

When Life Gives You Lululemons

LAUREN WEISBERGER is the bestselling author of *The Devil Wears Prada*, which was published in forty languages and made into a major motion picture starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway. She is also the author of the bestselling novels *Everyone Worth Knowing*, *Chasing Harry Winston*, *Last Night at Chateau Marmont*, *Revenge Wears Prada*, and *The Singles Game*. Her books have sold more than thirteen million copies worldwide. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and two children.

If you'd like to find out more about Lauren Weisberger and her books, join her online:

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The Devil Wears Prada

Everyone Worth Knowing

Chasing Harry Winston

Last Night at Chateau Marmont

Revenge Wears Prada: The Devil Returns

The Singles Game

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LAUREN
WEISBERGER



HarperCollins*Publishers*

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To my entire family, with love

Part One

1

Again with the Nazi Getup?

EMILY

Emily racked her brain. There had to be something to complain about. This was New Year's Eve in Los Angeles, one of the most annoying nights of the year in arguably the most annoying city known to humanity. So why couldn't she think of a thing?

She sipped her skinny margarita from her chaise and watched her husband's beautiful body cut through the water like a moving art installation. When Miles emerged, he propped himself on the back of the lit infinity pool, where the turquoise water appeared to spill over the side and straight down the mountain. Behind him, the lights from the valley twinkled for miles, making the city look

alluring, even sexy. Night was the only time Los Angeles really shone. Gone were the smog and the junkies and the soul-crushing traffic, all replaced by an idyllic vista of night sky and silently twinkling lights – as if God Himself had descended into the Hollywood Hills and selected the most perfect Snapchat filter for His least favorite city on earth.

Miles smiled at her and she waved, but when he motioned for her to join him, she shook her head. It was unseasonably warm, and all around her, people were partying in that intensely determined way that happened only on New Year's Eve after midnight: *This will be the most fun we've ever had; we will do and say outrageous things; we are loving our lives and everyone around us.* The massive hot tub was packed with a dozen revelers, all with drinks in hand, and another group sat around the perimeter, content to dangle their feet while they waited for a few inches of space to free up. On the deck above the pool a DJ blasted remixed hip-hop, and dancers everywhere – on the patio, in the pool, on the pool deck, streaming in and out of the house – all moved happily to his playlist. On the chair to Emily's left, a young girl wearing only bikini bottoms straddled a guy and massaged his shoulders while her bare breasts dangled freely. She worked her way down his back and began a rather aggressive handling of his glutes. She was twenty-three, twenty-five at most, and while her body was far from perfect – slightly rounded belly and overly curvy thighs – her arms didn't jiggle and her neck didn't sag. No crepey anything. Just youth. None of the small indignities of Emily's own body at thirty-six: light stretch marks on her hips; cleavage with just the smallest hint of sag; some errant dark hairs along her bikini line that just

seemed to sprout now willy-nilly, indifferent to Emily's indefatigable waxing schedule. It wasn't a horror show, exactly – she still looked thin and tan, maybe even downright hot in her elegant Eres two-piece – but it was getting harder with every passing year.

An unfamiliar 917 number flashed on her phone.

'Emily? This is Helene. I'm not sure if you remember, but we met a couple years ago at the Met Ball.'

Emily looked skyward in concentration. Though the name was familiar, she was having a hard time placing it. Silence filled the air.

'I'm Rizzo's manager.'

Rizzo. *Interesting*. He was the new Bieber: the hottest new pop star whose fame had skyrocketed when, two years earlier at age sixteen, he'd become the youngest male to win a Grammy for Album of the Year. Helene had moved to Hollywood to join an agency – either ICM or Endeavor, Emily couldn't remember – but she'd somehow missed the news that Helene now represented Rizzo.

'Of course. How are you?' Emily asked. She glanced at her watch. This was no ordinary call.

'I'm sorry I'm calling so late,' Helene said. 'It's already four a.m. here in New York, but you're probably in L.A. I feel terrible interrupting . . .'

'No, it's fine. I'm at Gigi Hadid's childhood mansion and not nearly as drunk as I should be. What's up?'

A shriek came from the pool. Two girls had jumped in together, holding hands, and were splashing Miles and a couple of his friends. Emily rolled her eyes.

'Well, I, uh . . .'

 Helene cleared her throat. 'We're off the record, right?'

'Of course.' This sounded promising.

'I'm not sure I understand the whole story myself, but Riz appeared on Seacrest's Times Square show earlier tonight – everything was fine, it went off without a hitch. Afterward, I went to meet up with some old college friends, and Rizzo was headed to some party at 1 OAK. Sober, at least when he left me. Happy about his performance.'

'Okay . . .'

'And just this second I got texted a picture from a colleague who works in ICM's New York office and happens to be at 1 OAK right now . . .'

'And?'

'And it's not good.'

'What? Is he passed out? Covered in his own puke? Kissing a guy? Doing lines? Groping an underage girl?'

Helene sighed and began to speak, but she was drowned out by shrieking laughter. In the shallow end, a girl with hot pink hair and a thong bikini had found her way atop Miles's shoulders for an improvised chicken fight.

'Sorry, can you repeat that? It's a little chaotic here,' Emily said as she watched the tiny piece of suit fabric wedge even tighter between the girl's naked ass cheeks, themselves spread straight across the back of Emily's husband's neck.

'He appears to be wearing a Nazi costume.'

'A *what?*'

'Like with a swastika armband and a coordinating headband. Storm trooper boots. The whole nine.'

'Oh, Jesus Christ,' Emily muttered without thinking.

'That bad?'

‘Well, it’s not great. Prince Harry pulled that stunt forever ago – but we have to work with what we have. I’m not going to lie, I would’ve preferred drugs or boys.’

In the pool, the pink-haired girl on Miles’s shoulders reached behind her back, yanked the tie of her bikini top, and began swinging the top around her head like a lasso.

‘First things first: who knows?’ Emily asked.

‘Nothing has shown up online yet, but of course, it’s only a matter of time.’

‘Just so we’re clear: you’re calling to hire me, yes?’ Emily asked.

‘Yes. Definitely.’

‘Okay, then right now I want you to text your colleague and have him get Rizzo into the men’s room and out of that getup. I don’t care if he’s wearing a gold lamé banana hammock, it’s better than the Nazi thing.’

‘I already did that. He gave Riz his button-down and shoes, confiscated the armband, and let him keep the trousers, which apparently are bright red. It’s not perfect, but it’s the best we can do, especially since I can’t reach Rizzo directly. But someone will post something any second, I’m sure.’

‘Agreed, so listen up. Here’s the plan. You’re going to jump in a cab and head over to 1 OAK and forcibly remove him. Bring a girl or two, it’ll look better, and then get him back to his apartment and don’t let him leave. Sit in front of the damn door if you have to. Do you have his passwords? Actually, forget it – just take his phone. Drop it in the toilet. We need to buy ourselves time without some idiotic drunken tweet from him.’

‘Okay. Will do.’

‘The first flight out of here is six a.m. I’m going home to pack, and then I’ll head to the airport. The story will definitely break while I’m in the air, if not before. Do not – I repeat, do not – make a statement. Do not let him talk to anyone, not even the delivery guy who brings up the food. Information lockdown, you understand? No matter how bad the photos are, or how horrified the reaction – and trust me, it’s going to be bad – I want no response until I get there, okay?’

‘Thank you, Emily. I’m going to owe you for this one.’

‘Go *now!*’ Emily said, managing not to utter what she was actually thinking – namely, that the charge for her time and the holiday and the travel was going to take Helene’s breath away.

She took the last sip of her margarita, set the drink on the glass table next to her, and stood up, trying to ignore the couple beside her who may or may not have been having actual intercourse.

‘Miles? Honey?’ Emily called as politely as she could manage.

No response.

‘Miles, love? Can you please move her thighs away from your ears for thirty seconds? I have to leave.’

She was pleased to see her husband unceremoniously lower the girl into the water and swim over to the side. ‘You’re not mad, are you? She’s just some dumb kid.’

Emily knelt. ‘Of course I’m not mad. If you’re going to cheat, you better pick someone a hell of a lot hotter than *that.*’ She nodded toward the girl, who looked not at all pleased with her wet hair. ‘I got a call from New

York. It's an emergency with Rizzo. I'm running home to get a bag and hopefully get to LAX for the six a.m. I'll call you when I land, okay?'

This was hardly the first time Emily had been called away in the middle of something – her surgeon girlfriend claimed Emily had worse call hours than she did – but Miles looked positively stupefied.

'It's New Year's Eve. Isn't there anyone in New York who can handle this?' His unhappiness was obvious, and Emily felt a pang, but she tried to keep it light.

'Sorry, love. Can't say no to this one. Stay, have fun. Not too much fun . . .' She added the last part to make him feel better – she wasn't one iota concerned about Miles doing anything stupid. She bent down and pecked his wet lips. 'Call you later,' she said, and wove through the throngs to the circular driveway, where one of the cute valets motioned for a Town Car to pull around. He held the door for her, and she flashed him a smile and a ten-dollar bill.

'Two stops, please,' she said to the driver. 'First one is on Santa Monica Boulevard, where you'll wait for me. Then to the airport. And fast.'

New York, her first and truest love, awaited.

2

Living the Dream

MIRIAM

It was only the beginning of mile two, and she felt like she might die of suffocation. Her breaths came in jagged gulps, but no matter how deeply she took in air, Miriam was unable to slow her heart rate. She checked her Fitbit for the thousandth time in the past sixteen minutes – how could it have been only sixteen minutes?! – and briefly worried that the reading of 165 might kill her. Which would officially make her the only woman in all of Greenwich, or perhaps all the earth, who had dropped dead after running – really, if she were being honest, walking – a single lousy mile in sixteen minutes.

But she had shown up! Wasn't that what all the feel-

good bloggers and motivational authors were always screeching about? *No judgments, just show up! Show up and you've already won the battle! Don't expect perfection – showing up is enough!* 'Fuckers,' she mumbled, streaming massive puffs of steam in the freezing January air. Motivating for a jog at seven o'clock in the morning on January 1 was more than just showing up. It was a downright *triumph*.

'Morning!' a woman called as she raced by Miriam on the left, nearly jolting what was left of her heart into immediate cardiac arrest.

'Hi!' Miriam shouted to the back of the woman, who ran like a black-clad gazelle: Lululemon leggings with elaborate mesh cutouts that looked both cool and extremely cold; fitted black puffer that ended at her nonexistent hips; black Nikes on her feet; and some sort of technical-looking hat with the cutest puffball on top. Her legs went on forever, and her butt looked so firm that it wouldn't possibly hold so much as a bobby pin underneath, never mind a full-size hairbrush, which Miriam had once tucked successfully and devastatingly under her left ass cheek.

Miriam slowed to a walk, but before she could regain anything resembling composure, two women in equally fabulous workout outfits ran toward Miriam on the opposite side of the street. A golden retriever pulled happily on the leash of the hot pink puffer coat while a panting chocolate Lab yanked along the woman in the army green. The entire entourage looked like a mobile Christmas card and was moving at a brisk pace.

'Happy New Year,' the golden retriever owner said as they sprinted past Miriam.

'You too,' she muttered, relieved it was no one she knew. Not that she'd met many moms in the five months since they'd moved to town just in time for the twins to start kindergarten and Benjamin to start second grade at their new public school. Beyond saying hello to a few moms at school drop-off twice a day, she hadn't had much opportunity to meet a lot of other women. Paul claimed it was the same in wealthy suburbs everywhere – that people stayed holed up in their big houses with everything they needed either upstairs or downstairs: their gyms, their screening rooms, their wine cellars and tasting tables. Nannies played with children, rendering playdates unnecessary. Housekeepers did the grocery shopping. Staff, staff, and more staff to do everything from mow the lawn to chlorinate the pool to change the lightbulbs.

The heady smell of burning wood greeted Miriam the moment she stepped into the mudroom, and a quick peek in the family room confirmed that her husband had read her mind about wanting to sit next to a fire. It was one of the things she loved most about suburban living so far: morning fires. Otherwise bleak mornings were instantly cozy; her children's cheeks were even more delicious.

'Mommy's home!' Matthew, five years old and obsessed with weaponry, shouted from the arm of the couch, where he balanced in pajamas, brandishing a realistic-looking sword.

'Mommy! Matthew won't give me a turn with the sword and we're supposed to share!' his twin sister, Maisie, screeched from under the kitchen table, which was her favorite place to sulk.

'Mom, can I have your password to buy Hellion?' Benjamin asked without looking up from Miriam's hijacked iPad.

'No,' she said. 'Who said yes to screen time right now? No iPad. It's family time.'

'Your fingerprint, then? Please? Jameson says it's the coolest game he's ever played! Why does he get it and I don't?'

'Because his mommy is nicer than me,' she said, managing to kiss her son on top of his head before he squirmed away.

Paul stood at the stove in flannel pajama pants and a fleece sweatshirt, intently flipping pancakes on the griddle. 'I'm so impressed,' he said. 'I have no idea how you motivated this morning.' Miriam couldn't help but think how handsome he was despite all the premature gray hair. He was only three years older than she, but he could have been mistaken for being a decade her senior.

Miriam grabbed her midsection, ending up with two handfuls of flesh. 'This is how.'

Paul placed the last pancake on a plated pile nearly a dozen high and turned off the stove. He walked over and embraced her. 'You're perfect just the way you are,' he said automatically. 'Here, have one.'

'No way. I didn't suffer through twenty minutes of sheer hell to kill it all with a pancake.'

'Are they ready, Daddy? Are they? Are they?'

'Can we have whipped cream on them?'

'And ice cream?'

'I don't want the ones with the blueberries!'

In a flash, all three children had gathered at the kitchen table, nearly hyperventilating with excitement. Miriam tried to ignore the epic mess and focus on her children's joy and her husband's kindness, but it was tough with flour covering every inch of countertop, batter splattered on the backsplash, and errant chocolate chips and blueberries spread across the floor.

'Anyone want some fruit salad or yogurt?' she asked, pulling both from the fridge.

'Not me!' they all shouted in unison through mouths full of pancake.

Yeah, me neither, Miriam thought to herself as she scooped some out. She spooned a bite into her mouth and nearly spat it into the sink. The yogurt had clearly gone bad, and not even the sweet strawberries could mask the rancid taste. She scraped the entire bowl's contents into the garbage disposal and considered hard-boiling some eggs. She even nibbled one of those cardboard-like fiber crackers, but two bites in, she just couldn't.

'Live a little,' she murmured to herself, grabbing a chocolate chip pancake from the top of the pile and shoving it into her mouth.

'Aren't they good, Mommy? Do you want to try it with whipped cream?' Benjamin asked, waving the canister like a trophy.

'Yes, please,' she said, holding out her remaining piece for him to squirt. Screw it. She was setting a good example for her daughter that food wasn't the enemy, right? Everything in moderation. No eating disorders in this house. She had just popped a pod into the coffee machine when she heard Paul mutter, 'Holy shit.'

'Daddy! Language!' Maisie said, sounding exactly like Miriam.

'Daddy said a bad word! Daddy said "shit"!'

'Sorry, sorry,' he murmured, his face buried in the newspaper Miriam had set on the table. 'Miriam, come look at this.'

'I'll be right there. Do you want a cup too?'

'Now. Come here now.'

'What is it, Daddy? What's in the newspaper?'

'Here, have another pancake,' Paul said to Maisie as he handed the paper over to Miriam.

Below the fold but still on the very first page blared the headline: MADD: MOTHERS ALL-FOR DRUNK DRIVING! SENATOR'S WIFE SLAPPED WITH DUI . . . WITH KIDS IN THE CAR!

'Holy shit.'

'Mommy! You said "shit"!'

'Daddy, now Mommy said a bad word!'

'Shit, shit, shit!' sang Matthew.

'Who wants to watch a movie?' Paul asked. 'Benjamin, why don't you go down to the basement and put on *Boss Baby* for everyone.' Again, there was a mad scramble as they bolted toward the stairs, and then, seconds later, blessed silence.

'This can't be right,' Miriam said, studying the mug shot of her old school friend. 'Karolina would never do that.'

'Well, it's right here in print. Failed roadside sobriety test. Empty bottles of booze in the backseat. Refused to take a Breathalyzer. And five kids in the car, including her own.'

'There is no way that's possible,' Miriam said, scanning the story. 'Not the Karolina I know.'

‘How long has it been since you’ve spoken to her? Maybe she changed. I don’t imagine things are so easy being in the spotlight, like they both are now.’

‘She was the face of L’Oréal for ten years! The mega-model to end all supermodels. I hardly think she has issues with the spotlight.’

‘Well, being the wife of a United States senator is something else entirely. Especially one who plans to run for president. It’s a different kind of scrutiny.’

‘I guess so. I don’t know. I’m going to call her. This just can’t be right.’

‘You guys haven’t spoken in months.’ Paul sipped his coffee.

‘That doesn’t matter!’ Miriam realized she was nearly shouting and lowered her voice. ‘We’ve known each other since we were children.’

Paul held up both hands in surrender. ‘Send her my love, okay? I’ll go check on the monsters.’

Karolina’s number rang five times before going to voice-mail. ‘Hi! You’ve reached Karolina. I’m not available to take your call, but leave me a message and I’ll get back to you just as soon as I can. Bye, now.’

‘Lina? It’s me, Miriam. I saw that hideous headline and I want to talk to you. I don’t believe it for a single second, and neither does one other person who’s ever met you. Call me as soon as you get this, okay? Love you, honey. Bye.’

Miriam clicked ‘end’ and stared at her screen, willing Karolina’s name to appear. But then she heard a scream coming from downstairs – a real pain scream, not an I-hate-my-siblings scream or an It’s-my-turn scream, and Miriam took a deep breath and stood up to go investigate.

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LULULEMONS

It had barely even begun, and already this year was shaping up to be a loser. She grabbed a now-cold pancake off the plate on her way to the basement: 2018 could take its resolutions and *shove* them.

3

Like a Common Criminal

KAROLINA

‘Hey, Siri! Play “Yeah” by Usher!’ Harry called from the back of the Suburban. A chorus of cheers went up from the boys when Siri chirped, ‘Okay, playing “Yeah” by Usher,’ and the bass blasted through the speakers.

Karolina smiled. Never in a million years would she have thought having a car full of twelve-year-old boys could be fun. They were loud and rowdy and even sometimes smelled bad, yes. But Harry’s friends were also sweet and quick to laugh and made an attempt at manners, at least when she was around. They were good kids from nice families, and once again she felt grateful

for the move that had taken them from New York – the city of social land mines – to Bethesda, where everyone seemed a little more easygoing.

Sweet boy, Karolina thought for the thousandth time as she sneaked a look at Harry from the rearview mirror. Every day he was starting to look more and more like a teenager: broadening shoulders, dark fuzz above his lip, a smattering of pimples on his cheeks. But just as often he seemed like a little boy, as likely to spend an hour playing with Lego as texting with his friends. Harry was outgoing and confident, like his father, but he had a softer, more sensitive side too. Right around the time they moved to Bethesda, Harry started asking Graham more about his late mother: where she and Graham had met, what she liked to read, how she'd felt when she was pregnant with him. And always Graham put him off, promising to tell Harry about his mother later. Later, when he was finished with a report he needed to read. Later, that weekend, when they had more free time. Later, during their ski vacation, because his mother had loved to ski. Later, later, later. Karolina wasn't sure if it was laziness or avoidance or genuine pain causing Graham to put off his son, but she knew Harry needed answers. It took her nearly three days while Graham was at work and Harry at school to assemble all the scattered pictures and letters and clippings she could find, but when she presented Harry with the memory box of his mom, his relief and joy made every minute worthwhile. She reassured Harry that his mom would always be his mom, and

that it was okay to talk about her and remember her, and Karolina's big, strong tween had collapsed into her arms like a kindergartener returning from his first day away from home.

'Guess what?' Nicholas, a lanky lacrosse player with shaggy blond hair, called from the third row. 'My dad got us tickets to the 'Skins/Eagles game next weekend. First playoff game. Who's in?'

The boys hooted.

'Hey, Mom, do you think Dad will take me?' Harry asked.

'My dad said tickets weren't that expensive,' Nicholas said.

Karolina forced herself to smile, though the boys couldn't see her in the driver's seat. 'I'm sure he'd love that,' she lied, and sneaked a peek at Harry to see if he could hear it in her voice. Despite the fact that Harry was passionate about professional football in general and the Redskins specifically – and Graham, as a sitting U.S. senator, could name his seats anywhere in the stadium – father and son had never attended a game together. Every year Graham swore to Karolina and Harry that they'd sit in the owner's box, fly to an important away game, or invite a bunch of Harry's friends and get seats on the fifty-yard line, and every year another season went by without the Hartwell boys in attendance. Harry had been to a game exactly once, two years earlier, when Karolina took pity on him and bought tickets off StubHub. He'd been thrilled and cheered like crazy in his head-to-toe gear, but she knew he would have preferred to go with Graham: Karolina had unknowingly gotten tickets

on the visitor side, and she couldn't totally follow who had the ball, and in spite of her best intentions, she kept cheering at the wrong times.

'Mom! Hey, Mom!' Harry interrupted her thoughts. 'There are cop cars behind us with their lights on.'

'Hmmm?' Karolina murmured, more to herself. She glanced in the rearview and saw two police cruisers with their lights ablaze, so close to the Suburban that they were nearly pushing up against the bumper. 'My goodness, it must be important. Okay, okay, give me a second,' she said aloud. 'I'm moving over.'

She was grateful Harry was safely beside her, because she always got nervous when she saw an emergency vehicle in her neighborhood. Their house might be on fire, but so long as Harry was safely in her sight, she could deal with anything. She put on her blinker and eased the unwieldy truck onto the side of the road as gracefully as she could, sending a silent apology to the Crains, who lived five doors down and owned the beautiful lawn her tires were probably digging up. Only the cruisers didn't quickly pass her on the left, as she'd expected; they too pulled to the side and came to a stop directly behind her truck.

'Ohhh, Mrs. Hartwell, you're busted!' Stefan, another of Harry's friends, yelled as all the boys laughed. Karolina did too.

'Yes, you know me,' Karolina said. 'Going twenty in a residential neighborhood. Crazy!' She watched in the rearview as the officers stood next to her license plate and appeared to type it into an iPad-like device. *Good*, she thought. They would see the United States government

plates that were on all three of their cars, and this whole silly thing would be over.

But the two officers who approached her window weren't laughing. 'Ma'am? Is this your vehicle?' asked the female officer, while the male cop stood behind her and watched.

'Yes, of course,' Karolina said, wondering why they'd ask her such a ridiculous question. She was driving it, wasn't she? 'Officer, I really don't think I was speeding. We literally just pulled out of the driveway. See? We live right back there. I'm just taking my son's friends—'

The female cop looked hard at Karolina and said, 'I'll need your license and registration, please.'

Karolina checked the woman's face. She wasn't kidding. Karolina carefully removed her driver's license from her wallet and was relieved to find the car's registration tucked neatly in the glove compartment. 'I, um, as you may recognize the name from my license there . . . I am actually married to Senator Hartwell,' Karolina said, giving her best smile. She wasn't usually one to name-drop, but then again, she wasn't usually being pulled over by angry-looking cops.

The male officer furrowed his eyebrows. 'Ma'am, have you been drinking?'

Karolina was vaguely aware of the boys going quiet with this question, and her mind flashed back to an hour earlier, when she'd deliberately opened a bottle of Graham's outrageously expensive cabernet that he'd been buying by the case lately. Harry and his friends had been polishing off pizzas, and of course she'd known she'd be driving them home shortly, so she'd had half a glass. If that. She

hadn't even wanted it, really, but it had been satisfying to open the bottle and know that it would likely go bad before Graham got home from New York. He'd asked to join him for a New Year's dinner at a friend's penthouse in Manhattan, but Karolina didn't want to leave Harry behind on New Year's Eve. She'd been upset that he'd gone without her, although she wasn't completely surprised.

Summoning her most dazzling smile and her most direct eye contact, she said, 'Officers, I have children in the car. I assure you that I have not been drinking. I didn't think I was speeding either, but I suppose it's possible. If so, I'm very sorry about that.'

At the mention of children, the male officer took his flashlight and began walking the perimeter of the car. He didn't seem to care that the light was shining directly in the boys' eyes. Karolina could see them all squint.

'Mom, what's happening?' Harry asked, sounding nervous.

'Nothing, honey. I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding. Just let them do what they need to do.'

With this, the male officer called to the female officer and gestured to something with his flashlight. They exchanged looks. Karolina felt her heart do a little flip-flop, though there wasn't a reason in the world she should be nervous.

'Mrs. Hartwell, please get out of the car. Slowly,' the female officer said.

'Excuse me?' Karolina asked. 'Why on earth would I get out of my car? I'm not even wearing a coat—'

'Now!' the male cop barked, and it became immediately clear that this wasn't a routine traffic stop.

Karolina jumped out of the driver's seat so quickly that she didn't bother to use the running board, and as a result she twisted her ankle and had to grab the door to keep from falling.

The officers exchanged another look.

'Mrs. Hartwell, we have observed both reckless driving and empty bottles of alcohol in the backseat of your vehicle. Keeping your arms down by your sides, please walk in the middle of the street for a distance of approximately twenty feet. Our officers are stationed down the road, so there will be no oncoming traffic.'

'Wait – you found what? In my car? You must be mistaken,' Karolina said, trying not to shiver. 'My husband is going to be livid when he finds out about this!'

The female officer gestured toward the very road Karolina lived on, now slick with rain, and motioned for her to walk. Immediately and without thinking, Karolina wrapped her arms around her chest to keep warm in her too-flimsy silk blouse and began to stride confidently toward her house. If there was one thing Karolina could do better than nearly anyone else on earth, it was work a catwalk. But what she hadn't expected was seeing her neighbors' doors and curtains open, their familiar faces squinted toward her, recognition dawning on their features as they realized who was performing a field sobriety test like a common criminal on their beautiful, quiet street.

Is that Mrs. Lowell? Karolina wondered, seeing an elderly woman peek out behind a crisp linen curtain. *I didn't realize she was visiting now. I can't believe she's seeing me like this.* Karolina could feel her cheeks start to color despite

the cold, and somehow she must have missed the small pothole in the road, because the next thing she knew, she'd stumbled and nearly fallen.

'Did you see that?' Karolina said to the officers, who were watching her closely. 'We've been telling the town forever that this road is badly in need of repair.'

They gave each other that look again. Without a word exchanged, the male cop approached Karolina and said, 'Ma'am, you're under arrest for suspicion of driving while under the influence. You have the right to remain—'

'Wait – what?' Karolina shrieked, before noticing that Harry had stuck his head out of the Suburban's window and was intently watching the entire scene. 'Under arrest?'

'— silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to . . .'

The words were familiar, of course. So many police procedurals she'd watched with Graham, and nights of *Law & Order* marathons in her single days, but who knew they actually said those things in real life? Was this actually happening? It seemed so surreal: one moment she was just another mom driving home her son's friends, and then next she was being escorted into the backseat of a police cruiser.

'Wait, excuse me! *Sir!* Listen please, I can't just leave the children in the car!' Karolina called as the car door slammed closed. She was alone in the backseat, entirely cut off from the world with a thick layer of presumably bulletproof glass.

The officer's voice came through some sort of speaker. 'Officer Williams will look after your son and his friends

and ensure that everyone gets home safely. I'll be taking you to the station now.'

The engine started, and with it, the sirens went on. She couldn't hear Harry, but she could see that he was screaming 'Mom' and trying very hard not to cry. Hand against the window, she mouthed to him, 'Don't worry, everything's fine,' but Karolina knew he couldn't see. With lights and sirens blaring in the quiet night, the cruiser pulled away from Karolina's son.

'How dare you!' she screamed at the officer, before noticing a camera with a blinking light mounted in the corner right above her window, but the officer didn't so much as glance up. Never in her life had she felt so completely helpless. So totally alone.

They hadn't allowed Karolina a phone call until nearly two hours after she'd been arrested. Was that even legal? she wondered, trying to keep calm. At least the woman officer had come by the holding room to tell Karolina that Harry and his friends were all home. The parents of the boys had each come to the station to retrieve their sons, and when Graham didn't answer his phone, Harry had suggested they call his grandmother Elaine, who had swept in to take Harry back to her house. Karolina was relieved that Harry was safe, but she was filled with dread at the idea of retrieving him from her mother-in-law.

'My husband isn't answering,' Karolina said to the officer overseeing her phone call.

He was slumped over a desk filling out paperwork. He shrugged without looking up. 'Try someone else.'

'It's almost midnight on New Year's Eve,' Karolina said.

‘Who am I supposed to call to come pick me up in the middle of the night from the local police station?’

With this, the officer looked up. ‘Pick you up? No, sorry, Mrs. Hartwell. You’ll be staying here tonight.’

‘You can’t be serious!’ Karolina said, nearly certain he was joking.

‘Strict orders from above. All DUIs have to sober up for at least five hours before they can be released. And we only do releases between the hours of seven a.m. and midnight, so I’m afraid you’re out of luck.’

‘Do I look drunk to you?’ Karolina asked him.

The officer glanced up. He looked barely old enough to buy beer, and the blush that spread across his neck didn’t help. ‘Sorry, ma’am. Those are the rules.’

She dialed the only other number she had memorized. Trip, who was their family lawyer and Graham’s best friend, answered on the first ring.

‘Lina? Where did you say you’re calling from?’ he asked groggily. Leave it to Trip to be asleep before midnight.

‘You heard me, Trip. The local drunk tank at the Bethesda County Jail. Sorry to wake you, but I figured you’d understand. I tried Graham, but he’s nowhere to be found. Surprise, surprise.’

Trip and Graham had been roommates at Harvard Law and best men at each other’s weddings and were godparents to each other’s children. She’d always thought of Trip as almost an extension of Graham, an extra set of eyes and ears, an acceptable substitute, a brother figure. Usually they shared a warm, mutual affection. But tonight she didn’t even try to mask her displeasure that she was talking to Trip and not Graham.

‘Can you please get me out of this hellhole?’ she whispered into the phone. ‘They said they won’t let me out of here until morning, but that can’t be possible.’

‘Sit tight. I’ll call a few people and get this sorted out,’ Trip said with reassuring confidence.

‘Hurry, please.’

But either he didn’t hurry or there was nothing he could do, because Karolina didn’t speak to Trip again until he showed up to bail her out at seven the following morning. Without Graham.

Trip read her face immediately. ‘Graham wanted to come, of course. I was the one who advised against it.’

Karolina took a seat in one of the plastic chairs next to Trip. Her entire body ached from lying on a bench in the holding room – not a cell, exactly, more like an outdated boarding gate at an old airport.

‘I’m not an idiot, Trip. I understand pretty clearly that the optics of a sitting senator walking into a county jail to bail out his wife aren’t great. But you can’t blame me for wishing he’d done it anyway,’ Karolina said, trying to hold back tears. ‘Can you tell me what the hell is going on?’

Trip’s cell phone bleated, and he silenced it without looking at the screen. ‘I’m going to be honest with you, Lina. This is a first-rate shit show.’

‘You think I don’t know that? *I’m* the one who slept in jail last night. *In jail*. And where is my *husband*?’

Trip’s brow furrowed. He cleared his throat. ‘Lina, it’s not—’

Karolina held up her hand. ‘Don’t. First I want to know who has Harry. Who’s getting him to school?’

Another throat clear. Karolina almost felt bad for

directing her anger with Graham at Trip. Almost. He looked so miserable. 'Harry stayed the night at Elaine's house.'

'He's still there?'

'You know Harry called her when they arrested you last night. Naturally, some of the journalists picked up the story from the police scanner, and a few cameras were waiting outside your house when Elaine went to drop Harry off. She just kept driving and took him back to her place. The media has staked out your house, and we didn't want to put him through that. At least now no one knows where he is.'

Karolina nodded. As much as she disliked her mother-in-law and the idea of her son having to hide out at Elaine's house, she had to agree it sounded like the best option. 'Fine. Now, how are we clearing up the rest of this nightmare? This is entrapment! False arrest! We should be talking lawsuit!'

Trip coughed, looked at Karolina, and coughed again.

'Trip? What's going on?'

'It's just that . . . Well, it's complicated.'

'Complicated? That's a funny word. I would say confusing, perhaps. I'm certainly *confused* that I was arrested for drunk driving when I was not driving drunk. And even if I were driving drunk – which I absolutely was not – my husband happens to be a United States senator with more connections than a teenager on Instagram, and I know *full well* that if he wanted this to disappear, it would have already,' Karolina hissed.

A garbled announcement came over the loudspeaker, and a female police officer hurried past them and out the front door.

‘Why don’t you take me through it, Lina? Tell me exactly what happened.’

It was only now, many hours into her ordeal, that Karolina felt like she may not be able to control her tears. She’d been stoic through the arrest and braver than even she would have predicted when she realized that no one was coming for her. But in the face of Trip’s familiar kindness, his obvious concern – even though it should have been her husband sitting there – it was all she could do not to weep.

‘Sorry,’ she said, swallowing a sob. ‘I’m just . . . overwhelmed.’

Trip cleared his throat. ‘Did you and Harry go out at all last night?’

‘Out? Of course not. I mean, only if you count running to the grocery store at about five to stock up on chips and salsa for the boys. He invited four friends over to hang out. I ordered them pizza, and they played Xbox and God knows what else twelve-year-old boys do. FaceTime girls? Each other? I don’t know. I’m not proud of it, but out of spite, I opened one of Graham’s thousand-dollar bottles of cabernet and poured myself half a glass. I knew that was all I was having, but it felt very satisfying to stick the barely drunk bottle into the fridge – he would have a heart attack when he saw it, and truthfully, I was looking forward to it. But that’s all I had. Half a glass.’

‘Okay, and then what?’

‘And then nothing! The boys wolfed down an entire Carvel ice cream cake in like thirty seconds, and they all piled into the Suburban around nine-thirty. Before I got

to Billy Post's house less than a mile away, two cop cars appeared out of nowhere. Full lights and sirens, like a real emergency. I pulled over to let them pass, but then they came up to my window.'

Trip nodded as though Karolina were confirming a script he already knew. 'What did they say?'

'They asked if I'd been drinking. When I said of course not, they said I was driving very erratically. Which is ridiculous, because I was actually driving very slowly in our residential neighborhood.'

'They said they saw empty bottles of champagne rolling around in the back of the Suburban.' Trip said this quietly, looking down at his hands.

'Oh, did they? Well, that's *impossible*. Because I don't even like champagne. Neither does Graham. It gives us both headaches—' She paused. Unless the kids had gotten into it? Karolina scrunched her nose in consideration. Was it possible? Twelve was hardly too young to try sneaking alcohol for the first time. Was she being delusional in thinking Harry would never try a drink? No, she knew her kid. She knew he'd be exactly like every other teenager and experiment with all kinds of things, but she was also positive that he wasn't there yet. And even if she was completely off-base and the boys had gotten into Graham's prized wine cellar, there was no way five twelve-year-old boys could even open a bottle of champagne undetected, much less polish off two bottles. She remembered back to the night before. Both Harry and his friends had all seemed completely normal: rowdy, yes, but certainly *sober*. 'No. That wasn't it. I have no idea how the bottles got there.'

Trip placed his palm over the top of her hand, and it

felt warm, comforting. 'I'm so sorry, Lina. This can't be easy.'

All it took was that small expression of sympathy for the tears to start freely flowing again. Karolina was certain she had dragonlike streams of mascara running down her cheeks, but considering she'd just spent the night in jail, she figured it wasn't the worst of her appearance problems.

'But here's the part that makes absolutely no sense. They brought me back here. Then without giving me a Breathalyzer or anything, they throw me in that room for the night. On what grounds? Empty bottles in my car? How is that even allowed?'

Trip's phone rang again, and the force with which he pressed 'decline' startled her. He cleared his throat. 'The police said you refused both the Breathalyzer and a follow-up offer of a blood test. Maryland is an implied-consent state, which means that by even having a driver's license, you consent to be tested. Refusal to participate in all chemical testing immediately results in a DUI.'

'You can't be serious.'

'I do mostly corporate work, Lina, you know that. Barely any litigation and certainly no criminal. But I did consult with a colleague before coming here, and he took me through the laws.'

'No, I mean you can't be serious that they're saying I refused a Breathalyzer. It was the exact opposite, actually – I asked for one. *Begged* for one. I knew it would put this entire misunderstanding to rest if I could just . . .'

'Lina? You know Graham and I will have the very best people on this. So long as we all stay calm, I know we will work through—'

The rest of his words garbled together as the repercussions of what had happened began to play slowly, full color, in her mind. She could practically see the headlines – SUPERMODEL–TURNED–SENATOR’S WIFE DRINKS WHILE DRIVING KIDDIES – and predict the intense media scrutiny and the humiliation of people believing she would do something like this. And Harry. Mostly Harry. Twelve-year-olds should be embarrassed by their stepmothers because of the jeans they wore, not because they were arrested for driving a car full of kids around drunk.

Then another feeling, one that surprised her with its brute strength: a yearning for her husband that was so visceral, it nearly took her breath away. How had they gotten here? To a place where she’d spent the night in jail and her husband – her lifelong partner – had left her there and then sent his friend to retrieve her in the morning. No, this couldn’t be right. Something was going on, something out of their control. Yes, there had been some distance lately. She’d felt more disconnected from Graham than usual. There was less intimacy. She even suspected he might be cheating on her again. But this was *Graham*. The man who had made meticulous arrangements to ensure her entire extended family’s financial security. The person who told her at least ten times a day how gorgeous she was. She could remember their wedding like it was yesterday. The vibrant green vineyards had provided a gorgeous backdrop to the unexpected rain, which might have ruined the day for another couple, but not for them. They’d barely noticed, they were so wrapped up in dancing and laughing and each other. She’d sat at their shared table and looked up at her strong,

handsome husband as he thanked everyone for celebrating with them. When he'd turned to her and extended his hand, she could see the tears in his eyes, and the toast he gave was so clearly heartfelt and true. And now this.

Trip was still talking. Something about legal precedent. The fatigue was beginning to hit her, and the sadness and the humiliation and the loneliness all at once.

'I'm exhausted,' she said, again wiping her eyes. 'Can you take me to get Harry?'

'Of course. Let's get you out of here.'

They drove in silence to her mother-in-law's house in Arlington. Trip pulled away the moment Karolina reached the front porch.

'Karolina,' Elaine said when she opened the door, as though she'd just tasted something bitter.

'Elaine. Thank you for picking up Harry,' Karoline forced herself to say as she placed her coat on the hallway bench and followed her mother-in-law, without invitation, to the kitchen.

'Someone had to. And contact the parents of those other boys.'

'Yes, well, thank you again. Where's Harry?'

'He's still sleeping,' her mother-in-law said. 'It was a traumatic night for him.'

Karolina pointedly ignored the woman, and when no offer was forthcoming, she rose to fix herself a cup of coffee. 'Would you like one?' she asked Elaine, who merely waved her off.

'You've got a real . . . situation on your hands, Karolina.'

It's none of my business, but if you're having trouble, you should have sought help. But a DUI? The wife of a senator? Of the future president of the United States? It's one thing not to think about yourself, but how could you not have considered Graham's career?'

'You mean Harry's safety? I must have heard you wrong.'

Elaine waved her off while making a clucking sound. 'You know I don't like to get involved in things between you and Graham, but this time the circumstances—'

'Mother, *please*.'

Graham's voice caused Karolina to jump just enough to spill coffee down the front of her sweater. 'Graham?' she asked, although he was standing right there in front of her, looking handsome. Karolina waited for him to run and embrace her, and she extended her arms to receive him. He didn't move. He stood in that doorway, glancing between his wife and his mother, looking like there was nowhere else on earth he'd less rather be. Everything about him was immaculate, from his custom shirt and pressed chinos to the thick dark hair he had cut every third Friday. Cashmere socks. Professionally clean-shaven. Hermès overnight bag. And the subtlest crinkle of crow's-feet around his green eyes, just enough to lend him gravitas. He was six feet and two inches of expensively groomed masculine perfection.

'I didn't know you were here,' Karolina heard herself squeak out, self-consciously pulling her arms back in. 'Trip said you were on an Acela.'

'I was actually just leaving,' he said, walking past her

into the kitchen. His voice was as cold and impersonal as the stainless fridge doors.

‘Where are you going?’ Karolina asked, shocked by his distance. He was mad at *her*? Of course he didn’t think she’d driven the children while drinking – he of all people knew she was practically a teetotaler these days. Shouldn’t *she* be the aggrieved party right about now, what with him leaving her in jail *overnight* for a crime she didn’t commit?

‘Here, darling, let me get you a cup of coffee,’ Elaine said to Graham, leaping out of her chair with newfound vigor.

‘Elaine, would you mind giving us a minute?’ Karolina asked.

The woman, appearing greatly offended, looked at Graham, who nodded his approval. ‘Thank you, Mother.’

Elaine made a big show of gathering up her coffee and banana; the moment she walked out, Karolina practically ran to Graham. ‘Hey, what’s going on with you?’ she asked. And then, trying very hard to keep her voice light, ‘Not sure if you heard or not, but I spent New Year’s Eve in the slammer.’

He turned sharply to her and shrugged her hands off his arm. ‘Is this some kind of a joke to you? Is that what this is – funny?’

Karolina could feel her mouth open in shock. ‘Funny?’ she sputtered. ‘Of course not. It was horrible, every minute of it. And where have you been? You send Trip? You know I—’

‘All I know is what I heard from the Bethesda Police Department, Karolina. According to Chief Cunningham,

you were detained during a routine sobriety checkpoint after failing a roadside test.'

His use of her full name, Karolina, instead of Lina, hit home.

'Graham, I know what they *said*, but I also know that—'

He slammed his palm against the countertop. 'How could you do that? How could you possibly be that stupid?' His face and neck were a mottled red. 'And with my son in the car, no less!'

'*Your* son?' Karolina asked. 'You meant to say *our* son. He may be my stepson, but you know I've never called him or thought of him as anything less than my own.'

Graham tossed his full mug in the sink and held a finger inches from her face. His eyes were slits. 'You need to wake Harry up right now and get him home safely. Can you manage that? Obviously, by Uber, since you're not driving anywhere. Those leeches' – he motioned toward the manicured Bethesda street out front – 'will find you. I hope it goes without saying that you are not to speak to a single one of them. Not a word. Don't even make eye contact. Do you understand me?'

Karolina moved closer to him, hoping to see him soften. 'Why are you acting like this? You know I didn't drive drunk. You know how private I am. You know I would never, ever do anything to put Harry – or anyone else's children – at risk.' Karolina sounded desperate, pleading, but she couldn't help it. It was one thing for her husband not to pick her up from jail, but it was another for him

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to be so livid over a crime she obviously didn't commit.

He had a brand-new hardness in his eyes. 'I'll be home tonight. Remember – talk to no one.' And with that, he left the kitchen.