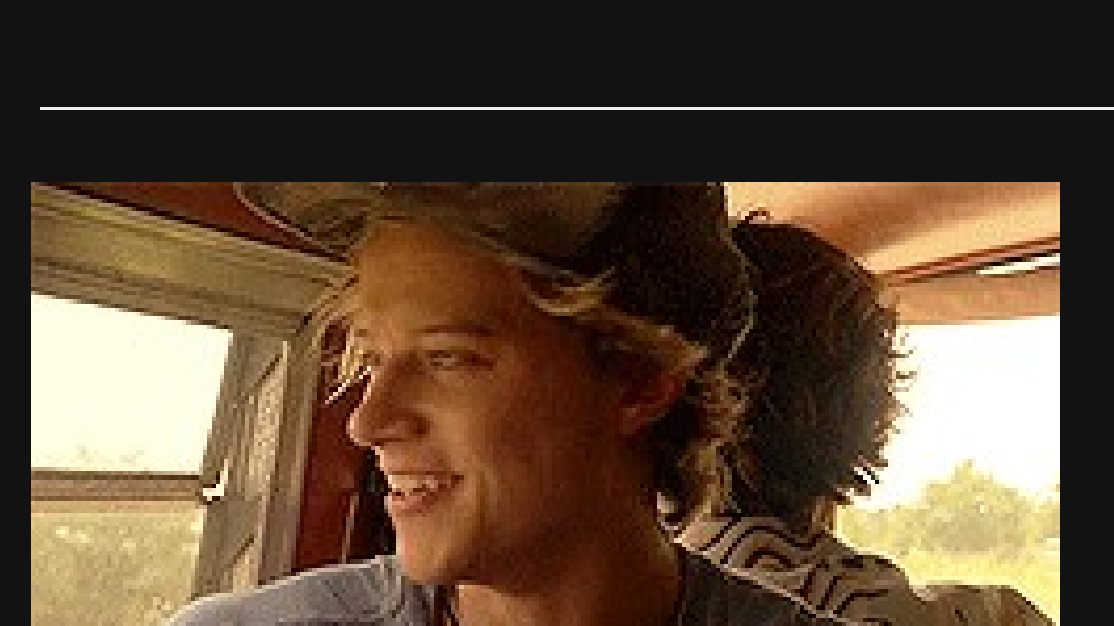
Chapter Thirty-Seven



In the morning, Pope came rushing into my room, announcing John B had a plan for the gold bars I had brought up the night before.

JJ groaned next to me, pulling me tighter into his side as Pope left the room.

"Is it just me, or does it feel like we just fell asleep?"

I hummed in agreement, feeling like I needed ten RedBulls just to get myself out of bed.

"Let's go!"

We both groaned at Pope's shout of encouragement and crawled out of bed.

I narrowed my eyes at the brightness of the sun, guessing it to be late morning. JJ, like a true gentleman, raced me to the bathroom and stole it. When he was finished, I quickly brushed my teeth and ran a comb through my hair and took a second to poke at the patches of purple patches under my eyes.

This is as good as it's gonna get today.

I left the bathroom with a sigh, surprised that JJ was waiting for me. He spared a glance towards the living room before grabbing my waist and pulling me into him and pressing his lips against mine.

I couldn't help but smile into the kiss as my hands found their way into his hair.

"Mornin'," he mumbled.

"Morning."

We quickly pulled away from each other as I heard Pope yell that Kiara was here. I shouted that I was coming before giving JJ a disappointed look.

"At least I waited for the both of us to brush our teeth."

I laughed, running a hand over my face.

"You're an idiot."

"Yeah," he said, closing the space between us again. "But, I'm your idiot."

He placed a quick kiss against my cheek before making his way outside to join our friends. I took a second to wipe the childish grin off my face before following after him.

John B and Sarah had just pulled up in the van when I walked off the porch.

"Sup, bro?"

John B nodded his greeting, and I returned the friendly smile that Sarah was giving me.

"Hey, Jo, does this look about right?"

I took the piece of paper that Pope had run to give me, and I try not to laugh at the kiddish drawing that was on it.

"Uh, yeah. That's pretty spot on."

I handed it off to Sarah as she made her way to Kiara and walked over to where John B was working on the pulley, following Pope.

Pope stopped working and stared off towards the van, and I didn't miss the goofy smile on his face.

"Hey, uh, you wanna help?"

Pope returned to Earth as John B spoke.

"Yeah."

"Great."

"We get this boat winch out, bring it to the basement, drill into the floor, we lower you down,"Pope explained, pointing to me with the wrench in his hand. "And get as much as we can. And, uh, this time we don't drop you."

I laughed.

"Yeah, I'd prefer that, thanks."

"Kie! This better work."

I turned back towards the van to see JJ walking up to it. Seeing that the two boys had the pulley under control, I made my way over to the van.

"We can't pawn this if there's a giant wheat symbol on it."

Kiara grabbed the blowtorch and held it up in front of her.

"It's gonna work."

After setting up the camping grill and an old cooking pot, Kiara, with safety glasses on, used the blowtorch to start melting the three bars of gold.

I couldn't help but smile as I watched the solid gold start to liquify. JJ, standing next to me, turned to give Pope a double high-five before throwing his arm around my shoulder and squeezing me into his side.

Unfortunately, the gold didn't look so pretty once we were done. The three gold bars had turned into one single golden turd.

I drove the six of us into town, pulling up to the pawn shop. We all climbed out of the van.

"Hell of a job melting it down, Dr. Frankenstein," JJ quipped towards Kiara who rolled her eyes.

"Like you could've done better."

"I could have," he argued, holding up the gold. "I took a welding class."

"You took, when?"

"Hey, guys!"

They both turned to look at me.

"Chill out, okay?" John B added from next to me.

JJ rolled his eyes.

"Easy for you to say. You're not the one that has to pawn this piece of shit off."

"Relax, JJ," I said, wrapping an arm around his torso as we began making our way to the door.

"How did I get this job anyway?"

"'Cause you're the best liar."

I hummed in agreement with Pope as JJ pulled open the door for the two of us.

The bell over the door jingled as JJ and I walked in first, I kept my arm around his torso as the two of us walked up to the counter.

"Afternoon, ma'am."

The lady at the counter turned toward us at JJ's voice.

"Afternoon."

"I see you buy gold."

"That's what the sign say, don't it."

"Well," JJ said, slinging his backpack off. "I sure hope you buy a lot of it, because I'm about to blow your mind."

I let my arm fall to my side as he put his bag onto the counter and began rooting around for the gold.

"I ain't got much mind left to blow, so have at it."

"How about them gold apples?"

I watched the lady's reaction and was amused when she laughed in disbelief.

"That ain't real."

"That ain't real?"

"It can't be."

"Feel how heavy it is."

The pawnbroker struggled to scoot it off the counter, shocked by its weight.

"Let's get some light on that," JJ mused when she picked up a magnifying glass with a light built into it.

"Spray-painted tungsten," she concluded.

"Spray-painted tungsten? Really? Okay. Why don't you see how, uh, soft it is?"

"You mind?" She asked as she picked up a chisel and hammer.

"No, go for it."

She gave the chisel a good hit with the hammer and looked shocked when it didn't shatter.

"See, malleable," I said, and she poked the dent she made.

"Hold your horses," she said, a little agitated. "We ain't got to the acid test yet."

JJ threw his arm over my shoulder, and I returned mine to around his waist.

"Ooh! The acid test. My favorite."

She used a dropper to drop some acid onto the gold turd.

"Well, it ain't plated, and it ain't painted."

"Ma'am, I'm telling ya, this is as real as the day is long."

"It looks like somebody tried to melt it down."

I froze.

"My mom. She had all this jewelry laying around the house, and she thought it was best to, to melt it down. To "consolidate" it."

See, best liar.

"Seven pounds? That's a lot of earrings."

"Okay, to be honest, ma'am. This young woman and I are trying to go to Vegas to elope."

I tried to keep the surprise off my face and tried to ignore the probably questioning looks from our friends around the store.

"Our parents don't support it, and it's really hard to get across the country at our age."

The lady sighed, looking between JJ and me.

"Fine. Give me a minute."

"Take your time, ma'am," JJ said, pressing a kiss to the top of my head.

When the lady disappeared, I pressed my fingers into JJ's side.

"Eloping? That's the first thing you could come up with?" I whisper-yelled, halfway amused and halfway freaking out.

"Yeah."

I tried to think of something to say to his simple response, but the lady came back out.

"So, I, uh, talked to my boss."

"And?"

"And, uh, this is what I can do."

She handed JJ a piece of paper.

"Fifty thousand? You think I walked in here not knowin' the spot price? Ma'am, I know for a fact this is worth one-forty, at least."

The lady smirked at him.

"Well, sweetie, you in a pawnshop. This ain't Zurich. Do I look Swiss to you?"

JJ scratched at his face in frustration.

"Ninety, or I walk."

Seventy," she countered. "Half price, and, um, I don't ask questions about where you got this."

I tapped JJ's side twice.

"I'm gonna need that in large denominations, please."

I smiled.

"Well, here's the snag."

Smile gone.

"I don't have that much denominated, not here anyway. I can write you a cashiers check."

"Cash... No, ma'am. I wan't the cold hard. That's what that sign says, cash for gold, and that's what I expect. I'm gonna get it in cold hard."

"Well, I have to send you to the warehouse. I have the money there. Is that all right?"

"Where's this warehouse?"

The pawnbroker gave us the directions, and I couldn't help but tap the steering wheel nervously as I drove down the road.

Something seemed off about that lady.

"So they keep money out here?" Pope asked, and I began chewing the inside of my cheek as I looked for the road.

"That's what she said."

He laughed before continuing.

"Ha, that's what she said."

"Stop."

I could feel JJ look at me as Pope and I spoke at the same time. He grabbed my tapping hand off the steering wheel and held it tightly in his own.

"I've never even heard of Resurrection Drive."

"'Cause you're rich."

"You've never heard of it either."

I smiled a little at hearing Kiara defend Sarah.

"There's nothing but weeds back here."

JJ squeezed my hand.

"Alright, just 'cause it's just weeds, doesn't mean it's, like..." he trailed off, not knowing what else to say.

A siren went off behind us, and I look in the rearview mirror to see a cop car with its lights flashing.

"Cops? Out here?"

"God! Are you kidding me?"

"I wasn't even going over the speed limit!"

My voice came out high and panicky as JJ was shouting in frustration. JJ threw the gold turd to John B, telling him to stash it.

"JJ, did you bring the gun?"

JJ glared at my brother.

"No, okay? Everybody told me to leave it back at the place."

"Thank God."

"How much weed do you have on you, bro?"

I accepted my driver's license and the van's registration from JJ and turned toward the cop as he walked up to my window, but instead of seeing a person in uniform, a gun was pointed right in my face.

I froze, unable to even blink as the guy wearing a skull bandana over the lower part of his face cocked the gun.

"Why don't I go ahead and see them hands in the air?"

I did as he said, my license and registration still in one of them.

"All y'all's hands up in the air now!"

The guy shoved the gun closer to my face, and I stopped breathing.

"You, out of the car! Let's go!"

My eyes widened in terror as he motioned for me to get out, and I dropped my license and registration to the floor of the van.

"Jo-"

"Shut up! Get out of the car, pretty girl. Let's go!"

I slowly used one hand to push open the door, not daring to take my eyes off the gun.

"Let them out!"

I walked towards the back door, meeting JJ's eyes through the windshield.

"What are you waitin' on, bitch? Let them out!"

Tears began to fall from my eyes as I felt the gun's barrel pressed into my back. He kept it there as I slid open the door.

"All y'all. Go on! Let's get out the car! Let's go!"

I took a step away from the door, allowing for my friends to get out.

"We're broke-"

"Shut the hell up!" The guy yelled, interrupting JJ as he got out.

"Alright! Just relax!"

I cried out, taking a step towards JJ as the gun was pushed into his chest.

"Shut the hell up! Shut up!"

The guy pushed him backward until we were all standing in a line.

"I'll blow your damn head off!"

I cried out as he reached forward and grabbed onto my bicep, squeezing it painfully, and pointed the gun at my head.

"I'll blow her damn head off!"

JJ stopped yelling.

"Lay down in the ditch! On your goddamn hands and knees! Down!"

"Let her go first."

"I'll let her go when I damn well please, now put your face on the ground before I splatter her brains all over the side of the road!"

I watched through my blurry vision as all my friends put themselves onto the ground.

"Put your head down! Don't let me see you look up, alright? That's all y'all gotta do."

I watched JJ start hitting the ground as the guy pulled me into the van with him.

"Any of you move, I'll blow her head off!"

He pushed me down onto the bench seat before tearing through the van.

I rubbed the sore spot on my arm and watched as he pulled JJ's bag out from under the seat, then the gold. He grabbed me by my arm and threw me out of the van. I landed on my hands and knees in front of Pope.

"Join your friends, pretty girl. On your face."

I crawled in-between JJ and Pope, and JJ immediately pulled me into him and covered most of me with his body, wrapping his arms around my shoulders so they gripped both my trembling hands at my chest and whispering that everything was okay as I began to sob silently.

"Alright, y'all stay like that. Unless you want your brains blown out all over this road, don't move your goddamn heads, okay?"

I heard his feet walking away from us then the car door shut then a familiar voice.

"Guys, I got the gun!"

JJ's weight disappeared at the sound of John B's voice, and I lifted my head to see him and the rest of my friends running towards the cop car. I got to my feet just as JJ threw his first punch.

The guy threw JJ to the ground, but Kiara shoved him. John B got out of the back of the car as the dude shoved Kiara back, and I ran up and threw a punch at his face. He fell, not expecting it, and Sarah began hitting him with the car door. I helped JJ get to his feet as John B pulled down the bandana.

"I know this piece of shit!"

I looked to JJ, shocked.

"He's a basehead!"

"Probably knows my brother," Sarah said, running a hand through her hair.

"He sells coke to my dad."

"Listen, I could've hurt any single one of y'all-"

JJ cut him off my hitting him with the butt of his own gun.

I pushed JJ back, placing both hands on his chest.

"Dude, chill, man," Pope yelled.

I tried to keep the blond back, but he easily brushed me aside and stormed back up to him.

"JJ, please," I tried to beg him not to do anything more.

He seemed to hesitate before reaching into the dude's pocket and pulling out his wallet.

"Come on, let's get outta here," John B said, standing next to his best friend.

JJ pulled something from the wallet before throwing it back at the guy.

"We got one last stop," JJ said before shoving John B away with one arm, causing my brother to stumble back. "Let's go see where this son of a bitch lives."

JJ stormed off toward the van, and I followed, having to jog slightly to keep up with his angry strides, and ignored the guys angry yells.

"JJ, wait."

The blond slowed down at my voice but didn't stop. He got into the driver's seat, and I made my way into the passenger seat as the others got into the back.

The whole car was silent.

JJ was clenching his jaw and tapping his hand against the steering wheel. I reached forward and grabbed one of his hand, intertwining my fingers with his. His jaw relaxed slightly, but I could still see the tension in his face and feel it in his hand.

Continue reading next part