

Chapter Forty-Eight



Fun fact, sleeping on a table with nothing but napkins to cushion your head doesn't make for a good night's sleep. At least, judging by the look on Pope's face, it didn't look very restful.

I didn't get much sleep at all, mostly just leaning up against the screened window and watching the stars. JJ stayed up most of the night too but fell asleep a few hours before dawn. He got a few hours more sleep than I did.

I rested my head against the window, having been faking being asleep to avoid JJ nagging me, and listened to him flick his lighter open and closed.

I listened as Pope walked closer.

"He's pinched for sure, man."

"No. They wouldn't still be patrolling if they caught him."

"Let's hope."

"You know, we were in that car. They're probably looking for us, too."

"Ever the ray of sunshine in the morning, Kie," I said, opening my eyes but avoiding eye contact with everyone.

"Well, if we're gonna be outlaws, we might as well help John B."

"So, find him before they do?"

"Pope?" I got to my feet as he pulled the keys to JJ's dirt bike out of his backpack.

"I'm gonna get gas for the boat."

"Hey, you be careful, okay?" Kiara said, but Pope ignored her and turned toward JJ and I.

"Meet me at the dock at three. Don't be late."

JJ and I shared a knowing look as Kiara walked out a er Pope.

"Okay, what is your problem?" I heard Kiara ask as JJ and I followed a er the two.

"No problem, o icer. I'm just doing my job."

"Look, I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings."

She tried to say more, but every time she spoke, Pope revved the engine.

"That's a dick move," I muttered, shaking my head.

He took o without another word just as a helicopter flew over.

"Who the hell is that?" JJ asked.

"I don't know, but it can't be good."

The three of us headed back inside the restaurant, Kiara obviously upset. She turned on the radio before going into the back to grab some boxes.

I turned to JJ as he chuckled.

"What?" I asked, unable to hid my smile at the sight of his.

"This is the song we danced to a er stealing the drone."

I nodded, my smile growing as I listened to the catchy tune. JJ held out his hand, and I laughed as I took it. He pulled me into his chest, gripping my hand in his and placing his other one on my waist. We slowly swayed to the upbeat song. I placed my free hand on his shoulder, and he pressed a quick kiss to my forehead before resting his cheek on the top of my head.

"Thank you," I whispered.

"For what?"

"For, just, being here."

He let out a laugh through his nose, and I closed my eyes before pressing my face into his chest.

"What happens if I go with John B?"

JJ froze, and I didn't look up at him.

That thought had been plaguing me all night. What would happen if I went with my brother down to Mexico? What would happen if I stayed here? Would Ward still be my legal guardian? Would he threaten me because of what happened? Would Rafe do something?

"I would miss you like crazy."

Tears gathered behind my closed eyes, and my chin began to wobble.

"You could come, too."

JJ cleared his throat, and that was when I finally looked at him.

His eyes were a little misty, and he had a far o look in his face.

"We could live just like you said in the van, surfing all day, eating what we catch, and just live our life."

He nodded.

"What happens if you stay?"

I bit my lip and shook my head before resting it back against his chest.

"I don't know."

"So, I got some box-"

JJ and I quickly pulled away from each other and turned towards Kiara. She looked a little confused as she held a couple of boxes in her hands.

I quickly wiped under my eyes.

"So, what are we gonna pack for John B?"

"We have some canned stu that we've had for a long time."

I nodded and began helping, working with JJ to pile the things she was tossing at us into boxes.

"You sure he wasn't just being weird Pope?" JJ asked a er Kiara described what happened at the Cameron's house last night.

"It wasn't really the kind of thing that needed interpretation," she said, casting a glance toward me.

"Is that gonna be enough food for them?"

I quickly looked away from Kiara and down to the two boxes in front of JJ and I.

"I think we have enough for them to last for a couple of weeks."

"And that's all they need, so," JJ added, his voice low and quiet. He wouldn't look me in the eye.

"Look, I think I actually hurt his feelings."

"Don't beat yourself up too much. He's completely changed his feels. The past twenty-four hours have been like Jekyll and Hyde."

I grabbed one box of food o the counter and JJ grabbed the other. We both followed a er Kiara as she grabbed her keys and walked outside to her car.

"I hate to admit it, but I miss the old Pope. At least I knew what to expect from him."

"Where you been?"

I froze from behind JJ as I looked up from putting my box in the trunk, seeing Kiara's mom.

"Uh, I'm fine. I slept here."

"Well, we were up half the night, scared to death, lookin' for you. Were you even gonna tell us?"

I half hid myself behind JJ as Kiara's mom's voice got louder.

"Well, I'm telling you right now."

"Alright, what the hell are you three up to?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Anna, we just gotta go," JJ said before grabbing my arm and pulling me to the other side of the car.

"No, I'm sorry. Absolutely not. Have you heard what's going on?"

JJ opened the passenger door and all but pushed me into the seat before shutting the door and getting in the back.

I closed my eyes as I heard Kiara and her mom begin to yell at each other, guilt clawing its way into my stomach.

"Honey, have you seen the storm coming in? This is not safe!"

"I'm sorry, Mom. I have to go!"

"These cops are armed, Kiara. You're gonna get yourself shot!"

"I have to go!"

Kiara got in and started the car.

"I am not letting you do this!"

"Mom, John B needs me!"

"Kiara, you need to stay here."

"I understand. I'll be careful."

She closed the door, but her mom pounded on her window.

"Kiara, open this door!"

Tears gathered in my eyes as I heard the desperation and fear in her mom's voice.

"Right now, Kiara! This is not safe! Stop!"

Kiara drove away, leaving her mother behind.

The car was silent until Kiara pulled out onto the road.

"I'm sorry, Kie."

I turned to watch her take a deep breath as she stared at the road in front of her. She simple nodded and kept driving. I hung my head and began fiddling with my fingers in my lap.