

Chapter Forty-Three



The sun had already set by the time we docked next to the My Druthers

"What now? We just fo up to the front door and ask, 'hey, have you seen John B?'" JJ asked as I killed the engine.

"Look, he lives at Tannyhill now. It's plausible," Kiara defended. "We can play dumb."

"Play dumb?"

"It's pretty late."

I rolled my eyes as my friends argued with each other and made my way to the bow compartment.

"Look, I've never seen John B like that. We should honestly be going to the cops."

"The cop... Yeah, and say what, Kie? We're worried about our' friend because he's on a rampage because Ward Cameron killed Big John?"

A er pushing some lifejackets and extra rope out of the way, I grabbed the pair of binoculars and looked at plantation house in front of me. A person walked by the front window, and I sighed in somewhat relief.

"I see Ward."

"Let me see," Kiara said, reaching for the binoculars, and I hand them to her.

JJ walked from the stern and placed a hand on my shoulder as I pointed to where Ward was walking out of the house.

"Don't look dead to me," Pope said, nonchalant, and walked to the helm. "Let's go home."

"Wait," JJ turned to face him.

"What?"

"Uh, okay. Obviously, Mr. Cameron is fine, and even if John B was here, he isn't now, okay? Plus, I have the biggest most important moment of my life in six hours."

I sco ed, turning away from Pope and back to the house, not really looking at anything in particular.

"Yeah, well, our friend is in trouble."

"I'm in trouble. Guys, I haven't been home in three days. My dad's probably put all my shit on the street by now."

"So that's it?" I asked, turning back to face him. "You just want to abandon my brother?"

"In a time of need, you're just gonna bail? You're just gonna walk away?" Kiara asked, her voice getting louder as her frustration grew.

"Okay, yo, guys, can we not do this right now?" JJ asked, messing with his snapback.

"Hey, I have a scholarship interview in the morning."

"Really, Pope? I had no fucking clue!"

"What about John B?"

Pope paused before taking a deep breath and responding to Kiara.

"Why is it always about John B?"

I ran my hands in my face in frustration.

"It's not always about John B," Kiara said. "You're so stupid. It would be any of you in this situation."

"Oh, bullshit!"

"Guys--"

"This is about friendship!"

"Bring it down."

"This is about my brother!"

"This is about Pogues for life!"

"What about forensic pathology, huh?"

"Forensic pathology?" I sco ed.

"That's your priority?"

"Yeah, it's my life. Everything I've worked for."

"Stop the moral high ground bullshit!"

I stepped back as Pope got in Kiara's face.

"Pope, come on," JJ tried to calm him down.

"No, no. She has no room to talk," he spat before turning back to Kie. "Where were you when Big John went missing?"

I put my hands over my face and sat down in the middle of the boat. This was too much.

"You weren't there. You weren't there for John B. You weren't there for Josephine. You weren't there for any of us. Remember your Kook year?"

"Dude."

"Yeah, you forgot about us. Now you feel guilty."

"Give me a break! Is that what you need? You need a break?"

"Hey! Yo, yo, yo, cut it out, alright?"

I looked up to see JJ standing between them.

"If I'm the one mediating, we've hit rock bottom."

No one argued.

JJ pointed to the front of the boat, glaring at Pope.

"Bow, now."

Pope walked away to the bow while Kiara sat down at the stern. JJ undid the mooring lines before o ering me a hand. I took it and sat down at the wheel while he stood and started the boat.

"Pope, I'll drop you o ."

As we pulled away from the dock, I pulled my legs up to my chest and buried my face into my knees.

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