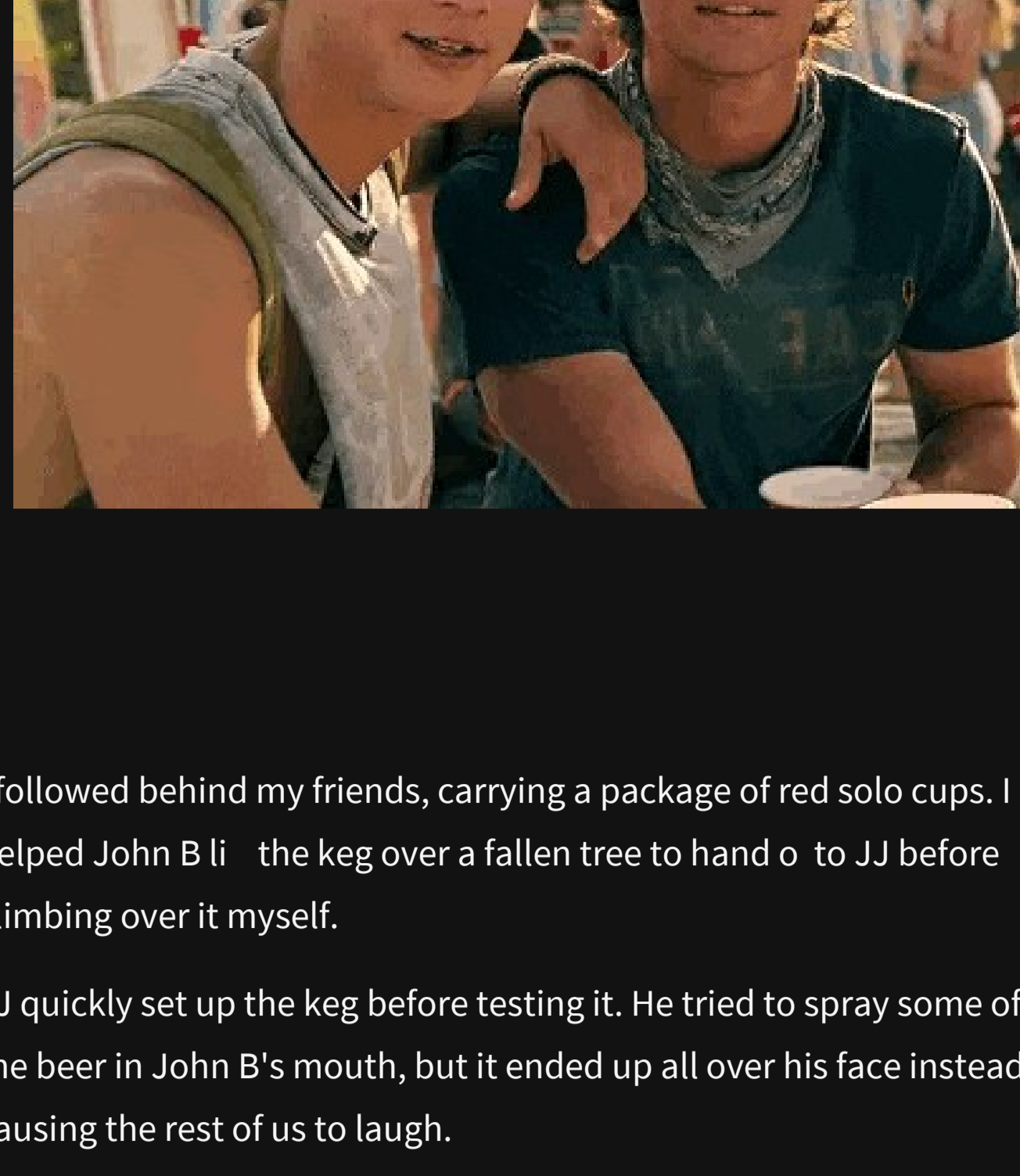


## Chapter Six



I followed behind my friends, carrying a package of red solo cups. I helped John B lift the keg over a fallen tree to hand it to JJ before climbing over it myself.

JJ quickly set up the keg before testing it. He tried to spray some of the beer in John B's mouth, but it ended up all over his face instead, causing the rest of us to laugh.

JJ filled a cup before offering it out to me.

I grabbed it and chugged it. I may not have felt like partying, but I needed to be drunk to enjoy it.

JJ whistled as I handed the cup back to him to refill it.

Soon, people were gathering around the keg as John B took over for JJ to fill the red solo cups.

The Boneyard was filled with the different people that John B usually describes as the three different layers of a burrito. There's us and our friends, the working-class derelicts from the Cut. Then, there were the Kooks, the rich second-homers. They were mostly from posh boarding schools, just with trustafarian posers and our natural enemies. And then, there are the Tourons. Totally clueless, here for a week on vacations with their families. Chum for the sharks.

After my third cup of beer, I feel myself beginning to relax into the party. I found myself talking to a group of Touron guys. They mentioned they were from Wisconsin taking a vacation together before heading to different places for college.

One of them challenged me to a chug, and I smirked before accepting it. The guy, Chandler I think, went up to the keg where JJ was filling cups. The blond sent me a wink as the guy made his way back, carrying two cups. He handed me one of them.

"Salud," I said, tapping my plastic cup against his before linking my arm through his.

One of his friends counted down, yelling out go.

I quickly chugged down the beer, beating the dude by a full two seconds as he struggled to finish his. I threw my cup down into the sand and let out a shout of victory as the guy pouted slightly.

"Now I owe that blond guy twenty bucks."

I laughed loudly, understanding JJ's wink from earlier.

"I hope I didn't wound your ego too bad," I said as his friends left to go get more beer for themselves.

"Nah, I figured when your friend got excited that I was going against you that he knew that you were going to win."

His words caused me to laugh again.

"Wanna take a walk down the beach?"

This time, his words caught me off guard. Tourons aren't usually that bold.

I began fiddling with my fingers.

"Uh," I started intelligently.

"Hey, Jo, can I steal your for a second?"

I tried to keep the relief off my face at the sound of JJ's voice and his arm landing across my shoulders. I smiled up at my friend before looking back to the guy.

"Rain check?"

He nodded before walking away to find his friends.

I wrapped my arm around JJ's waist, squeezing him in a side hug.

"Thanks for the rescue."

"You looked a little awkward there, I was mostly saving the guy from getting second hand embarrassment."

I gasped, playfully shoving him away from me.

"You dick!"

He just laughed before throwing his arm back over my shoulder and guiding me back towards the keg.

"It's time to get you white-girl wasted my friend."

The sun sunk below the ocean, and I did not, in fact, get white-girl wasted as JJ planned. I didn't drink any more, not really wanting to wake up with a headache and nausea tomorrow.

I suddenly found myself alone for the first time that day, and it was kind of a relief. I walked through the sand and down to the water, letting it wash over my bare feet, having lost my flip-flops hours ago.

I looked up at the sky, noticing the amount of stars and enjoying the small moment of peace.

"Yo, Jo!"

The very small moment of peace.

I slapped on a grin before turning towards JJ.

"What's up?"

JJ grinned back and held out a red solo cup.

"I got this for you, want it?"

Just by how loudly he was talking, I could tell JJ was a little passed the buzzed stage.

"For me?" I asked, faking surprised. "Sure, I'll take a sip."

I reached for the cup, but JJ pulled it back as my fingers touched it.

"Oh, wait. Hey, hey," he yelled out, turning his attention to someone walking by us. "Hey, Sarah!"

I pursed my lips as Sarah and Topper, aka Kook Prince and Princess, walked by us.

"Can I interest you in a tasty Milwaukee beverage?"

I cringed as JJ held out the beer.

"No, thanks," Sarah declined, and I shook my head at her holier-than-thou tone.

"Come on, is it not fancy enough for you?"

"Dude, cut it out," I muttered, feeling the tension begin to rise as John B joined us.

"No, we were just leaving."

"Hey, you know what? I'll take it. Thank you, man. I appreciate it."

I internally groaned as Topper spoke up, knowing JJ wasn't going to give it to him.

"That's nice, but I didn't ask you," JJ said with a sarcastic smile on his face. "If you said pretty please, maybe, but you didn't."

I wrapped my hand around JJ's forearm, giving it a squeeze in warning.

"Oh, pretty please?"

"JJ..."

"Yeah, so Sarah, you can have it."

I gave my brother a pointed look to stop our friend from starting something, but the next thing I knew, beer is splashed in my face.

I gasped, and JJ grabbed Topper by the front of his shirt, pushing him out of the small circle the five of us were making.

I quickly wiped the beer out of my eyes before grabbing onto the back of JJ's shirt and pulling him backwards as John B pushed him back by the shoulders.

"You're so funny, man!"

"JJ, please, stop it," I begged, trying to stop him from escalating the situation even more.

"You three are nothing more than dirty Pogues!"

Fuck me.

I tried to reach around JJ to grab onto my brother but wasn't quick enough as he ran and shoved Topper back.

"John B!"

"We're supposed to be incognito, remember?" Pope reminded him as he and Kiara came over.

Topper slams a fist into my brother's face, causing John B to stumble back and fall into the sand. I gasped and stepped forward to get in the middle, but Pope grabbed me by the forearm.

"Incognito!"

I watched as Topper kicked John B over into the water.

"Hey, John B," the Kook yelled loud enough for everyone to hear. "Don't make me drown you like your old man, all right?"

I saw nothing but red.

I managed to twist my arm out of Pope's grip and ignored Kiara's yells to not do anything. I charged Topper at a sprint, tackling him straight into the shallow water. I threw a punch after letting out a battle cry and hit him solidly in the jaw.

I screamed insults at him as I drew my arm back for another punch, but arms wrapped around me and landed me on the asshole. I struggled and flailed in JJ's grip as he tried to calm me down.

"If your Kook ass ever speaks about my father again, Topper, I swear to fuck that I will kill you!"

"Josephine, enough!"

My chest heaved up and in down with heavy breaths as JJ set me back down on my feet.

I felt tears well up in my eyes as I met JJ's concerned ones. JJ wrapped his arms around me in a tight hug, and I buried my face in his chest as I tried to hold everything in.

"He's drowning him!"

I pulled out of the hug and turned back towards the group of people, seeing Topper holding my brother's face in the water.

"Get off him!" I screamed, running towards Topper again.

I went to tackle him again, but he grabbed me by my shoulders and pushed me into the water, holding me down by my shoulders. I struggled to keep my head above the water, but a wave crashed over me. I held my breath until my chest started to ache. Suddenly Topper's weight was gone, and I sat up enough to get my head out of the water.

I gasped in air as my eyes focused on the scene in front of me. JJ was holding the gun to the back of Topper's head.

"Yeah, you know what that is. Your move, broski."

"JJ, stop."

My words had no effect on him as Topper stood up. Everyone started screaming and running away from the group.

"Put the gun down," Sarah yelled, but JJ kept it right where it was.

"Did you say somethin', princess?"

I struggled to my feet and sloshed up to the two boys.

"JJ," I whispered as everyone kept yelling.

I grabbed onto his wrist, the one that wasn't holding the gun.

"Let him go," I said calmly, tugging back on him.

He walked backwards with me a few steps, allowing Topper to fall to his knees in the water in relief.

"Okay, everyone, listen up!"

JJ pulled his wrist out of my grasp as he yelled at everyone else.

"Get the hell off our side of the island!"

I covered my ears as JJ shoots twice up into the air.

"Are you crazy? You idiot!"

I watched as Kiara pulled JJ's arm down and Pope shoved him.

"Why would you do that?"

"I was saving their lives, okay?"

My hands formed fists by my sides as everyone kept yelling at each other.

"Shut up! Shut up! Everyone just shut the fuck up!"

Pope, Kiara, and JJ all turn to me as I dug my fingernails into the palms of my hands.

"We all just need to go home, and act like this never happened."

Pope and Kiara nod in agreement before looking for their stuff.

"Jo..."

"JJ, just shut up and help me with John B before he drowns himself."

The two of us, each slinging one of them over my shoulder out of the water by the arms, walk slinging one of them over my shoulders. We dragged him back to the van. He groaned as we placed him on the bench seat in the van before I got in the driver's seat and JJ in the passenger.

"Are you okay to drive?"

His question was quiet, and I wrapped my hands tightly around the steering wheel, turning my knuckles white.

"Apparently I'm more capable of making decisions than you are right now."

"Right."

I drove to the Chateau in silence, minus a few groans from John B when we went over bumps in the road.

We got home, and JJ and I worked together to throw John B on the pull out bed.

"You can stay if you want," I muttered to the blond as I made my way back to my room.

I slammed my bedroom door closed and quickly changed out of my wet clothes and into a pair of running shorts and an old band t-shirt. I fell down face first on my bed, not bothering with the blanket as I groaned into my pillow. A knock sounded on the other side of my door.

"Go away."

The door opened.

Typical.

The bed dipped beside me.

"Jo, I'm..."

"I know."

I rolled onto my side, propping my head up with my arm. JJ did the same.

Both of our adrenaline levels came down, and both our blinks began to grow long. I laid my head down on the pillow, pulling it slightly to share it with JJ. He threw an arm over my waist and a leg over one of mine. I slipped quickly into a dreamless sleep.