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& AISHA SAEED

YES NO MAYBE SO

SIMON & SCHUSTER

For Stacey, Lucy, and Jon, with gratitude

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CHAPTER ONE
JAMIE

"Oranges don't have nipples," says Sophie.

I park our cart by the display pyramid, pointedly ignoring her. You could say there's a part of me that doesn't want to discuss nipples with my twelve-year-old sister in the Target produce section. And that part of me. Is all of me.

"They're tangelos," Sophie adds. "*Tangelos* have—"

"Good for tangelos." I tear a plastic bag off the roll. "Look. The sooner we get everything, the sooner we can leave."

Which isn't a diss on Target. No way. Target's the best. It's kind of my personal wonderland. But it's hard to catch that anything-could-happen big box general merchandise vibe when I'm here as my cousin's errand boy. Gabe is the assistant campaign manager for a special election in

our district, and he never seems to run out of random jobs for Sophie and me. This morning he texted us a snack list for his volunteers: oranges, grapes, chocolate, pizza bagels, Nutri-Grain bars, water bottles. NO APPLES. NO PRETZELS. All caps, in true Gabe fashion. Apparently, crunchy foods and political phone banking don't mix.

"Still think they look nipply," Sophie mutters as I reach for a few tangelos near the top of the pyramid. I like the ones that are so bright, they look photoshopped, like someone cranked up the color saturation. I grab a few more, because Gabe's expecting at least ten volunteers tonight.

"Why does he even want oranges?" Sophie asks. "Like, why pick the messiest fruit?"

"Scurvy prevention," I start to say—but two girls step through the automatic doors, and I lose my train of thought completely.

Listen, I'm not the guy who loses the ability to function when a cute girl walks by. I'm really not. For one thing, that would imply I was a functional person to begin with. Also, the issue isn't that they're cute.

I mean. They *are* cute. Around my age, dressed for Georgia summer air-conditioning in zipped-up hoodies and jeans. The shorter one—white, with square-framed glasses and brown spiral curls—gestures emphatically with both hands as they approach the carts. But it's her friend who keeps catching my eye. She's South Asian, I think, with

wide brown eyes and wavy dark hair. She nods and grins at something her friend says.

There's just something so familiar about her. I swear, we've met before.

She looks up, suddenly, like she senses me staring.

And my brain stalls out.

Yup. Yup. Okay. She's definitely looking at me.

My friend Drew would know what to do here. Eye contact with a cute girl. A girl I'm pretty sure I know from somewhere, which means there's a built-in conversation topic. And we're in Target, the definition of my comfort zone. If there's even such a thing as a comfort zone when cute girls are involved.

Dude, just talk to her. I swear to God, it's not that deep. I wonder how many times Drew's said that to me. *Eye contact. Chin up. Smile. Walk over.*

"Okay, Mr. Heart Eyes." Sophie nudges me. "I can't tell which girl you're looking at."

I turn quickly back to the tangelo display, cheeks burning as I grab one from the bottom of the pyramid.

And everything comes crashing down.

First the pyramid trembles—followed by the *thwack thwack thwack* of oranges raining to the floor. I turn to Sophie, who claps both hands over her mouth and stares back at me. *Everyone's* staring at me. A mom pushing her baby in a cart. The guy manning the bakery. A kid, pausing

mid-tantrum near the packaged cookie display.

Of course, the two girls are front and center. They stand frozen by their cart, with matching uh-oh expressions.

Thwack thwack thwack. And again. Without pause.

And.

Thwack.

The last tangelo falls.

"I'm—"

"A cartoon character," Sophie finishes.

"Okay. Yeah. I can fix this." I squat down right where I'm standing, and start passing tangelos up to Sophie. "You take these."

I tuck a few more into the crook of my arm and attempt to stand, but I drop a bunch of them before I'm even upright. "Crap." I bend to grab them, which sends a few more tumbling down, rolling toward the apple display—which you'd think wouldn't happen with tangelos. Shouldn't the nipples keep them from rolling? I scoot on my knees toward the apple display, hoping nothing slid too far under, when someone clears his throat loudly.

"Okeydokey, my dude, let's keep you away from the apples."

I look up to find a clean-cut guy in a red polo shirt and a Target name tag. *Kevin.*

I scramble up, immediately squishing a tangelo beneath my sneaker. "Sorry! I'm sorry."

"Hey," Sophie says. "Jamie, look at me." She's holding her phone up.

"Are you filming me?"

"Just a little Boomerang," she says. She turns to Kevin, the employee. "Meet my brother, Butterfingers von Klutzowitz."

"I'll help you clean this," I say quickly.

"Nah, you're totally fine. I got this," says Kevin.

Sophie peers down at her phone. "How do you send stuff to BuzzFeed?"

Out of the corner of my eye, a flicker of movement: the girls in hoodies veering quickly down a side aisle.

Getting the hell away from me, I guess.

I don't blame them one bit.

Twenty minutes later, Sophie and I park at the Jordan Rossum state senate campaign satellite headquarters—technically the side annex of Fawkes and Horntail, a new age bookstore on Roswell Road. Not exactly the Georgia State Capitol building, or even the Coverdell Building across the street, where Mom works for State Senator Jim Mathews from the Thirty-Third District. The whole state capitol complex looks plucked from DC, with its columns and balconies and giant arched windows. They've got security teams at the entrances, like an airport, and once you're in, it's all heavy wooden doors and people in suits and fidgety

groups of kids on field trips.

And those bright, gleaming Coverdell Building bathrooms.

I know *all* about those bathrooms.

No suits or security teams at Fawkes and Horntail. I cut straight to the side-access door, hoisting two dozen bottles of water, while Sophie trails behind me balancing the snack bags. We're here so much, we don't even bother knocking.

"Hey, bagels," greets Hannah, the assistant field coordinator. She means us, not the snacks. There's a bagel chain in Atlanta called Goldberg's, and since we're Jamie and Sophie Goldberg, people sometimes . . . yeah. But Hannah's cool, so I don't mind it. She's a rising junior at Spelman, but she's staying with her mom in the suburbs this summer, just to be near the campaign office.

She looks up from her desk, which is stacked high with canvassing flyers—the ones Gabe calls *walk pieces.* "Is this for the phone bankers tonight? Y'all are the best snack team ever."

"It was mostly me," Sophie says, handing her the snack bags. "I'm like the snack team captain."

Hannah, halfway across the room with the snacks, looks back over her shoulder and laughs.

"Except I drove," I mutter, "I pushed the cart, carried all the water—"

"But it was my idea." Sophie jabs me with her elbow and smiles brightly.

"Mom literally made us."

"Okay, well I'm the one who *didn't* knock over a display, so."

Hannah walks back over and settles into her desk. "Hey, y'all are coming tomorrow night, right?"

"Oh, believe me," Sophie says. "We'll be there."

Mom never lets us miss Rossum campaign events these days. Lucky us. They're all the same: people milling around with plastic cups, making overly familiar eye contact. Me forgetting everyone's names the moment I hear them. And then everyone gets super extra when Rossum arrives. People laugh louder, angle toward him, sidle nearer to ask for selfies. Rossum always seems a little startled by the whole thing. Not in a bad way. More like in a *who me* kind of way. It's his first time running for office, so I guess he's not used to all that attention.

But the thing about Rossum is that he's amazing with people. I mean, his platform's great too—he's super progressive, and he's always talking about raising the minimum wage. But a lot of it's just the way he speaks. He can give you goose bumps, or make you laugh, or make you feel purposeful and clear. I always think about the people who shake the world with their words. Patrick Henry, Sojourner Truth, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King. I know

Rossum's just a guy running for state senate. But he makes it all feel huge. He makes this race feel like a *moment*, a brand-new dot on Georgia's timeline. He makes you feel like you're watching history change.

I can't imagine being able to do that.

Tomorrow's event is an interfaith outreach dinner at a local mosque, which means Mom's extra excited. We aren't the most observant Jews in the world, but she lives for this kind of religious community-building stuff.

"Should be fun," says Hannah, opening her laptop. But then she stops short, glancing back up at us. "Oh, right, you need snack reimbursement, don't you? Gabe's in the VIP room. I'll grab him."

The VIP room? A supply closet.

Hannah emerges moments later, followed by Gabe, who's wearing a crisp blue button-down shirt, with a picture of Jordan Rossum's face stickered onto his chest. People sometimes say Sophie and I look like Gabe, since he's tall and has brown hair and hazel-green eyes. But he's got bigger lips and archier eyebrows and a weird sprouting pseudo-beard he's always working on. And he's twenty-three, which is a solid six years older than me. So I don't really see it.

Gabe clasps his hands and grins. "I was wondering when I'd see your faces around here."

"We were here on Monday," Sophie says.

"And Sunday," I add.

He's unfazed. "You've been missing out on some sweet canvassing action. You should sign up for a slot. Or maybe you could swing by for phone banking tonight? It's gonna be lit." He pitches his voice high when he says it, tilting his palms up like he's about to raise the roof. I sneak a glance at Sophie, who seems caught between laughing and choking.

"So are you in?" Gabe asks. "Rossum needs you."

This time, I glance down at my feet. I want to help Gabe, but I'm not a phone banking kind of person. Envelope stuffing? Absolutely. Postcards? Even better. I've even sent out what Gabe calls "peer to peer" text messages, though anyone old enough to vote is, by definition, not my peer.

Of course, the thing that throws me the most is canvassing. I'm not exactly great at talking to strangers. And I don't just mean cute girl strangers. It's everyone. I get really in my head about it. And thoughts never seem to travel smoothly between my brain and my mouth. I'm not like Sophie, who can walk into any room, befriend anyone, join any conversation. It's not even something she tries to do. Sophie's just fundamentally not self-conscious. Like, she farted on the school bus once in fifth grade, and was downright giddy about it afterward. Being embarrassed didn't even occur to her. If it were me, I'd have shriveled up on the spot.

Maybe some people are just destined to always say the wrong thing. Or *no* thing, because half the time, I just stammer and blush and can barely form words. But hey, better

that than the alternative . . . which, as I now know, involves phlegm, a touch of vomit, and State Senator Mathews' black oxford shoes.

Let's just say I'm not the master of persuasion you want on the front lines of your political campaign. I'm not a history changer.

"I don't know." I shake my head. "I'm just—"

"It's super easy," Gabe says, clapping me on the shoulder. "Just follow the script. Why don't I put you down for phone banking tonight, and we'll find you a canvassing slot while you're here."

"Um—"

"We have Hebrew school," Sophie says.

"Oh, sweet. Big J, I didn't know you were still taking Hebrew."

"I'm not—"

Sophie cuts her eyes toward me, lips pursed—the patented Sophie Goldberg STFU Jamie Face. "Jamie *is* taking Hebrew," she says loudly. "Because he needs a refresher so he can quiz me on my haftorah portion."

I nod really fast. "Haftorah. Yup."

"Dang," Gabe says. "That's a good brother."

"He is. And I'm a good sister," Sophie says, smacking my arm. "An extremely good sister. Too good."

I glance at her sideways. "You have your moments," I say.

* * *

Karma, though. Wow. Sophie may have been lying about Hebrew school tonight, but from the moment we step through the kitchen door, it's clear: we're in bat mitzvah planning hell. My mom and grandma are huddled at the kitchen table in front of Mom's laptop—I mean, that's not the weird part. Grandma's always here. She moved in with us when I was nine, right after my grandpa died. And the huddled-over-a-laptop part's not weird either, since Mom and Grandma are both big-time tech geeks. Mom runs campaign analytics sometimes for Senator Mathews, and obviously Grandma is our resident social media queen.

But the fact that Mom's working from home in a bathrobe at four in the afternoon is concerning, as is the way Boomer, Grandma's mastiff, is pacing nervously around the table. Not to mention the fact that the table itself looks like a paper apocalypse, strewn with centerpiece mock-ups, printed spreadsheets, washi tape, binders, and tiny envelopes. I'd say there's a zero percent chance I'm making it out of the kitchen tonight without a stack of place cards to fold.

Sophie dives in. "New RSVPs!"

"Soph, let Grandma pull up the spreadsheet first," Mom says, reaching for a large binder. "Also, I need you to look at this floor plan so we can think about the flow. We'll mostly be in the ballroom, with the dance floor there, tables here, and we have two options for the buffet. One, we can stick it on the side, near the—"

"Tessa Andrews accepts with pleasure." Sophie slams a card down happily. "Oh. Hell. Yes."

"Sophie, don't cuss," says Mom.

Sophie tilts her head. "I don't really think of hell as a cuss word, though."

"It's a gateway cuss," I say, settling in beside Mom. Boomer parks his chin in my lap, leaning in for a head scratch.

"Here, I've got the spreadsheet pulled up," says Grandma.

"Sophie, are you listening?" says Mom. "Now, the other option for the buffet is this bonus room at the back of the venue. But is it weird having the food that close to the restrooms?"

I shrug. "At least it's convenient."

"Jamie! Don't be gross," Sophie says.

"Oh my God, for handwashing!"

Mom rubs her temples. "I'd like us to utilize the space, since we'll be paying for it anyway, but—"

"Hey." Sophie perks up. "What about a teen room?" Mom narrows her eyes, but Sophie raises a finger. "Hear me out. It's a thing. You've got the adults, all of your friends, family—you all get the nice party in the ballroom, right? And then we get our own super chill smaller party in the other room. Nothing fancy."

"That's ridiculous," says Mom. "Why wouldn't you want to be with family?"

"I'm just concerned about some of the music being a bit much for the old people, you know? This way, y'all can play 'Shout' or whatever in here." She pokes the middle of the ballroom on the floor plan. "And then *we* can have Travis Scott . . . and everyone's happy."

"Oh, you mean Kylie Jenner's fellow?" says Grandma. "He's just lovely. What a handsome couple. And Stormi—"

"We're not having two separate parties," says Mom.

"Then why'd you ask my opinion?" says Sophie. "Why am I even here?"

"Why am *I* even here?" I mutter to Boomer, who gazes back at me solemnly.

I mean, let's be real. Mom didn't even want my input when it was my own bar mitzvah. I didn't even get to pick my own theme. I wanted historical timelines. Mom made me do Around the World, with chocolate passports for favors.

I guess it ended up being sort of cool—in an ironic way, since I've only been to one other country. My dad's been living for years as an expat in Utrecht, so Sophie and I spend a few weeks in the Netherlands each summer. Other than that, we don't talk to him much. It's hard to explain, but when he's physically present, he's *present*—he takes off work when we visit and everything. But he's not really a phone guy or a text guy, and he's barely an email guy. And he's only been back to the States a handful of times since the

divorce. I doubt he'll come to Sophie's bat mitzvah, especially with it scheduled so close to our summer trip. He skipped mine, though he did mail me a congratulatory box of authentic Dutch stroopwafels. I didn't have the heart to tell him they sell the exact same brand at Kroger.

"—Jamie's toast," my mom says.

I jolt upright, startling Boomer. "My what?

"You're giving the pre-challah toast at the reception. And the hamotzi, of course."

"No I'm not." My stomach drops.

"Come on, it will be good for you." Mom ruffles my hair. "Great speaking practice, and pretty stress-free, right? It's just family and Sophie's friends."

"You want me to give a speech in front of a room full of middle schoolers."

"Is that really so intimidating?" asks Mom. "You're going to be a senior. They're not even freshmen."

"Um." I shake my head. "That sounds like hell."

"Jamie, don't gateway cuss," says Sophie.

Grandma smiles gently. "Why don't you think about it, bubalah? It's not all middle schoolers. Drew will be there, Felipe and his fellow will be there, your cousins will be there."

"No." Mom rests her hand on my shoulder. "We're not doing the negotiation thing. Jamie can step out of his comfort zone for Sophie. She's his sister!"

"Yeah, I'm your sister," chimes Sophie.

"This isn't a normal brother thing! Where are you even getting this? If anything, you should be giving the toast."

"Andrea Jacobs's sister gave a toast," Sophie says. "And Michael Gerson's brother, and Elsie Feinstein's brother, though I guess he just said mazel tov and then belched into the microphone. Don't do that. Hey, maybe you could do your toast in verse?"

I stand abruptly. "I'm leaving."

"Jamie, don't be dramatic," says Mom. "This is a good opportunity for you."

I don't respond. I don't even look back.

I just can't. I'm sorry. No offense to Sophie. Trust me, I'd love to be the awesome brother who can get up there and be just the right balance of sentimental and funny. I want to charm all her friends and say all the right things. Sophie probably deserves a brother like that. But the thought of standing in front of a packed ballroom, trying to form words and not choke or have a coughing fit or burn the whole banquet hall down . . . It's just impossible. It's a job for some other Jamie, and unfortunately, I'm just me.

CHAPTER TWO

MAYA

Sara is on a mission. And since I'm her best friend, I am all in. But forty-five minutes into our treasure hunt we've come up empty. The object of our conquest? A trash can. And no, I do not mean this metaphorically. We are literally on a hunt for a receptacle for garbage.

"It's got to be here somewhere . . . ," Sara mutters. "They had three in stock when Jenna called to check this morning."

I stifle a yawn as people dart past us, pushing red shopping carts.

"I thought you were going with the other stuff you texted me last week," I tell her.

"Yeah, but then Jenna found a great theme here that goes with our dorm layout. This is the only thing we're missing."

"I still don't get it." I glance at her. "I mean, it's a trash can."

"Correction, it's the *perfect* trash can, Maya." Sara's eyes sparkle. "It's got a vintage feel. You'll see!"

I smile and nod, but the truth is, even if we've combed over the storage section three times, I'm just happy I get to be here with her. Between her babysitting gigs, swim coaching at the Y, and working at Skeeter's custard shop, she's as busy this summer as she was all senior year. I haven't even had a chance to tell her everything that's been happening at home. Just thinking about it now makes my stomach knot up. Because right at this moment, my dad is packing his things into cardboard boxes.

I rummage in my purse for my phone; my fingers slide over my passport. It arrived yesterday. Pulling it out, a fresh burst of sadness washes over me. We were supposed to leave for Italy right after Ramadan ended, two days after Eid. But right after I turned in my passport application, the trip was canceled and, along with it, it turned out, so was my parents' marriage. I glance at my picture. I think there's some kind of rule that photos in stamp-sized squares must come out terribly. As evidence, I would present: my driver's license, my YMCA card, and now my new passport, where I look like a very stern woodpecker. But *how* I look in this photo feels like a silly thing to even think about, considering everything that's happened.

"It's not that bad," Sara says, looking over my shoulder.

"But not that great."

"It's a passport photo." She pokes me. "It'll get you where you need to go."

I bite my lip. Sara was the first person I wanted to tell about my parents, but she's been so busy. I haven't been able to find the right time. But . . .

"So." I look at her. "I'd been meaning to tell you. Italy got canceled. I think—"

"Are you serious?" Sara whirls around to face me. "You won't believe this. I just got a text this morning from a family who needs a part-time summer babysitter! I felt so bad, because I'm too busy, but I could connect you guys? Jessie's mom is super tapped into the network, so this could be your in."

I blink at the unexpected pivot. It's true. I'd been hoping to break into the ridiculously intricate local babysitting network since forever, but she didn't even pause to ask *why* Italy was canceled. I should rewind and tell her, but she's so amped up right now. And I haven't seen her in so long. . . .

"If it's in the mornings, I can," I finally say. My mom works from home until noon most days, so I can borrow her car.

"Jessie is the sweetest toddler you'll ever meet." Sara jots off a text and puts her phone away. "I don't even know what I'd do here without you," she tells me. "Finding this trash

can is like playing a game of Where's Waldo. It could be shelved in so many categories. Kitchen. Bath. Storage . . ."

"I'm kind of shocked you're not working," I say.

"I know," she says. "They shut down the pool because of a plumbing issue, so all my classes have to be rescheduled. I can't believe I have a whole day to myself."

"Maybe we can grab dinner after I open fast?" I suggest. That way we can sit down and finally have a real conversation. Just the thought of talking to Sara about my parents makes me feel a tiny bit better. I don't think there's anything she can possibly say to make me laugh and move on from it, like she normally does when I vent to her. But if anyone can find the humor in my family imploding, it's Sara.

"Mellow Mushroom for old time's sake? We haven't done that in forever."

"Three weeks and two days," I tell her. "Not that I'm counting or anything."

"Sorry." She glances at me sheepishly.

"No big deal. We still have the rest of the summer."

Come fall, she's going to the University of Georgia. I try not to think too hard about the fact that Athens is a solid two hours in traffic. And this is Atlanta, so there's *always* traffic.

"Oh yeah, about that." She bites her lip. "I'm not sure about August anymore."

"What do you mean?"

"Jenna is taking summer session two, and her girlfriend—Ashley—is a manager at Avid Bookshop. I just did a Skype interview with them this morning."

"You're leaving sooner than August?" I stare at her.

"I don't even know if they'll hire me. Ashley said they got a ton of applications. But if I get the job, you've basically hit the lottery, Maya." She winks. "I bet they have a sweet employee discount on books. You know I'll hook you up."

This isn't a big deal. She was leaving anyway. But she was so busy all senior year—I hoped this summer, we'd finally find pockets of time to catch up. The disappointment stings. This is the downside to being best friends with someone one school year ahead of you.

"Oh my God." Sara glances down at her phone. "Jenna found *another* guy she's positive is 'the one' for me." She holds it out to show me. A boy with a shaggy surfer cut grins back.

"He's cute," I say.

"I haven't even moved yet, and she's already on the lookout." She groans.

"It's about time you got back out there. I think it'll be fun."

Sara hasn't dated anyone since she broke up with her long-term boyfriend, Amari, last year.

"Sounds fun, huh? Okay. I'll tell her to keep an eye out for you too, then!"

"Sara." I bump her with my shoulder.

"Think about it." She grins. "We could even do double dates!"

"Right—that's definitely happening." I roll my eyes.

Here's the thing. Muslims fall all over the spectrum on dating and relationships—kind of what happens when there's over a billion of us—but my parents? They're not cool about me dating in high school. They're not as strict as Lyla's parents, who said she can't hang out with boys, period, but my parents have always said relationships are sacred. They don't think it's a good idea to date just to date, without the potential for a long-term future together. It's not something I really talk about, since it's kind of weird to announce that sort of thing when you're seventeen years old. Sara's the only who knows, and she thinks that it's bonkers I go along with it—but I actually see where they're coming from on this. Relationships are so complicated, and right now there's too much stuff changing in my life for me to think about adding anything like that to the mix. So the truth is, unless Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* shows up at my door with flowers announcing his eternal devotion, count me out.

"There it is!" Sara shrieks just then. We're in the "back to school" section. Shelves of cute lamps and alarm clocks frame the space. Five different twin beds are stacked next to each other, outfitted with different patterned sheets, blankets, and throw pillows.

Sara rushes over, scoops up a metal trash can, and gently places it into our shopping cart, like it's a fragile work of art. She snaps a photo and texts it. "I don't know why I didn't check here first. It's the last one too!"

"Awesome." I smile, trying my best to look supportive. But just how excited am I supposed to be about a trash can?

"Jenna texted me to check out the curtains." She pushes the shopping cart along with one hand while glancing down at her phone. I hurry to keep up.

"Still going with sky blue and cream?"

"Yep." She nods. "Let me know if you see anything cute."

I walk along with her as she browses the curtains and then the rugs. She texts Jenna photos along the way. It's like we're hanging out with Jenna too. Which is fine. Really.

We're about to turn into the next aisle when I pause.

"Love muffin straight ahead," I say.

Sara looks up with a start. Her eyes widen.

It's Kevin Mullen from school. He's walking down the main aisle toward us, sipping an iced coffee. In school, he wears loafers, jeans, and preppy button-down shirts, always untucked. But right now, he's in full Target uniform, with practical sneakers, khaki pants, and a bright red T-shirt. I've known Kevin since seventh grade and it's probably statistically impossible not to like him, since he's the chillest and nicest guy around. Even when he was fourteen, sporting the

most extreme bowl cut known to man—everyone let it fly without a snicker. We'd gotten to know each other better this past semester when we got assigned to do a project presentation on the First Amendment. He'd even come along with Sara and me to Menchie's for frozen yogurt twice. I'm not saying we were friends exactly, but we were on our way. Of course everything fell apart when he brought Sara a basket of her favorite chocolate muffins two months ago and confessed his long-standing crush on her. When Sara told him she didn't feel the same way, he handled it in trademark Kevin style—said it was a bummer, but he understood—but it hasn't been the same. And Sara's been avoiding him anytime she sees him coming. We slipped by him pretty handily when he was cleaning up an orange spill, but it's too late to duck now. He's spotted us.

"Hey, guys." He walks over. Sara quickly glances down at her phone.

"I didn't know you worked here," I say.

"Assistant manager." He taps his badge. "And let me tell you, it has been a day."

"Yeah. What's the deal?" I say as a woman grazes me with her cart. "It's like the migration of the wildebeests."

"It's the Summer Trifecta," Kevin says. "Fourth of July sales plus swim clearance and then an early-bird back to school special. It'll be a zoo until August." He looks at Sara and blushes a little. "So, you're leaving soon, right? UGA?"

"Yes." Sara smiles politely.

"I hope they recruit me next year," he says. "Their basketball game is pretty strong."

"It is." Sara brightens, the awkwardness magically vanishing. "You should definitely take a tour and see if you like it."

"Nah, as long as their scholarship game is strong, I'm there."

Sara launches into a speech about the glory that is the University of Georgia and the wonder that is Athens. I suppress a laugh. I mean, don't get me wrong, UGA has a great veterinary medicine program, so I'm all in if I get accepted there one day—but Sara's love for that school is next level. I'm glazing over when I get a text message.

Mom: Where are you?

Maya: At Target helping Sara with some errands.

Mom: When will you be done?

Maya: We're almost wrapping up.

Mom: Pick up some red and blue napkins for the iftar while you're there, to make sure we have extra. But come home soon. We need to have a family meeting.

I shove the phone back in my purse. I don't want to have another meeting about this. I want to pretend it isn't happening at all.

We say goodbye to Kevin, and I grab the plates and napkins my mother requested.

"That wasn't so bad," Sara says, glancing back at Kevin's retreating figure.

"Good," I say, slightly relieved. "Also, please tell me you're free tomorrow," I tell Sara. "I could use some company at the campaign iftar. The food's going to be really good."

"Babysitting," she says. "Sorry."

I'm about to suggest we head to the Perimeter Mall before dinner this evening, when her phone buzzes. Glancing down at it, her expression falls.

"Jenna change her mind on the color scheme?" I ask her.

"It's Lucas." She winces. "He fractured his wrist. He needs me to cover his shift at Skeeter's tonight."

"What?" My voice goes two octaves too high. "Can't they find someone else?"

"It's my turn to cover. I'm so sorry, Maya, I really wanted to catch up." She glances at her phone. "I think I'm off Friday evening. I can check with Hen's mom to see if she needs me to sit or not and let you know?"

I shrug. I'm not going to be a big baby about the fact that my best friend has to try and pencil me in like a dentist appointment. It's not like she's leaving soon and I won't see her again except for holidays. Yeah.

I do not want to talk about this.

If you asked me to choose between sitting on this

ottoman across from my parents or sticking my hand in a bee's nest, I'm not saying I'd go for the bee's nest, but I would definitely need to think about it.

My parents are pretty cool people, and normally I like hanging out with them. And sitting across from each other in the family room isn't unusual, especially during Ramadan, when we're trying to kill the last few hours before it's time to open fast by playing a game of Spot It! or Uno or Pandemic (my dad is a major nerd).

But there are no board games out right now. We aren't hanging out.

This is a family meeting to sort out the details about how we are not going to be a family anymore. I'm still reeling from the announcement. When they told me Dad was moving out. That it was for the best. That they wished it didn't have to be this way. They normally ask for my feedback on the type of flowers to plant around the mailbox in the spring, or what color to paint the dining room—but breaking up our family unit as we know it was something they didn't bother to run by me.

It shouldn't have come as a complete shock. I'd heard the arguments since the middle of junior year. I saw the unmade guest bed the last few months. I just thought they'd get over it, whatever *it* was. We're a family. Families fight. Families make up and move on. It didn't hit me until now that moving on could mean something else entirely.

"Maya?"

They watch me expectantly.

"The movers are coming tomorrow," my mother says. "In the afternoon."

"The leasing office is still trying to find the spare key," my father says. "I'll get it to you as soon as I have it."

"Do you have any questions for us?" my mother says.

"About?" I glance at them.

"This . . ." My mother gestures to the half-packed moving boxes around us. "Anything on your mind?"

"It's a little too late for that, isn't it?"

"We just want to make sure you're okay," my father says. "Whatever you want to say, we're here."

"Did you figure out the time frame yet?" I clear my throat. "For the trial separation?"

Trial separation. The words themselves sound heavy—I think of courtrooms and unsmiling judges with wooden gavels.

"We still don't know, Maya. We're going to have to take it as it comes," my mother says.

"But what does that mean?"

"The apartment lease is month to month," my father says.

"I still don't get why you had to do this now. During Ramadan."

"I know. But Ramadan felt like the right time," my mother says. "We're supposed to be reflecting on ourselves

anyhow. Hopefully time apart can help us recharge and focus on what to do next."

"So, end of Ramadan then." Twelve days to go. That isn't so bad.

"We're not sure," my father says gently. "*Maybe* that's all the time we'll need, but it might be longer."

My cat, Willow, walks past me just then—she rubs her body against my leg before heading toward the kitchen. My phone buzzes.

Sara: Whoops sorry, Jessie's grandma is going to cover their sitting needs. I'll keep you in the loop if anyone else reaches out.

"Could you put the phone down?" my mother asks. "We know this is a big change."

"Thanks for the alert."

"Maya." My mother sighs.

"Do you have any ideas on how to fill up your extra time this summer?" my father says. "I found a couple of day camps with open spots. There's a really interesting robotics one at Mercer. And a dance camp by your mom's work still has two openings."

Dance camp? Robotics? I stare at him.

"I called the humane society," I say. "They're good on volunteers for now but said to check back next month. Sara might be able to get me a sitting gig in the mornings." I

look at my mother. "That way you'll have the car back in time for work."

"I was going to talk to you about that," my mother says. "My work schedule is shifting the next few weeks. Chris assigned me a really messy case that's going to trial. I'm going to have to go into the office each day until it settles down."

"Are you fucking kidding me?" I blurt out.

"Maya, language," my mother says.

"Crap. I mean . . . sorry." I wince. Ramadan isn't just about not eating from before sunup to sundown. We're supposed to be patient—the best versions of ourselves we can be. But this is . . . flocking unbelievable.

"How am I even getting to Dad's apartment, then?"

"Door to door, it's only four minutes away, and—"

"Four minutes by *driving*," I correct him.

"I'll set you up with a rideshare app," he says. "Honestly, it's so close by, it's barely moving out."

No such thing as barely moving out, I want to say. Moving out is moving out. And what about Willow? She freaks if we move a houseplant to the other end of the room. Am I going to cart her back and forth to two different houses in random people's cars? But I can't get the words out, because tears threaten to spring to my eyes.

They look at me from where they sit on the ironically

named love seat. What do they want? Absolution? Tears? All *I* want is to run as far as I can out of here and never look back.

Because the truth is, it's not just Willow who doesn't like change. I literally got twitchy when my favorite yogurt company rebranded to a bigger font. When my hairdresser accidentally cut off three inches more than usual, I wore it in a bun until it grew back out. Let's just say I'm not exactly the most adaptable person in the world.

But I don't mention that. I don't even move. I just stare at the coffee table and try my best not to cry, because I'm legitimately terrified that if I start, I might never stop.

Because this?

This fucking sucks.