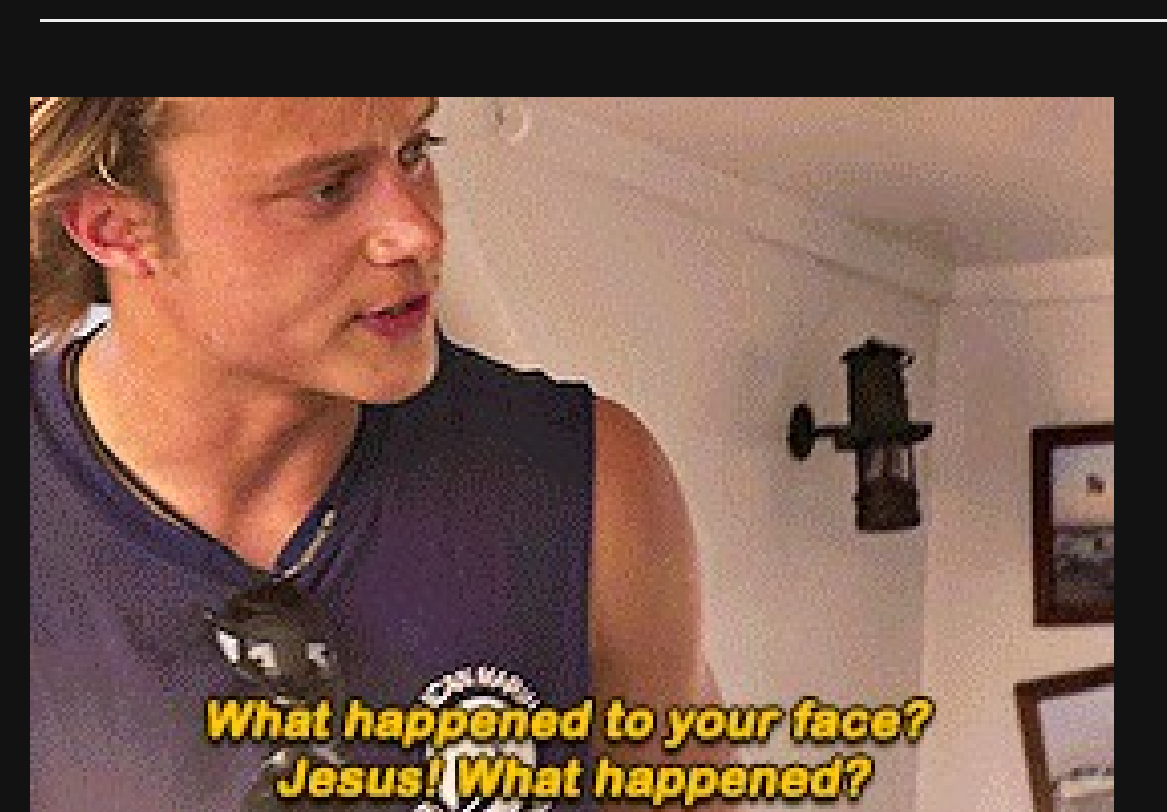
Chapter Twenty


What happened to your face?
Jesus! What happened?

I had a hard time falling asleep after everything. Thinking about JJ's homelife, JJ being all touchy feely, slow dancing with JJ, JJ calling me sweetheart all day. My mind was buzzing two hundred miles per hour and all centered on JJ. So, to say I was grumpy when no other than the blond himself came in to wake me up the next morning was a major understatement.

I begrudgingly changed into a swimsuit and met everyone at the dock.

"She lives!"

I flipped off my brother as Pope started to tell me about the drone thing.

JJ and Pope lowered it into the water, and I watched Pope test all the controls.

"Now, I need someone to test the camera."

JJ turned to me and smirked.

"You stay away from me," I warned, backing away from the blond who was grinning ear to ear.

"JJ, I swear to Go-" I cut myself off with a scream as JJ threw me over his shoulder and straight into the water.

The water was super cold in the morning, and it immediately woke me up. I kicked towards the surface and sputtered out some water that got in my mouth.

"I hate you."

"You look much more awake now," he said, smiling down at me from the ladder.

"I'm going to murder you in your sleep."

"Aw, you don't mean that, baby."

I glared at him to keep the blush off my face, and John B vaulted over the rail and landed with a splash.

"Pope needs us to test the camera," he said before diving under the water.

"Diver down," I saluted before diving down under the water.

John B found the drone and began brushing his teeth with his finger. I swam up to it, smiled as pretty as I could underwater, and forced my face into a frown before flipping off JJ and Pope, who I knew were watching. I kicked up to the surface and smiled fakely at JJ as he walked towards the rail.

"What would we do without you to control the drones?" I heard JJ ask as I climbed up the ladder.

"Technically, it's not a drone. It's an ROV."

"Shut up."

"Yeah, Pope it's too early for that," I said pulling myself out of the water, ducking under the rail to join the two on the dock.

I felt JJ's eyes on me but decided to ignore it.

"Hey, once we get footage of the wreck, we'll bring it to a lawyer in town and file a formal claim."

"It's such bullshit. Why do we have to do that?"

I stand next to JJ, leaning on the rail to let the morning sun begin to dry me off.

"Well, there is the maritime salvage law," I said, causing Pope to nod as he leaned on the rail next to me.

"Yeah, you can't just go to the ocean floor and scoop a bunch of stuff up."

"I know. I know. It's just lawyers aren't cheap, bro."

"Well, as soon as they see the footage of the wreck, they'll work for a comp," I assured, causing Kiara to scoff.

"How do you know that?"

"'Cause our dad said it, like, a million times," John B said, causing the girl to nod.

"Yeah, that's fair."

"This tether is, like, really long. In the wrong weather, it could get pushed around."

I closed my eyes and just enjoyed the sun.

"Then we'll go at dead calm."

"At slack tide?"

"So now, we just gotta wait around for the right weather."

A sound thunder rumbled off in the distance, causing me to open my eyes and stare at the clouds gathering off in the direction of the ocean.

"And today is not that day."

Everyone agreed and went up to the Chateau to get their stuff ready to go their separate ways, and I just plopped down on the dock with my feet dangling over the water.

I nearly screamed as someone plopped down next to me.

"Didn't mean to scare you."

My heart rate picked up slightly at the sound of JJ's voice.

"It's fine," I kept my reply short.

"Hey," he placed a hand on my bare shoulder, and I tensed. "Are you alright?"

"Yup, I'm great."

I started to fiddle with my fingers but stopped when I remembered what JJ said in the van yesterday. I shoved them under my thighs instead.

"You sure?"

I sighed.

"Yeah, I just didn't sleep well last night."

"Too excited about the merchant or something?"

I bit my lip.

"Yeah," I said and then muttered to myself. "Or something."

"Hey, Jo!"

JJ and I both turned around to see Pope waving his arms.

"What's up?" I shouted back.

"You still coming to help today?"

I grinned.

"Absolutely!"

I got to my feet and made my way toward the house, getting followed by a confused JJ.

"What are you helping him with today?"

"Stuff."

"Like, what kind of stuff?"

"A thing that he wanted help with."

"Josephine, I swear."

"Dude, chill out. It doesn't concern you."

"Can I come?"

"Did you not hear what I just said?"

"I chose to ignore it."

"You definitely cannot come."

Honestly, I did want to get away from JJ. Clear my head from the blond for a little bit and start thinking straight. I feel so confused about the vibes that he was putting off, and it was starting to make me feel on edge around him.

"What are you two bickering about?"

"I want to come and help, too, but she said I couldn't come."

"You sound like a child."

"Of course you can come."

"What!"

"Ha!"

I glared at the two boys and mumbled something about getting dressed before stomping into the house, cursing Pope's name under my breath the whole way to my room.

Once dressed in some jean shorts and a random Pelican Marina shirt I found on my floor that smelt clean, I met the boys back outside.

Pope asked if I could help him deliver some groceries for his dad, and once deciding I could keep my own tips, I agreed.

JJ, Pope, and I walked to Heyward's where the legend himself was waiting for us. We grabbed some groceries and climbed onto Heyward's boat as he began giving us directions.

"You guys get these groceries over to Figure Eight. Get straight back here when you're done. No Fishin'. I promised delivery by this afternoon."

I dropped my load before turning back to Heyward, holding my hands out for more bags.

"Rich folks don't wanna wait for you lazy sone of, oh. Thank you, Josephine."

I smiled and took the groceries he offered.

"Sons of bitches," Heyward finished, causing me to laugh.

Once all loaded up, Pope drove the boat while JJ fiddled with a knife, and I stood on the back of the boat, still not wanting to be near the blond boy.

I grabbed the order with a case of beers and a few odds and ends, telling the boys to meet back at the boat and not to leave without me. Pope promised he wouldn't leave without me.

I began walking through the golf course of the country club, having been told by Pope that these were the owner's groceries and that he just wanted them delivered to the entrance.

"Hey, what's up?"

I looked up from looking down in the sand and freeze when I see Rafe Cameron walking towards me with Topper close behind. I don't answer him as he points towards the case of beers with the grip of his golf club.

"Hey, how much for one of those beers?"

"They're not for sale."

I tried to walk around him, but he held up his club across my chest and pushed me back a few steps.

"Oh, wait, wait, wait. You can just give us one, then, right?"

I glared at both guys as Topper stood slightly behind Rafe.

"Or you can order one, like everybody else does."

I once again tried to walk past them, but Rafe pushed me back by placing a hand on my chest.

"You're not listening to me. Um, you've got so many, and we've got nothing."

"No, I don't think you're listening. These aren't for sale, and they're not mine. Now move."

Rafe shoved me back, causing me to almost fall over. He ripped the bags of groceries, causing a jar of pickles to shatter and the rest of the items to spill out into the sand.

"What the fuck?" I yelled, glaring at him. "You owe me for that."

"I don't owe you shit, Pogue." He spat out the last word as he tried to get into my face.

I shoved him as hard as I could before trying to make a run for it, but Topper grabbed onto the case of beer.

"We just want one of these beers! Just give us one of these-"

A tug of war for the case had ensued as I called them crazy and selfish douchebags, but Topper suddenly swung the case around, causing me to let go and trip, falling to the ground and rolling over a few times. I groaned as my forehead connected with a rock.

"Shit, my bad, Josephine."

I glared at him before lunging towards him, but Rafe intervened. He grabbed me by the throat and pinned me up against the nearest palm tree, lifting me up off my feet.

I clawed at his arm with my nails as Topper tried to get him to stop. I kicked upwards as hard as I could, hitting Rafe where the sun-don't-shine, and he dropped me. The kick unfortunately was only hard enough for him to stumble back a few steps and piss him off.

He charged back at me, grabbing my wrists in a death grip and pinning them above my head. He lumbered over me and leaned down and whispered in my ear.

"We don't want you here, bitch. You got that?"

"Let her go, man."

"Stay off Figure Eight, Pogue, and we won't have a problem."

I cried out as he suddenly squeezed my wrists, causing him to smirk, and he let go, picking up some of the spilled beer cans.

"See ya!"

Rafe walked away, and Topper just looked at me before following after him.

I just left the spilt groceries in the sand and began walking back towards the docks, wincing as I rubbed my wrists.

"Hey, Jo, how'd it-"

Pope stopped mid-sentence as I got onto the boat.

"What the hell happened?"

"Nothing."

"Josephine, you face is bleeding!"

"I'm fine, Pope."

"No, you're not."

"Rafe and Topper jumped me, okay?"

Pope's eyes widened as I yelled it out, tears building in my eyes.

"They destroyed the groceries, stole the beers, and left. I'm sorry."

Pope pulled me into a much needed hug and stroked my hair to try and calm down.

"When JJ finds out, he's gonna be pissed."

"No, no, no. You can't tell him." I said, pushing away from Pope. "I'm serious, you can't tell him, he'll just make the situation worse, please. Pope, please."

He hesitated, obviously not liking the idea of lying to his friend.

"Fine, but if he finds out on his own..." he trailed off, sending me a pointed look.

Pope helped me clean up the cut on my face and gave me a sweatshirt to cover up the already forming bruises on my wrists.

"Dudes, you are not going to believe what just happened to me!"

My eyes widened at JJ's voice coming form the dock, and I walked into the cabin, playing with my hair to try and hide the cut on my face.

"Whoo! That was the best one-hundred bucks I've ever made! When I say count me in on all these grocery deliveries, Pope, I mean it!"

Pope pulled way from the dock, and I walked to go sit on the bow of the boat. I sat by myself for five minutes before JJ came out and sat next to me.

"What's up with you?" He asked, and I could hear the note of concern in his voice.

I turned my head away from him and pulled the sweatshirt sleeves down to my fingers, hoping he wouldn't see the bruises.

"Nothing."

"If nothing's wrong, why won't you look at me?"

Shit, say something witty.

"I get tired of looking at your face sometimes, believe it or not."

Nice.

He didn't react, and I started fiddling with the sleeves of the sweatshirt.

"Jo-"

Before I could stop myself, I turned to face him.

"Look, JJ I'm fine, I'm just-"

"What happened to your face, Josephine?"

Fuck.

I tried to turn away from him, but he caught my chin and forced me to look at him.

"JJ-"

"Jesus!"

I pulled out of his grip and pushed some hair behind my ear, but JJ grabbed onto my wrist and pulled the sleeve down.

"What happened?"

I could tell that he was trying to keep control of his temper, but his voice shook with anger.

I pursed my lips as tears gathered in my eyes.

"Rafe and Topper jumped me and said no Pogues on their side of the island."

JJ stood up and started pacing in front of me, and I could see him clenching his jaw as his hands formed fists by his side. He suddenly whirled towards me with a fire in his blue eyes.

"What are you gonna do?"

"Not a God damned thing, JJ."

That answer only seemed to piss him off more.

"What?"

I flinched at his yell before standing up.

"If we retaliate, it's only going to make everything worse! You said it yourself, JJ. The Kooks always win, no matter what we do."

He finally looked down at me before pulling me into a tight embrace. I sighed and buried my face into his chest and wrapped my arms around his torso.

"I just don't like seeing you hurt," he whispered, leaning his chin on the top of my head. "What do you want me to do?"

I pulled away slightly, still keeping my arms around his waist.

"I honestly just want to sit with my best friend and relax before we meet up with Kie and John B."

He nodded before pulling me down to sit next to him. I leaned my head on his shoulder, closed my eyes, and enjoyed the sun on my face.

Continue reading next part