smile and a model like figure.

'No one. Obviously.' Alicia rolled her eyes.

I heard Edward let out his breath in a puff of air.

'Could you say that again? I think I misheard you.' Fred said, wiggling his eyebrows.

'Yes.' Edward added. 'That sounds quite offensive.'

Ryan just grinned and shook his head.

'No, I meant, you guys are my friends.' Alicia clarified.

'What about Ricky?' Julie asked, smirking.

'Ooh, yes. I bet he's *more*.' Edward let out a high pitched girlish giggle.

Disgusting.

'*Ricky* is not here right now. And I'd appreciate it if we don't talk about this.' Alicia gave a curt reply, her lips pursed and face flushed.

Edward wolf whistled childishly.

Alicia then reached over Julie and whacked Edward on the head.

'Ow!'

'I wish Ricky would come back already.' Julie said, quietly.

I winced. This could very well lead to another row.

'Me too. Now can we move to the next one?' I said impatiently.

'Sure.' Julie nodded and gave the bottle a turn.

It was Fred's turn.

'Truth or dare, Fred?' Ryan asked.

'Dare.' He grinned.

'Nice, so there's no chance you're getting your secrets out, huh?'

'No way.'

'Okay, break dance.'

'What?'

Ryan smirked. In the next moment, I found myself smiling. It was a good look on him. Somehow, he looked even more ruggedly handsome with that expression.

At that precise instant, we heard a scream. It sounded horribly like Ricky.

Everyone froze for a few seconds, then all of us jumped to our feet at the same time and ran out, myself trailing behind the rest of them, like usual.

'Alicia!' Julie yelled, because it was really dark outside now, the wind howling ferociously, and Alicia had dashed out ahead of us and we couldn't see her anymore.

All of us were now running blindly forward and I was terrified.

'She's here,' Fred called out, his voice barely audible over the wind.

Everyone suddenly shuffled to a stop and I narrowly avoided colliding with Ryan in front of me.

I peered over his shoulder and squinted my eyes, trying to look past the heavy snowfall and the dark.

Fred was standing a few feet to our right, illuminated by the flashlight from his phone. He seemed to be standing over a huge lump on the snow, with Alicia kneeling by his feet near the lump. I could see her shuddering body from here.

I shivered as faint wisps of steam curled out of my mouth, and followed the group as they warily made their way towards Fred's silhouetted form.

Fred looked white as sheet, his eyes wide, horror stricken, as he jerked his chin towards the lump at his feet when we approached him.

'Ricky.' I heard Alicia whisper from below and looked down, my heart pounding furiously, refusing to be contained within such silly things as ribcages.

Alicia looked ashen, from what I could see of her face, and her voice shook when she spoke.

I swallowed as I finally moved my gaze over Ricky's limp form. He was lying on his side, his head twisted at an odd angle, legs bent and hands sprawled out in front of him. His lips were blue and cracked and snow was starting to collect in his curly black hair.

Fred, broken out of his daze, bent over Ricky after a while.

He pressed his index and middle finger over Ricky's wrist.

Two seconds.

Five seconds.

Ten seconds later, he pulled his fingers away.

'Dead?' Edward whispered hoarsely.

Fred gave a stiff nod. All the color drained off everyone's faces.

Silence followed. Well, not exactly, since a storm was raging around us. But none of us spoke as Alicia broke down into sobs.

For a minute or two we all remained frozen to the ground, unable to comprehend the situation, not knowing what to do.

I selfishly thought about my warm soft bed as we stood in the freezing cold, the wind whipping at our hair and clothes.

It was Ryan who regained his senses first.

'What do we do with the body?' He asked to no one in particular, voice trembling.

'How many hours till the body starts to . . . smell?' Edward asked another one when no one replied.

What should we call it, irony? How someone with a name becomes a body in a moments notice?

Julie started towards Alicia, ignoring Fred's questions, having no strength to answer them.

'We should better get inside.' Ryan said, sounding suddenly so wretched.

'Alicia.' Julie whispered to her. She was still crying. I saw Julie wipe the tears off her own face with her sleeve before bending down to grip Alicia's shoulders and haul her back to her feet.

'What? And leave him here?' Fred asked, harshly.

'C'mon.' Edward just shook his head and turned to go.

'Fred, there's nothing we can do.' Ryan muttered.

'He was our friend, Ryan!' Fred cried out.

Was. . . Isn't he still? Does death change the being of relationships too?

'We'll send someone after him once we get back to the lodge.' Ryan said softly.

'We can at least take him inside.' Fred let out in a choked voice.

'You want to spend the rest of the night in there with a f***ing dead body?' Edward swore at him as he turned back around and faced him.

'Let's just bury him here, yeah?' Ryan said, licking his lips anxiously. He was crouched in front of Ricky's body.

'In the snow?' Edward raised his eyebrows.

'Why not just take him inside with us?' Fred asked, agitated.

'He will start smelling, you idiot.'

'He won't. It's just a few hours till morning.' Fred argued.

Julie had her arms around Alicia's trembling frame as she wept into her shoulder. Ryan glanced at them and winced.

'Freddie, it's eleven hours at least till the sun rises. And then there's the storm. Who knows when we'll be able to go back to the lodge. We've lost our network signals as well.' Ryan paused and sighed. 'We have to get back inside. Without Rick.'

'Alright. Alright. *Mr. Goody-Two-Shoes.*' Fred spat at Ryan.

'Don't you dare be that way. I'm only saying what's best for us. Do whatever you want if you don't agree with me. See if I care.' Ryan scowled at him then turned around, trudging back towards the log cabin in the flashlight of his phone.

Fred sighed and followed with heavy, long steps. Edward rolled his eyes, motioned to Alicia, Julie and me and made his way back as well. Julie, with her arm around Alicia supporting most of her weight, trailed along behind him.

I, however, stood rooted to my spot, a few steps away from Ricky's lifeless form. Why had nobody wondered yet how this had happened? Why had nobody thought about the fact that this looked horribly like *murder*? Because it did. It looked as if someone had snapped Ricky's neck to the side with a jerk of their bare hands. It looked as if someone had actually killed him. Or perhaps, he had just tripped over a jutting rock and snapped his neck in the fall?

My God. I gasped as the reality of another death in one day hit me and goosebumps arose on my arms and neck. I looked up, away from the body, and tried to blink the tears out of my eyes.

Something moved in the trees in front of me. I froze and squinted my eyes. But even if there was something, I wouldn't have been able to see it past the storm. With my heart thumping, I quickly made my way back.

'Alright there?' Ryan asked when I entered, panting.

He was leaning against the door frame, looking like death warmed over, all pale and grim, hair a mess and eyes bloodshot, while the rest of the group was back on the floor, sitting in a circle.

'Yes.' I nodded, deciding to keep my suspicions to myself.

Alicia was still sobbing while Julie held her, who had tear tracks on her face as well. Edward had his head buried in his phone, his fingers trembling as he typed something. Fred had his legs propped up close to his chest, his arms around them, and his blank gaze fixed on a wall in front of him. His eyes were red rimmed. Struggling to keep my own emotions in check this time, I went to my old position and sat down on the half broken chair.

Ryan heaved the door back into its place and walked over to sit down on the floor beside my chair. The now flimsy excuse of a door did no good against the storm outside, letting in snow and cold wind. I shivered as I realized the fire had finally died down. The room was quite dark now, but after the eyes have adjusted to it, it wasn't too difficult to see. Then there was also the glow from Edward's phone.

'Amy said we all could die tonight.' I blurted out a few seconds later.

Their heads snapped in my direction.

'Sorry?' Edwards asked, arching his eyebrows.

I sighed, bringing my hands up to massage my forehead. I could feel the familiar prickings of a headache.

'Amy told me that she felt as if none of us would be able to survive this storm.' I explained, finding it strangely easy to think of her now.

I saw them trying to digest this new, slightly terrifying piece of information with their eyebrows furrowed and noses scrunched up.

Edward snorted. 'What is this? Amy's precognition? Come on. Since when has Amy been a blasted seer?'

'Ed. Don't start again.' Julie hissed angrily. Alicia wasn't stuck to her any longer. She was sitting with her head on her knees, her face hidden by her arms around them.

'What? You want me to believe this? It's absolutely mental.' Edward spluttered, throwing his arms in the air.

'It's coming true so far.' I shot at him hotly.

'This is absurd, Johanna. Ed's right. Please don't stir up any more trepidation.' Fred admonished.

I glared at him, then turned away to stare fixedly at the empty fireplace.

There was a few moment's silence then Fred got up to his feet, brushing his jeans as he did so.

'What is it now?' Ryan asked.

Fred was looking at us all, his lips curled in a smirk.

'You lot have got no brains, do you?'

'What have you thought of then, O Mr. Brainy?' Edward asked mockingly.

'It's a bloody storm outside, right? The temperature's probably below freezing by now.' Fred said excitedly, clearly pleased with himself, ignoring Edward's retort.

'And?' Ryan asked curiously.

'How the hell can the body rot then? Tell me.' Fred demanded.

Julie, Fred, Ryan and I looked at each other, slightly nonplussed.

'I'm fetching his body inside.' Fred said.

'I'll come with you.' Edward stood up, trying to cover up the embarrassment he felt. It was his idea after all, to leave Ricky's body outside.

Finally, the jerk is of some use.

'Be careful.' I muttered, thinking about the highly suspicious movement I'd seen in the woods.

'Yeah, it'll take us a minute.' Fred nodded and headed out of the lodge with Edward behind him, mumbling to himself.

Ryan stood up to set the door in its frame after they had left.

Alicia was still sobbing into her knees, while Julie and Ryan looked thoroughly shaken. I cast a sideways glance at them and turned to look at the broken door, waiting for the boys' return.

Almost fifteen minutes later, when i had grown worried and restless, the door fell to the ground with a bang, letting in a gust of cold wind and snow.

Fred stood on the threshold, completely out of breath. Ryan stood up at the sight of him.

'What? Something happened?' He asked anxiously.

'Body . . . gone.' Fred spluttered shaking his head. 'Ed . . . went into the woods . . . heard him scream.'

'Shit. Why the hell would the idiot do that?' Ryan almost yelled as Julie and I stood up as well. Alicia looked up at us, horror stricken.

'There was a trail in the snow. Like someone dragged the body away. It led into the woods. The imbecile wouldn't listen to me and went to investigate. Then I heard him scream.' Fred explained, his voice wavering, eyes white and skin pale despite the cold.

'Shit. Shit.' Ryan muttered as he walked towards the exit. Fred blocked his way.

'No, no. Don't even think about going after him. I think someone's out there. And I don't think Ricky was an accident. We really, really should just stay inside.' Fred's voice grew forceful as he pushed Ryan back into the room.

'Well, f***.' Ryan swore, kicked at the empty, broken chair and sat down on the floor with a thud.

Fred quickly set the door back in its place and sat down, his back pressed up against it.

'What now?' Julie asked in her trembling high pitched voice.

What now? What now? I think now we wait. For whoever's out there to come for us too. I felt hysterical laughter bubbling inside me and struggled to keep it at bay. Oh God, this was insane. We went from enjoying a ski trip to being stuck in a storm with a possible maniacal killer on the loose.

Something clicked in my mind and memories suddenly flashed past.

My mother's smiling face as she taught me to bake. My Father's angry voice shouting at my mother. All three of us at the district court, sorting out my parent's divorce. My mother struggling with her cancer. My Father's second wedding. My mother's funeral. My Father's apologetic face. Our empty house. The dreary months of my life after. Everything. I relived the tragedy of my life as I realized that this night might indeed be our last.

And suddenly, I felt suffocated in this tiny cabin. Like I couldn't breathe. Claustrophobic. The need to escape overwhelmed me.

I stood up, breathing heavily and walked to the door.

'Where are *you* off to now?' It was Ryan. I refused to succumb to the wishes of my pathetic heart.

'I just . . . want to go and check if there's any firewood close by.' I said shakily, coming up with an excuse pretty quickly.

'Are you joking?' Fred scowled at me. 'Do you have a death wish?'

'I just want to look for some firewood. It's getting unbearably cold and dark. I won't go too far.' I said, pleading to them internally to just let me go.

'Johanna-'

'Please.' I cut off Ryan. 'Please.' I said again, dangerously close to tears by now.

Ryan just stared at me. Everyone did.

'It's really cold. We need firewood.' I whispered.

'You know what. Do whatever the hell you want. I'm sick of this.' Fred snarled and stood up. He made a sweeping motion of his hands towards the door, telling me to leave if I wanted to. I gritted my teeth, glanced at Ryan one last time, who still just effing staring at me, pulled the door down and stomped out.

I ran and ran and ran. Away from the cabin, away from my friends, and towards the woods. Not knowing if I was running away from danger or into it, I just ran. All I knew was that I needed to escape. From what? You guessed it. No idea.

My legs throbbed and my eyes stung with tears as I staggered between trees, pushing branches away from my face.

I heard a distant ear splitting scream over the storm and came to an abrupt halt. Was it Julie? Or Alicia? I was terrified out of my wits and suddenly lost all my strength to move as I dropped on my knees beside a huge, hundred-year-old looking tree. Over my hammering heart and squirming stomach, I felt a piercing pain in my head. It was, probably, my conscience nagging all alive and free.

I started to sob as I pulled my knees towards my chest. I couldn't possibly have done something, it wasn't up to me. What good would staying with them have done if I wouldn't have been able to save them. I tried to reason with myself as I pressed myself against the tree and dropped my head backwards.

There was another distant, muffled scream and I bit my bottom lip hard to keep from shouting out myself. I plucked the ear muffs from my head and covered my ears with my hands, closed my eyes, trying to block out the world.

And even in this freezing weather, I felt a drop of sweat roll down my temple to my neck and finally absorbed into my fur coat. I was breathing heavily as I saw Amy falling down the cliff,

Ricky's body lying on the snow, then Ryan and every one of them dead before I drifted off to sleep.

I woke up with a start to shimmering of the morning sunlight falling on my face from between the trees and the eery quiet of the atmosphere. I was about to get up when a hand clamped down on my mouth. My eyes opened wide in shock and my pupils dilated in terror as I felt white hot pain in my back from the blade of a dagger. It was pain beyond endurance, nothing like I had ever felt. My sight became a blur as the blow of the dagger came once again in the exact same spot, slashing through my flesh. Faces of my friends and my now nonexistent family flashed in front of my eyes and as I was dropped on the soft white snow with a dull thud. Felling utterly stupid for running away if I was to meet the same end, I closed my eyes as darkness engulfed me.

Ah, nothing gave him more satisfaction than the terrified faces of his victims, their lifeless eyes, and the stark red of their blood.

Stupid teenagers.