

**JUST
MY
LUCK**
JENNIFER HONEYBOURN

Swoon READS
NEW YORK

A SWOON READS BOOK

An imprint of Feiwel and Friends and Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC
120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.
ISBN 978-1-250-19465-7 (hardcover) / ISBN 978-1-250-19466-4 (ebook)

Book design by Liz Drosher

First edition, 2019

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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For my mom

One



People leave a lot of really strange things behind at hotels. In the five months I've worked at the Grand Palms Maui, I've come across some truly weird items—a rubber gorilla mask, a notebook with nothing but *carpe diem* written over and over in tiny block letters, a pair of dentures floating in a glass of water.

And now, a cat.

"Here kitty, kitty." I'm down on my hands and knees, trying to coax the poor thing out from underneath the bed. One of the housekeepers heard meowing when she was cleaning the room, and for some reason my mom decided I was the best person to deal with the situation.

The door to the suite opens. I know it's one of the

other staff, probably Leo, coming to check on me, because this is taking way longer than my mom thinks it should.

“Howzit, Marty. Any luck?” Leo asks.

Luck. That’s not something I have much of these days.

I shake my head. “It hasn’t moved.” All I can see are two wide green eyes staring at me through the darkness.

“Maybe this will help.” Leo’s knees pop as he kneels down beside me. He holds out an open tin of tuna, and the cat immediately comes out from beneath the bed. She’s small, with the same pale gray hair as Leo, and she’s wearing a pink rhinestone collar.

“Hello, sweetheart,” he says, gently stroking the cat’s back as she dives into the food. “Who could leave you behind?”

“Karl and Dana Hudson, that’s who,” I reply, silently cursing them. “They were the last guests in this room. They checked out this morning.”

Leo shakes his head. “I guess there’s no point trying to track them down, then. They’re probably already on a flight to the mainland.”

Maui has a lot of feral cats—seriously, they’re everywhere—so it’s not exactly a mystery how this cat ended up here. My guess is that this couple decided

to “adopt” her during their luxury vacation, thinking they were doing her a favor. And now that they’ve returned to reality, they’ve left her behind for someone else to deal with.

Leo sighs and turns to look at me. He catches sight of my face, and his eyes widen. I scowl at him as his lips pinch together, like he’s trying really hard to hold in a laugh.

“It’s not funny,” I snap. I’ve lived on Maui my entire life; I *always* wear sunscreen. But I clearly didn’t apply enough to my face yesterday, because I got a wicked sunburn. Which would be bad enough, but I was wearing sunglasses, so while the rest of my face is the color of raw beef, the skin around my eyes wasn’t touched. I look like a raccoon.

Maybe I’d be able to laugh about it too, if this were the only crappy thing that had happened to me lately. But it’s just one more thing in a long, long list of things that have gone very wrong for me over the past several months.

A few examples: my computer crashed and wiped out an essay I’d spent a week working on, the morning it was due; I dropped my phone and cracked the screen, and two days after I had it repaired—using the money I was saving for a new laptop—I dropped it again; I was knocked off my surfboard in front of this creepy

guy Hunter, and when I came up for air, the top half of my bikini was missing; and I caught my prom date making out with another girl in the back of our limo.

The cat finishes the tuna. Before she can dart back under the bed, Leo scoops her up, cradling her in his arms like a baby. His navy Hawaiian-print shirt is immediately covered in cat hair. Management makes him wear it, along with stiff khaki pants, even though he's the hotel handyman. Khakis aren't the most practical choice when you're unclogging toilets or fixing a broken air conditioner, but Leo doesn't complain. Leo never complains.

"So now what?" he says.

"Now I take her downstairs, I guess." I stand up and smooth out my skirt, which is more habit than necessity—I'm stuck in the same stiff khaki material as Leo, and it never wrinkles. God forbid our guests lay eyes on someone in a wrinkled uniform.

"Your mom isn't going to be too happy to have a cat in housekeeping."

I frown. He's right about that, but I don't know what else to do with her. "She sent me up here. She's going to have to deal."

Leo rubs underneath the cat's chin and her eyes drift closed. She starts to purr. "I'd take her home, but Beth would kill me. She made me promise not bring

home any more strays." His voice raises an octave as he says, "You should have a name."

"Don't get too attached. She's probably just going to the shelter." I feel mean saying this in front of the cat, but it's either the shelter or back out on the street.

If Nalani were here, she'd tell me to take the cat home. It certainly wouldn't be the first time I took something from a guest's room. But I know better than to ask my mom if I can keep her cat. She's not exactly Team Marty right now.

"She looks like a Libby," Leo says.

"If you say so." I straighten the bed's immaculate white duvet and glance around to make sure everything is perfect for whoever is checking in next. The people who can afford to stay in the Grand Palms are rich—not just regular rich, but incredibly, unbelievably rich—and they have super-high standards. Although the room is simple—white and airy, like being inside a cloud—everything in here easily costs more than my family makes in a year.

The room still smells like tuna, but hopefully no one will notice. I pick up the empty tin, and Leo and I leave the room. He follows me down the hall, still cooing to the cat. The carpet is so thick, I can't hear our footsteps. When we reach the elevator, he sighs and passes Libby to me before punching the call button.

“Don’t just dump her, okay, Marty?” he says.

I nod, but I’m not sure why he thinks I’ll have any say in the matter. He’d be better off talking to my mom himself, but I think he’s scared of her. Most people are. My mom is the floor supervisor, but from the way she acts, you’d think she runs the entire hotel.

Leo pats the cat one more time, then ambles off down the hall. Libby squirms in my arms like she wants to run after him, and I tighten my grip. The last thing I need is for her to jump out of my arms and take off. I’ve already wasted too much time trying to catch her.

The elevator dings and the mirrored doors slide open. I stand back as two guys around my age step out.

I flinch. Great. Guests my age are the worst. There’s nothing more awkward than having to serve someone who could be sitting behind you in history class. Most of the time we ignore each other—only for different reasons: me, because I’m quietly dying inside; them, because they don’t really see me. After all, I’m just the help.

“We need to talk to the locals,” the guy with a messy black pompadour says to his friend, a scrawny kid with closely cropped dark hair. “They’ll know where the best waves are.”

Surfers. Well, wannabe surfers. I see this a lot. Rich kids who come to Hawaii with the idea that they

can conquer our waves. They won't get very far talking to any of the locals. We're friendly, sure, but there's a definite line between the places we recommend to tourists and what we save for ourselves.

Libby starts to wriggle again and lets out a sorrowful meow. The black-haired guy's eyes flick to her and then to me. He's good-looking, in an early Elvis, rockabilly kind of way. Skyscraper tall with thick eyebrows and full lips and ears that stick out slightly. Exactly my type. And so, when he smiles at me, a jolt goes all the way through me, right to my toes. And if my face wasn't already burned, there's no way he'd miss me blushing.

Oh my god. My face! He isn't smiling at me; he's smiling at my ridiculous sunburn!

I duck my head, anger and humiliation coursing through me. I'm in such a hurry to get away from them, I don't notice the elevator doors have already started to close until I bump right into them. Libby digs her claws into my arm and I let out a scream.

"Are you okay?" the guy calls, but I pretend not to hear him. The doors have slid back open and I quickly escape inside the elevator. Mercifully, it's empty and the doors slide shut again before he can check on me.

My heart is pounding. *It's fine. This is a big hotel, I reassure myself. I probably won't ever see them again.*

But given the way my luck has been lately, I know the odds of not running into them again are not in my favor.

I sag against the back wall of the elevator and close my eyes. How much worse can this day get?

Two

I haven't been down to the housekeeping department since I was reassigned to the front desk last month. After my mom caught me sneaking out, she said that if I liked being awake in the middle of the night so much, I might as well do it at the hotel.

She couldn't have come up with a worse punishment. Not only do I have to work vampire hours the entire summer, putting a serious crimp in my social life, but Nalani is mad that I've been "promoted," while she's still stuck cleaning rooms. It's put a real strain on our friendship. I get why she's upset—she's been at the hotel a lot longer than I have. I've tried explaining to her that working the front desk is not nearly as much fun as working with her—for one thing, all the

other staff are at least ten years older than I am, and, with the exception of Benjie, most of them have lost their sense of humor somewhere along the way—but she says it’s still better than cleaning toilets. And honestly, it’s hard to argue that point.

Nalani usually works the day shift, so I’m surprised to see her down here with the other night crew, haphazardly stuffing towels into her housekeeping cart. The huge concrete room is a warehouse of housekeeping supplies—cleaning products, plumbing tools, extra pillows and bed linens—all stacked neatly on tall metal shelves.

She glances up as I walk toward her. Her eyes narrow as she takes in my weird sunburn, the blood running down my arm, the cat desperately squirming to get away from me.

“I have so many questions,” she says.

“I don’t know where to start,” I reply.

Nalani lifts Libby out of my arms and the cat immediately settles down.

“Someone left her behind,” I say, grabbing the first-aid kit from one of the metal shelves. I flip it open and take out an antiseptic wipe and a Band-Aid.

She scowls. “God, I hate people.”

“How come you’re here so late?” I ask, wincing as I gently dab at the scratch with the wipe. Being here

at night means my mom is trusting Nalani with turn-down service again—something I never thought would happen after she was caught eating the chocolate-covered macadamia nuts she was supposed to be leaving on the guests' pillows.

I've never helped myself to the macadamia nuts, but I have taken things that don't belong to me. When I was cleaning rooms, I would sometimes take little things I didn't think anyone would miss—things most people would assume they'd just misplaced. Stupid stuff, like a cheap pair of sunglasses or a travel candle. I never took from anyone who didn't deserve it, but still, it was wrong and I feel bad about it.

Nalani shrugs. "Andrea quit, so I'm picking up some of her shifts. We need the extra money. Our trip is coming up fast. Can you believe we'll be leaving in less than two months?"

I swallow and concentrate on cleaning my scratch so I don't have to look at her. Taking a gap year and traveling after we graduated has been the plan since junior year. But so much has changed in my life recently, I just need to stand still for a minute.

If our friendship weren't on such fragile ground, I would have told Nalani months ago that I'm not going with her. But I'm not sure we can survive that bombshell and so, like a coward, I keep pretending I'm still

on board. I feel super guilty about lying to her. I know I'm not making the situation any better by not telling her, but I don't know how to break the news.

"Are you off this weekend?" Nalani says as I stick the Band-Aid on top of my scratch. She hands Libby back to me and tucks a strand of her short dyed-blond hair behind her ears. "I'm having a party in Kaanapali. Remember the house with the huge pool?"

Nalani's stepdad works for a company that rents luxury houses all over Hawaii. He travels around the islands a lot and her mom usually goes with him. Sometimes they're away at the same time one of the houses on Maui is empty, and since Nalani knows where they keep the keys, we usually take advantage and hang out in these crazy expensive places.

"Is Kahale going?" I know I shouldn't care if he's there—he's the one who acted like a jerk, after all. I haven't talked to him since prom night, when I caught him with his hand down the front of Grace Hamasaki's dress.

Nalani rolls her eyes. "I didn't invite him. Although maybe I should. You could confront him and be done with it."

"I am done with it." But we both know that's not true. I know it bothers Nalani that I avoid confrontation, but honestly, I want to forget the entire night even

happened. Just talking about Kahale is making my palms sweat. I only need to steer clear of him for two more months, until he leaves for college somewhere in the Pacific Northwest.

Libby starts to wriggle around again. "I'd better get her in there," I say.

"Saturday. Don't forget," she calls as I walk toward my mom's office.

It's almost eleven o'clock at night—long past the time when my mom should have left for the day—but she's still here, frowning at her laptop. The fluorescent lighting is bright and unforgiving, and it highlights the dark purple bags under her eyes. Two deep wrinkles are engraved on either side of her mouth, the result of all the frowning she's done over the past six months, ever since my dad left. All of her stress and unhappiness is showing up on her face.

"When I said fix the situation, I didn't mean bring it down here," she says without looking away from the screen.

"I didn't know what else to do with her." I can't just stick Libby outside—the hotel is constantly trying to get rid of the stray cats; no one would appreciate me adding another one.

My mom sighs heavily, a sound I've become so used to hearing, I barely register it.

I'd like to tell her to go home, that we can do without the money she makes working overtime, but I know she'll just snap at me. Money isn't the only reason she works so much. She doesn't like being at home. We're still living in the house I grew up in, the one she and my dad bought together when they were first married. He may have moved to O'ahu, but there are still reminders of him everywhere in that house.

"Leave it down here until your shift is over, then take it to the shelter," she says, rubbing her eyes.

Although I knew this was probably what she was going to say, I feel bad for Libby. I don't want to think about what could happen if no one adopts her. It's not her fault she's in this situation.

"What if we—"

My mom's already shaking her head. "Marty. Don't even ask."

I purse my lips. Once upon a time, she would have let me keep the cat. In fact, keeping her probably would have been her idea. But now it's just one more thing she'd have to deal with. One more thing on her already overloaded plate.

And this is why I can't leave Maui.

My older brother, Ansel, is already halfway out the door, and if I go too, I don't think my mom will ever snap out of this funk. Our family is already fractured,

but if my brother and I both leave, we'll officially be broken. Someone has to stay behind to make sure that doesn't happen.

"Fine. I'll ask around and see if any of the staff will take her," I say. I set Libby down on the floor then pull the office door shut behind me.

I keep hoping that time will give my mom back to me. But with every day that goes by, I'm less and less sure that she'll return.

Three

“**H**ey, any chance you want to adopt a cat?” I ask Benjie an hour later. It’s past midnight and the front desk is quiet. This is the worst time to be at work, because there’s nothing to do, and yet there’s still a million hours before my shift ends.

“Zero chance. Leo already asked me,” Benjie says. “But cheer up! I know how we can pay those heinous people back for dumping her on us.” He taps something into his computer, then swivels the monitor so I can see the screen.

I wrinkle my nose. “You want to send them a glitter bomb?”

“It’s the perfect revenge,” he says. “They open the envelope and *pow*”—he mimics an explosion with his

fingers—"glitter everywhere. They'll be vacuuming it up for weeks!"

"Um, maybe not." The Hudsons are the worst, but sending them a glitter bomb isn't going to help me find a home for Libby.

Benjie's lower lip puffs out. "You're no fun," he says. "Now, I could stand here and try to convince you, but it's been an hour since my last break. I need to eat something or I will faint. You'll be fine on your own?"

I nod. The Grand Palms is in Wailea, an area on the south side of the island that shuts down ridiculously early. Aside from the occasional late check-in or guest complaint, at this time of night it's usually just Benjie and me, jacking around.

When he leaves in search of a snack, I pull out my phone. We're not supposed to use them on duty, but if no one's here to catch me, then does it even really matter? I haven't had it fixed since I dropped it again last month, and the screen is webbed. I'm scrolling through Instagram, trying to talk myself out of checking Kahale's feed, when out of the corner of my eye, I notice someone approaching the front desk. I quickly tuck my phone back into my pocket. I glance up and my breath catches. It's the hot guy I saw in the hall earlier, only this time all he's wearing is a towel.

And ohmygod, his body is *incredible*. He's like a

Greek statue come to life, his chest as hard and polished as cut stone. His dark hair is wet, slicked back from his face. My own face is prickling underneath my sunburn, but he doesn't seem the least bit embarrassed, even though he's the one standing half naked in front of a complete stranger. His friend is behind him, also wearing only a towel, and dripping water all over the bamboo floor.

"Hey," Hot Guy says, his eyes dropping to the brass name badge pinned on the pocket of my Hawaiian shirt. "Marty. Can you help us? We forgot our room key."

My shoulders stiffen as I remember that, just over an hour ago, this boy laughed at my sunburn. Okay, maybe he didn't laugh, exactly, but he did smile at me and I'm pretty sure it was only because I look like I'm wearing a bandit mask.

Unfortunately, my face hasn't changed since then. It's not easy to pretend that this doesn't bother me, but I have to be polite—it's kind of a job requirement—so I say, "What's your room number?" I sound calm and professional, so there's no way he could pick up on my inner rage.

"7010."

I type the number into my computer.

"The room is registered to my dad. Richard Foster," he adds. "He booked the room for my brother and me."

His dad didn't just book a room—he booked the King Lunalilo Suite. The Fosters are clearly in the top 1 percent, because they're staying here for the entire summer.

God, life is so unfair. Hot Guy gets to live in the lap of luxury, experiencing things that the rest of us could never hope to, even if we lived ten lifetimes. And he didn't even do anything to earn it—he just happened to be born into money.

“What's your name?”

“Will,” he says.

Sure enough, there's a note on the file about Richard's two sons—Will and Hayes.

“Do you have ID?” I ask.

Will glances down at his near-nakedness. “Not on me,” he says. “I didn't think this through, obviously.”

Right.

Hotel policy is not to let someone into a room without proper ID, but I'm pretty sure that he's telling the truth, so I bend the rules and program a key card.

“You know, the pool actually closed hours ago,” I say. This time, I hear the edge in my voice and Will must too, because his eyes skip guiltily away from me. He drums his fingers on the counter, and I notice his fingernails are chewed almost all the way down.

"Yeah, sorry about that. We were quiet. Although not quiet enough, I guess. The security guard just kicked us out," he says. "Listen, are you okay? You looked like you ran into those doors pretty hard earlier."

"Oh. Yeah. I'm fine," I reply. "I just wasn't watching where I was going."

His concern knocks me off balance a bit. He seems genuinely interested in making sure I'm all right. I guess there's a small chance I was wrong about him and he wasn't actually making fun of me earlier. A very small chance.

All of this is going through my head as I hand him the key card. Our fingers brush and my body starts to buzz. A slow smile spreads across his face, like he knows exactly what I'm feeling, because he's feeling it, too.

It's been a while since I buzzed like that and I don't know what to do, so I yank my hand back and take a small step away from the desk. We're staring at each other, eyes locked, when the other guy—who must be Hayes, his brother—marches up to the desk, a striped beach towel wrapped around his shoulders like a cape.

"Okay, you've got the key. Why are you still standing here?" he says to Will, without acknowledging me. "I'm freezing my ass off."

Will's smile tightens. "Right," he says, but his

brother has already stormed off, heading through the lobby, leaving behind wet foot prints on the marble.

"I guess I'd better get going," Will says. "Sorry for getting water all over the floor. I'll see you around, Marty."

He walks away just as Benjie reappears, carrying a plate of muffins.

"Let me guess, they broke into the pool and forgot their key," he says, as Will and Hayes disappear into the elevator.

I nod.

"The tall one is cute."

I pick up a stapler, even though I have nothing to staple. "I didn't notice."

Benjie scoffs. "When have you not noticed cute?"

I frown. He's right—every hot guy who crosses our path is usually up for immediate discussion. I don't know why I'm being weird about Will.

That's a lie. I do know why—whatever it was that just passed between Will and me, it's something I haven't felt since Kahale. And look how that turned out. I don't want Benjie to pick up on this, because he will never let it go.

He sets the muffins in front of me. "You like him."

Okay, so obviously I'm not doing a very good job of hiding my feelings.

"I don't even know him," I reply.

"The beginning is the best part of a relationship." Benjie sighs. "I remember those days."

"Those days were not that long ago," I remind him. He's only been with Aaron, one of the hotel's sous chefs, for a couple of months. "And calm yourself. The last thing I'm interested in is a relationship."

"Fine—fling, dalliance, summer romance. Call it what you want," he says. "I call it love."

I snort. "I talked to him for ten seconds." And, okay, it was a pretty meaningful ten seconds, but still. Love is the furthest thing from what that was.

I grab one of the chocolate chip muffins—one of the benefits of working with someone well connected with the kitchen—and take a large bite. I cry out as something crunches horribly in my mouth and an excruciating pain shoots through my gums.

Benjie wrinkles his nose as I spit the muffin out into my hand.

"I think I just chipped my tooth."

"I don't think that's even possible," he says. "Muffins are practically pre-chewed. There's nothing to chip your tooth on."

But he moves a bit closer to me and peers into my mouth. "Oh my god!" he cries. "Half of your front tooth is missing!"

I groan and run my tongue over the jaggedy edge of what's left of my tooth. "Great."

"Maybe they can reattach it or something."

"It's not like a finger," I say, but I dig the shard out of the spit-out remains of the muffin, just in case. My hands are shaking as I drop the shard of tooth into my pocket.

I take a deep breath to try to calm my nerves. My luck seems to be getting worse with each passing day, and it's starting to get to me. I've done everything I could think of to try to flip my Karma—no sneaking out, no talking back to my mom (well, mostly), no taking things that don't belong to me. I've picked up every penny I've come across on the street. I feng shui'd our entire house. I've hung horseshoes above my door, bought a rabbit's foot—a faux one, but still. I even considered getting a four-leaf-clover tattoo, until I realized my mom would kill me dead, so I settled for a necklace with a charm of the lucky symbol instead.

I've been a model citizen for an entire month. Nothing has worked. My luck still sucks.

And I have no idea how to fix it.

Four

So it turns out that breaking your tooth is not a good enough reason to leave work early—at least not according to Marielle, our night manager. She points out that the dentist office won't be open for hours anyway, and since the pain has subsided—thanks to a few Tylenol—I should be able to hang on for a few more hours. She's usually a stickler for presenting a professional appearance, but unfortunately for me, it's the middle of the night and she figures I won't be interacting with many guests.

I swear Marielle's out to get me. She was not happy when my mom had me moved to the front desk—apparently she's not a fan of nepotism—and I feel like she's just waiting for me to slip up so she can fire me.

After my shift finally ends, I change into my slippers. I hate the ugly, low-heeled black patent leather shoes that are part of the hotel uniform, so I always take them off the first chance I get. I head down to my mom's office and load Libby into a black cat carrier that Leo left for her, along with a Tupperware container of cat food. I know I should take Libby to the shelter, like my mom asked me to, but one look at her sweet little face and I know I can't do it.

Benjie is waiting for me so we can walk out together. The hotel makes us park our cars a few blocks from the hotel, in a sandy lot next to a construction site. It's not a sketchy area, exactly, but I don't like to walk out there alone before the sun has come up. He's changed out of his uniform and into a white tracksuit. His unruly black curls are tucked underneath a trucker hat.

"How much do you think it's going to cost to have my tooth fixed?" I ask him as we head down the sidewalk. I'm worried, because we don't have dental insurance. And we don't have a whole lot of extra money, especially now that my dad's gone.

Benjie shrugs. "Whatever it costs, it's worth it—it's not like you can go around with half a front tooth."

I sigh.

An older woman out for an early-morning stroll is

coming toward us, walking a huge brown dog. Libby must sense the dog, because she shifts nervously in her carrying case. The dog clearly picks up on her too because it starts to bark and strain at its leash. I'm afraid of dogs—especially loud, barky ones that look like they could swallow me whole—so I'm relieved when the woman manages to wrestle control of it. My heart pounds as she crosses to the other side of the street.

“Okay, that was seriously—”

“Marty,” Benjie interrupts. “Watch where you're—”

Something makes an awful squish underneath my rubber slippers.

“Walking,” he finishes.

My stomach heaves. Even without looking down, there's no mistaking what I just stepped in. The smell wafts up toward me and I gag. “Ew! Ewwwwwww! Oh my god!”

Benjie whips around. “You shouldn't own a dog if you can't clean up after it!” he yells at the woman's retreating back.

I can't even scrape the dog crap off—it's embedded in the bottom of my slipper. I angrily kick off my shoe, tears stinging my eyes. I know this isn't something I should be crying over, but it's the end of a very long, very bad night and I can't hold it in any longer.

I'm sniffing as I set Libby on the ground. Benjie hands me the Whole Foods tote he uses for a lunch bag. I bend down and gingerly pick up my slipper by its yellow rubber strap. I throw it inside the bag, then bend down to inspect my foot.

There's dog poop on my big toe.

Dog. Poop. On. My. Big. Toe.

I shudder, so grossed out that I can't even talk.

Benjie wrinkles his nose. "Boy, you are really having a day."

If only it were just this day.

I take off my other slipper and walk barefoot on the concrete, praying I still have some hand wipes from the rib place my brother and I went to last week stashed somewhere in my car. We're almost at the edge of the parking lot when I hear a crack as loud as thunder.

I glance up at the sky just in time to see a palm tree falling through the air. Benjie grabs my arm and we stare, openmouthed, as the tree lands with a sickening sound of crunching metal—right on top of my car.

"What are the odds?" Benjie says. He's standing beside me, surveying the damage to the old VW Golf I inherited from my dad. The roof is completely caved in, crumpled like an accordion underneath the thick

trunk of the palm tree. It landed perfectly on my car, not a mark on either of the vehicles parked beside mine.

I wrap my arms around myself. What did I do to deserve this?

“Look on the bright side,” Benjie says, putting his arm around my shaking shoulders. “No one was hurt.”

“My car was hurt!” From the looks of it, it was totaled. It wasn’t worth much, but it was mine and there’s no way I can afford another one.

This time, I don’t even try to hold the tears back.



Benjie comes with me back to the hotel. While I stash Libby in my mom’s office and clean the dog crap off my foot in the staff washroom, Marielle arranges to have the tree removed and my car towed. I think she’s afraid I’ll sue the hotel or something, because she offers to let me use one of the hotel’s passenger vans until we’ve sorted the situation out.

Before she hands over the keys, Marielle reminds me that this is a company vehicle and whenever I’m behind the wheel, I’m representing the Grand Palms. Benjie is standing behind her and he rolls his eyes.

I chew my lip. “Don’t I need a special license to drive the van?” The hotel has a fleet of cars that are

much smaller and more manageable than the passenger vans.

"No," she says. "You just need common sense and I trust you to have that."

But she doesn't, not really, because the next thing she says is, "No running red lights or cutting anyone off."

Behind her, Benjie makes a face and wags his finger at me, back and forth, like a metronome. Normally, his spot-on impressions of Marielle make me laugh, but I'm not in the mood for any of it right now.

After saying goodbye to Benjie, I pick up Libby and take the elevator down to the underground lot. The van is parked in the far corner, exactly where Marielle said it would be. I jingle the keys, my palms sweating. She's given me one of the biggest vans, usually used to ferry large groups of guests to and from the airport. It's white, with the Grand Palms logo imprinted in gold on the doors.

I take a deep breath and climb inside, setting Libby on the seat beside me. I feel tiny behind the steering wheel, and it takes me a few minutes to figure out where everything is before I start the van.

My hands shake the entire ride home. I keep well below the speed limit, ignoring all the cars that pass me. When I pull up to my house half an hour later,

Ansel is loading his surfboard into the back of his beat-up truck. The waves are the only thing that ever gets my brother out of bed this early in the morning. His entire life is built around surfing. He's been taking a few classes at the University of Hawaii, but his attendance is spotty at best. It annoys me that he skips so much, especially when all I hear from my mom is how much college costs. The cost of it all was part of the reason I'd decided not to even bother applying. That, and I was so sure I'd be traveling with Nalani.

I turn off the van. Ansel walks over to me. He's wearing blue board shorts and a grungy pair of Adidas slides that I've begged him to get rid of. His red hair is sticking up in every direction.

He taps his fingers against the Grand Palms logo on the door. "Sweet ride. Where's your car?"

I'm in the middle of telling him what happened when he starts to laugh.

"What happened to your tooth?" he asks.

Libby lets out a plaintive yowl and my brother forgets about my tooth as he spots the black carrier resting on the passenger seat beside me.

He smiles. "Mom's going to kill you."

"She's not going to know."

"Marty, she's going to know," he says. "The woman doesn't miss a thing."

I rest my hand protectively on the carrier. "I just need to keep her here for a couple of days. Until I find someone who wants her."

Ansel shakes his head. "You don't need to convince me," he says. "It's Momzilla you need to worry about."

"If she finds out—which she won't—all she'll do is make me drop her off at a shelter," I say. "It's not like she's going to kick me out."

Ansel bends down to peek at Libby through the carrier's mesh window. "You best be quiet, cat, or it's curtains for you." He draws a finger across his throat.

"Stop."

His face straightens. "She's not going to let you keep her."

"I'm not planning to keep her," I say, but I know he can tell I'm lying. Ansel has always been able to read me. It's super annoying.

"I'll ask around," he says. "See if anyone's in the market for a new pet."

"Thanks."

Ansel walks back toward his van.

"Be careful!" I call. My brother isn't reckless, exactly, but surfing is a dangerous sport. No matter how good he is—and no matter what he thinks—he's not invincible. All it would take is one rogue wave and he could be seriously hurt. Or worse.

He turns around and gives me a thumbs-up, but his overconfidence doesn't make me feel any better.

Maybe Ansel got through to Libby, because she doesn't make a peep as I hurry through the house and downstairs to my bedroom. When I'm safely inside, I shut the door and unzip the carrier. It's not until she steps out and starts to explore my room, her long gray tail twitching, that I realize I don't have a litter box. Which seems like a pretty big oversight.

I open my closet door, like I'm somehow going to find one magically in there, stuffed in between my clothes and rarely used scuba gear. I'm wondering if there's a way I can somehow repurpose my laundry basket, when something falls from the top shelf. It clips me on the shoulder on the way down.

A shoebox that I could have sworn I'd buried at the very back of my closet is lying on its side. The lid has popped off, and everything I'd hidden in the box has spilled onto the floor. A pair of cherry-red sunglasses, a vanilla-scented travel candle, a hula girl shot glass, and a luggage tag shaped like a surfboard.

All stuff I stole from guests at the hotel.

Looking at all of this makes me sweat. I kneel down

and pick up the sunglasses, trying to remember why I even wanted them in the first place.

Nalani knocked on the hotel room door. "House-keeping."

When no one answered, she opened the door with the master key card and we pushed our carts inside.

I groaned. The room was littered with pizza boxes and beer bottles. The duvet cover was in a puddle on the floor. The sheets were pulled off, showing the bare mattress. A bunch of snorkel gear was piled in the corner, along with an inside-out wetsuit. Haystacks of dirty clothes and towels were everywhere, and the teak floor was covered in sand.

"I'd like to nut-punch these slobs," Nalani grumbled as I gathered the dirty sheets into a ball and dumped them into the laundry basket attached to my cart.

I'd only been working at the hotel for a few weeks, but the state that some guests left their rooms in still managed to shock me.

After we remade the bed with eight-hundred-thread-count sheets, Nalani placed a couple of hand-towel swans in the middle of the bed, while I straightened a row of shiny black gift bags on the credenza. The bags were from one of the hotel's luxury stores, which meant that I could never afford whatever

was nestled beneath the cream-colored tissue paper. It bothered me that these people, whoever they were, could buy whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, without sparing a thought for the price, while pretty much everything I owned came from chain stores in the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center mall. It wasn't fair.

Next to the bags was a pair of red sunglasses. I picked them up and slid them on. I'd been looking for a pair just like this for ages.

"They look good on you," Nalani said.

It was just a pair of sunglasses. And these people already had so much—they probably wouldn't even notice they were missing. What was the harm if I took them?

I sit down on the floor, my heart racing. Nothing in this box means anything to me. I didn't take any of this stuff because I needed it—I took it because I felt resentful of the people who could leave their rooms in a disaster state and not spare a thought for the staff who had to clean up after them. I was jealous of what they had and I wanted to punish them in some small way.

And, all of a sudden, I know why my luck has been so bad. It has nothing to do with my dad leaving—and everything to do with me stealing this stuff.

The universe is trying to settle the score.

I put all of the items back into the shoebox, handling them as gently as if they were grenades. This time, I don't bury the box at the back of my closet. I set it on my desk instead and sit down on my bed, wrapping my arms around myself.

I have to return all of this. It's the only way I'm ever going to get my luck back. And judging from how bad it's been lately, I need to do this sooner rather than later.

But it's one thing to know I have to give this stuff back. It's another to figure out *how* I'm going to do it. I only have a vague idea of which rooms I took each item from. On an average day, I'd clean ten suites, which were assigned at the beginning of each shift. I never wrote the room numbers down, because why bother? While housekeeping maintains a record of who cleaned which room on which day, I don't have access to those records.

But my mom does.

I take a deep breath. Breaking into her files might not earn me any points with the universe, but it's the only way I can get that information.

I just hope that it works.

Five

The dentist promised that the freezing would wear off in a few hours, but my mouth still feels numb when I arrive at work later that evening. I keep wiping at my lips, worried that I'm drooling. I could have called in sick, I guess, but I really want to get the information about the rooms I cleaned. I want to start sending these items back to their rightful owners and free myself from this curse of bad luck.

I've barely started my shift when Marielle walks up and thrusts a piece of paper into my hands.

"Marty. What is this?"

I glance down at the events rundown she asked me to create yesterday. We put them up in the elevators

so guests know what's happening around the hotel. Yoga classes, hula lessons, a massage on the beach. A Maui Public Transit meeting.

Whoops.

"Maui *Public* Transit," Marielle says, tapping one red fingernail against the glaring typo. "This was up in the elevators all day!"

"Sorry," I mumble.

"Don't apologize; just do better," she says. She adjusts the brass name tag pinned on the pocket of her Hawaiian shirt, even though it's already perfectly straight. Benjie swears this a tactic to draw attention to the *MANAGER* title listed under her name when she's about to ask you to do something you're probably not going to want to do.

And sure enough . . .

"Now, I've been meaning to talk to you about something else," she says. "I need you to show some children of our VIP guests around the island. Take them to a luau, go to the beach, visit the aquarium. Whatever kids like to do."

I stare at her. She wants me to babysit?

"Wouldn't they be better off with a nanny?" I ask. The hotel has a roster of wonderful, caring *trained* nannies—why is she asking me, someone with zero

experience with kids, to do this? I have no idea why she thinks I'm the right person for this job. It makes no sense.

Marielle's lips tighten, the only indication that she's heard my question. "I'll arrange for luau tickets for tomorrow night. And don't worry about your front desk shift—I'll find someone to cover it." She turns on her sensible black heel before I dare ask her anything else, and disappears through the doors into the back room.

I put my head down on the counter.

"Wait," Benjie says. "She's going to pay you to do all sorts of fun touristy stuff and you're pouting?"

I lift my head up to glare at him. "This is going to be a million times harder than working the front desk."

"You are such a negative Nelly," he says. "People the world over take care of kids every single day. You'll be fine."

"I'm glad you think so."

"I know so. You'll be sipping mai tais while you're entertained by fire dancers and hula girls. I'm the opposite of sorry for you."

Well, when he puts it that way, it doesn't sound so bad. But the way my luck has been lately, it's pretty much a guarantee that this situation will turn out to be a disaster.

Later that evening, after playing three rounds of Hangman—all of which I lose—Benjie goes on his second coffee break. I'm finally alone behind the front desk, so I decide to see to use the opportunity to see if I can break into my mom's files.

I glance behind me, just to make sure no one else is around, before I type in her password. My mom uses her birthday for everything, even though I've lectured her a hundred times about changing it to something harder to crack. For once, I'm glad she didn't listen to me.

A quick search of my name in the scheduling software turns up more than four hundred results. I suck in a breath. I can't believe I cleaned that many rooms in five months. How on earth am I going to figure out which of these rooms I took the stuff from?

Except . . . the only time I ever had the nerve to steal anything was when I was working with Nalani. Maybe if I type her name alongside mine . . .

The list immediately narrows down to 110 results. My shoulders relax a tiny bit. One hundred and ten is better than four hundred, for sure, but it still seems like an impossible number to try to wade through.

I'm nervous that Benjie could come back at any minute, so I save the record and send it to my email, then delete the email from my mom's sent box to cover

my tracks. I'm busy setting up our next game of Hangman when I spot Will Foster crossing the lobby. My fingers tighten on my pen as I watch him head toward the yellow leather club chairs. He's carrying a white Grand Palms mug and a book. Will must feel me looking at him, because he glances over and our eyes meet. Something inside me flutters as he reroutes and starts walking toward me.

My palms are sweaty. I'm usually a lot slower to warm up to someone, but something about Will really affects me. The way he smiles at me, like he's really glad to see me, like he's been waiting to talk to me, makes my heart race.

He probably smiles at everybody like that.

I hate the thought that he smiles at anyone else like that.

"Marty, hey," he says. He's tall and thin, a lamppost of a boy in plaid board shorts and a washed-out *X-Files* T-shirt. His dark hair is messy and standing high on his head, completely defying gravity. He sets his mug and book—a worn copy of *Ready Player One*—on the counter.

"You're still awake," I say. And then my face reddens because, hello, obvious.

"Can't sleep. Still on East Coast time, I guess." He runs a hand over the stubble sprouting on his jaw.

There are dark purple circles under his eyes that weren't there when I saw him last night.

I tap my pen against his mug. "Might help if you weren't drinking coffee so late at night."

"It's probably not the best idea," he agrees. "But the coffee here is so good."

It's my turn to talk but he leans forward, resting his elbows on the polished bamboo counter, and my mind goes blank. He's inches from me, close enough that I can smell the coconut pomade he uses in that unruly tangle of hair. I twirl the pen in my fingers. Talking to people is my job—it's never been a problem for me before. But other people are not Will. And they're not usually staring at me so intently, with mesmerizingly deep blue eyes.

The silence between us lengthens to the point of awkwardness.

I clear my throat. "We grow our own beans."

My face burns. We grow our own beans?! God. What is wrong with me?

But instead of stopping and salvaging my dignity, I keep going. I can't seem to stop myself. "In Hawaii, I mean," I add. "We're one of only two states in America that grow coffee plants. The other is California."

I'm having an out-of-body experience. I can see myself delivering the most boring lecture ever on the

history of Hawaiian coffee—who even knew I knew so much about the subject?—but unbelievably, Will doesn't run away. In fact, from the way his face lights up, it seems like he actually might be interested in this conversation.

"I'm planning to try every coffee place on the island," he says. "I don't want to go to the same place twice."

"Wow, you're really into coffee," I say. "Maybe you should open your own shop."

He drums his fingers against the counter. "That's the dream."

"I can give you a list of some of my favorite places, if you like."

His smile widens. "That'd be great."

"Have you been to Maui before?"

Will shakes his head. "My parents sent me as a graduation present," he says. "Of course, they made me bring my brother, so in reality, it's really a gift for them, too. Now we're both out of their hair for the summer."

My smile tightens. My mom took me out for dinner to celebrate, which is not nothing, but it doesn't exactly compare to an all-expenses-paid vacation. But then, I don't think there is much in my life that compares to Will Foster's.

He glances around the open-air lobby, at the high

ceilings and marble columns, the indoor reflection pool with a stone mermaid at the center. "It must be amazing to live here. Like being on permanent vacation."

This is something tourists say all the time. It's hard for them to believe any different, when they're faced with the crash of waves against the shore and air scented with plumeria flowers. Their real lives, with all the day-to-day worries and problems, are thousands of miles away. My problems—even if they're mostly all of my own making—are still here.

"I don't have anything to compare it to," I say. "I've never left."

Will blinks at me. "Wait, what? You've never been off this island?"

"Well, I've been to the other Hawaiian islands. I just haven't been to the mainland." Hawaii is pretty remote—like thousands of miles from anywhere else on Earth—and we've never had the extra money to travel.

The pen I've been spinning in my fingers suddenly flies out of my hands. I make a quick move to grab it while it's still midair, which turns out to be a bad decision, because my elbow connects with Will's mug. I knock the mug over and coffee spills all over his book.

He snatches the book up, but it's too late—it's soaked.

"I'm so sorry." I grab a handful of tissues from the box we keep under the counter and try to wipe the book off, but it's no use. Coffee has leaked through the cover and onto the pages.

"Not a big deal," he says. "I've read it a million times anyway."

Marielle picks that moment to return to the front desk. She frowns at the sight of me mopping up coffee from the counter.

"Mr. Foster," she says, a practiced smile spreading over her face. "Everything okay?"

Marielle is very good at her job. She makes it her business to know as much as she can about our high-profile guests, so of course she knows who Will is. She probably knows more about his family than he does.

"It's fine. I just knocked over my coffee."

I shoot him a grateful look and finish cleaning up. It's nice of him to take the blame—I don't need Marielle yelling at me again tonight.

"I see you've met Marty," she says. "Good news. She's agreed to show you and your brother around the island."

My brow furrows. My mind spirals back to our conversation earlier this evening when she told me the "other duties as assigned" in my job description

included babysitting rich kids. Only, now that I think about it, she didn't actually tell me how old the kids were.

Marielle's job is to make sure that our super-rich guests are kept happy. The only way she would have ever agreed to lend me out as a tour guide, rather than one of her other, more trusted staff, is if Will asked for me personally. And from the way his face is turning red, it's pretty clear he did.

"I thought you might like to go to a luau, so I've arranged for tickets tomorrow night," Marielle says. "How about you and Hayes meet Marty at the front entrance at five p.m.?"

"Great," Will says. He raises his eyebrows slightly at me. "I guess I'll see you tomorrow, then?"

I nod.

Marielle waits until Will has disappeared from the lobby with his soggy book before fixing her sharp gaze on me.

"Remember, you're representing the hotel," she says.

"Of course."

What she's really saying, without really saying it, is that Will Foster is off-limits. But she doesn't need to remind me that fraternizing with guests is against

company policy. Will's only here for the summer. He may have requested that I show him around the island, but that's all I'm going to be showing him.

After what happened with Kahale, I'm through with boys. And no matter how hot Will Foster is or how zingy he makes me feel, he's not going to make me change my mind.