

The Joy of Revenge by Sheila Chapter 29

CHAPTER 29 The Sheriff

Joy

Noah and I decided to drop off my grocery items at my house, then freshen up for dinner. In California, it was already a bit warm during this time of year and my current outfit would have been fine for the evening. Unfortunately, it was still a bit chilly in North Dakota. Now that the sun had set, a cool breeze blew giving a chill to the air. Without a light jacket or a shawl, I would be shivering the whole night.

I invited Cristos to come with us, but he said he had to open his pub and get it ready in time for happy hour. And since he was running late, he had to back out of our dinner plans. He

did promise me we would do a sleepover soon. I smiled coyly... I was already picturing what we would do together in my new house!

I dressed casually in a camel colored off-shoulder long-sleeved cashmere sweater and skin tight jeans to showcase my long legs. I paired my outfit with knee high brown boots and a brown leather bag.

When Noah showed up at my doorstep, I was surprised to see him wearing a nice crisp white long-sleeved shirt under a blue dinner jacket which he paired with dark blue jeans and loafers. His blonde hair was still damp from his shower and he obviously had taken the time

to shave, cut his fingernails and put on some nice cologne.

The restaurant surprisingly was a bit crowded when we arrived. Thankfully, I made a quick

reservation when Noah and I passed by earlier during our walk. If I hadn't, Noah and I would

have been turned away and instead of nice, juicy steaks with mashed potatoes and

cornbread, we would be at the diner eating cheese steak sandwiches instead.

Well, I wasn't hungry anyway, but I did want to sit and talk.

After our visit with the mayor, Noah's demeanor had changed. Earlier at the grocery store, he acted jolly and friendly, but now, he acted reserved and preoccupied. Obviously, Liam was the reason for this sudden change in him. It was such a shame really. I was hoping this: would be a fun evening.

I ordered a bottle of wine thinking a bit of alcohol would help loosen him up a little.

"I'm driving, remember?" Noah said as our server poured us each a glass of red wine.

"Our neighborhood is just a fifteen minute walk from here, Noah. I can leave my car and get it in the morning. I just thought a bottle of wine will help us both

unwind,” I said, raising r

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glass, “To new beginnings...”

“I’ll cheers to that,” Noah said and raised his glass.

After a sip of wine, I saw him relax. We began talking about recreational activities in the area and upcoming town events to look forward to. We then went on to talk about the best flea markets for vintage furniture to thrift shops in Bismarck. As the conversation progressed, we quickly moved from topic to topic, even touching the subject of why I left Nevada.

Suddenly, a middle-aged man in a police uniform stopped in front of our table. I looked up and found the kind eyes of the sheriff staring down at me..

“Good evening, Noah. I see you have a date,” he said, smiling.

“Sheriff Combs, I’d like you to meet Virtue. She just moved in-”

“Into the old Taylor house. Yes, I know,” he said, cutting Noah off. “Virtue, I’d like to welcome you to our small town. Unfortunately, I’m here on an official capacity. Since winter is behind us and spring has started, I need to remind folks that there’s a curfew for minors. I

need to check your ID’s although I know both of you are above the legal drinking age. Just standard operating procedure.”

“Sure, Sheriff.” I took my wallet out and gave him my driver’s license. Noah did the same.

“Virtue Sullivan from Reno, Nevada,” he read my license.

“Yes, Sir. Near Lake Tahoe,” I said.

“It’s beautiful there. Why move here?” The Sheriff asked curiously, handing me back.

“For a fresh start. I always wanted to live in a place where every one knows everybody. Just like one big happy family,” I answered. He furrowed his brow and chuckled embarrassingly.

“Unfortunately, this one big family is now becoming dysfunctional. Last year, two bodies showed up two weeks apart at the nearby lake. One was a young girl of seventeen while the other was twenty years old. The teenager was the granddaughter of a previous New Salem resident while the twenty year old was from the nearby city of Bismarck. Because untoward incidences, Mayor Cohen issued a curfew for all minors,” he said.

“Sorry to hear that, Sheriff,” I replied. “I would like to ask though, was this a simple

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drowning or was there foul play involved? He raised his eyebrows, surprised I would ask so boldly.

“Foul play,” he answered. A suspect from Bismarck was arrested, but evidence points to an accomplice who we’re still looking for. Until we find this accomplice, the curfew stays. Anyway, nice to meet you, Miss Sullivan. Enjoy your evening. Noah. The Sheriff tipped his hat at us and went to the other table.

Our server finally arrived with our food and we both ate quietly. Noah looked detached, like his mind was on other things. I already knew what was bothering him. He was afraid I now had a different perspective of the men in New Salem and this was not good for his friends. I attempted to make small talk, but he would only answer me with a few words so I gave up trying to make conversation.

Ever since I told Cristos, Sebastian, and Xavier the details of my assault, we kept a close watch on this town. I had thought that after what they did to me, they would lead squeaky clean lives to avoid any kind of suspicion just in case Joy Taylor were ever to suddenly pop up. However, we noticed they had escalated while the people in this town continued to look the other way. The Sheriff, on the other hand, had a very close relationship with the Cohens. I knew Sheriff Combs was the one who stalled the investigation on my assault. I also suspected he had something to do with my missing gown and the missing sexual assault evidence collection kit. While I strongly believe he discarded the evidence, Sebastian thinks Sheriff Combs has kept it as leverage to keep his position.

“No eye witnesses and no evidence. It would be a matter of ‘he said, she said’, George,” Sheriff Combs said when he spoke with my father at the hospital.

He told my father if we decided to prosecute, I would have to go on the witness stand and

relive every horrifying detail of what had happened to me. He also pointed out the harsh reality that rapists were hardly ever convicted in New Salem, which meant whoever I was

going to accuse would get off scott free and I would be labeled as the town’s trollop.

My father then argued we could try and file attempted murder charges. But the Sheriff reasoned, if there wasn’t enough evidence to put all four boys with me at the gym that particular night, then logic would dictate they weren’t the ones who tried to kill me. The jury would give a ‘not guilty verdict and we would become the laughingstock in New Salem.

“Look at her, Sheriff! Look at the state my Joy is in. Aren’t you going to do anything to find who did this to her? Since you’re practically convinced it wasn’t those boys,” my father

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hissed. I heard the Sheriff sigh frustratedly at my father.

“George, I’m not your enemy here. I’m your friend and honestly, I understand what you’re feeling. I truly do. But you know who Liam’s father is. You know what he’s capable of,” Sheriff Combs said grimly. I heard the caution in his voice. “If you love your little girl, you’ll keep quiet and leave this town before it’s too late.”

I overheard all their conversations as I laid in the hospital, pretending to be asleep. My parents and I... we were alone. No one wanted to help us and if they did, they wouldn’t dare try. I wanted justice, but the courtroom wasn’t where I would get it.

As I sliced some of my steak, I secretly glanced at the Sheriff who was at a nearby table and imagined throwing my steak knife into his chest. I pictured myself giggling at him while I watched the blood trickle out from his wound after he removed the knife. I know he wouldn’t die from such a small wound, but hurting him would appease some of my anger.

I placed a piece of steak in my mouth and chewed slowly, savoring the meat’s beefy and salty flavor while stealing another glance at the Sheriff. Well, as they say, ignorance is bliss. These people’s lives were going to be turned upside down and they didn’t even know it.

After the awkward dinner, Noah guided me to the Buzzed Pub which was previously known as the Night Captain. Before Cristos, this old local pub was owned by one of the oldest families who ever lived in this town.

I casually walked inside the dingy bar as Noah held the door open for me. Tammy Wynette’s song ‘Stand by Your Man’ was playing while a band was setting up to perform on stage. I looked around and grimaced. Cristos really did need to have this place spruced up.

I stood in the middle of the bar, searching for Cristos, when someone tapped me on the shoulder.

“You made it,” Lisa exclaimed as I turned to face her. I grinned and pointed to Noah behind me. “And you brought Noah.” She rushed to him and planted a kiss on his cheek. Lisa’s breath smelled heavily of bourbon. Obviously, she had started early.

“Just you?” Noah asked rubbing off her lipstick from his cheek.

“Yeah, I was seated at the bar feeling lonely before you guys came in,” Lisa answered. “Both Nicole and my husband are running late while Chip is in his office talking to Dom and Bo. Anyway, all is better now since you guys showed up. So, what have you two been up to?” Lisa asked while gesturing to the bartender for a round.

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“Noah has been kind enough to give me a tour of the town. We even went to the town earlier and I met the mayor,” I said.
hall

“You met Liam?!” Lisa exclaimed loudly, her eyes as wide as saucers. She seemed surprised... no, shocked. I gave her a puzzled look.

“Uhm, yeah, to get building permits. I also met Dan. He said all I needed to do was to sign those papers you drew up for the commercial space,” I said. She placed her hand on her forehead, obviously forgetting she and I still had some unfinished business.

“That’s right,” she muttered, remembering the contract. “How about you swing by my office tomorrow morning so you can cross those T’s and dot those I’s?” The bartender placed our orders on the bar and Lisa happily handed me a beer.

“Sure, Lisa. Noah and I need to start purchasing construction material and all the furnishings anyway,” I said taking a sip of my beer.

“Alright,” Lisa said, cheerfully. “You do that and I’ll go and pick up your permit from the Mayor. How does that sound?”

Before I could answer her, I suddenly heard the door open, followed by several footsteps on the hard wooden floors. Lisa looked over my shoulder and grinned.

“Well, speaking of the devil,” she murmured and walked over to greet her friends.

I slowly turned to face the devil.

Chapter Comments