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Opening extract from

Tempest

Written by

Julie Cross

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JULIE CROSS

MACMILLAN



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To my editor, Brendan Deneen,
whose vision collided with mine to create this book.

SATURDAY, 11 APRIL 2009

My name is Jackson and I can travel through time. Now, wait, it's not as exciting as you might think. I can't go back in time and kill Hitler. I can't go to the future and tell you who wins the World Series in 2038. So far, the most I've ever jumped is about six hours in the past. Some superhero, right?

Recently I've acquired a sidekick with mad talent for the hard-core science stuff. The one request Adam insists I follow is documentation. A record of nearly every moment from this point on. Actually he wanted the eighteen years prior to today, but I talked him out of it – for now. Maybe if I avoid recording detailed accounts of my many fantasies starring a certain incredibly hot girl, or the dream where I play for the Mets as a last-minute substitute, I could cut my work in half. But who knows, those entries might be crucial to the country's economic stability. Or something equally important.

Even though I'm going along with this journal idea, it

doesn't mean I buy into it. It's not like the world's going to end just because I can jump around in time. Or that I'll serve some greater purpose, like saving the human race from dying. But as Adam says, I must be like this for a reason and it's up to us to find out why.

Cool ending, huh? Actually it's just the beginning.

chapter one

TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 2009, 12.15 p.m.

'How far back should I go?' I asked Adam.

We kept a good distance between us and the long line of kids corralling around the polar bears.

'Thirty minutes?' he suggested.

'Hey, let that go!' Holly snatched the bag of candy one of the day-camp kids had swiped from a toddler's stroller and threw an exasperated look in my direction. 'It'd be nice if you would actually *watch* your group of kids. It's your summer job too, you know!'

'Sorry, Hol.' I scooped Hunter up before his kleptomaniac habits got any worse. 'Hold up your hands,' I told him.

He grinned a toothless smile and opened his chubby hands in front of my face. 'See? Nothing.'

'Let's keep it that way, all right? You don't need to take other people's stuff.' I set the kid back down and gave him a shove towards the others, who were heading for the large stretch of grass reserved for campers having lunch at the zoo.

'Hey you,' I said, grabbing Holly's hand and twining her fingers in mine.

She spun around to face me. 'You have a soft spot for the klepto kid, don't you?'

I smiled at her and shrugged. 'Maybe.'

Her face relaxed and she tugged on the front of my shirt, pulling me closer before kissing my cheek. 'So . . . what are you doing tonight?'

'Um . . . I've got plans with this really pretty blonde chick.' Except I couldn't remember what we had planned. 'It's a . . . surprise.'

'You're so full of it.' She laughed and shook her head. 'I can't believe you forgot your promise to spend an entire evening with me reciting Shakespeare . . . in French . . . backwards. Then we were supposed to watch *Titanic* and *Notting Hill*.'

'I must have been drunk when I said that.' I glanced over Holly's shoulder before kissing her quickly on the mouth. 'But I'll agree to *Notting Hill*.'

She rolled her eyes. 'We're supposed to go see that band with your friends, remember?'

A little girl from Holly's group tugged on her arm and pointed towards the bathroom. I darted around her before we could discuss my inability to make plans two weeks in advance and actually remember them two weeks later.

'Yo, Jackson, over here,' Adam said, nodding towards a tree.

Time for precise and exact time-travel planning.

'Are you coming with us to see that band tonight?' I asked.

What I really wanted to know was if he remembered it.

'Um . . . let's see. Spend an evening with your high-school friends, who, I've heard, are like a real-life version of *Gossip Girl*. Not to mention blowing an entire pay check on an appetizer and a couple of drinks.' He shook his head and smiled. 'What do you think?'

'I see your point. How about we hang out in your and Holly's neighbourhood tomorrow?'

'Sounds good.'

'All right, on with it. I can't eat while smelling camel ass, so we might as well experiment now.'

Adam tossed my journal on to my lap and threw a pen on top. 'Write down your goal, because time travel without a goal is just . . .'

'Reckless,' I finished for him, trying not to groan.

'The gift shop is right behind us. I've been watching for the last hour and the same girl's at the register.'

'You've been checking her out, haven't you?'

Adam rolled his eyes and pushed his dark hair from his forehead. 'OK, so, you set your stopwatch and then jump back thirty minutes. You go into the gift shop and do whatever it is you do so a girl remembers your name.'

'It's called flirting,' I said quietly so no one else would hear. Then I focused on writing my notes before Holly got back from the bathroom.

Goal: Test theory on someone who has no knowledge of the experiment.

Theory: Events and occurrences, including human interaction, while travelling into the past will NOT affect the present.

Non-geek-speak translation: I jump back thirty minutes in time, flirt with the girl in the shop, jump back to present time, walk back into the store and see if she knows me.

She won't.

But Adam Silverman, winner of the 2009 National Science Fair and a soon-to-be MIT freshman, won't confirm this conclusion until we've tried it from *Every. Single. Angle.* Honestly I don't really mind. Sometimes it's fun, and until a few months ago, nobody except me knew what I could do. Now that the number has doubled I feel a little bit less like a freak.

And a little less lonely.

But I've never been friends with a science geek before. Although Adam's more of the bad-boy-hacking-into-government-websites kinda geek. Which is beyond cool, in my opinion.

'Do you know for sure you can jump back *exactly* thirty minutes?' Adam asked.

I shrugged. 'Yeah, probably.'

'Just make sure you note the time. I'll record the seconds you're sitting here like a vegetable,' Adam said, placing a stopwatch in my hand.

'Is that really what I look like when I jump? How long do you think I'll be like that?' I asked.

'I'm guessing that a twenty-minute excursion, thirty

minutes into the past, will leave you catatonic in the present for about two seconds.'

'Where was I thirty minutes ago, just so I don't run into myself?'

Adam clicked his stopwatch on and off about ten times before answering me. He's so totally OCD. 'You were inside, looking at the penguins.'

'OK, I'll try not to end up over there.'

'We both know you can choose your location if you really concentrate, so don't give me that "I don't know where I'll end up" shit,' Adam said.

Maybe he was right, but it's hard not to think about *anything* but one place. Just one, tiny, half-second thought about any other location than the one I was aiming for, and I'd end up there instead.

'Yeah, yeah. *You* do it then, if you think it's so easy.'

'I wish.'

I get why someone like Adam is so fascinated by what I can do, but for me, I don't exactly consider it a superpower. Just a freak-of-nature occurrence. And kind of a scary one at that.

I glanced at my watch, 12.25 p.m., then closed my eyes and focused on thirty minutes in the past and on this exact spot, though I really, truly have no clue how I do this.

The first time I jumped was about eight months ago, during my first semester of college. I was sitting in the middle of a French poetry class. I nodded off for a few minutes and woke up to a cold breeze and a door slamming me in the face. I was standing in front of my dorm. Before I even had a chance to panic, I was right back in class again.

Then I panicked.

Now it's fun, for the most part. Even though I still have no idea what day or time I travelled to that very first jump. As of today, my known record jump is forty-eight hours in the past. Jumping to the future has yet to work, but I'm not going to stop trying.

The familiar sensation of being pulled into two pieces took over. I held my breath and waited for it to stop. It's never pleasant, but you get used to it.

chapter two

TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 2009, 11.57 a.m.

When I opened my eyes again Adam was gone, along with the rest of the kids and my co-workers. The horrible splitting sensation stopped, replaced by the light-as-air feeling I always get during a time jump. Like I could run for miles and not feel a bit of ache in my legs.

I looked around. I was lucky – everyone was too busy looking at the animals to notice me materializing out of thin air. So far I hadn't had to explain that one to anyone, thankfully. I hit the start button on the stopwatch and glanced at the giant clock above the zoo entrance.

11.57 a.m.

Pretty close. I strolled over towards the shop and walked inside. The girl at the register looked about my age, maybe a little older. She leaned on the counter, holding her face in her hands, staring at the wall.

Whenever I do these little experiments I have to constantly remind myself of one very important fact:

Hollywood gets everything wrong when it comes to time travel.

Seriously.

OK, here's the weird part. The chick at the counter could punch me in the nose, maybe even break it, and when I jumped back to the present time it would be sore or bruised, but not broken. Why it's not broken is a whole different (unanswered) question, but the point is . . . I'll remember being punched.

If I broke *her* nose, then went back to the present, she'd be totally unhurt and wouldn't remember a thing. Of course, I'm supposed to be testing that theory right now (again). Well . . . except I'm not going to punch her. Either way – same outcome.

'Hey,' I said to her. 'Do you guys sell . . . sunscreen?'

She didn't even make eye contact, just pointed to a wall to the left. I walked over and snatched four different bottles and then dumped them on the counter. 'So . . . are you at NYU or—'

'You know, you can buy these somewhere else for, like, half the price,' she snapped.

'Thanks for the tip, but I need some now.' I leaned on the counter right in front of her.

She straightened up and started ringing up my purchase. 'Four bottles? Seriously?'

OK . . . so much for flirting. 'Fine, I'll just get one. I guess you're not working on commission.'

'You work at a day camp?' she asked disdainfully, eyeing my green staff shirt.

'Yep.'

The girl snorted back laughter and snatched the credit card from my hand. 'You really don't remember me?'

I had to pause for a second to process her words. 'Um . . .'

'Karen . . . I sat behind you in economics all semester. Professor Larson called you unbalanced and said you needed to get a better grasp on realistic finances for college students.' She rolled her eyes at me. 'Is *that* why you have a job?'

'Nope.' Totally true. I don't even get paid. I'm a volunteer, but I wasn't about to tell *her* that. She had obviously already made up her mind about me. 'Well . . . it was nice to see you again, Karen.'

'Whatever,' she grumbled.

I left the store quickly. Jumping back to the present didn't require the same level of focus as going into the past, mostly because I always have to come back to my present before I can jump again. Adam calls the present my 'home base'. He's mastered the art of dumbing it down for me to understand. And baseball analogies are my favourite. Hopefully I wouldn't return to a bunch of strangers staring at my catatonic state.