

Chapter Thirty-One



There are only three kinds of relationships in the animal kingdom. The first is commensalism. One example is fish finding hiding spots in coral reefs. The fish profit, but nothing good or bad happens to the coral. Then, there's mutualism. A relationship where both animals benefit from each other, like a bee and a flower. Then that brings us to relationship number three. The parasitic. The type of relationship where one thing benefits from the others harm. Think tapeworms, fleas, mosquitoes. The tricky thing about nature is you don't always know what kind of relationship you're in, until it's too late to change it.

"I'm sorry, you let who do what now?"

"Ward is our legal guardian."

We were all at The Wreck, keeping Kiara company as she worked. John B had just finished telling us what happened at the hospital this morning, and I was pretty livid.

"You let the Kook who fired you become our legal guardian?"

I felt JJ's hand discreetly squeeze my bouncing knee as him, Pope, and I sat at an empty table sharing a basket of fries and looking over the plat map of Tannyhill Plantations.

"And you're staying where?"

"Tannyhill."

I glared at my brother, and my skin crawled at the thought of living under the same roof as Rafe Cameron whose not so subtle threat from the night before still bounced around in my mind.

"So you're living with Sarah Cameron."

"Okay, look, the only reason we're living there--"

"Oh no, I'm gonna stop you right there, Johnny Boy. I am not living in the Kook palace."

I watched John B roll his eyes and felt JJ squeeze again, a little higher than before.

"Fine. The only reason I'm living there is because her dad bailed us out, alright? And it's way better than foster care, which, by the way, is where I was about to go if Ward didn't."

"Hey, so do you have a membership to the clubs now?"

I scoffed at Pope's question, still fuming at my brother for not even asking me before accepting Ward as our legal guardian.

"I don't know, Pope."

JJ's thumb started rubbing circles on my thigh, inching up higher and higher.

"What about those gold carts they drive around? You get one them?"

I slapped JJ's hand off my leg.

"Does it come with a sweater-vest, or do you have to buy one of those on your own?"

I pushed myself out of my chair and walked away from the table.

"Look, you promised. You said you weren't with her," Kiara said as I stepped out onto the back patio.

"Bro, just own it. She got you."

I leaned on the rail as a breeze blew off the water. A hand on my back caused me to peek at the person next to me, and I was surprised to see Pope. I returned his reassuring smile as John B told everyone to focus.

"We've got the map, right?"

"It's all out of whack 'cause the guy was ganja'd when he drew it."

I turned and raised my eyebrows at JJ who was already looking at me and Pope.

"That's because the coast has changed, dumbass."

JJ nodded and sent me a sarcastic look before taking a drink of his soda.

"So," Pope said, moving away from me and to the table. "We just have to look for landmarks that haven't changed."

"What about the old forts?"

Four heads turned towards me.

"What?"

Everyone turned away except JJ who looked me up and down, sent me a wink, and then turned back to the map.

"Battery Jasper."

I sighed as John B started folding the map back up and stuffed it in his backpack.

"Can't we just have a normal lunch?"

JJ laughed as Pope and Kiara followed my brother out of the restaurant. He threw his arm over my shoulder as I slumped over our friends.

"When this is all over, I'll take you to lunch."

He kissed my cheek before removing his arm and walking outside.

I couldn't contain my smile or blush as I followed him outside to the van.

John B drove us to Battery Jasper where we all piled out and began examining the coast line. Pope had the map spread out over a rock.

"We're in Battery, right here. So, if this is parcel nine, then it's somewhere northeast of here," he said, pointing his hand in the direction.

"Somewhere over there?" Kie asked, pointing in the same direction.

"Yeah."

"Over there? Guys, that's not Tannyhill, that's a subdivision."

I pursed my lips and patted JJ on the shoulder as John B spoke.

"Tannyhill Plantation was the entire island. It got sold into smaller pieces over time."

Pope looked back down to the map.

"So we're just looking for an old stone wall."

I convinced John B to let me drive because he was horrible at following direction.

"Okay, so the road should split up here," Pope said from next to me. I nodded.

"Alright. You're gonna take a left."

"Left it is."

I took the turn, looking to my right at the ivy next to us.

"That looks like a stone wall to me," JJ said excitedly, squeezing my shoulder.

I parked the van and took a better look at the stone wall, noticing the house on the other side.

"Not the Crain house," I heard John B mutter as he slid open the back door.

I jumped out and walked around the van to stand by Kiara.

"Are you kidding me?"

"Worst-case scenario," JJ said, standing next to me.

"Why'd it have to be here of all places?" Pope added.

I rolled my eyes at my friends.

"Ya'll are so dramatic."

"I heard that Mrs. Crain buried her husband's head on the property," JJ said, poking me in the side and causing me to jump.

The five of us climbed the brick wall and into the Crain property.

"Honestly, I don't really believe the bullshit stories of this place," I said, a bored tone in my voice as I followed after my friends.

Continue reading next part [▶](#)