

Unzipped Bonus Scene

Finley

The view is spectacular. A vast streaming ribbon of blue cuts besides the trail. Mountains and trees hug us as we hike along the San Gabriel River.

Five miles will take us to our destination and we're almost there.

No surprise, the whole way up we talked. That's what Tom and I have always been good at—talking about everything and nothing, and the whole world in between.

Even though we're currently on a trip—a weekend away in Southern California—we've been debating where we want to go on our next trip. It seems we both have a taste for adventure.

"What do you say we go crazy and travel to the other hemisphere? How about we tackle New Zealand?" he suggests.

"I say we can go to New Zealand, but we must, must see some of the sheep herding dogs."

He laughs. "Didn't you tell me about someone that stayed in the home next door to you who had a sheep herding dog?"

"Yes, and I insisted he showed me videos of the pooch. It's really one of the coolest things ever to watch a dog doing his 9-to-5 gig. I mean, dogs who have jobs? How awesome is that?"

"It is pretty awesome," he admits. "I suppose lots of dogs don't have jobs at all. For instance, Chihuahuas."

I give him the side-eye as we wind around a bend in the trail. “Chihuahuas have jobs. Their job is to keep you warm at night when they snuggle under the covers.”

He lifts an eyebrow. “That’s not really a job.”

“That’s totally a job,” I insist. “Being responsible for keeping a human toasty? That makes a Chihuahua a warming dog. Don’t you think that’s an important responsibility?”

“By that same token, wouldn’t being a lapdog be important?”

I nod vigorously as the sun beats down. “Exactly. Especially for writers. Writers always need lapdogs.”

He strokes his chin. “Basically, what you’re saying is that most dogs have jobs, even lapdogs, even companion dogs. Being a companion is their job.”

I stare at him. “Yes. All dogs have jobs,” I say as we reach the top of the hill.

“I suppose they do. Which is another reason dogs are awesome. Like Dude.”

That’s the Chihuahua-min-pin mix we adopted and we named him Dude because it amused us. He’s hanging with Mister Dog, my dad’s dog, while we’re away on this trip.

“Do you think Dude is having fun?”

“Yes, but he definitely misses us. He’ll probably miss us if we go to Italy too.”

I grab his arm. “Are you saying we’re going to Italy next?”

“We could go on one of those bike rides where we do twenty or thirty miles a day across the hills in Tuscany.”

“And we could drink wine and eat salad and pasta.”

“Can I just eat the pasta? Do I have to eat the salad?”

I give him a sharp stare. “Of course, you have to eat the salad, Tom. Salad is good for you.”

“And I always eat the wonderful salads you make. And also, I was just teasing you. I’ll devour the salads, pasta, and also you.”

I stop in our path and wriggle against him. “You’re quite good at devouring.”

His eyes darken from behind his glasses. “Because you taste so sweet.”

I shudder, then shake my head. “We have to stay focused. We have a dare to execute. Let’s go.”

At the top of the hike, we reach our destination. The Bridge to Nowhere, an abandoned bridge atop a washed-away road. Tom removes his glasses, puts them in his backpack, and gives me the most serious look ever. “Are you ready?”

I smile back. “So ready.”

We join the guide who hooks us into the harness and goes over all of the safety precautions.

“So, what is it with you, guys? Lots of people come here to fulfill a bucket list item or do this before they change in their life. Is that your story?”

Tom shakes his head and points to me. “No, she just really likes adventure.”

The guide laughs. “Right on. That’s a damn good reason to take the plunge too.”

“I do like adventure,” I chime in. “I do like taking chances. And I think, really, every day should be a bucket list day, don’t you?”

The guide knocks his fist to mine. “I like your attitude, lady. You ready to go for it?”

“Absolutely.”

We turn, step over the railing on the edge of the bridge high above the river, with views as far as the eye can see, and a drop of nearly one thousand feet.

My stomach nosedives and for a second, fear clutches me tight.

My blood roars and my heart rate speeds like it’s on a racetrack.

But at the same time, a wild anticipation fills my cells.

I turn to Tom, nod, and we let go, jumping off the bridge, diving into the air, falling at the speed of sound, it seems.

I scream.

He screams.

Exhilaration floods every corner of my body. It feels wild and electric, and like nothing else could even compare.

And, at the end of the day, it feels like falling in love.

Wild, crazy, and totally worth it.

When we’re done, my heart is still beating fast. My cheeks are red and I can feel the adrenaline flowing through me. “It’s a damn good thing I’m not pregnant,” I say with a laugh.

Tom stops in his tracks. “Is this your way of telling me you’re pregnant?”

I laugh. “I would never bungee jump if I even thought I was pregnant, okay?”

“Are you thinking about getting pregnant?”

I look at him. “If I was thinking about getting pregnant, don’t you think I would involve you? After all, you’re my fiancé.”

“Someday soon I’m going to be your husband.”

“Even then, I’m not bungee jumping if I might be pregnant.”

“Do you want to be pregnant at some point?”

“I wouldn’t mind having a little person to indoctrinate into our crazy, daring, movie-centric, 80s-loving world, would you?”

He pretends to consider this thoughtfully, tapping his chin. “True, at some point you might not want to ride roller coasters with me and I totally need someone to ride with.”

“Also, you’d probably make a great dad.”

“And you’d make a great mom,” he says. And then he tugs me in for a hug and a kiss.

“We’re not having kids anytime soon. We’re not tossing out the pills tonight,” I remind him. “But perhaps down the road.”

“Someday that’ll be our next crazy adventure.”

For now, bungee jumping will do.