

Chapter 14

I nervously bite my ngermails as Staci drives up to the largest dock along the lake, with a huge sleek boat against it.

She brings the golf cart to an abrupt halt, making me nearly hit my face on the dashboard, placing my hands out in front of me just in time as I throw a questioning glance at her.

"Whoopsie."

Staci smiles, her eyes glinting.

"I think you can nd your way from here. Buh bye."

I look nervously towards the boat before I climb out, my stomach squirming with anticipation of what Mr. Kinston might be expecting from this little excursion and how I can politely decline whatever it is without losing my job.

"When should I..."

But Staci is already pulling away. Leaving me with no idea how I am going to get home or any clue how long I am expected to stay here.

Tucking my hair behind my ear, I can't help thinking...that went well.

I think Staci must really like me now.

Ha.

With a sigh, I make my way towards the boat.

"Hey! You made it! See, told you they would let you. No problem."

Milo has a drink in his hand as he leans against the railing, wearing a white linen button-down shirt, that is open down to his belly button, and matching shorts, his blonde hair pulled back into a small bun.

For some reason, I want to laugh at this.

Really?

A man bun?

But I hold my tongue.

I mean, I don't even know the guy. Especially not well enough to make fun of his ridiculous hairstyle choices. And I really don't want to be red.

"Come around this way."

Following his instructions, I move around to the other side of the boat to nd a short board with railings to get on.

He waits at the top for me.

As I get closer, his eyebrows pull together while he watches me step carefully onto the boat.

"What is it? Is something wrong?"

Feeling self-conscious, I smooth the top and side of my hair, running my tongue over my teeth.

He shakes his head.

"Nothing, sorry."

He grins and gestures, "Let's get you a drink."

"Umm..."

"It's okay, your boss won't mind."

Ha! Actually, I think she really, really does.

Quite a lot.

But I follow him anyway, and notice someone moving behind us.

Turning around, I see it's his assistant from the nightclub, pulling the walkway onto the boat.

He gives me a wink and I smile back.

"Oh, have you met my be...best friend, Mike?"

"I only noticed him at the nightclub last night, but we weren't introduced. I think he has met my boss, Staci, though."

I can't resist giving him a grin of appreciation at how he handled her, which he returns with another wink.

"I sure did."

Smiling, I turn back around to Milo, whose own smile falters as he looks at me.

"I could swear..."

He shakes his head and returns to his easy smile.

"Come on."

Milo reaches into a cooler on the front deck of the boat and hands me a can.

Is that all that people do around here? Act weird and drink? What do these people actually do for a living?

"What do you do for a living?" The question blurts out before I can stop it and Milo's face freezes brie before he smiles again.

"Getting right to it, aren't you?"

"Sorry."

I lift a shoulder and grimace apologetically while I crack open the can, sitting down on the bench seat next to the railing.

For some reason, I don't feel embarrassed.

Milo has this vibe about him. I don't quite understand it, but I have this odd sensation...as if I can relax and be more myself. And I denitely do not have the same feelings towards him as I do for Dean and Alec Van Kerr.

There is absolutely no desire to kiss this man.

Especially since he is wearing that man bun.

"I work in business takeovers. Buy out businesses that aren't doing very well, or that need to be taken out to avoid competition."

"Oh, savage."

Milo throws his head back in a loud laugh, "Sometimes. Sometimes it really can be. You have no idea."

Looking amused, he sits next to me.

"Where did you come from, tennis instructor Kylie?"

I take a sip of my drink and make a face.

Gross.

He laughs again, "You don't like it? What do you want to drink instead?"

I give him a sheepish smile.

"You wouldn't have any soda, would you?"

He seems to nd this hilarious as he laughs and his friend, Mike, appears beside us and holds a can of soda out for me.

That was quick.

"Thank you, Mike."

I skirt around the topic of where I came from by inquiring all about Milo instead, who doesn't seem to mind talking about himself and how much he loves his work. It doesn't take long at all for me to realize that I am actually enjoying being on the boat with both Milo and Mike, even if we haven't left the dock yet.

My nerves quickly disappear and the conversation is easier than I had thought it would be. Not only that, but Milo Kinston doesn't make any iratious advances, as I had worried after what Staci had said. She was clearly wrong about what would be expected from me, thank god.

Hopefully, when I tell her that she was wrong, she will lighten up around me again.

I don't think Staci is someone you want to be on the wrong side of.

The three of us have a light lunch together, consisting of sandwiches and chips, and Milo shows me how to sh, telling me how he used to do it with his stepfather before he died two and a half years ago.

"Did you come here with him a lot, growing up?"

I watch Milo expertly wrap a worm around the shing hook.

He frowns, "Not here, no. I think we came to the club once, maybe? This wasn't his type of place."

"What about your real father? Were the two of you close?"

Milo pauses, staring at the worm on the hook.

"I'm sorry...that was too personal."

He shakes his head, "No, it's okay."

He tilts his head and checks that the worm is attached properly before stepping back. He clears his throat before speaking, "We were close, but he died when I was only seven."

"Oh, I'm so sorry."

For some reason, even though he speaks in a casual way, I can almost feel Milo's pain, like I am sharing in it with him.

"That must have been hard."

He lifts a shoulder.

"It was." He hesitates slightly, "Especially because I lost my mom the same day."

I feel a stab of loss for Milo, and I instinctively put down the shing pole and wrap my arms around his torso.

He seems unsure of what to do for a pause, then wraps his long arms around me.

It's not anything like it was with Dean or Mr. Van Kerr, but it's comforting in an entirely different way.

Something seems to be stirring inside of me, something I can't explain.

Milo steps back and gives me a sheepish grin. "Thanks, Kylie."

"Yeah...no problem."

I force a smile, but then I spin around and put my hand on my stomach, feeling shaky and odd.

"Hey, are you okay?"

Milo grabs my elbow and steps in front of me just as I grimace and bend forward slightly in pain as my skin seems to be on re and I feel like I might retch.

"What's wrong?" He sounds a bit unnerved.

Shaking my head, I grit my teeth and try to force the pain away, to ignore it, as I straighten up and smile. "Nothing, I'm ne. Just...um...maybe a little overheated. I'm ne."

The pain is going away just as quickly as it came on.

He gives me a concerned look, his eyes wide, and glances at Mike, almost as in silent communication.

This is so freaking embarrassing, and after such a nice moment too.

I clear my throat and pick up the shing rod. "So, should we give this a go?"

Milo frowns and glances at his wrist. "Actually, I forgot that I have a business call that I will have to hurry off too. Raincheck?"

He must think I'm crazy.

I guess I can't blame him for not wanting to be around the crazy girl. Honestly, he doesn't even know half of it...

I give him what I hope is a bright and convincing smile and put the shing rod back down.

"Sure! No problem!"

Milo reaches into his pocket and pulls out a phone, waving it at me before walking away, not even bothering to wait for Mike to put down the wooden plank, but just jumping easily onto the dock.

I watch him half run to his golf cart, slide inside, and take off, then I turn to look at Mike, not really sure what just happened.

Mike gives me an apologetic smile, "He's a busy man, he forgets things a lot."

"Hmm."

I give him a forced smile back and move towards the plank that he places down for me.

Mike reaches out his hand to help me go down.

"Please tell Mr. Kinston thank you for having me. I had a really nice time."

I place my hand into him when I step onto the plank.

"Will do."

"And I will tell him that he is an idiot."

I freeze, halfway down the board and stare over my shoulder at Mike.

The last thing he said to me sounded different...like it was an echo in my head.

How did he do that?

"What was that?"

Mike looks confused, "I said, will do."

"No, after that?"

Mike's eyes go wide, "I didn't say anything."

"Oh, I thought..."

But I stop myself, maybe I hear things? Was it just the wind...or my imagination?

I rub my forehead with the palm of my hand.

I think I need to go home and lie down. My head is starting to pound uncomfortably and a real worry about my mental health is starting to freak me out.

I give Mike a tired smile, "Thanks again."

He tilts his head and looks at me curiously, but then nods and releases my hand.

I lift my hand in a wave, without turning around, and that's when I realize that I have no way home, except to walk.

The odds of Staci coming back to get me seem pretty low at this point.

With a huge sigh, I start the long walk home, my mind replaying the last hour over and over in my head.

Wondering what the hell is wrong with me and if I truly am going mad.