

Chapter Fifty-One



The sun had already set by the time we pulled up to the temporary headquarters they set up by the lighthouse. Shoupe came around and opened my door.

"Follow Plumb to that tent," he said, before gently grabbing onto my arm. "Hold on, wait for your friends."

I felt a hand slip into my mine as I took everything in. It was all overwhelming with so many flashing lights, different voices speaking over the radio, and bystanders yelling at us as we walked into the tent.

"Right to your left here," Shoupe called out, and Officer Plumb waved to four chairs to our left.

"Sit down, don't move. We got a lot to talk about. Keep an eye on these kids."

I sat down on the hard, plastic fold out chair on the end, gripping JJ's hand tightly in mine. I tried to ignore the SBI agent standing two feet in front of me, and my knee began bouncing up and down. I closed my eyes and tried to focus on the patterns JJ was drawing into the back of my hand with his thumb, but hearing the officers talk about my brother like he was criminal was getting to me.

"Hey, we're back up. We got power!"

My eyes shot open, and I instinctively squeezed JJ's hand, apparently hard enough to cause him to wince and draw in a deep breath. I looked to JJ with wide eyes, and he returned the look.

"He'll be fine."

I could feel my hands shaking, and my knee bouncing grew quicker. If John B was out there and the light house turned on, he was so screwed.

"That's them! There they are!"

I stopped breathing.

The SBI agent who seemed to be in charge walked up to me. He squatted down in front of me.

"You are going to get on that radio, and you are going to convince your brother to turn around before he gets himself and Sarah Cameron killed in that storm."

His voice was deadly calm, and I found myself standing and following him. I sat down in the chair in front of the radio, feeling the agent's and Shoupe's eyes on me I swallowed thickly before picking up the receiver.

"John B?"

He doesn't answer. The SBI agent nodded for me to try again.

"John B, if you can hear me," I paused, glaring at the SBI agent. "Do whatever you gotta do! Go with the waves and don't let them turtle you. You got thi-

The radio is pulled out of my hand, and the SBI agent is in my face.

"That's not what you were supposed to say! You were supposed to convince him to come back!"

I just simply glared at him as he tried to regain his composure.

"I have one more card I think we can play."

The guy disappeared, and I'm told not to move, but I can't help but get to my feet as the SBI agent returned with someone else.

Ward Cameron.

Ward's eyes go wide when they land on me before quickly recovering.

"Josephine, I've been so worried about you."

He held his arms out and took a step forward, but I quickly took one back, bumping into Shoupe, who was quick to steady me.

"You," my voice cracked as I glared at the man in front of me. "Son of a bitch!"

I lunged at him, but Shoupe held me back.

"You took everything from me! You killed my father and framed my brother for a murder he didn't commit! But I'm still here, and I'm going to make sure that you pay for this, you motherfucker!"

I was screaming and sobbing uncontrollably at the same time. My knees gave out, and Shoupe dragged me back to my friends as Ward simply sat there, mouth half open in shock.

"Don't go anywhere. We're gonna need to talk to you," I heard Shoupe whisper to Ward as we walked by.

JJ was on his feet, struggling against another officer to try and get back to us. He stopped when he noticed me. I collapsed into his arms and sobbed against his chest.

JJ somehow got me to calm down and sit back on the chair. I closed my eyes and laid my head on his shoulder, just wishing for all of this to be over.

I should've been careful what I wished for.

Shoupe walked in with Officer Plumb and Deputy No Neck, and the four of us got to our feet, running up to meet them.

"Did you find them?" Pope asked, and I wasn't sure I was ready for either answer.

A yes meant that my brother was going to jail. A no meant that they got away. Or, that they were killed in the storm.

"No."

I squeezed JJ's hand.

"So, they got away?"

"We, uh, we lost them. I'm sorry."

"You lost them? What do you mean you lost them? Like, they're gone? What are you talking about?"

"They took an open boat into a tropical depression, Pope."

"So, they're dead?"

Shoupe looked over to me before closing his eyes and shaking his head.

"We don't know."

JJ dropped my hand and took a step forward.

"You drove them straight through the storm, man! Are you kidding me? Come here! I'm gonna kill you!"

I heard Kiara yell for him to stop, and I wanted to grab onto him, comfort him, tell him everything was going to be okay. But, I couldn't move.

I watched as he struggled against Deputy No Neck and watched as Pope began yelling and Kiara begged Pope to stop.

I tried to take a breath in, but it got caught in my throat. Pope and Kiara's parents came into the tent, pulling them into family group hugs, and my world shattered.

I would never have that again.

"No."

Everyone seemed to freeze at my voice. It was dry, cracked, and weak. I wrapped my arms around myself, needing to feel like something was holding me together. My knees gave out, and I fell to the floor.

I heard a bloodcurdling scream, and it took the pain in my throat to understand that it was me.

"No!"

JJ grabbed my face into his hands, trying to convince me that everything was going to be okay. But how could it? I was all alone. My whole family either didn't give a shit about me or was dead.

How could anything ever be okay again?

I continued to hug myself as sobs pulled every breath from my chest. It became harder and harder to breath in.

"I can't..."

I squeezed my eyes shut as my chest began to burn, and I was drowning all over again. The feeling I felt on the porch yesterday was back, tenfold.

I felt more arms wrap around me, but all I could do was scream as Kiara, Pope, and their parents encircled me in a hug. That only made it harder to breath. I couldn't suck air in.

"I can't breath," I somehow got out.

The arms fell away just as my vision tunneled and my hearing went. I could feel JJ shaking my shoulders and grabbing onto my face.

The last thing I saw was the roof of the tent as my eyes rolled into the back of my head, and everything went black.

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