

## CHAPTER 4 - - SAINT PHILLIP'S ACADEMY

“Good morning,” said Detective Scott.

Elijah froze, feeling completely helpless.

“Where is my uncle?” he asked feebly.

“Now’s not the time,” said Detective Scott. “I need you to come with me.”

He opened up the passenger-side door to his car and pointed to the seat. Elijah stayed put. The last place he wanted to be was inside that car with the detective.

“I’m not going anywhere until you tell me where my uncle is,” Elijah said defiantly. “He *is* my legal guardian.”

Detective Scott walked a little closer to Elijah and spoke softly.

“Not anymore.”

“What?”

“Your uncle will no longer be taking care of you. He will not be returning to this house, and neither will you. Now get in.” Detective Scott sounded much more forceful this time, and Elijah knew he would eventually have to get into the car. But he needed answers.

“What do you mean he’s not taking care of me?”

The detective huffed. “We have reason to believe that your uncle has been involved in serious unlawful activity for several years now. He was picked up 500 miles north of here under criminal charges.”

“What charges?”

“That is not your concern. Your only concern should be to get in the car!”

“Where are you taking me?” Elijah detected a pleading in his own voice.

“To your new home. You will be relocated to Saint Phillip’s Academy in Canada.”

Elijah’s head began to spin.

“In *Canada*? Why not somewhere here?”

“For your protection,” the detective answered abruptly. Elijah found that hard to believe. He wanted to ask more questions, but words wouldn’t come out of his mouth. He stood motionless, staring up at Detective Scott, unable to think or move. How could this happen? What was his uncle doing? Why was he being taken away? Didn’t he have other family who would take care of him? Elijah had more questions he wanted to ask but was so dazed that before he knew it, he was climbing into the front seat of Detective Scott’s car. This was it—rock bottom. He was now being taken away from his uncle, the last person who cared about him.

The ride north was long and silent. Elijah was in the middle of a thoughtless trance, watching the world whiz by his window at an alarming rate, when he suddenly became angry. Why had Uncle Stan abandoned him? What was so important that he left for days at a time? Uncle Stan had always been a little on the wild side, but was he really a criminal? He looked at Detective Scott, who had been ignoring him the entire drive. His uncle may have been a criminal, but Elijah would do anything to have him take the place of the detective right now.

After what seemed like years, the car pulled behind a line of other cars at the Canadian border. They had traveled through the night, and neither the detective nor Elijah slept a wink. As they waited in line, the weather seemed to acknowledge Elijah’s despair and unleashed a sudden downpour. Buckets of water poured from the sky. He looked out his window and just stared at the world that was being completely consumed by water.

Despite his situation, Elijah wished he could appreciate the beauty of his surroundings. Everything was so green and peaceful-looking here. He tried to force his memory to recall

driving through places like this with his family so he could enjoy something about the ride he was taking, but it wasn't working. This was not a pleasant journey. Elijah was not in the back seat with his sister, Kyria, playing a travel game or reading a book together. He was sitting next to someone that he despised, being shipped to a school in another country.

A couple of hours after crossing the border, they arrived at the academy. Elijah gazed at the school and was reminded of a small university. The main building was made of brick and looked very impressive. A tall bell tower divided the three-story building perfectly in half. Farther in, past a large courtyard, Elijah could see two smaller buildings, also made of brick.

"Let's go," said Detective Scott, suddenly looking rushed. "They're expecting us." As soon as he stepped out of the car, Elijah shivered. It was much colder than he expected it to be. He felt the outside of his jacket pockets, where his prized possessions were hidden, and was immediately thankful they were small enough to fit.

Walking through the entrance door, Elijah's eyes fell upon the walls of the front hallway. Lining both sides, placed inside long glass cases, were items that had to do with the school's history. On the right were photographs of every student body class that came through Saint Phillip's Academy. It reminded Elijah of the photographs he found in Uncle Stan's basement the other night. On the left were all kinds of artifacts that were special to the school's heritage. Elijah was particularly impressed with the massive paintings that depicted various scenes through the years.

The hall opened up into a great circular room with banners hanging from the floors above. Detective Scott didn't stop to look or ask anyone where he was going. He marched directly through the circular room toward a door labeled **ADMISSIONS**, and they both walked in.

“Hello, Jen,” said Detective Scott. “I have Elijah Hawk here to see the chancellor.”

“One moment,” said the secretary. She left her desk and rushed back into a corner office. Elijah looked around. Hanging on the wall by the office was a tall banner that read DISCIPLINE. On the opposite wall was another banner that read RESPECT. The office was very tidy. Even the desk of the secretary was incredibly organized.

The secretary returned with a thin man. Elijah guessed this was the chancellor. He was dressed in a suit with a plain red tie. He wore glasses, and his black hair was perfectly parted to the side. The chancellor didn't even acknowledge Elijah as he walked toward Detective Scott, who was standing by the doorway. They shook hands.

“Thank you, Nick,” said the chancellor. “I can take it from here.” Without saying a word, Detective Scott turned on his heel and fled the office. In a funny way, Elijah was slightly uncomfortable with him leaving. Even though he couldn't stand the detective, a sudden rush of loneliness hit him.

The chancellor walked over to face Elijah. He stood still for a moment studying him and then held out his hand.

“Hello Mr. Hawk, my name is Chancellor Hawthorne.” Elijah shook his hand.

“Hi,” said Elijah. Chancellor Hawthorne furrowed his brow.

“You shall respond to me or any of your adult superiors by name when addressing us. When answering me, you shall call me ‘sir’ or ‘Chancellor Hawthorne’. Also, the correct way to address someone in salutation is ‘Hello’ not ‘Hi’. Understood?”

Elijah gulped.

“Let's try again. Hello, Mr. Hawk. My name is Chancellor Hawthorne.”

“Hello Chancellor Hawthorne, my name is Elijah.”

Elijah's voice cracked as he said his name.

"Much better," said Hawthorne.

"Come into my office and we'll have a chat. Would you like a glass of water?"

"No, thank you, sir," said Elijah.

Hawthorne ushered Elijah into his office and pointed to a chair across from the desk indicating where Elijah was to sit. Elijah was sure he had never seen such a neat office. Every fiber of carpet was not only clean, but in perfect uniform with the other fibers. The pictures on the walls were straight and evenly spaced. The books on his bookshelf were arranged by size, so none stuck out. All of the papers on his desk were in pristine condition and filed neatly. Hawthorne sat down and folded his hands on his mahogany desk.

"So, tell me about yourself."

Elijah didn't know where to begin. What exactly did he want to know?

"Well . . . my entire family died a few weeks ago. I went to live with my uncle, but he was just arrested. So the detective brought me here . . . sir." Hawthorne continued studying Elijah intensely. Elijah fidgeted with his hands.

"Were you close with your family?" asked Hawthorne softly.

He didn't know why now, but for some reason Elijah's lip started to quiver, and he quickly looked out the window, breaking eye contact with Hawthorne. Elijah thought surely he would be scolded for turning away, but Hawthorne remained silent and continued to watch Elijah.

"Yes sir, I was," Elijah finally said after he composed himself. Hawthorne paused for a moment before continuing.

“How much do you know about Saint Phillip’s Academy?” he asked. Elijah was thankful for the change in conversation.

“Nothing.” Hawthorne glared at Elijah with an expectant look. “Sir.”

“Very good. Well, Elijah, we expect three things out of every young man that walks through our doors,” Hawthorne said. “Honesty. Respect. Discipline. Follow these expectations, and you will succeed here at Saint Phillip’s Academy. Fail to do so, and you will be punished.”

Elijah never had trouble obeying the rules of his house and school, but for some reason these three expectations seemed like a big task.

“Every teacher here will give you their very best each and every day,” Hawthorne continued. “In return, you will give them yours. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Elijah.

“Each teacher here is superior to you in both intellect and discipline. Therefore, you will address them as ‘Master’. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Elijah.

“You will be given a set of uniforms, books, school supplies, and a room with a roommate. If you want to eat, breakfast starts at 7:00. Lights out at 10:00. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Elijah.

“Since you are coming to us mid-term, I expect you will find time to catch up on the studies you have missed. Your roommate is named Samuel. He arrived two weeks ago. Do you have any questions?” Elijah had a million questions, but he had no idea where to even begin.

“Not yet, sir,” Elijah answered.

“I leave you with this. There are two paths you can walk here at Saint Phillip’s Academy. One path will lead you to greatness. The other will lead you to failure. Make every choice directed toward greatness.” Hawthorne stood up and gazed above Elijah’s head as if he had just delivered the most remarkable and inspiring speech of his entire life. Elijah, on the other hand, was not really sure what he was talking about. He wished the chancellor would just give him a list of rules for him to study.

“Follow me,” Hawthorne commanded. He led Elijah out of the office and through the back exit, which opened into a beautiful courtyard. They passed large lawns of green grass and trees, bushes that were trimmed to perfection, and a very impressive fountain as they headed toward one of the smaller brick buildings called PHILLIP’S HALL A. Elijah glanced around and saw students everywhere studying and reading. Inside the hall, Hawthorne’s shoes gave a commanding thump as he marched Elijah up the stairs.

“Your room is on the second floor, number 213. It will always be unlocked in case we need to inspect it. I will introduce you to Samuel and you will find a list of instructions on your desk. On it will be your classes for tomorrow and a list of chores.” Elijah was having a hard time keeping up with Hawthorne’s pace as he walked briskly up the stairs, each step making a loud echo down the hall.

When they reached room 213, Hawthorne turned the knob without knocking. Sure enough, it was unlocked and a small boy sat at his desk reading.

“Samuel, this is Elijah. Elijah, this is Samuel.” They shook hands, not quite sure how to address each other. Samuel was short and frail-looking, with dark brown hair, brown eyes, and a sheepish smile. “Samuel, Elijah just lost his parents a few weeks ago. I’m sure you both will have much to talk about. Have a nice day, gentlemen.”

“Thank you, sir,” both boys replied in unison. Chancellor Hawthorne left the room, and they each let out a sigh of relief. Samuel peered down the hall to make sure he was gone.

“I’m sorry to interrupt you,” Elijah said. “If you want, you can finish your work.”

“What work?” asked Samuel.

“Weren’t you reading?” Elijah responded. Samuel chuckled.

“I was holding a book in front of my face, if that’s what you’re referring to. It’s a good thing Hawthorne wears those clunky shoes. It’s like a siren letting us know he’s coming.”

They both laughed.

“I’m sorry to hear about your parents,” Samuel said. “What happened?”

“I honestly don’t know. They were killed by someone.” Elijah was tempted to tell Samuel the whole story, but he decided to hold off. After all, they had just met.

“Wow,” Samuel said softly, shaking his head. “Do they know who did it?”

“No.”

“Well, I just got here too,” said Samuel. “My parents gave me up.”

“Did they tell you why?” Elijah asked.

“Not really,” said Samuel. “They said something about not being able to handle me anymore. I don’t know what they had to handle. I barely saw them anyway.” He looked down and kicked an imaginary object with his foot. “They just didn’t want me.” After an uncomfortable silence, Samuel looked up. “Well, I hope you don’t mind, but I actually do have work to do. We can talk some more after class tomorrow.”

“Okay,” Elijah agreed. “I need to read my list anyway.” Samuel picked up a book and sprawled out on his bed to read. Elijah looked around. The room was small and plain. On the far wall were two beds separated by a lamp and a stand. Two simple desks sat snug against the

wall closest to the door. Across from the desks were two closets. His uniforms were already neatly hung in one.

Elijah walked over to the desk. Sure enough, there was a piece of paper with a to-do list on it. He had four classes this term: literature, history, arithmetic, and biology. His chore for the remainder of term was to clean the hall bathrooms. The paper informed him that his work would be randomly inspected three times a week.

“When am I supposed to do the chores?” he asked, turning toward Samuel. “It doesn’t say.”

“Whenever you can,” answered Samuel, looking up from his book. “Probably right after classes in case you get inspected.”

“What’s your chore?” asked Elijah.

“I work in the kitchen for breakfast. I have to be up at five to get the breakfast ready at seven.” Samuel made a face showing his displeasure with the early wake-up time.

“That doesn’t sound like fun,” Elijah said.

“I suppose cleaning toilets is much better?” Samuel smiled up at Elijah and then looked back down at his book. “That’s right. I looked at your chore list. You’ll get used to it, though. I’ve only been here a few weeks, but I own that kitchen. In fact, you could call me the master of breakfast.” Samuel made a sarcastic salute from his bed.

Elijah tried to soak in all the information that he had just learned. He hoped he could get used to everything, but no matter how well he cleaned those bathrooms, he never wanted to be known as the toilet master.

Samuel had already left for the morning when Elijah woke up, so he was on his own to eat and find his classes. He rushed out of the hall and asked the first person he came across where his literature class was. The boy told him the way and Elijah ran as fast as he could, lugging his pack filled with books.

Surprisingly, he was the first student to arrive. The teacher was very tall with long, shaggy brown hair that didn't quite get to his shoulders. He had the look of an energetic youth, but the wisdom of an older man. Elijah guessed he was a little younger than his parents. He didn't look at all like a literature teacher. In fact, he looked exactly the opposite of most of the other adults he had seen on campus.

"Hello, young man. Elijah I presume?" said the teacher.

"Yes, sir—I mean Master—er—sir."

The teacher laughed and turned to write on the board.

"Sounds like Hawthorne got to you. I'll let him know his scare tactics are working. I'm surprised he didn't make you call him 'His Lordship'—or did he?" Elijah liked this teacher immediately. "My name's Glen Roddick. You have your books?"

"I think so," said Elijah. He pulled out a large textbook and two Shakespeare plays.

"You won't need the plays for a couple of weeks," said Roddick, looking over Elijah's materials, "but you'll need that textbook today." He looked up at Elijah. "So, I hear you've been through quite a lot lately. How are you handling all of this change?"

"Not good," Elijah admitted. "I'm not sure I fit in with all of this." Roddick frowned at Elijah's answer and paused.

"I'm very sorry to hear that. I'll tell you what," Roddick said more cheerfully. "When your day is over, come find me. I think I can help. We do a good job here at Saint Phillip's

keeping kids in the dark. I may be able to ease your mind a bit.” Roddick smiled at Elijah and then turned back to the board. “Only if you want.” Elijah thought that it might be nice to talk to someone who seemed to sympathize with him. He thought maybe Master Roddick could help him adjust to this new life, even if it was just a pep talk.

The rest of class was uneventful as were the next two classes. History was spent learning about medieval chivalry and the beginnings of the crusades. Elijah found himself drawing swords and shields during the discussion. Math was the same. He did some problems, but it was very dull.

Science, on the other hand, was not at all what Elijah expected. It was the one class he was looking forward to the most. He and his father liked to tinker with machines and talk about how the world worked during long walks together, so he always had a heart for science. The teacher, however, was very different from Elijah’s father. His name was Master Corgan, and he was built like a tank—wide and burly with very little neck. Elijah walked in prepared to be extra friendly to him.

“Hello, Master Corgan. My name is—”

“Never—speak to me—unless you are spoken to,” Corgan interrupted in a very low, crackly voice. He talked very slowly and clearly, as though he thought Elijah would not understand unless he did. “I know very well who you are, and I will tell you what you need to do when I feel you are ready.” Elijah wasn’t sure if he should acknowledge Master Corgan or not. “Just let me tell you this,” continued Corgan stiffly. “Science is a gift. You either have it, or you don’t. You either understand it, or you don’t.” When Corgan continued speaking, he wasn’t even looking at Elijah. He spoke almost mystically. “The world is a funny place. If you have the gift, the world can be miraculous. There is power to be found in it and power to be

taken from it.” He looked down at Elijah. “Some people do not have that gift. Don’t take it too hard. Some things are not meant to be.” Corgan walked away.

Elijah was left standing absolutely dumbfounded. He hoped that the next term he would not have Master Corgan. The rest of class was spent reading out of an old science book. Corgan didn’t seem at all interested in teaching anyone. He walked around with his head held high and one hand perpetually in his coat pocket. He paced around the classroom as though he was waiting for an excuse to punish students.

Elijah decided to find Roddick immediately after class. Following his science class, he needed to talk with someone who could make him feel better. He walked into Roddick’s classroom and saw that he was still teaching.

“I’ll be done in about twenty minutes,” he hollered to Elijah from the front of the room. Elijah gave him a wave of acknowledgement and walked out to kill some time. He wandered over to the front hallway and looked at the old photographs. They amused him. He looked at all the changes throughout the years and was intrigued by the different styles and trends of the previous students.

After about five minutes, when Elijah had looked at twenty or thirty class pictures, he came face to face with two students in a picture that made him gasp in surprise. He blinked again to make sure he wasn’t imagining things. He wasn’t. Elijah stared transfixed at a photograph of his father and his uncle Stan posing for the camera, wearing their own Saint Phillip’s Academy uniforms.