

**Title:** Body Heat

**Author:** Scribblesinink

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**Author notes:** Thanks to Tanaqui for betaing.

**Summary:** Getting dragged along on an impromptu hunting trip with Stanley and Jake isn't Mimi's idea of fun. When the cold winter night threatens to keep them all awake, she comes up with a plan.

## Body Heat

Mimi shifted awkwardly on the lumpy vinyl. The truck's bench was unpleasantly hard under her, despite the padding of long, warm leggings and a pair of jeans. She glanced to her left, watching Jake's profile as he steered the old Jeep along the dusty road, his eyes focused forward to where a purple evening lit up the horizon. Dusk came early these days: it was only a couple weeks before Christmas.

*If we're even gonna have a Christmas.* Mimi wasn't feeling very festive, with the whole country in shambles, and her stuck in corn country, and her family and friends all dead, and—. She shoved the thought away before it could bring tears to her eyes. No use crying over what she couldn't change. Best she concentrate on the here and now and not think about what-ifs and maybes.

She tilted her head a little toward her other side, catching sight of Stanley's quiet presence from the corner of her right eye. He was watching her in turn, an expression on his face she couldn't quite place, but one that flooded her with welcome warmth. In an attempt to hide how he flustered her before he could catch it, she asked, "Why am I here again?"

Stanley shrugged. "Told ya."

He had. More than once. "Yeah, yeah. You want me to trap and shoot like a regular mountain man." Mimi sniffed; it still made no sense to her.

A few hours ago, Stanley had come home to the farm, Jake in tow, to drag her away from the nice, warm fire she'd finally gotten going in the kitchen, telling her to get her coat and gloves as they were going hunting. She'd let out a squeak once his words had sunk in, shocked and scandalized, and looked over at Jake

for support. Jake had merely shrugged his shoulders, a wry half-smile on his lips that seemed to say he'd already tried to change Stanley's mind and failed.

Twenty minutes after that, she'd found herself bundled into the cab of an ancient Jeep pick-up, the truck's bed full of camping gear and blankets and shotguns. She let out another sniff as she pictured it: her, Mimi Clarke, camping in Kansas in the thick of winter. It'd be funny, if it wasn't also terrifying to realize this was what her world had come to.

The jeep bucked over a pothole, rattling the gear in the back and making her land painfully hard on her tailbone as she bounced. "Ow," she grumbled under her breath.

"Sorry," Jake muttered an apology.

Mimi sighed, shifting again to try and find a more comfortable position. At least, she mused, watching a last ray of sunlight pierce the low clouds, she wasn't cold any longer, jam-packed as she was between the two men and with everyone bundled up in heavy winter jackets and hoodies.

"We should stop for the night." Stanley leaned forward to peer through the windshield into the dusk. "It's getting dark."

Jake grunted an agreement. Neither man added that if they broke an axle trying to continue driving in the dark, or something equally critical, they'd be truly screwed. Mimi hadn't seen any sign of life since passing the Jericho patrol a few miles outside of town. And calling Triple A was certainly out of the question. She swallowed a harsh chuckle at the thought. So much had changed in the past few months, and everyone had had to become a lot more self-sufficient to simply survive. Maybe Stanley did have a point taking her along on this trip. She just wasn't sure she was up to the challenge: she was a born-and-bred city girl and not cut out for the kind of hardships she'd been suffering lately.

"We'll camp at Mill Pond," Jake announced. He was speaking past her, addressing Stanley. She felt Stanley's nod, the cab growing too dark for her to make out more of his face than a pale blur outlined against the darker side window.

"Shouldn't we have better waited until tomorrow morning if you didn't think we'd be done before dark?" She didn't see the point of heading out late enough they'd be forced to camp when there was a perfectly warm bed, with a heap of blankets to huddle under, waiting for her back at Stanley's farm.

"There's a storm coming," Stanley said, as if that was any explanation. "Could've been stuck in town for days."

"So?"

"Hopefully we get done and back before it hits," Jake added.

"*Hopefully?*" Mimi squeaked, her voice high. "You—."

Jake pulled the truck over into what felt like a field strewn with rubble and Mimi's teeth clacked together, preventing her from voicing the rest of her incredulous question. In the glow of the headlamps she spotted a flat patch of ground, the long grass yellow and brittle. A clump of trees rose, black shapes in the night sky. Jake killed the engine, and they got out of the car. Mimi sucked in an involuntary breath that hurt her lungs: it was even colder than before.

Stanley went round to the back of the truck to start dragging out their gear, while Jake instructed Mimi to gather wood for a fire. "Dead wood," he explained. "Best you look under those trees. The drier, the better it burns."

She rolled her eyes at him. She might be a city girl, but she'd seen enough survival documentaries to know that green wood didn't burn very well. "I'm not that dumb." She trudged off toward the trees, grateful for the flashlight Jake had given her. A gust of wind rattled the bare branches above her and she shivered deeper into her coat. She couldn't wait for Jake to get that fire going.

Dinner consisted of some stale muesli bars left over from before the bombs, along with a few cans of peaches Jake had brought along. "Mmm." Mimi closed her eyes to better relish the sweet softness on her tongue as she slowly chewed the last piece. Who'd have ever predicted she'd get near-orgasmic over canned fruit that, objectively speaking, wasn't even very good?

Jake was grinning at her across the fire as she opened her eyes again, and Stanley licked his lips, staring at her. She felt her cheeks heat up in a way that had nothing to do with the glow of the flames.

The moment lasted another few seconds, until Jake cleared his throat and got up to collect the empty cans, breaking the spell. "We should turn in," he suggested, though it was still early. "We'll leave at first light. We should get to Flint Springs just after sun-up."

"Prime white tail country," Stanley commented to nobody in particular. Shaking out a sleeping bag, he handed it to Mimi. "You take the tent."

Ten minutes later, Mimi was huddled in on herself inside the sleeping bag, the fire glowing outside the tent making strange shadows dance on the canvas. The

sounds of Stanley and Jake moving around ceased. Closing her eyes, she tried to catch sleep.

She soon discovered it was easier said than done. Night sounds surrounded her: the crackle of the dying fire as burning branches shifted; the cry of a bird; the whisper of the wind through the trees. The ground she lay on was hard and cold, a deep chill creeping out of the dirt to seep into her sleeping bag. Her teeth chattered. She wished she was still in the cab of the truck, with Jake and Stanley packed tight enough against her to keep her warm. "This is stupid," she grumbled.

From outside, Stanley's voice reached her. "Mimi, go to sleep."

"No, I mean it." She squirmed around until she could stick her head out of the tent. "We're being silly. We're all gonna freeze to death if we stay like this." She gestured with her hand to indicate herself and Stanley and the shapeless lump on the other side of the fire that had to be Jake.

There was a moment of silence, then the lump moved and Jake asked, "What're you suggesting?"

"Body heat," she declared triumphantly. "We can zip the bags together and share the tent. I bet we'd all be a lot warmer that way."

Stanley huffed. "Dumbest thing I ever heard."

"No, it's not." Jake sat up. "Mimi's got a point." He patted his sleeping bag. "Dad said this was good to minus forty, and I'm still freezing my ass off."

"Thank you." Mimi shot him a bright smile. Turned out she wasn't completely useless. "C'mon, Stanley, unzip." She was already crawling out of her own bag, her breath momentarily taken away when the cold fully hit her, before she realized how that sounded. Luckily, Stanley didn't seem to have noticed: he was grumbling another protest. But he couldn't stand up to the combined force of her and Jake's arguments: soon they'd zipped all bags together and were spooned back to front in the small tent.

Mimi sighed contentedly. Much better, she decided, enjoying the heat coming off the two bodies on either side of her. The chill from the ground didn't seem half as bad as it had before, either. Her hands were still cold, though, and she worked them under Stanley's sweater. He yelped as her chilled fingers found the heat of his bare stomach, but he didn't push her away. Resting her cheek against his back, Mimi fell asleep at last.

She woke what felt like a couple hours later, momentarily confused about where she was. Stanley had turned around and was nuzzling her throat, his lips warm as they nipped softly at her skin. Jake's breath was hot on her neck, tickling the small hairs there. He was awake also, although she didn't know how she could tell, since he wasn't moving. Something hard was pressing against her buttocks and—*Oh crap*. She stiffened involuntarily.

"Mimi...?" Stanley's voice was a whisper against her lips as he moved his head up to kiss her face. What should she do?

She wasn't averse, per se. She liked Jake, had even flirted with him a few times during the early days, before anyone realized how much trouble they were really in. And before she got together with Stanley....

Stanley's hand was sliding over her clothed hip, reaching behind her to pull her closer against him, his intentions clear. It was only a matter of time before—. She could tell the exact moment his wandering hand encountered Jake, pressed against her back. Stanley pulled in a harsh breath, stilling in the same way she had a minute earlier.

"Sorry." Jake started to roll away, but the sleeping bag kept him imprisoned.

"Don't be." Mimi reached behind her, placing her hand over Stanley's to keep Jake where he was. "Stanley?" Stanley hadn't moved, and while she didn't give words to the question she was really asking, he seemed to get it anyway. He released a quivering breath, a sigh full of emotions he probably couldn't quite articulate but that she understood nevertheless: it wasn't the cold that had brought them together; it was this new, frightening world they'd been plunged into, and a desire to be connected to someone, to not be alone. Jake must feel it the same way they did.

Indicating his mind was made up, Stanley tightened his hand under her palm, urging both her and Jake closer. He dipped his head until his lips could capture hers. She eagerly opened up under his questioning tongue, no longer cold.

"Sure about this?" someone—Jake—asked, a last attempt at seeking confirmation.

In answer, she shifted her hips, one hand tangling in Stanley's hair to keep his mouth to hers. "Uh-huh."

Stanley's hand moved from her hip to slide under her shirt, stroking her flank. Seemed he had no further objections either.

And then cold hands were on her, everywhere at once, it seemed: fumbling with the button of her jeans, dragging down the zipper, palms quickly warming on her belly, calloused thumbs under her bra strap caressing the sensitive underside of her breasts. A soft moan escaped her as strong fingers dipped between her legs, warm wetness trickling from her. She wriggled impatiently, trying to help the grasping hands that were pushing her pants and leggings down her thighs. They were all far too dressed to get up to much, but she managed to yank down Stanley's zipper, worming her hand inside his jeans. Stanley groaned. Behind her, Jake's erection was throbbing hotly against her bare buttocks. "Wait," she muttered. Pleasure was building in her lower belly, but she wasn't so far gone yet her brain had left her entirely. "What about—?"

Stanley's curse was filled with disappointment. Jake moved, briefly breaking contact with her. A moment later, he handed something over to Stanley. As Stanley fumbled with it, she heard the quiet crisp of a foil packet being torn behind.

"How—?" Stanley asked, ripping his own packet open.

"In my wallet." Mimi could hear Jake's embarrassment in his quiet chuckle.

Stanley snorted. "Why were you even—never mind."

Mimi understood: nobody was carrying their wallet any longer. Both cash and plastic had become useless in the past months.

"Dunno." Jake sounded distracted. "Force of habit, I guess."

Mimi could care less why Jake had been lugging his wallet onto a hunting trip; since it had held much-needed condoms, she was just grateful he had.

And then there were no more words, as they concentrated on sensations instead of conversation. Mimi pulled her knee up as far as the bag would let her, and Stanley slipped into her easily, filling her. Another whimper escaped her as Jake reached around her hip, sneaking a hand between them to rub her clit. The wave inside her was slowly building, inexorably getting closer and closer. Soon—.

Jake pressed in behind her, and though she'd been expecting it, her body rebelled against the intrusion, muscles tightening reflexively. Jake stopped. "Sorry, shoulda asked. Did you ever...?"

"Yeah," she puffed, breathless with desire. She relaxed her muscles. "I have."

Stanley grumbled, "So didn't need to know that."

Mimi laughed, and then Jake slid home. She briefly had time to wonder if the guys had done this before; their motions were so perfectly in sync. Or perhaps they simply knew each other well enough. Then the wave crested and washed over her, and she no longer cared about the reasons. Forgotten was the cold winter, the lack of food, the thousands who had died in DC and elsewhere.

Mimi existed only in the moment, in the sensations coursing through her body, the heat pooling in her belly, the energy crackling along her spine, the pleasurable clench and unclench of internal muscles. She cried out, her voice loud in the still night.

As she came back to herself at last, Jake was pulling out, no longer hard. Stanley followed suit a moment later, leaving her empty. They fumbled around her, rearranging clothes, but Mimi was too occupied with the afterglow to pay much attention, though her body cried out in dismay at the loss of heat as Jake briefly crawled out of the sleeping bag and left the tent for a few minutes. But once he was spooned at her back again, Mimi sighed, contented. Sated and warm, she drifted back into a dreamless sleep.

They got up when the sky to the east was showing a pale glow. If Mimi had been afraid of awkwardness in their interactions, she found none, though everyone moved quietly, speaking only when necessary, and in low tones, as they quickly broke camp and packed up their things. Neither man brought up what happened during the night, and Mimi decided she shouldn't, either.

They were under way again soon, trundling along sedately through the empty landscape. "My grandmother went faster than this." Mimi softened the complaint with a chuckle, nudging Stanley teasingly with her knee. The sun rose over the horizon, coloring the wispy clouds in the east a pretty pink that Mimi couldn't help but admire. Perhaps this hunting trip hadn't been such a bad idea after all. "And she didn't even *have* a car."

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