

Chapter Five



I woke up to fingers running through my hair and blinked against the light of the sun multiple times before meeting bright blue eyes.

"We're at the dock," JJ whispered down to me, and I nodded.

I sat up, my head leaving JJ's very comfortable lap, and noticed that we were the last two on the HMS Pogue

I stood and stretched with my arms going over my head. I turned around to see JJ staring at me.

"Um, where's everyone else?"

I tucked a piece of hair behind my ear and tried to hide the blush that was creeping up on my face.

While JJ was my best friend, I was not blind. JJ is quite attractive with the blond hair, blue eyes, and tanned skin. But rules are rules. No Pogue-on-Pogue macking.

"They're up there already."

I nodded silently before making my way off the boat and up the dock, quickly spotting the rest of our friends. I stood behind Kiara, and JJ stood next to me, wrapping an arm around my shoulder as someone was being pushed in a gurney. A woman ran up to it, crying.

"Who's that?"

I looked to my brother and then to the blonde girl who began speaking.

"It's Scooter Grubbs. He was out during the storm. Check out his pic I got. Dead body."

I looked up to JJ with wide eyes, and he returned the look.

"What kind of boat did he have?" JJ asked the girl without breaking eye contact with me.

"Somehow, that dirtbag copped a brand new Grady-White. Everyone's out looking for it."

We all agreed to head back to the Chateau after that, knowing we needed to discuss some things. Like what the hell we were going to do with the information that we now had.

Pope ran up to the porch, having needed to stop by home first.

"Okay," he panted as he threw the door open. "So, um, we didn't see anything. We don't know anything."

I looked up from the book I was reading on the couch, feet propped up in Kiara's lap.

"We need to have total and complete amnesia."

Pope sat on the arm of the couch next to my head, and I nodded in agreement.

"Actually, Pope's right for once," JJ said, finally stopping fiddling loudly with his lighter. "See, I agree with you sometimes."

JJ stood up from the recliner.

"Deny, deny, deny," he spouted, pointing at Kiara, Pope, and I with each 'deny' as he walked up to John B.

"Guys, we can't keep that money," Kiara suddenly spoke up, and I raised an eyebrow at her from over the top of my book.

"Okay, not all of us can afford unlimited data plans, Kiara," JJ argued.

"He's got a point, Kie," I added.

"We have to pass that off to Lana Grubbs. Otherwise, it's bad karma."

"Bad karma to be implicated in a felony, too. We got to go dark."

"Shut up, Pope. You're just worried about your scholarship."

Pope retaliated by flicking me in the forehead.

"If that means we get to keep the money, then I agree," JJ stated, once again flicking his lighter around.

John B patted him on the shoulder.

"I don't agree."

"What? Why?"

"Just think about it. This is Scooter Grubbs we're talking about, right? Same dude that's buying individual cigarettes at the Porthole."

"One time, I saw him begging in a Save-A-Lot parking lot because he needed money for gas," I added, seeing where John B was going with this.

"Exactly! We're talking about a dirtbag marina rat who's never had more than forty bucks in his pocket, and all of a sudden, he's got a Grady-White? Just sayin'."

JJ sighed before walking off the porch and down to the dock, grabbing a fishing pole on his way. I was the first to follow after him. I watched as he angrily casted the line into the water before slowly reeling it back in.

"Penny for your thoughts?" I asked, crossing my arms and leaning them on the railing, and peered up at my blond best friend.

He was letting the frustration show on his face.

"It's just not fair."

I straightened up at that, turning around and letting my back lean on the rail to semi face him.

"Talk to me, JJ."

He sighed before casting the line back out.

"We struggle for everything, and when we find something to lessen that struggle, everyone wants to just give it away."

I nodded in understanding.

The money was enough to pay a couple months rent on the Chateau, something that had been difficult in paying after Dad skipped out. I could see why JJ was frustrated.

"I get that," I said, before turning my body again to face the water, and placed a hand on his forearm, stopping him from continuing to reel. "But."

"I knew there was a 'but' coming."

I laughed slightly.

"But, Lana Grubbs just lost her husband, and while the money can't replace him, it could be enough to cover funeral costs."

I watched as JJ sagged.

"I just want it to be easy for us for once," he whispered. "Does that make me a bad person?"

JJ finally turned to look at me, and he was showing me his guilt. Despite the current situation, I smiled. I loved when JJ allowed me to see a glance of what he was really feeling. He put on a great show around everyone else, but sometimes, he showed the cracks in his wall when it was just the two of us and allowed himself to be vulnerable. It made me feel like I could be vulnerable around him, too.

"JJ, you could never be a bad person," I answered, pulling him into a side hug. "You just want what is best for all of us, and that makes you a good person."

"Thanks, Jo."

Our friends joined us after that. Pope joined JJ in fishing, and Kiara and John B sat close to him while JJ and I continued to hang back a little bit.

"Think about it, Pope. How does a marina rat get a Grady-White?"

"Prostitution?"

I snorted.

"Square groupers, bro," John B continued as if Pope didn't just answer sarcastically. "Okay, flying under the radar, no aerial surveillance. They don't do that stuff during a hurricane. What does that mean? JJ?"

"They were straight smuglin'."

"Smuglin'," John B affirmed, "and I guarantee there's a serious amount of contraband in that wreck."

"Hell, yeah," JJ agreed before he jerked back the pole, setting the hook. "Fish on!"

After JJ caught the fish and did whatever with it, we all moved into the Chateau. I walked into my bedroom, flopping down onto my bed to be quickly joined by the rest of my friends. JJ joined me on the bed, Pope and Kiara shared the beanbag in the corner, and John B sat in the open window with his guitar.

"For the record," Pope spoke up, continuing the conversation from the dock. "If that is a smuggling ship with illegal contraband on the inside of it, it probably belongs to someone else."

"Minor details," Kiara said, waving him off.

"They could come looking for it," Pope argued, "taking it would be catastrophically stupid."

"When isn't the stuff we do catastrophically stupid?" I asked from the face down position.

JJ laughed from next to me, patting me on the back before addressing Pope.

"Agreed, and stupid things have good outcomes all the time," he said, holding up the money. "All we need to do is figure out a way to get into the cargo hold of that wreck. Until then, we just lay low. Just act normal."

"Right," Pope agreed. "And how exactly do we do that?"

"Kegger?"

I groaned and buried my face into my pillow. I was so not in the mood for a party.