

Chapter 2

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When you live in your car, you have to keep things simple. You're not going to be hosting any major gatherings, for one thing. No wine and cheese parties, no poker nights. That's fine, because I don't have anyone I want to see. The bigger problem is where to take a shower. Three days after I was evicted from my studio, which was three weeks after I got fired from my job, I discovered a rest stop that had showers. I almost cried with joy when I saw it. Yes, the showers have very little privacy and smell faintly of human waste, but at that point, I was desperate to be clean.

Now I'm enjoying my lunch in the back seat of the car. I do have a hot plate that I can plug into the cigarette lighter for special occasions, but mostly I eat sandwiches. Lots and lots of sandwiches. I've got a cooler where I store the cold cuts and cheese, and I've got a loaf of white bread—ninety-nine cents at the supermarket. And then snacks, of course. Bags of chips. Crackers with peanut butter. Twinkies. The unhealthy options are endless.

Today I'm eating ham and American cheese, with a dollop of mayonnaise. With every bite I take, I try not to think about how sick I am of sandwiches.

After I've forced down half my sandwich, my phone rings in my pocket. I have one of those prepaid flip phones that people only use if they're going to commit a crime or else they've traveled back fifteen years in the past. But I need a phone and this is all I can afford.

"Wilhelmina Calloway?" a woman's clipped voice says on the other line.

I wince at the use of my full name. Wilhelmina was my father's mother, who is long gone. I don't know what sort of psychopaths would name their child Wilhelmina, but I

don't speak to my parents anymore (and likewise, they don't speak to me), so it's a little late to ask. Anyway, I've always just been Millie, and I try to correct people as quickly as I can. But I get the feeling that whoever is calling me isn't somebody I'm going to be on a first-name basis with anytime soon. "Yes...?"

"Ms. Calloway," the woman says. "This is Donna Stanton from Munch Burgers."

Oh right. Munch Burgers—the greasy fast-food joint that granted me an interview a few days ago. I would be flipping burgers or else manning the cash register. But if I worked hard, there was some opportunity for advancement. And better yet, an opportunity to have enough money to move out of my car.

Of course, the job I really would've loved was at the Winchester household. But it's been a whole week since I met with Nina Winchester. It's safe to say I didn't get my dream job.

"I just wanted to let you know," Ms. Stanton goes on, "that we have already filled the position at Munch Burgers. But we wish you luck with your job search."

The ham and American cheese in my stomach churn. I had read online that Munch Burgers didn't have very strict hiring practices. That even if I had a record, I might have a chance. This is the last interview I've managed to book, ever since Mrs. Winchester failed to call me back—and I'm desperate. I can't eat one more sandwich in my car. I just can't.

"Ms. Stanton," I blurt out. "I'm just wondering if you might be able to hire me at any other location. I'm a really hard worker. I'm very reliable. I always..."

I stop talking. She's already hung up.

I clutch my sandwich in my right hand as I grip my phone in my left. This is hopeless. Nobody wants to hire me. Every potential employer looks at me in the exact same way. All I want is a fresh start. I'll work my butt off if I have to. I'll do whatever it takes.

I fight back tears, although I don't know why I'm bothering. Nobody will see me crying in the backseat of my Nissan. There isn't anybody who cares about me anymore. My parents wiped their hands of me more than ten years ago.

My phone rings again, startling me out of my pity party. I wipe my eyes with the back of my hand and click the green button to take the call.

"Hello?" I croak.



"Hi? Is this Millie?"

The voice sounds vaguely familiar. I squeeze the phone to my ear, my heart leaping.

"Yes..."

"This is Nina Winchester. You interviewed with me last week?"

"Oh." I bite down hard on my lower lip. Why is she calling back now? I assumed she had already hired somebody and decided not to inform me. "Yes, of course."

"So if you're interested, we would be delighted to offer you the job."

I feel a rush of blood to my head that makes me almost dizzy. We would be delighted to offer you the job. Is she serious? It was conceivable that Munch Burgers might hire me, but it seemed outright impossible that a woman like Nina Winchester might invite me into her home. To live.

Is it possible she didn't check my references? Didn't do a simple background check? Maybe she's just so busy, she never got around to it. Maybe she's one of those women who prides herself on gut feelings.

"Millie? Are you there?"

I realize I've been completely silent on the other line. I'm that stunned. "Yes. I'm here."

"So are you interested in the position?"

“I am.” I’m trying not to sound too ridiculously eager. “I definitely am. I would love to work for you.”

“Work with me,” Nina corrects me.

I let out a strangled laugh. “Right. Of course.”

“So when can you start?”



“Um, when would you like me to start?”

“As soon as possible!” I’m jealous of Nina’s easy laugh that sounds so different from my own. If only I could snap my fingers and trade places with her. “We have a ton of laundry that needs folding!”

I swallow. “How about tomorrow?”

“That would be wonderful! But don’t you need time to get your stuff packed?”

I don’t want to tell her that everything I own is already in the trunk of my car. “I’m a fast packer.”