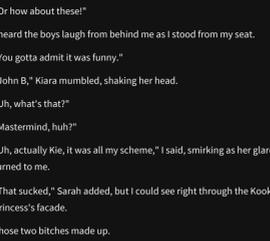
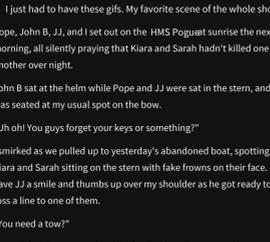


## Chapter Thirty-Five



I just had to have these gifs. My favorite scene of the whole show! Pope, John B, JJ, and I set out on the HMS Pogue at sunrise the next morning, all silently praying that Kiara and Sarah hadn't killed one another over night.

John B sat at the helm while Pope and JJ were sat in the stern, and I was seated at my usual spot on the bow.

"Uh oh! You guys forget your keys or something?"

I smirked as we pulled up to yesterday's abandoned boat, spotting Kiara and Sarah sitting on the stern with fake frowns on their face. I gave JJ a smile and thumbs up over my shoulder as he got ready to toss a line to one of them.

"You need a tow?"

I raised the plugs in my clenched fist, holding them up in the air.

"Or how about these!"

I heard the boys laugh from behind me as I stood from my seat.

"You gotta admit it was funny."

"John B," Kiara mumbled, shaking her head.

"Uh, what's that?"

"Mastermind, huh?"

"Uh, actually Kie, it was all my scheme," I said, smirking as her glare turned to me.

"That sucked," Sarah added, but I could see right through the Kook Princess's facade.

Those two bitches made up.

"You still love us though, right?" JJ asked as he tossed Kiara the line.

"You still hate me?" John B asked Sarah as I climbed onto the other boat to fix what we broke yesterday.

"A little. We're both gonna get you back when you least expect it."

"Is that a threat or a promise, Cameron?" I yelled over my shoulder as I entered the cabin.

"Definitely a promise!"

"I for one, welcome the challenge."

"Me too."

"So, did you guys, you know?"

"Reconcile our differences? Not even close."

"But, we're willing to work together."

I rolled my eyes.

"One of you ass monkeys get in here and help me!"

JJ was the first one to join me as we fixed the alternator plugs, and Pope was the one to start it up without any problems.

Kiara and Sarah joined John B on the HMS Pogue and Pope, JJ, and I got Pope's dad's boat back to the store before opening. We all took the HMS Pogue back to the Chateau before gathering our supplies and heading to the Crain House.

"Alright, you guys got rope?" John B asked from the passenger seat as I drove.

"Got it," Pope answered.

"Grappling hook?"

"We don't have a grappling hook. We're not Batman."

"No, but we should totally have a grappling hook," I added, meeting Pope's glare with a bright smile in the rearview mirror.

John B keeps listing o supplies until I pull up outside of the familiar wall a er the sun went down.

"Pulley?"

"Check," Kiara said, sounding annoyed now.

"Dark clothes?"

"Got it," Sarah added, pulling at her black sweatshirt.

"Flashlights?"

"Check," JJ chimed in.

John B opened his mouth to ask for another thing, but I break checked him, e ectively shutting him up and causing him to glare at me.

"I think we got everything, bro."

"Let's go get rich, guys."

I smiled as I turned o the van and jumped onto the gravel road. I went around to the side to take some of the flashlights but stopped my friends from getting out.

"Uh, listen guys."

They all stopped collecting items and moving around and looked up at me.

"We wanna say thank you, guys. Seriously," John B said, throwing his arm around my shoulder, and I nodded in agreement. "It means a lot to us that you're here tonight."

"Always," Kiara said with a genuine smile and a playful role of her eyes.

"Of course, man," Pope added, doing the signature handshake.

Sarah simply nodded.

"Alright, we done with the circle jerk? Can we go do this?"

I glared at JJ before smiling at him.

"Oh, you mean you don't wanna stay for the group orgy?" I asked, gesturing to everyone sitting in the van.

He stood up, poked me in the side, causing me to squeal, and jumped out of the van.

"Let's go get that wheat out of the water."

"Weed? I'm up for weed."

"Wheat. I said wheat."

I let the rest of my friends climb over the wall first before joining them. We all followed behind John B in a single file line, Sarah behind my brother, then Kiara, Pope, JJ, and I brought up the rear.

A light suddenly flashed on, covering us in light and making us visible to each other.

"Shit!"

"Go, go, go, go."

"Flashlights!"

JJ grabbed my hand and pulled me down behind him as we all crouched behind some bushes. I squeezed his hand and rested my other one on his back.

"Okay, so she has motion sensor lights," Pope stated the obvious.

"We could, uh, move really slowly, maybe?"

"JJ, your blond is showing."

"Shut up, Jo."

"That's not how it works, JJ."

"Oh, shit," John B exclaimed, gaining our attention. "Let's throw a rock at it."

"What?"

"That's a really good idea. Let the ave murderer know that we're here," Kiara deadpanned, voice full of sarcasm.

"Throw a rock at it?" Pope asked, not believing that was the best idea that John B could come up with.

"You have a better idea?"

"Yeah, literally anything but that," I said, shrugging my shoulders.

JJ tried to hide a laugh and squeezed me hand.

"What about the breaker? In the circuit box on the porch."

"Oo, that might work," I said, pointing at Sarah.

"We used to play hide-and-seek here as kids, and, if we were brave enough, we'd go all the way up to the porch. I've seen it."

"No, no. You're not going in the house alone."

I sco ed.

"Watch me," Sarah said, already getting to her feet.

"Crain chops people into pieces," JJ added unhelpfully, causing me to slap him on the back.

"If you believe that, but she's like what, eighty-five?"

"Yeah, somethin' like that."

"She's probably barely still kicking."

"She's got a point."

"I'll go with her."

I nodded to Kiara, silently thanking her.

"We'll wait for your signal."

I scrunched my eyebrows in confusion.

"What the hell do you want them to do, Pope? Scream out 'caw-caw'?"

Kiara laughed as she stood up.

"Hey! Be safe."

I can see Sarah smile at John B's words.

"We will."

JJ grabs Pope's face with his free hand, turning the boy to face him.

"Be safe."

I laughed as JJ used the so est voice I've ever heard.

"I'll be so safe," Pope returned, placing his hands on JJ's face. "I'll be safe for you."

"Can you guys stop? Stop. I'm gonna kill you."

"But how would that keep us safe?"

I couldn't keep in the full, belly laugh that erupted, and buried my face into JJ's back to try and muffle it.

"Shut up, Roo!"

I waved o my brother as I tried to control the laughs, very unsuccessfully. I could feel JJ's muscles shudder as he tried to cover his own laughter.

A few minutes later, we watched Kiara and Sarah disappear inside the house. That can't be good.

"They said when Hollis disappeared--"

"That you should shut the e up!"

I li ed my head from JJ's back to stare at an obviously panicking Pope and reached out with my hand not holding onto JJ's.

"Hey," I said, placing my hand on Pope's shoulder. "It's gonna be okay."

There a moment of tense silence before the light in front of us turns o.

"They did it. Go time."

"Three, two..."

John B started counting down our departure, but the three of us stood up and walked towards the basement entrance before he finished. I heard him sigh as he stood to follow.

We get into the basement, and Pope started setting up the pulley while JJ started unrolling the rope.

"Holy crap, do you know what this is? It just hit me."

I turn from my nervous gaze down the well and faced JJ.

"This is C.H.U.D. Full C.H.U.D."

"What the hell is that?"

"Cannibalistic humanoid underground dwellers? Have you guys not seen that film?"

I purse my lips and glare at the blond.

"Yeah, thanks, JJ. I really wanna be thinking about cannibals that live underground as you three lower me into a fucking well."

"It's actually a good film."

I rolled my eyes.

"It's about like cannibals that live in the sewers and under New York City, and it's like--"

"Shut up," I interrupt, giving him my best what-the-hell face.

John B started lowering the rope down the well.

"How deep do you think this is, Pope?"

"I don't know."

I groaned.

"Why do I have to be the one to go down there?" I whined to JJ as the two others start trying to guess how deep the well is.

"Because you're the lightest."

"That's not fair."

JJ stopped messing with the rope long enough to make sure my brother and Pope were busy and give me a quick peck on the lips.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. I won't let you fall."

Once all situated, I put my foot through a loop in the end of the rope while the boys all took a part of the line.

"Hey, dudes. One request: don't drop me."

Both John B and Pope fake letting go of the rope, causing me to drop a few inches, and my heart skipped a beat.

"You two are gonna die first, for sure."

"Don't worry, Jojo. I got you," JJ said from the back, sending me a wink as they started lowering me down the well.

I cast one last nervous look at my three friends as they disappear out of my sight. I kicked away from the sides of the well as they slowly let out more and more rope.

"Keep going!" I yelled up when they paused.

Suddenly, my feet slip down the wall, and instead of the nice, slow pace I was descending at, I went into a free fall. I let out a scream as I tried to reach out and grab hold of something. Just as suddenly, I'm yanked to a stop, and I grab onto the rope with both of my hands, having dropped my flashlight, and glared up at the top of the well.

"Jo?"

"I only asked for one fucking thing, and you three couldn't even do that!"

"Sorry!"

"You good, Jo?"

"What the hell was that?" I asked, trying to steady my breathing and slow my heart rate back to semi-normal.

"Little technical di culties."

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

"Okay, keep going. This time, for real, don't fucking drop me."

Pope warned me before they continued lowering me down. I gripped tightly onto the rope and kept kicking o the slimy wall.

"Hey, we got fi een feet le I Are you getting close to the bottom?"

I tried to look below me, but, with no flashlight, it was hard to see.

"I can't really tell. Just keep going."

They lowered me down a few more feet, and I noticed something below me.

"Hey, stop a sec."

I stopped moving down.

"I'm hangin' over some sewage-water looking shit."

"You want back up?"

I sighed.

"Fuck me, keep going."

I cringed as my sneaker went into the water soon followed by my legs and then my torso and then my chest. My feet touched the bottom as the water reached my shoulders, and I clung onto the rope.

"I'm at bottom."

"How is it down there?"

"Oh, it's like an oasis down here. Would you like to join?" I growl out, glaring up at what I assume are their three faces.

I began poking around with my foot, and the toe of my sneaker kicked something.

"What's this," I mutter to myself.

I tried to li it up with my foot but couldn't get it onto of my shoe. I frowned at the water.

"This is gonna suck."

I took a deep breath before closing my eyes and plunging under the water. I blindly grabbed the object and li ed my head back out of the water, wiping drops from my eyes.

I examined the thing in my hand, my eyes widening when I realized what it was.

A human mandible.

"JJ?"

My scream echoes o the walls of the well as I dropped the lower jaw bone back into the water.

"JJ! Pull me up!"

My panicked yells bounced around my ears, causing them to ring as my anxiety suddenly sky rocketed.

"JJ, please! Get me out of here!"

I began trying to climb the wall to try and help them get me out of the well faster, but my hand pulled out some loose stones, causing me to lose my grip and swing away from it.

"Shit!"

I tried using the hole I created for leverage, when I noticed that the more stones that fell the more a passage was being revealed.

"Wait, wait, wait! Stop!"

I dug in the pocket of my shorts and pulled out JJ's lighter that I confiscated earlier at the Chateau. The light faintly lit up the passage.

"Dudes, I think I found something."

I li ed myself into the passage and began crawling through the tight space, slipping my foot out of the loop in the rope. It suddenly opened up into a larger tunnel. I took a deep breath before pulling myself into it. I eloshed through mud, feeling it soak into my clothes and get into my shoes. I tried to ignore the amount getting on my face.

Something shiny gained my attention. I ran my rand over a mound of something in front of me, knocking the loose mud o of it, and grabbed a small piece of something. I was shocked at how heavy it was.

I squinted in the dim light as I held up the rectangular object closer to my face and tried to clear the rest of the mud away.

"Holy fuck."

I was holding a bar of gold with a bundle of wheat stamped into it.

I felt tears gather in my eyes as I shoved it into my pocket and picked up a few more bars.

"We did it, dad," I found myself muttering as I put the newly collected pieces into my pockets.

I uncovered the rest of the mounds, smiling as more gold reflected the light of the lighter.

"Hey, Josephine, get back on the rope!"

I began climbing back through the tunnel and attached the rope back to my leg.

"I found the gold!"

I couldn't keep my excitement in any longer as I slid myself out of the tunnel. The rope gives a little at my sudden weight, but I soon began to rise up as my friends pull on it.

A loud sound from above caused me to jump as I heard my friends scream and felt the rope stop moving.

"Guys!"

I began to fall again.

"JJ!"

"Jo, you gotta climb up!"

"What!"

"Climb up!"

I heard another loud noise before I started climbing, being careful of where I put my hands and feet. It only took me a few minutes before I grab the top of the well and li my head up. I nearly scream.

Mrs. Crain held a shotgun in her hands and was shooting at my friends as they all ran out of the basement. I watch John B shove into her, knocking her onto her side, before running out. I heaved myself out of the well and went into a full out sprint out of the basement behind my friends, letting out a yell of excitement as my adrenaline fueled my muscles.

I ran through the yard, hearing the van start up. I jumped over the wall just as Mrs. Crain fires another shot just to my right. I start running a er the moving van.

"Jo, run, run, run!"

I ran a er the van, reaching out for Kiara and Sarah's outreached hands. I grabbed onto them, and the two of them heaved me into the van and closed the door.

"JJ, drive!"

"Go, man!"

"Oh, my God!"

I laughed as I wiped some of the mud from my face.

"Are you okay? Are you shot?"

I shook my head at JJ's questions as he pealed away from the Crain house.

"I think I'd know if I was shot, right?"

"You look disgusting."

I rolled my eyes at Pope.

"I'm fully aware, thank you."

"God, you smell like ass."

"What the hell just happened?"

"All-time Pogue Hall of Fame, baby."

"That bitch is possessed."

"That bitch can't aim."

"How does she move that fast?"

I ignored the rest of my friends banter, reaching into my pocket and pulling out a single bar of gold. I ran my thumb over it, clearing some of the mud o of it before smiling up at Sarah.

"No, you didn't!"

"Yeah, I did!"

"We did it, baby!"

"No, you didn't!"

"Oh, my God!"

We all bursted into excited screams as I held up the bar of gold. JJ started pounding on the roof, Pope was dancing in his seat, John B took the bar from me, and Sarah was all but screeching.

"Wait, wait!"

We all froze at Kiara's words.

"Guys, we're gonna be rich!"

"Full Kook!"

My friends started chanting, and, despite me not wanting to ever be a Kook, I found myself joining in with the excitement. The words turned into just noises of celebration, and the van bounced as we all literally bounced up and down in our seats.