

Chapter Seven



I woke up to the sound of the rooster crowing. I groaned and opened my eyes, gasping as I see someone standing in my doorway.

"Get descent, sweetie. We need to talk."

I nodded at Sheri Peterkin's whispered words and carefully pulled myself out of a still sleeping JJ's grip, not wanting to wake him yet.

I followed the Sheri out into the living room to see John B awake and sitting up in the pull out bed. Peterkin leaned on the the doorway between the kitchen and the dinning room area.

"Sorry to break in like this, but DCS called. They wanted me to check on you two, see how you're doing. So, how are you, John B, besides the-"

Peterkin cut herself o , motioning towards her own eye in question about my brother's obvious bruised one.

"Oh, no, I'm, I'm great," my brother tried to convince the Sheri .

"Yeah, fantastic, uh, thanks for comin' by."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that, John B," Peterkin said sarcastically, obviously not buying what my brother was saying. "But I heard a few things that worried me. Let me see if I can remember."

John B got o the bed and started making himself busy by cleaning up a few things. I, on the other hand, didn't move, just held the Sheri 's stare with my own.

"Oh, yeah. One of the things I heard was that your Uncle Teddy, your guardian, hasn't been in the state for three months."

"Yeah, that's false," I lied, shrugging my shoulders.

"Neither of you have to say anything. I know it's true. I called the school. They said that both of you used to be good students, but now, John B, you're failin' all your classes."

"No. No, I'm only failing one, and it's history. He's a dick. He's out for me-"

"And, Josephine, they said that you had multiple breakdowns and had quite a few trips to the nurse and school councilor."

I pursed my lips and took her earlier advice. I didn't say anything.

"Hm. I heard there was a fight on the beach yesterday, and a gun was involved."

I kept my face neutral as I shrugged my shoulders.

"Okay, gun?" John B sco ed, shaking his head.

"Did we get in a dustup? Yes, but was there a gun? Nope."

Sheri Peterkin raised her eyebrows at my words.

"That's okay. I know who it was. I'll get to him. All I'm worried about right now is makin' sure the two of you are in a safe home."

John B and I sco ed at the same time.

"Yeah, super safe," my brother stated, knocking on the wall. "Super sound, sturdy. You know what I mean?"

Sheri Peterkin seemed unimpressed.

"And, Uncle T's coming back, so..." I trailed o , looking to John B who nodded vigorously in agreement.

"That what he told you? Well, if he is coming home, I think you two should be allowed to stay."

I cringed internally at the obvious sarcasm and disbelief in her voice.

"Thank you," John B muttered with a wave of his hand.

"But if I stick my neck out for you, you have to help me. Tit for tat."

"What, what does tat mean?"

I rolled my eyes.

"What he means is, what do you want, Sheri ?"

"Let me see, how can you help me? Oh, I know. So, a body was found in the marsh yesterday."

I tensed up at Peterkin's words, figuring I knew where this was going.

"Were you in the marsh yesterday?"

I shook my head at my brother, mouthing behind Peterkin's back.

'Deny, deny, deny.'

"Yeah, we were fishin' for some drum."

"You catch anything?"

"Nah, we were skunked."

"Strange. Fishing's usually good a er a storm. All sorts of things get stirred up."

Shit.

"You come across a wreck yesterday?"

"No."

He almost sounded convincing.

"You skimmin' just above the surface, John B. Now, down here is foster care, juvie. Pretty big drop for a smart kid like you. Up here is you, your sister, and your little friends doing whatever you want. Outer Banks, or foster care on the mainland. You one inch below the surface, John B. Be careful you don't drag your sister down with you."

John B sighed and sat down at the table.

"Now, you sure you didn't come across a wreck yesterday?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure."

Peterkin leaned down and put her hand on John B's shoulder.

"It's better if you didn't, you understand? I'm gonna look the other way, as long as you stay out of the marsh."

She walked towards the door before turning back.

"I got dogs livin' better than this, Josephine. You two might wanna think about cleanin' up."

She le , and John B picked up an empty can and threw it against the wall before running his hands over his face. I leaned against the wall and slid all the way down to the floor, bearing my face in my knees.

"We are so screwed."

"What's goin' on?"

Both of us turned to see JJ still half asleep walking out of my room.

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