

Chapter Thirty-Two



"You guys know whose house this is, right?"

"Oh yeah. I know," I responded to Kiara as we walked through the overgrown front yard.

Both JJ and Pope whipped around from in front of me with wide eyes.

"What?" I asked as Pope shushed me, and JJ stopped walking and fell into step with me.

"Which stories did you hear?"

I rose an eyebrow at JJ as our shoulders brushed together.

"The one where she killed her husband with an axe and that she's been holed up ever since."

"On certain nights," Kiara added from up front, "when the moon is full, you can see her in the window!"

She wiggled her fingers towards me and JJ, causing me to laugh with her and JJ to scowl.

"No, it's not funny, 'cause it's all true. I swear to God, guys, this is all real. I knew Hollis. Jeez!"

I laughed at him as he flinched at a statue, shoved me behind him, and put up his fist as if getting ready for the statue to attack us.

"Wait, you knew Hollis Crain?"

"Yeah, dude," JJ said, dropping his fists as Pope shoved him to get his attention.

"Dude, how do you know Hollis Crain?"

"She was my babysitter, man. She told me all about it, told me the truth about her mother and what happened in this house."

"I seriously doubt she would tell you all about it while she was babysitting you."

JJ grabbed my wrist as everyone circled around him. I looked up at the house, my eyes widening when one of the curtain moved, suddenly closing. I used the hand JJ wasn't holding to grab onto his arm, partially hiding myself from any eyes in the house in front of us. Axe murderer or not, someone was still in that house, and we were trespassing.

"So as a kid, she heard all the stories that her mother killed her father, and she was a murderer and all. Hollis didn't believe it. Until that night."

JJ let go of my wrist before grabbing onto my hand, wrapping his fingers around mine.

"What night?" John B asked skeptically.

"It all came back to her. When Hollis was six years old, she heard her parents arguing downstairs, so she goes downstairs to see her mom washing her hands in a sink full of blood.

"Her mother just says that she cut her finger. The next morning, she says her father and her split up, but then Hollis noticed something. Her mother going into the parlor constantly, in and out and it and out with plastic bags. Weeks pass, and Hollis decides to use the outhouse, and as she's using it, she looks down, and there, in the outhouse, is her father's head, looking straight back at her."

"God, you are so full of shit," John B said, and I nodded in agreement.

"So many holes in that story there, bud."

"Dudes, I swear to God."

"Did she call the police?" Pope asked, hanging on every word JJ was saying.

"She didn't have time."

I let go of JJ and began walking towards the house.

"Hey, wait! Dude!" JJ grabbed onto my shoulder and pulled me back, causing me to stumble.

"What?" I asked, growing more annoyed.

"You sure you wanna do this? Both of you?" He asked, looking between John B and I. "She's an axe murderer. You've got a cast on, and you scare easily."

I send him an ended look as John B scooped.

"I don't give a shit if she's an axe murderer, okay? We've got nothin' to lose, right? You comin' or what?"

I raised my eyebrows at JJ as John B, Pope, and Kiara walked past us. He looked down at me as he scratched his bare arm. I grabbed his hand and pulled him a er the rest of the Pogues.

"Come here," John B whispered, and we all crouched next to him. "So here's the plan. We need to look for the wheat near the water like it said in Denmark's letter."

"Okay, like, what kind of water? Like, pond water?"

"Bong water?"

I sighed at JJ, shaking my head.

"What?" He asked, his usual goofy grin on his face.

"No. It, it just said look for water, okay?"

"That's the shittiest secret message every," Kiara said, and I nodded.

"You wanna complain a little more, Kie? Nobody said it was gonna be easy."

I stood up as Pope and JJ did the same.

"I'll search the northeast quadrant, you two search the northwest quadrant," Pope said before moving towards his search area.

"The decapitation quadrant," JJ protested.

I rolled my eyes before grabbing his hand and pulling him towards where we were supposed to be searching.

JJ jumped at everything; a bird called, a mouse ran in front of us, and a bug flew in his face. We continued to look for any signs of water, and JJ suddenly pulled back on my hand, causing me to stumble into his chest with a gasp.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. I'll protect you."

I laughed and rolled my eyes.

"JJ, I think you're more freaked out than I am, so--"

The blond cut me o by putting his lips over mine.

I couldn't resist leaning into him as he intertwined our fingers together, his free hand coming up to caress my cheek.

A snapping branch had me pull away, eyes wide as I looked around us.

"Hey, psst. Hey, come on."

JJ pulled me behind him as we followed John B's whispered voice right up to the house. Two doors that lead down into the basement stood wide open in front of him.

"It's the only place we haven't looked."

John B pulled a flashlight from his shorts and went into the basement first. Kie went next, then Pope, and JJ and I went in last, our fingers still intertwined together.

"Down came Mrs. Crain and cut o all our heads. Up came the sun and dried up all the blood," JJ sang until Pope cut him o .

I chuckled and squeezed his hand, taking the flashlight from him.

"See any water?" Kiara asked, and I began taking a closer look at the basement.

There was random stu everywhere. Dust covered everything, even the pipes hanging above our heads. I flinched as a mosquito buzzed past my face.

"Another dead end?"

JJ reached up, running his hand along the pipes.

"There's not even water on the pipes."

"There's no water here."

"Not a dropamino."

"Know why we didn't find it?"

Oh, Lord.

"Bad karma," Kie said, annoyed.

"Oh, God. Here we go," John B muttered, sending me an annoyed look.

"You know, we had a good thing going, and then you decide to rope in Barbie, and now the trail's gone dry. Coincidence? Probably not."

I dropped JJ's hand, continuing to search the basement as JJ stopped to watch John B and Kiara argue.

"This is exactly why I didn't wanna tell you about Sarah."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. What the hell's the deal with you two?"

"Nothing."

"If it were nothing, you'd be over it by now," I muttered in a whispered sing-song voice, kicking a rock away from my foot.

"Nothing? Is it because I kissed you? Is that the problem?"

"oh!"

"Oh, shit!"

I cringed at the sound of Kiara smacking my brother, but part of me kinda knew he deserved it for throwing that in her face.

"That echoed, dude!"

"Stop treating me like I'm some girl that's obsessed with you instead of your best friend who's actually trying to look out for you."

"Did you, uh, hit me?"

I watched as Kiara smirked and held up her hand.

"Skeeter."

"Skeeter?"

John B smacked her, not as hard as she hit him, but it was enough for her mouth to drop open and her heard to turn. Pope and JJ groaned, not as entertained now.

"Where's your proof?" She asked, looking him dead in eye.

John B smirked and held up his hand, revealing the dead bug.

"Skeeter."

The two started smacking each other, laughing as they blamed the mosquitos. I rolled my eyes, kicking another rock, freezing when I heard a distinct splash as it fell between two boards of wood.

"Why are there so many mosquitos in a basement?"

I dropped to my knees, pressing my face to the floor to see in-between the planks of wood.

"Dude, I know, seriously. Tiny vampire bats, just leave me alone."

"That's because there's water in here!"

All heads turn towards me, Pope smirking as he figured it out too.

"Help me move these."

Pope begins helping move things and the wood out of place, revealing a water well.

We all dropped to our knees and leaned over the hole.

"Well, well, well," Pope chuckled.

"That was a good dad joke."

"That was a horrible dad joke."

John B and I muttered at the same time as we continued to stare down into the well.

"They built this part of the house right over it," Kiara said.

"This is where she hid the bodies."

"Dude, come on," I rolled my eyes at JJ.

"Stop."

"No, I'm dead serious. It was never an outhouse."

"She probably doesn't even know it's here."

I nodded in agreement with Kiara.

"So, we found water."

"We're gonna need a really big rope."