

Chapter Fifteen



For Bird and Roo.

My eyes started to water at the sight of my father's handwriting on a FedEx envelope, the same weird R used for my nickname as he carved into the compass.

"You alright?"

JJ's voice caused me to tear my eyes away from the envelope and towards the hole.

"Yeah, here."

I passed the envelope over to John B before tossing my flashlight out. I grunted with the effort of lying myself up, noting Pope and Kiara huddled around John B a little ways away.

"Put your arms around me, and I'll pull you out."

I nodded at JJ, wrapping my arms around his neck. He began slowly walking backwards, dragging me out of the mausoleum.

"Ow," I winced as my bare thighs dug across the rough stone.

Once my feet got through the hole, my whole body swung towards JJ's, and I wrapped my legs around his waist as he stumbled back a few steps. JJ's hands supported me from the back of my legs as he tried to keep up both from falling over.

I squinted as JJ's headlight shined right in my face but found myself staring into his blue eyes as our eyes were at the same level for the first time since he had his first growth spurt in the fifth grade.

"Thanks," I whispered out, slowing unwrapping my legs from his waist, causing his hands to slide from the back of my thighs and to the middle of my back. I couldn't hide the blush from my face as his hands slid over my butt.

"No problem," he said after clearing his throat.

I let my arms unwrap from around his neck, and JJ's hands fell away from my back. We both scratched at our heads, feeling awkward.

JJ's eyes suddenly went wide as he focused on something behind me. I looked over my shoulder and noticed a pair of headlights heading our way.

"Shit."

"Code red. Code red. Square Groupers! Square Groupers!"

JJ and I caught the attention of our friends and we all ran to the other side of the stone structure, trying to stay out of sight.

"It's the guys who robbed your house."

"Lights! Turn off your lights!."

I pulled JJ back from leaning around the corner and grabbed his face, turning it towards me and turning off his headlight.

"Homie's got a gun," JJ said after peeking around the corner again.

"Screw this."

I gasped as Kiara suddenly turned her flashlight back on and took off running towards the gate. I quickly got to my feet and followed after, staying close to be able to see.

I got to the brick way and looked over my shoulder to see the rest of our friends right behind us.

"Go!"

I started climbing as JJ shouted at me. I was quickly up the wall and jumped down, landing with a grunt. Kie was right behind me, then JJ and John B. Pope was hanging on the iron gate by his pants.

I couldn't help the laugh from slipping out as he called out that he was stuck. I ran back towards him and grabbed his dangling leg and began pulling him down.

"You're gonna rip, you're gonna rip me!" He protested as the sound of fabric ripping could be heard.

I laughed even louder as his pants were left behind on the gate, and he landed on his feet next to me.

"Nice!"

"It's like a little Tootsie-Roll!"

JJ's comment had me laughing harder as we all ran to the running van. I got in the front seat with John B as the rest of our friends got in the back. John B handed me the envelope from our father, and I held it tightly against my chest as he began driving us back to the Chateau.

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