

Chapter Forty-Two



We spent all day getting the boat winch hooked up to the giant barrel and getting it to work the right way. Pope, Kiara, JJ and I were all sweaty by the time the sun had started to set.

Kiara and I sat in the barrel while Pope tested it out with our weight in it, and JJ watched from sitting on the edge of the hot tub.

"How's it feeling?"

I gave Pope a thumbs up while Kiara told him we were good. I finally noticed how late it was when I saw how low the sun was in the sky.

"Why isn't John B back from fishing yet?"

I looked over to JJ as Pope brings us down out of the air.

"Yeah, John B's pullin' a Houdini."

"Yeah, where is he?" Pope asked as the barrel sets down on the ground. "I got my scholarship interview tomorrow morning. We gotta get this done!"

Just as he finished talking, John B walked right past all of us without saying a word.

"John B!"

He doesn't turn around as I jump onto the ground.

"Speak of the devil. Hey! Dude, I set up the entire winch to pull up the gold and everything."

I followed after my brother, having to jog slightly to catch up.

"No, he did not. I did that."

He got into the house before I could reach him. I turned and shrugged to my friends before following him into the house.

"Yo, dude, what's with the cold shoulder?" I asked, watching him looking through our china cabinet and then throwing things on the counter.

He didn't answer.

"You alright, man? What, what's up?" Pope asked, walking behind him as he continued looking for something.

"What are you looking for?" Kiara asked, sharing a concerned look with me as John B moved the pull out bed mattress.

"Bro, what's going on?" JJ asked as John B held up the gun.

My eyes widen.

"John B, what do you need the gun for? Talk to us!"

JJ walked up to him to try and keep him from moving, but John B just shoved him down onto the bed.

"John B!"

"What are you doing?"

I stepped out in front of my brother and grabbed the front of his shirt.

"Stop, what is going--"

He interrupted me by grabbing me by my arms and pushing me away from him and into the table. I hit it hard enough for the whole thing to scoot back an inch or so. I wince as the edge collided with my back.

"Shit, are you okay?" Kiara asked, putting a hand on my shoulder.

I couldn't say anything as I stared at my brother's back.

"John B, what the hell are you doing?" She yelled, running after him. Pope quickly followed, and JJ grabbed my hand, pulling me behind him as we followed our friends.

We get outside as John B started up JJ's dirt bike.

"John B, what the hell?" Kiara yelled one more time as he revs the engine.

"Ward knows about the gold!" John B yelled back as I came down the porch stairs, having dropped JJ's hand to hold onto the rail, and he turned to face us with tears in his eyes. "He killed our dad."

I froze.

My breathing stopped, my legs stopped moving, and I'm pretty sure that my heart stopped beating as my blood turned to ice in my veins.

Pope, Kiara, and JJ chased after John B for a few feet as he drove away.

"Shit!"

I heard JJ yell before all I could hear was buzzing in my ears. My vision went blurry, so I could barely make out the form of a person running up to me. I couldn't see their face or hear their voice, but I assumed it was JJ by the way they were caressing my face.

My knees buckled, and I fell to the ground. JJ pulled me into him, and I heard him trying to say something to me, but it sounded like he was trying to talk to me underwater.

My dad was dead.

And I was drowning.

I don't know how long I sat there not breathing, but when my chest finally felt like it was going to explode, I gasped in a shuddering breath.

I closed my eyes as tears immediately gathered in them, and the ringing faded.

"That's right, sweetheart, breath. Breath for me."

JJ's voice cleared as I took another shaky breath.

I opened my eyes and was met with JJ's concerned face. That's when I started sobbing.

I gripped onto JJ's shirt and broke down. JJ hugged me into him, both of us sitting on our knees, and just like the night before, Kiara and Pope wrapped their arms around the two of us.

"He's gone," I choked out, burying my face into JJ's chest. "You guys were right. He's fucking gone."

I had been trying to convince myself that I would be prepared to learn that my father was dead, but I had only been fooling myself. The last adult that would ever care for me is fucking dead.

"You're gonna be okay," JJ whispered into my hair, pressing a kiss into it. "I've got you."

I sobbed and blubbered and screamed until my voice was completely gone. Pope and Kiara pulled away first when I was reduced to nothing but sniffling.

"We have to go after him," Kiara said as I wiped under my eyes. "He could do something stupid."

Pope and JJ both nodded in agreement, and I quickly got to my feet.

"Let's go," I rasped out, walking straight toward the dock where the HMS Pogue was sitting.

"Whoah, uh, Jo, I don't think you should go."

I whirled on Pope, spinning around so fast my hair flew into my face.

"That's my fucking brother, Pope. I'm not making the same mistake I did yesterday," I growled, casting a small glance toward JJ, and continued walking to the boat.

I heard my friends follow after me as I got onto the HMS Pogue and started her up. JJ and Pope quickly removed the mooring lines, and I took off from the dock at full speed, knowing exactly where my brother would be heading.

Tannyhill.

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