

Chapter Thirteen:

Encore

Written by: Jay Mosher

The Office is playing on our TV. I'm curled up on the couch under several blankets and with Hershey by my side. Every time I stop giving him pets and ear scratches, he wags his tail until I start petting him again.

Clay returns from the kitchen and hands me a mug of hot chocolate. They've made it just the way I like it; a little bit of milk, marshmallows, and whipped cream.

"Thank you, love," I say, taking a long sip of the hot chocolate.

"Of course." Clay settles onto the couch on the opposite side of Hershey. They turn down the volume of the TV. "Are you ready to talk about it?"

"Yeah." I sit up, focusing on petting Hershey. "We need to discuss what to do next. When Harvey finds out his plan didn't work..."

"I know." Clay sighs. "He'll just find another hitman or some other crazy way to try to kill us."

"I feel like the main character in a book," I chuckle.

"Our lives haven't exactly been simple," Clay agrees, pausing to sip on their tea. They don't like hot chocolate as much as I do. "It's probably best for us to go off the grid for a little while. We have enough money from my grandfather. We'll keep on the down low, tell only my parents and your aunts where we're going."

"We might have to change our names." I bite my bottom lip. "Or do something with our identities to make us a little harder to find."

"You're right. I'll find someone to take care of that for us." They pet Hershey while thinking it over. "We'll find a nice house in the country like you want. You can write your books, and I'll think about working at a local police department. If that doesn't work out, I'll find some kind of odd job to do."

"We'll have to leave soon," I say. "As soon as we get the house. If we stay here too long, someone will find us."

"I'll start looking at houses tonight."

I nod. "I'll start packing tomorrow."

Clay sighs and reaches over to take my hand. Their skin is warm from holding their tea cup.

“Clay,” I say quietly. “This probably won’t be the end of our mysteries. Our track record isn’t very good.” I bite the inside of my cheek. “I don’t know if a normal life is possible for us anymore. We can only do the best with what we have.”

“I know.” They squeeze my hand. “It doesn’t matter what happens. We have each other. I’ll keep you safe, Park.”

“And I’ll keep you safe.” I kiss the top of their knuckles.

We fall into silence. There is nothing but the soft sound of the TV, Hershey’s snores, and the prospect of our new life.

I know that we’ll be okay.

We’ve survived this long, we can sure as hell survive whatever else is thrown at us.
