

## Chapter 4 – The truth is a drug

There was a short but comfortable silence in the room after Hughie finished his full story, and although most of the tension left the room by now there was still something hanging in the air that makes it feel heavier than usual. So, Hughie decided to lighten the mood again *“So, is it really less hot now that the mystery gone?”*

Annie snorted before choosing to play along. *“Well nice Hughie sure lost most of appeal, but I still waiting for the result for bad boy Hughie.”* She said nonchalantly.

There was a heavy pause for a long second before both of them broke out with low chuckles, enjoyed the easiness that returned to their interactions.

Hughie allowed himself to enjoy the simplicity in their embrace for a moment longer before asking with a weak voice *“Ummm... A-Annie? What does it mean for us?”*

Annie broke the hug they were in for the past few minutes, and leaned back until she was sitting close to Hughie and was looking him straight in the eyes *“I am not sure Hughie. I feel I can forgive, but I am not sure I can trust you again.”*

Hughie gulped heavily. He knew from the start it will be her most likely response, and even considered it the best-case scenario. The old him would have accepted the answer and try to move on, but him now, the him the love for Annie drew out in combination with Butcher’s pushing was going to push back. *“I-I get it Annie. I really do, and part of me know that you deserve more than me after what I did. B-But there is a selfish part of me that’s not willing to give up on the best thing that ever happen to me.”*

Annie raised both her eyebrows in surprise at this assertive Hughie. It was nice to see Hughie not dismissing her feelings and demand her forgiveness just because he kept his promise to tell the truth. And while she didn’t agree with the comment about him not being good enough for her, his next statement unsettled her even more. She tried to ask as gently as she could, so she won’t trigger anything him *“What about Robin? You were together for years, and you did all of this because of her.”*

Hughie took a deep breath and responded, from the bottom of his heart, *“Don't get me wrong, I loved Robin, part of me always will. She always kept pushing me to be the best version of myself no matter how hard she had to try. But that the difference with you. With you neither of us has to try hard, you just drew out the best in me and I enjoyed every*

*moment of it.” He looked deep into her deep brown eyes “You say I did all those things for Robin. It started this way, yes. But along the way the more of the corruption in Vought we discovered I kept doing it to protect people so no-one will have to be in the same position as me, ever. I believe in what The Boys do, I agree that sometimes they choose to handle things in a way I don’t like, but we all trying to do something good. Even when It was Robin’s death pushing me, like in the case of your bug it was more out of anger and fear than love.”* He then grabbed the blonde’s hand tightly and side in a voice thick with emotion *“I-I told you the truth today knowing there is a good chance you will end up hating me, and I end up dead.”*

*“I would never kill you!”* Annie cut Hughie outrageously. Her eyes wide but filled with sincerity.

Hughie nodded with reassurance *“You won’t, I know it. But you would have arrested me, and either Vought or Homelander would of.”*

Annie shook her head and wanted to argue that they would take him to a long trial in court, after all he was the first person to kill one of the seven and did it without anyone being any the wiser. But the certain look in his eyes made her wonder how sure she actually was. A shiver went down her spine imagining she could have been responsible for Hughie’s death.

Before she had any time to respond to his statement he spoke again *“I-I didn’t tell you this to guilt you into giving me a chance Annie. I just wanted you to know that neither my feeling or my decision to tell you everything today was spore of the moment things.”* Hughie hesitated for a moment before gathering his courage and saying slowly, but with confidence *“I-I love you, Annie.”* As he finished, he closed his eyes and braced himself.

Annie breath froze in her throat, her eyes wide and she could hear her own heart beating heavily. Could she, do it? Can she find it in herself to trust him again? But Hughie was right, telling her could easily be the most dangerous thing he did yet. After all she didn’t hid the fact, she can kick his ass without an issue, and with the both of them alone here Butcher won’t know to rescue him. Hughie said himself the moment she walked him into Vought and told them he killed Translucent he was a dead man. He trusted her to do the right thing even when he didn’t give her any reason too, he trusted her with his most deep thoughts and fears, he trusted her enough to give her the choice of knowing the truth or live in blissed ignorance. So, yes, she can trust him too. But can she said she loves him?

Hughie felt a soft palm on his cheek, redirecting his stare to the woman next to him, his eyes still closed. Until her soft call of *“Hughie”* made him open them and immediately look into the soft look of his favorite brown eyes. She gave him an apologetic smile *“I can’t tell you this back, not after all you told me. There is still the part of you I knew and fell for, but there is a whole new part that I will need to learn about before I could say it back to you.”*

Annie could see Hughie deflate in her words, probably getting ready to be friend zoned. She cut that line of thought *“But…”* She decided to joke a little, remind him how this whole mess started *“And there is a but.”* The small twitch in the corner of his lips shows her he caught on to her humor *“I trust you. And that’s enough to give a shot for something deeper between us.”*

Hughie’s smile spread so wide on his face she was almost worried. She solved that problem by leaning in and giving him a short, but sweet kiss that left him dazed.

Annie smirked at him after he stayed frozen for more than a minute. The familiar smirk shook Hughie out of his daze. He gave her a sheepish smile and said *“Sorry, I dreamed that you will still accept me like that when learning the truth, but I honestly never thought it will actually happen.”*

Annie giggled, before the smirk was back on her face and she shrugged *“Hey I flattered, one kiss did that to you.”* She didn’t feel ready to stop teasing him yet and added *“Have to wonder how you will react when I introduce you to my mom as my boyfriend.”*

The mention of her mom caused Hughie to flinch and the heavy atmosphere to return. Not as heavy as after his first confession, but still tense enough to know Hughie had more secrets.

Annie raised her eyebrow and said flatly *“Hughie don’t make me regret trusting you. Please. There is another thing that happened, and you don’t tell me.”*

Hughie looked away and said slowly *“Well there is another thing. But it not something that happen or I did, more something I discovered about your origins.”*

Now Annie was very intrigued and suspicious. She narrowed her eyes and called *“Hughie”* waiting patiently until he turned his eyes back to her, then she ordered firmly *“Explain.”*

Hughie took a deep breath, knowing what he will say next will crush his new girlfriend. *“Butcher and MM tracked one of Ezekiel’s deliveries of the drugs to a hospital in the city, they only went there to get a sample for a woman in the CIA. But instead, they found a lab, injecting babies with it.”*

Annie looked horrified and confused *“Who was doing it? And why?”*

Hughie felt anger swell in him, these days the name always have these effect. He took a moment before answering *“The who, well it’s the easy part, it’s Vought. The why is where things become... difficult.”*

Annie wondered what could make Hughie so uncomfortable to say after everything he told her. She began rubbing his arm to show him she was here for him. Hughie gave her a deep sad look *“They gave them the drug to turn them to supes. A-Annie, I am sorry. The drug, called Compound V, it’s what giving the supes the powers.”*

Annie drew herself away from her as if he caught on fire, shaking her head fervently, her golden locks flying around in denial. She tried reasoning, with herself or him Hughie wasn’t sure *“No. You must have got it wrong. We were born like that, with our powers.”*

Hughie let out another heavy breath, understanding why she was trying to deny it, but knowing that now that the truth was out there it will be dangerous for her to actually buy into this excuse. *“That’s what Vought wants you to think. That’s why they are supporting Ezekiel so he will keep this bullshit about chosen by God the mainstream, and so they could use his charity to move the Compound V. After all, who will suspect this from a man who’s entire brand is God and faith.”*

Annie began to shake. She didn’t want to believe it, she couldn’t even if it is Hughie telling her. She can see in his eyes he believed completely at what he was saying, but there must be another explanation Hughie missed, something that will make it all more sensible. There has to be another angle, she just had to think hard enough *“My mom always told me how when I was born...”* Her eyes widened, Her mother! She will be able to tell her the entire truth. Annie stood and began looking for her clothes, she looked apologetically at Hughie and said *“I need to go see my mom, hear it from her. I can’t just believe my entire life was a lie.”*

Hughie gave her a small smile and nodded, *“Of course, I understand, Annie.”* He waited until she was dressed to get his shirt back and putting it on.

Annie was checking her phone that was turned off since last night. She looked up at Hughie who was doing the same thing and said *“So, I missed a message from the seven about a meeting I was supposed to be in like an hour ago. I will have to drop by the tower before I go to my mom’s.”*

Hughie looked concerned both at his phone and Annie. Without even taking his eyes from the screen he said, *“I don’t think it’s a good idea.”*

Annie frowned asking *“Why?”*

Hughie glanced at her quickly, but instead of verbally answering her, he showed her the message from Butcher which read *‘Vought is onto us. Got burned. Don’t return home, come straight to the hideout, keep low profile.’*

Annie saw the message was sent almost three hours ago, but what concerned her even more was the message Butcher sent half hour ago, which said *‘Oi kid, if you are not done fucking your supe girl and answer me in an hour I will break into your bloody room and drag your naked arse myself.’* Annie narrowed her eyes at Hughie and asked coldly *“So Butcher knows where we are and what we did? Do I want to know why?”*

Hughie’s eyes widened, he didn’t look at the second message yet, too worried about the implications of the first one with the combination of Annie’s own message. he quickly turned the phone back around to read the message that pissed Annie off all over again. He frowned after he finished mumbling mainly to himself, although in the silence of the room Annie still heard him *“I didn’t tell him about any of this. How..”* He stopped for a moment before letting out a frustrated sigh *“He followed us. The fucking..”* Hughie began angrily.

Annie believes Hughie’s conclusion, it makes more sense, but still there is one thing. *“I didn’t see him in the room. So, where the ‘fucking’ comment came from?”*

Hughie just shrugged while replying *“Assumed. I told you he spent the last couple days trying to convince me a relationship with you will kill me.”*

Annie just gave another scandalized look before saying, *“I thought you were joking!”*

Hughie chuckled a little *“Yhea, sorry, but that’s Butcher for you.”*

Annie wasn't sure how to respond for it. To her it seemed like Butcher is a bad influence on Hughie, but it was also obvious the two cared for each other. Putting that aside as something to consider later, she needed to think about her own options right now. She looked at Hughie as he was replying to Butcher. *"Fine. I will go to my mom's first, talk to her and see what happens from there. Will you be Ok?"* She finished worried after Butcher's news.

Hughie smiled and nodded at her *"Butcher was already on his way to, in his words, carry my whipped naked arse out of this fucking hotel. He should be here in 15 minutes. You go out first, I will wait here. It's better not to give Vought a reason to come after you."*

Annie picked up her jacket nodding. She closed the distance between the two and gave Hughie another short kiss before advancing toward the door. Just before she left she said over her shoulder *"if something happened, call me."* And she was gone, leaving Hughie to process what happened here this morning.