

Fatal Snag Excerpt:

From the hushed voices and quick glances between Garret and Buchanan and the other officers in the room, Naomi knew something was up. Garret and Buchanan disappeared for a time, and when they came back in she noticed him squeeze Reagan's hand tighter and thought she heard Chayton's name. Garret's face revealed no clues.

Was Chayton dead?

An officer came to stand by him. He fixed his hand on Garret's shoulder and leaned down to say something in Garret's ear. A shadow crossed Garret's face.

Long, drawn-out seconds passed. Silent seconds. Naomi's thought processes were past the point of rationality as every fear—past and present—rushed forward. She was about to jump up and demand an explanation when a door slammed, the reverberation like a cannon straight through her heart.

When Chayton walked into the room, Naomi was struck with shock the force of a tsunami. Waves surging, striking her off balance. Crushing. Washing over her, crashing down, choking her. Water in her chest. She wheezed, unable to breathe. Her thoughts tumbled with the force of the waves. The swell receded, releasing her, leaving her in a wake of relief. As she regained her momentum, her breath came in short, liberating gasps. Her heartbeat steadied. Warmth tingled her skin. She wanted to run to him, hug him, tell him how grateful she was that he was alive. Limbs shaking in exhaustion, she couldn't stand.

Buchanan stood and shook his hand. She remained seated, her eyes focused on him as he spoke to Buchanan, trailing him as he sat across from her. His gaze found hers, forcing out the terror of his potential death. He reached out and curled his hand in hers. Warm. Assuring. Alive. She let out a weak smile, her body unable to fully express everything she felt. Relief overflowed in tears she managed to choke down.

She'd never felt so safe or so joyful. She'd feared he'd get himself killed, and they still had so much to straighten out with the police.

Her mouth was dry. She couldn't speak if she wanted to. Garret bantered with him, but Naomi couldn't follow the conversation. All she could think about was Chayton. He was alive. Unharmful.

Then she noticed Caleb beside him. Caleb, a friend who had never evoked those types of emotions in her. He winked at her and she smiled, returning her gaze to Chayton.

Chayton slouched in his chair and kept one hand up on the table, the other lightly holding Naomi's. He spread out his knees in a casual stance, like he had no care in the world. Like he hadn't almost lost his life. And as far as Naomi was concerned, she'd been pressured to the point of breaking. Being left alone in a hotel with a distraught woman. Being nearly kidnapped. Nearly smashing her face in the windshield—prevented thanks to the seatbelt. It'd been a hell of a day.

"Life with these boys will never be normal," Naomi commented to Reagan, who was sitting beside her.

Reagan laughed and turned to her, her eyes gleaming. "No, it won't, will it?"

Chaos was right up Reagan's alley. She liked spontaneity and surprises.

Not Naomi. When she'd left Air Dog a few months ago, she couldn't wait to leave. She couldn't live the spontaneous lifestyle her cousin was so wrought to live. Picking up and moving didn't bother Reagan, probably because she'd done it since she was a child. But Naomi needed roots, and those roots needed stable ground.

But now, the graffiti Chayton painted on her heart would be impossible to erase. She didn't want to leave. She never wanted to leave. So maybe Chayton was a little careless. He was still the most thoughtful, intelligent, and strong-willed man she'd ever known. And she loved everything about him. Internal scars and all.

He leaned into her and bunched his nose on hers, still wearing that blasé, devil-may-care attitude. "Are you okay?" he asked. Maybe the look in his eye was casual, but his voice was full of emotion.

Her toes, her knees, her thighs, her belly, her neck, her ears trembled as the whisper-soft breath of his words branded her.

"I am now."