

## 05 | Penguin Walk

**This chapter begins with Luke's car so I felt it was super appropriate to post this from @jsroberts. Thank you!**

**Chapter 5: Penguin Walk**

A black Jeep wrangler was parked in our driveway, next to my beat-up car. Luke walked towards it; flashing lights as he unlocked the doors.

"Don't touch anything," he said, before I barely slipped into the passenger seat.

"I didn't ask to come with you."

He ignored me, pressing his hand behind my headrest. I breathed in his musky scent. He was close to me and the sunlight glinted o his tanned skin. With his le hand on the steering wheel, he drove us in reverse down the winding pathway.

"Luke, this is a bad idea. We can't skip camp like this. They'll notice."

"Can you relax?"

I quietened, and he glanced over at me, a small smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "It was a genuine question. You're uptight about everything."

"Because I don't get second chances. This job means something to me. If I screw up, I'm out. Unlike you, no one's begging me to be here and they'll fire me just as easily."

"I get it."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Does that mean we can go back?"

"No."

I frowned, staring down at my hands. "Please, please can't I do this favor later?"

He chuckled.

"Stop laughing at me, I'm being serious. Look at my serious face. Look!"

He did.

I looked demented.

Luke swerved to the side of the road and stopped the car. I had no idea what to expect. He grabbed his phone and dialed, his piercing blue eyes staying fixed on me the entire time.

"Hey man, what's up?"

I was flailing my hands, mouthing "Let's go back!" This was **not** the time for a casual phone call. We were runaway camp counselors.

Sounds so lame when I say it like that.

He flicked my hands away, still on the phone, "I'm getting distracted by an annoying wasp. Listen man, can you do me a favor? Cover for..." he looked at me.

"Millie. Ripley." I repeated my name for the 10,355,763time. My arms stopped flailing. Was he actually helping me?

"Cover for Millie Ripley. No one needs to know she's not at camp. She'll be back tonight."

And just like that, he hung up and revved the engine. I stared at him. So that's what life as Luke Dawson was like. Everything was easy. No problems at all.

He ramped up the speed, driving fast on the highway. I rolled the window down, letting the wind rush through my hair.

"You call me an ungrateful jerk," he smirked, "but you don't say thank you either."

I narrowed my eyes at him, "Thank you for kidnapping me from summer camp."

"You're welcome, Millie."

He said my name.

My actual name. And I likedthe way he said it. Is that bad?

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I don't know what this favor was about, but whatever it was, we arrived. Luke smoothly parked while I stared at my surroundings.

We were at the beach.

It was almost two hours away from our hometown but only forty minutes away from camp. A place for cotton candy and surfing and why on earth would Luke be taking me here?

What favor could I possibly do for him on the beach?

We stepped out. Luke fit the beach scene like a model in a photoshoot. Girls stared at him as he walked by. His confidence, his rugged handsomeness; he had that e ect on people. They couldn't help being attracted to him.

Luke turned around, the sunlight glinting against his jet-black hair. "You coming?"

Me. That's right. Luke was calling me

I felt like the polar opposite to his existence. When Luke was created, nature needed to balance itself out by creating something unattractive. I'm not looking for pity, I promise. I'm just repeating what others have told me. Some of us don't turn into a stunner, no matter how much you Princess Diaries our hair.

I joined him and we walked onto the beach, side by side. I was a very uncool sidekick. He needed to be with an Angelina Jolie tomb raider type. I was... dude, they don't even have Hollywood characters like me.

He strolled across the beach, while I hu ed and pu ed because of all the sand seeping into my shoes.

"Can you hurry up?"

"I'm trying"

"You're walking like a penguin."

"Well if you told me where we were going, I would have dressed better," I hu ed.

"Your lack of fashion sense seems permanent."

"Watch it. I'm doing you a favor."

"Oh right. I'm really grateful you broke my laptop"

"You le it in the driveway."

I hadn't realized it, but Luke and I were face-to-face, his minty breath in my nostrils. The sand in my shoes stopped irritating me. And instead of sinking into the sand, I felt like I was sinking into his blue eyes. They blended into the color of the ocean behind him.

"Yo Dawson!"

Luke jumped away from me like he'd caught on fire. I turned around and saw a gorgeous boy emerge from the water like something out of a Baywatch scene. He shook his head and water sprayed out of his hair. He was carrying a surfboard under his arm, with washboard abs to match.

Forgive me for drooling.

"Austin," Luke greeted the boy, "brother."

"You guys look nothing alike," I said.

Austin laughed a beautiful laugh. "It's just a saying. We're not brothers. Funny girl you got there, Luke. Where'd you find her?"

"Not my type, is she?"

"You're not hers either." I said.

Austin extended a hand, "Austin Taylor. Nice to meet you."

A boy with manners. How refreshing.

"Millie. Nice to meet you."

His handshake was strong and firm.

"Millie's helping us out with the thing." Luke dropped an arm around his friend's shoulder, looking more relaxed than I'd seen him at camp.

"Does she have the nerve to follow through?"

"She's our only option. Trust me, I would've gone with anyone else."

And there's the jerk side. They walked o , catching up and laughing over stories I couldn't hear. I tried to hurry a er them but the sand in my shoes were burning my feet.

I still had no idea what favor Luke wanted from me. I was on the beach with two hot boys and we were about to do 'a thing' -sounds dirty- but a thing that would take \$50 o the ridiculous amount that I owed Luke for his computer...

Any ideas?

Nada, zilch?

I sighed and caught up with them just as they entered a beachside restaurant. The Surfside Shack.

**Hey! Short chapter I know but I'll make up for it with the next one. How am I so sure about that? Because I already have the next chapter sitting pretty in my dra s. xoxo**

**You can also find me sitting pretty on Instagram... nope I couldn't keep a straight face even writing that sentence haha. Let me try again: You can find me @NatalieInACorner on Instagram. See ya!**

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