

WEAK GIRLS
WON'T SURVIVE
SPY TRAINING

TRAINING SHADOWS

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TRAINING SHADOWS TEASER



The bandits were all roughly tying the hands of each girl after forcing her to wrap her hands around a tree trunk, but when one of them reached for Tess, the gang's leader shouted aloud, "Don't!"

The bandit who had lunged for us jumped in surprise and immediately retreated. Tess and I clung to each other, terrified, as the leader of the bandits approached. He hesitated for a moment, then reached up to pull off his face covering.

Tess's eyes widened as they settled on the surprisingly young face beneath the shock of bright red hair. "Peter Pan, is that you?"

The man swallowed, looking oddly wrong-footed. "Hello, Tess." His voice, which had been shouting orders and commands moments before, suddenly sounded deeper and more mature. Then he turned his attention to his gang watching him. "I'll take care of this one myself."

They went back to tying up the others, and I may as well have become invisible for all the attention Peter and Tess gave me.

"You've grown up," Peter told her so quietly it bordered on reverent.

"They told me you were dead." Tess's normally cheerful voice had sobered to the point that I wondered if she was about to cry.

"Surprise, I'm not." Peter had put away his weapons and was flexing his hands at his sides, arms held stiff and straight. "I hoped we would see each other again."

"We would've been able to see each other often if you hadn't escaped and run away."

"You went to finishing school. I had no reason to stay when my only friend was gone."

"I thought that the prison cell and guards would have been reason enough."

Peter let out a short bark of a laugh. "Not a good reason."

"Do you know how much I sacrificed to keep you out of a hangman's noose?" A deeper level of pain edged Tess's voice. "I *begged* them not to kill you. I told them that you were different now and that you had changed."

"Tess—"

"I *trusted* you!"

Peter took a step forward and reached out for her. "Tess."

"Don't touch me! Do you know how much I grieved for you when they told me you died? Do you have any idea?"

"No, I don't."

An awkward silence fell between them and Tess hardened her expression to that of a dignified prisoner. "Go ahead and tie me up, then." Tess's voice was heavy with bitter disappointment then softened to whisper, "I always thought you could be so much more than a criminal, Peter."

"That's not..." Peter's voice sounded strained. "You don't understand."



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“You’re right,” Tess said sadly. “I clearly don’t understand you at all. They all told me I was a fool for trusting you, and they were right.”



