

CHAPTER 90: GRAYSON

Grayson returns to Hawthorne House, confronting the remnants of the tree house he and Jameson destroyed in their grief after Emily's death. As he navigates the damaged structure, his brothers Xander and Nash surprise him, having anticipated his arrival. Grayson avoids discussing the emotional turmoil that prompted his return, but his siblings create a lighthearted atmosphere, preparing for an impromptu slumber party. The scene sets the tone for a chapter balancing familial bonds with unspoken tensions.

The brothers engage in a chaotic game of "Drink or Dare," mixing absurd concoctions and issuing outrageous challenges. Jameson arrives with supplies for the game, and the siblings revel in the ridiculousness—Nash nearly eats his hat, Xander builds a self-slapping machine, and Grayson's stoicism begins to crack. The game serves as a distraction from deeper issues, though Jameson's bruised face hints at unresolved adventures in England. The playful dynamic contrasts with the underlying emotional weight Grayson carries.

As the night progresses, the brothers' antics momentarily ease Grayson's tension, but Jameson seizes the opportunity to push him emotionally. He dares Grayson to admit he's not okay, forcing him to confront his feelings. Grayson initially resists, reaching for the dreaded drink instead, but Nash and Xander create a safe space for vulnerability. The moment marks a shift from humor to raw honesty, as Grayson's defenses begin to crumble.

Grayson finally confesses his fear of losing people, acknowledging his strained relationships with his sisters and his struggle with imperfection. Nash reassures him of their unwavering support, emphasizing that Grayson hasn't lost his brothers. The chapter closes with a poignant blend of humor and heartache, highlighting the Hawthorne siblings' ability to balance chaos with compassion, even as Grayson grapples with his vulnerabilities.