

Chapter One

We thought it would be funny.

“Keep the camera low. Try to get the middle of people. No faces,” Jordan said. “Make sure you get the school sign in a bunch.”

I tilted the tiny screen so it was facing up, then held the camera low around my waist.

There were about fifty kids across the street, waiting for buses outside our town’s only private high school.

“Remember the plan?” Jordan asked. I nodded, trying to keep my attention on the screen and not shift the angle. “Make sure once we start whaling on one another, you don’t get our faces.”

“If I do, I can fix it in post.”

“Post?” Rowan said. “What the fuck’s *post*?”

“Post-production. Like, where I’ll edit the video and stuff.”

Rowan looked annoyed by this.

“Better to get it out fast and make sure it looks real,” Jordan said.

“It will,” I said.

“Yeah, you’re good at this shit, aren’t you.”

I checked the screen again.

“So I should punch you in the face, right?” Rowan said.

Rowan has one of those big round heads with a short tuft of hair on top. Jordan, on the other hand, is your regular square-jawed athletic type. Styled and stiff black hair. Bright blue eyes.

“No, don’t fucking punch me in the face. Just make it look like you are.”

“I’ll try, but I ain’t no stuntman.”

As Jordan and Rowan walked down the block to cross the street, I moved into position. Jordan had handed me this camera an hour earlier, and I was still trying to figure out how everything worked.

The pickup area for the buses was crammed between the street and a brick-rimmed flower garden. This meant the fifty or so kids waiting for buses were packed in close to one another. So when Jordan and Rowan rolled into the middle of them, kids started tripping over one another trying to spread out. I moved, keeping the camera low and marking a time where the crowd was visible but what Jordan and Rowan were doing was out of frame.

I could start the video right at this spot when I began editing. As I moved closer, the garbled words of the kids became clearer. If anyone said anything clearly enough to be heard, I would make

it more garbled. Before I even got to the curb, half a dozen kids had their phones up, filming. Jordan and Rowan were keeping it tight though. They kept pulling each other into headlocks and flailing around so their faces were always either down or turned to the weed garden.

“What the hell, guys!” A big dude wearing a tank top and shorts, even though it was just the beginning of spring, grabbed at Jordan and Rowan, trying, I guess, to separate them. Other than this one dude, though, no one else stepped in.

Sirens rattled the air. They were close. They likely didn't have anything to do with us, but it added to the drama. Jordan gave Rowan an extra bang in the stomach with his knee, shoved him away and took off running across the street. Rowan went down on the ground, then jumped up and ran along the sidewalk away from the school. The big guy took a couple of steps after Rowan, then stopped. I made sure I got the school's sign in the frame one last time

before I shut off the camera and backed away. As I was crossing the street, I heard someone say, “Who the hell were those guys?”

I walked the block and a half to where we'd left Jordan's car and sat down on a bench. There were kids everywhere. Along with the high school, there was an elementary school just down the street. I hadn't been sitting for more than a minute before the lights flashed on Jordan's BMW and the doors unlocked. Without looking up, I opened the back passenger door and got in.

“Did you get it?” Jordan asked as he pulled away from the curb. He was breathing heavily, his face a bright red.

“Yeah, it'll look good.”

He drove us two blocks north, turned left and there was Rowan, sitting on the bleachers of a ball diamond. Rowan swung off the bleachers and opened the passenger door before the car had come to a full stop.