

Chapter Forty-Nine



Just when I thought I couldn't feel any worse, we pulled up in front of JJ's house.

None of us moved or said a word as Kiara turned o the car.

"Home sweet home."

JJ got out of the back seat and paused as he turned toward the house.

"JJ," I called, causing him to walk up to my open window. "Do you want me to come with you? Because I'll do."

"No," he interrupted, taking o his hat and handing it to me. "This will only take a second."

I reached through the window and grabbed onto his hand, stopping him from turning around.

"Just, be--"

"Careful?"

I laughed weakly before nodding.

"Yeah."

He rubbed his thumb over my knuckles before leaning into the car and pressing his lips against mine.

Half of my brain was telling me to enjoy the sweet passionate kiss while the other half of my brain was trying to remind me that Kiara was sitting just to my le .

He pulled away, closing his eyes and resting his forehead against mine.

"I will."

He walked backwards, holding onto my hand as long as he could before turning around and heading into his house. I tried to give him an encouraging smile and nod when he looked over his shoulder before opening the door.

I watched the door intently as it shut behind him.

"So?"

I closed my eyes and winced as Kiara's voice.

Fuck.

I slowly turned to face her.

"Yeah."

"When did that start happening?"

My fingers were shaking as I played with JJ's hat in my lap.

"Uh," I started, my voice about two octaves higher than normal. "The day of Midsummers."

"More details please," she sco ed, and I nodded.

"Well, it was a er his dad had picked him up from the sheri 's o ice a er he was arrested for taking the blame for Pope, and I went to his house, and we kinda kissed."

"Kinda kissed?"

I rolled my eyes.

"You know what I mean."

"Okay, and then?"

"Then, what?"

"Tell the rest of the story!"

I laughed at how excited she seemed to be getting, relief washing over me as I realized that she wasn't mad.

"Well, we kissed a couple more times a er that, made out a few times, and..."

I trailed o , biting my lip as I remembered a few nights ago, before everything went to complete shit.

"Oh, my God. Did you two..."

I nodded, and she squealed.

"Oh, my God, Kiara, shut up. This isn't really the time or the place," I tried to chastise, but I couldn't keep the smile o my face.

"He was your first though!" She gasped, looking to me with wide eyes. "Did he know that?"

"Yeah, I told him."

"And it didn't freak him out?"

"Not that I know of."

"What was it like?"

"I am not going into detail with you."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

I paused, feeling slightly guilty at her question.

"We thought it would be best to wait until we had the gold."

She nodded.

"And he wanted to tell John B first."

She nodded again.

The two of us fell into another silence which was quickly interrupted by the front door slamming open.

I looked toward the house to see JJ coming out of the house, clearly upset. Kiara started the car as I debated getting out of it, but JJ got into the back seat. Kiara and I both turned around to look at him.

"How'd it go?"

JJ silently held up the chain that held the key, but I focused more on his face. His eyes held unshed tears, and his face was a little red. Basically sitting backward in my seat, I reached out and grabbed onto his hand.

Kiara started driving, and I interlaced our fingers as he stared down into his lap. I brushed my thumb over his battered knuckles and quietly inspected every piece of exposed skin for injury.

"I'm fine."

I sighed.

"You don't look fine."

He met my eyes, and I tried to smile despite our situation. It didn't seem to help.

As Kiara got back onto the main road, the tension in the car grew. I was clutching onto JJ's hat in one hand, so I wouldn't have to worry about breaking his hand in my other one.

"It'll be fine. It'll be fine with the Phantom. She'll get out of here quick."

I dropped his hand and turned around in my seat at the sound of police sirens. I lowered myself in my seat, placing JJ's hat on my head and tipping the bill down to try and cover my face without being too obvious about it as four cop cars flew past us going the opposite way.

"They're still looking," Kiara said, trying to sound hopeful. "It's a good sign."

"Right."

I lowered myself in my seat as even more cop cars went past us. I felt JJ's hand around my arm, and he began rubbing circles into the skin with his thumb.

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