



Chapter 24

Charlotte POV

"Who is it?" I asked, confused and slightly on edge.

Waylon got up and moved over to the window. "It's Leo and Ezra but they weren't suppose to be back yet..."

"This isn't good." Arlo muttered. His whole demeanor changed as he stood partially in front of me. I watched as the two guys partially run inside.

"We need to move. I don't know how but there are rumors spreading that she is being kept here in these woods."

"This is my territory. How would anyone know that or even suspect it?" Waylon looked pissed. My heart was racing at all the different possibilities it could be.

"Jasmine?" I asked Waylon.

"She thinks I went to Washington to file some taxes."

"Do you have a tracker on you?" I pushed.

"She isn't that smart."

"Are you going to take a chance with my life on that?" I pushed. He looked at me before going through his pockets.

"I don't see anything."

“Regardless. We need to move. Burn everything that shows she was here. Ezra will stay being as if he is living here.” My body was frozen. He told me to get my stuff but I didn’t have stuff. A few pairs of clothes I guess. Waylon took off towards my room. Assuming he was going to pack those items but I was still frozen in my spot. Wasn’t I suppose to be safe here? There is no such thing as safe is there.

The guys were all running around as they gathered different things and ran it out to the fire pit. It was like they were burning any evidence I was even there. Waylon finally came down with a duffle bag and dropped it at my feet. Going to the kitchen, he grabbed a couple protein bars. Finally, he grabbed my arm and pulled me outside.

“I’m sorry but you can’t be in there. We are trying to get rid of your scent.”

Right on cue, thunder pounded in the sky. That would be helpful to get rid of my scent. My heart sank as I thought about how I finally felt safe and it has been taken from me. As Waylon went to go back inside, I grabbed his arm. “Wait!”

“Charlotte, we are on a time crunch.” Waylon tried to walk away from me.

“Stop! Listen to me.”

“What?” He asked, slightly annoyed.

“Didn’t you say the only you knew about the panic room in

your packhouse? Or at least how to get into it?"

Waylon's body froze as the idea stewed in his mind. "Are you suggesting you hide out in the packhouse?"

Obviously.... "Yes, I am." It was hard to not roll my eyes at him. "I mean, it was just a thought. I can survive in the woods just fine."

"No, that's a brilliant idea. Even if they wanted to come search my house, they wouldn't find anything."

"It would be putting you at a very difficult position."

"Just hold the thought." Waylon ran back inside, leaving me standing by myself as it started to sprinkle. The feeling of being exposed was overwhelming. Waylon came back out in a different set of clothes. Walking straight to the fire, he threw what he just had on. I watched as the fire completely ate away has the cotton.

"Let's go." Waylon said as he grabbed my arm and pulled me into the woods.

"Where to?" I knew it was a stupid question but for some reason, I needed an answer.

"I don't know." Waylon was only paying half attention to me as he was looking around.

"Faster." Arlo ran up behind me. He scared me so bad that I lost my footing and almost fell. Thankfully, I am a little more graceful and managed to catch myself.

"The fuck?" I whispered.

He didn't pay any attention to me but kept looking behind us. "We need to get to the cave."

"Any leads?" Waylon asked.

"None. Ezra thinks they will be showing up soon and the cave will provide shelter and a birds eye view."

The rain started pouring down in big drops. My hair was soon plastered to my face as the wind picked up. Our daylight has turned into dusk.

"Come on! Faster!" Arlo yelled at us. The mountain arrived at will require a certain level of climbing. "Can you do it?"

Looking up, it was probably a hundred yard climb. Solid rock that was razor sharp lined the mountain side but this is where I excelled. You don't live on your own for that long and not develop good mountain climbing skills.

"Get out of my way." I muttered as I started up the mountain. There was barely an edge for your finger tips but we also didn't have any rope. One small slip and it would cost you. To make things worse, the wind and pounding rain made everything slippery. More than once, my foot slipped, causing me to almost fall. Somehow, we all managed to make it to the top.

Between the chill of the cave and our soaked clothes, we all were shivering. The whole cave was probably only 30 feet

deep and 20 feet wide. It looked like there might had been a fire here at one point but nothing else remained. Only a few twigs and a pile of bear fecal matter.

"Look." Arlo was hidden in the shadows as he looked down at the vast scenery below us. You could only barely make out the roof of the cabin but the drive wa visible. Three cars approached. One was all black and the other two were local news stations. I didn't see any lights but I had a feeling the one car was police.

"That's it?" I asked. "Surely I am worth more than just one cop car!"

Arlo smirked at me. "Hurt your ego that you one got one police car? Maybe you need to actually kill someone for them to take you seriously."

"I could start now." Annoyed, pushing him off the cliff didn't sound bad.

"Wow, testy." Arlo laughed. "Either way, they are just seeing if you were really there. I doubt they took the information seriously."

"That makes me look really bad. First she is found at my pack house and then there is an anonymous tip that she is on my land?"

We watched them, for what we could see. Eventually, the cars backed out and left but we could see them packed just outside of eye sight from the cabin. Arlo send a text to him,

telling them that but that was it.

"I am going to do some recon. Not sure if I will be back. I might just stay hidden and listen. Keep your phone on you." Arlo was getting antsy. Part of me thought he was going just because he didn't want to sit in a cave but the more I thought about it the more I think he has a need to be in the crosshairs. A need for danger.

"Be safe." Waylon said. He was sitting on the floor towards the back.

"Will do." Arlo started climbing down. It was much easier to climb down than to go up. Sighing, I went and sat across the cave from Waylon.

"Isn't this cozy." I said sarcastically.

"Something like that." Waylon looked around, for what, I have no idea.

"I've slept in worse. The key is to let your mind go blank."

"I'm surprised you aren't freaking out more." Waylon looked at me weirdly.

"IIIIII was a little shocked it was all happening the way it did but this is what I know. This is my childhood.

These caves were the only protection I had from stormy days like this one. There will always be something comforting from the smell of wet rock and mud. I might be dirty with a stiff back but I was free." Looking around, I

almost had a sentimental feeling about caves. Too many times I have resorted to this.

Occasionally, I was able to get a hotel room or even rent an apartment out but in the end, I always ended up here.

"Do you really want to go back to my pack?" Waylon asked.

"Do you know a better place to hide? At least there you can control the elements. You know who is coming and going. No reason to bug you since you will be in her eye sight the whole time. The only other place I can think of is the palace. Literally hid in the basement."

"Ha. Not going to cabo?"

"Like you said. He always found me. No reason to keep running. At some point, you just got to turn around and face it. This time I didn't have a choice. I wasn't ready to come to terms with this part of my life but since it has done it for me, it is what it is."

"Hmm." Waylon was in his head. His eyes were glued to the rain that played a lullaby.

"Thank you." I blurted out.

Waylon took his time to look back at me. "For what exactly?"

"I can't believe you actually did that." He knew exactly what I was talking about. A cold shiver passed through me. As I started to dry, my wet clothes felt like ice on my skin.

"It was fun to be bad." The double meaning in his words sent a throbbing ache to my core. My eyes involuntary went to his fingers.

"Was it, now? What do you consider to be bad?" Flirting with the devil sounded like fun.

"Many things. Anytime I am told no, I have this internal desire to fulfill it."

"So, if I tell you that you are sleeping over there tonight... by yourself...?"

"I could say you are partially right."

"Partially?" That comment threw me.

"I might be over here but I won't be alone or if I did get up and go over there, I won't be sleeping." His eyes narrowed at me.

"So, which one does your heart want?"

"You're not asking the right questions." Well, damn. He is going to make me work for it.

"Hmm.... what if I fell asleep over here?"

His eyes danced with the challenge. "Princess, you won't be able to sleep until I allowed it."

"You talk a heavy game for someone who is still over there." Part of me wanted him to stay over there but if I really was

going to put my trust in him, that meant my body as well as my heart. They are a packaged deal.

"Maybe I wanted to see if you were capable of making the first move. So far, I am the one that has done all the work."

Mother fucker! "Was it your plan to try to make me jealous by making me watch another girl hang off you?"

"No, but that was fun to watch you try not to care." Waylon smiled at my eye roll.

"Part of me really didn't care..." I confessed.

"And the other part?"

"Died a little inside." I was even surprised by the words that came out of my mouth. This took a turn I didn't want to go down. "So, tell me. How do you plan on keeping us from freezing tonight?" I said quickly to avoid that heart to heart I accidentally opened the door to.

"A fire is out of the question."

"True. They will see the smoke." I agreed.

"We could get naked and use each other's body heat." Waylon suggested.

"And if Arlo comes back?"

"I'll have to take his eyes out."

"For some reason, I believe you." I actually did.



We heard a noise from down below. Slowly, we inched our way to the cave's entry point. Staying in the shadows, we strained our ears.

"Surely she didn't come out here!" A male voice spoke, clearly annoyed.

"She might have." Another male voice said.

"Honestly, there is zero evidence that she was even here in the first place! We really just need to pack up and move on."

"No, we will stay the night and continue our search when the rain goes away tomorrow. It will be raining all evening into tonight. Might as well set up camp at the cars."

"Fine, but I'm not coo-" That's all I heard when a hand slipped around my waist and went blew my pants.



Mrs. Smith  Author

"Thank you all for reading!!"

