

CHAPTER 1



Millie "Millie" Avery cringed as she gripped the steering wheel while her two best friends, Samantha Powell and Paula Bergen, sang loudly from the back seat to the newest summer hit. Millie thought they sounded like a pair of cats in heat and it took her entire willpower not to push them out the window of her tiny blue Mercedes and into incoming traffic so she could finally get some peace and quiet.

Whose idea was it to travel from Los Angeles to New York on a spontaneous road trip? Oh, right, hers.

She was regretting ever opening her mouth and inviting these two to come along instead of taking a plane and hiring someone to drive her car back to New York where her new home residence would be.

But then again, these two had been her best friends since kindergarten, and the three of them had been attached at the hip even though the trio didn't always like each other. They had even dropped out of UCLA at the same time she had so they could accompany her on this road trip.

Eighteen-year-old Millie had lasted exactly six months in college before calling it quits and moving back to the city of her

birth, New York, after the spring semester ended. There was nothing for her in L.A. anymore. Her parents had been real estate moguls, building expensive condos all across the west coast before the pair had died in a car accident the day of her high school graduation.

When Millie had continued with her education six months after the funeral, she had thought going to school in the city her parents often took her to would help her heal. But it didn't. It just made her more sad, not to mention she had never been a very studious person to begin with and school simply bored her.

Plans were changed, and now, Millie was headed back to New York where she had grown up with her equally rich and vain friends. Millie didn't know exactly what she was going to do with her life, but she would be deciding on it poolside. After all, thanks to her large trust fund, she could afford to take a few months off and think. Perhaps she would be an influencer. People did say she was charming.

Millie narrowed her blue eyes at Samantha when the blonde burped in her face. Her brand-new car was covered in candy wrappers, greasy chip bags, and empty cans of Diet Coke. Not to mention it smelled like feet covered by expensive perfume.

She pulled her bleached blonde hair into a sweaty ponytail at the nape of her neck. After driving for four hours in the blistering summer heat with these two, she desperately needed a shower and a private hotel room where she could scold herself for being so stupid. They were only in Virginia, which meant she still had at least a week before she could escape her friends.

Her manicured fingers changed the radio to a news station where a bored-sounding woman delivered a news segment, "It's been almost a year since twenty-two-year-old Winifred Woods was declared a missing person. The young woman seemed to have disappeared into thin air, leaving police officers puzzled. Her last location was—"

"Snore." Paula leaned forward and changed the station to one where they were playing punk rock music.

"Hey!" Millie threw her a dirty look as they passed a blue and white, *Welcome to Wisteria Grove* sign. "I was listening to that."

Paula rolled her eyes. Samantha used the opportunity to squeeze her head next to Paula. Her lips were stained from the spiked raspberry drink she'd been sipping on all morning. "I need to pee."

"Hold on." Millie sighed as they drove through the picturesque town which looked like it had been pulled from a storybook. It was filled with 20th century style buildings in pristine condition, well-kept gardens, and monuments dedicated to preserving the history of the town. "Let me find a hotel. We're staying here tonight. Unless one of you wants to drive."

Paula and Samantha exchanged looks before shaking their heads. Samantha flattened her sweaty curls. "We can find a nightclub to celebrate your eighteenth birthday, Mil."

"My birthday was six months ago. I lost my fake ID in the move."

Paula started munching on chips. "Oh, please, do you think they're going to ask for ID in this one-horse town? They'll feel lucky they're getting any tourists at all." She peered out the window. "Come to think of it, there doesn't seem to be anyone under the age of eighty. We might have to play bingo, instead, to pass the time."

"You'll just wear a lot of makeup to make you look older." Samantha squeezed her shoulder. "Anyway, you need to properly celebrate your birthday. You were such a downer when it actually happened."

"Sorry, my parents died and I wasn't in the mood to celebrate," Millie snapped, but Samantha didn't seem to hear her.

Twenty minutes later, Millie had booked three private rooms in the nicest hotel in town, which was just a step up from a bed and breakfast. As she closed the door of the bedroom for a

much-needed shower, she couldn't help the persistent question which seemed to nag her daily—what the hell was she going to do with her life?



MILLIE WAS drunk and it wasn't even ten in the evening, thanks to the mini bottles of alcohol the minibar in her hotel room had so generously provided. She didn't drink often, and when she did, she was a pathetic lightweight. It didn't help that her friends drank like champions and often egged her on even when she couldn't tie her shoes anymore.

"Dude, you passed a red light," Paula mumbled in her ear as she finished a mini bottle of whiskey before fixing her lipstick. As the least drunk member of the group, the driving responsibilities had befallen Millie even though if someone arrested her, she would be buried in legal troubles.

Samantha started putting on her false eyelashes. "Dude, there's no one on the road. Who cares?" She pursed her bright red lips, a devious smirk on her face. "Let's play *Dare Me*."

Paula squealed as she started clapping her hands wildly. "Yes! Yes! Mil has to go first because she's the birthday girl. No complaining, Millie."

The three girls had been playing *Dare Me* since they first came up with the game in middle school. It was the reason Paula had broken her ankle, Samantha had ended up throwing her panties at a couple of their classmates, and Millie had even ended up with pink and green hair for an entire semester. They were required to do whatever the dare was; otherwise, the punishment would be ten times worse.

Her stomach churned when she remembered she had refused to do a dare in the tenth grade which ended up with her drinking water from a toilet. Absolutely disgusting.

"Fine." Millie parked terribly in front of the local park. "But then Paula goes next. What's the dare?"

Paula looked around, tapping her extra-long green nails against her freckled cheek. "I don't know, this place is so boring." She narrowed her dark eyes to a fountain in the center of the park with a frail-looking baby angel which looked worse for wear. "I know. You have to destroy the angel. It's giving me the creeps. Maybe then, this one-horse town will build a juice café or something more worthwhile."

Millie hesitated. She wasn't the brightest tool in the shed, but even she knew destroying government property, especially something as ancient as the fountain, was probably a federal offense. But then again, she didn't want to drink toilet water, either.

She ordered Samantha to give her the toolbox she kept underneath the seat for any car emergencies and pulled out a small hammer. Millie looked over her shoulder, but the streets looked empty. It seemed no one dared step foot outside after nine pm.

"Let me know if you see anyone coming."

The girls nodded, even though both of them were drunk enough, they didn't seem to remember their own names. Millie exited the car, pulling on her gold dress she had picked for clubbing which barely covered her black lace thong she wore between her pale cheeks.

The hammer felt heavy in her hands, almost like a death sentence, which was stupid since she had surely done worse things than destroying an aging fountain as a result of a dare. She supposed the fountain had been pretty at one point, but it was now rusty with age. In the center, there was a chubby baby angel holding a jar in which water poured out. The angel looked lifeless.

There was a golden plaque beneath the angel which read, *Generously donated by Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Carrington.* No doubt,

a pair of aging, boring philanthropists with too much money on their hands.

At least they used the money for something, Mil, instead of just facials, her inner voice scolded her. She raised the hammer, landing it straight down on the baby angel's head. Once. Twice. Three times.

Millie flinched as she continued to hear the cracking, but yet the hammer kept falling. Her hands stopped moving when the angel stood at the bottom of the fountain, its creepy, pale eyes staring back at her in a demonic way.

"Sorry. They dared me," she squeaked pathetically as she ran back to her car with her tail between her legs as if she expected the stone angel to rise up from the dead and chase her.

"Yes, bitch!" Paula handed her a shot, her boobs nearly spilling out of her green mini dress. If they didn't get stopped for underage drinking, then they surely would for indecent exposure. "My turn. What's my dare?"

Millie climbed shakily into the back seat, her blue eyes staring back to remnants of the angel fountain. "Your dare is to drive us to the club."