

ONE: *You've Got to Love a Premiere*

"I'm Chatty Cathy from *Inside Hollywood*—your source for all things Hollywood—and tonight I'm at the premiere of *Pretty Young Assassins*. This heart-stopping, action-packed ride stars the stunning young lady standing next to me, *Family Affair* star Kaitlin Burke. Hi, Kaitlin!"

"Hi, Cathy!" I flash her my most dazzling smile. "It's nice to see you again."

Cathy is an Amazonian tabloid reporter known for her dyed neon yellow hair and right now she's standing next to me on the red carpet at Westwood's Mann Village Theatre in Los Angeles, where my movie, *Pretty Young Assassins*, is premiering on this warm May night. Behind me there are dozens of die-hard fans screaming so loudly I can barely hear and holding handmade signs as they press against a crowd control rope on the normally quiet palm tree-lined street. In a few minutes, I'll be sitting in the cool, darkened theater with my costars and my family surrounding me, but right now I'm doing what my publicist Laney Peters calls

“a necessary evil” — talking to the tabloid press. Sometimes they love me, sometimes they drag me through the mud. It depends on whether it’s a slow news week.

Cathy sticks her glittery microphone in my face. Cathy’s electric green paisley print mini dress is so bright it almost blinds me. “It’s nice to see *you*.” Cathy stares at me with her piercing green eyes, which are so similar to my own. “You look drop-dead gorgeous. Who are you wearing?”

“This is Marchesa.” I give a sort of half-spin to show off my pale pink Grecian-style gown. My stylist had it shortened from floor-length to mid-thigh, and my hoofs (aka big feet) are blinged out in strappy, sparkly Jimmy Choos. I wore my long, honey-blond hair half up and had Paul, my favorite hair guru, set it so that curls cascade down my bronzed back. For makeup, Shelly swept my green eyes with a very in vogue pearl blue shadow and left my tanned face bare except for peach blush and gloss. Austin said I look like a goddess. God, I adore him.

“Kaitlin, let’s talk business.” Cathy puts an arm around my bare shoulder and stares directly into the video camera instead of looking at me. “You’ve had quite a year, and it’s not even half over. Your TV show goes off the air in a few weeks, you’re making your Broadway debut at the end of June, and you’ve survived a heap of media coverage surrounding your train-wreck friendship with party girls Lauren Cobb and Ava Hayden.” Her smoky voice is so raspy, I almost have to read her lips to follow along. “Not to mention all that gossip

about your supposed near breakdown at a *Sure* magazine photo shoot. What's the real deal, Kaitlin?"

I do my best to keep smiling and turn on the charm that years of media training have taught me well. "Cathy, if my life were really that dramatic, it would be a movie!" I laugh even though for this particular crisis, the press kind of got it right. Not that I can actually admit that. Laney would kill me! I stare up at the famous glowing Fox tower sign perched above the theater.

"Lauren and Ava are great girls, but we haven't hung out together in a long time." I talk slowly, making sure every word I say is just right. "They like to go out, and I'm a couch potato. My nights usually involve a trip to Blockbuster, studying my script for *Meeting of the Minds*, my upcoming Broadway show, or getting takeout with my boyfriend." Cathy doesn't look convinced, but I keep going. "I'm happy, which I know is hard for some people to believe when they hear all those meltdown rumors, but they're not true. I had a panic attack. I had a hard time coping with the news that *Family Affair* was going off the air. I mean, I was losing a show that I'd been part of since I was a preschooler."

Cathy nods, but I'm not sure she's really paying attention. Her eyes have locked on my date. "It must help to have such a dashing boyfriend to lean on," she coos.

I turn to Austin Meyers, my boyfriend of over a year, and notice his face is redder than the carpet we're standing on. Cathy's right about one thing — my boyfriend is hot.

He's taller than me (which isn't hard, since I'm under 5'4"), with broad, muscular shoulders and arms. And he has the best hair on any guy I know. Austin wears it sort of long, so his bangs are hanging constantly in his amazing blue eyes, which gives me plenty of excuses to touch his face and push his hair out of the way. Tonight Austin is wearing a dark blue suit with a skinny gray tie. Very Robert Pattinson. He smiles at me nervously.

I smile back at him. "I am lucky," I tell Cathy, and squeeze Austin's hand, which has been linked with mine for the entire interview.

"Me too," Austin echoes, surprising me by saying anything at all. He's not used to getting the media third degree like I am. Austin spends his days doing algebra and playing lacrosse (he has a normal high school existence), while I spend mine in front of a camera, doing interviews, or hiding from the paparazzi.

Laney taps me on the shoulder, or should I say, jabs me hard with one of her highly laquered nails. "We have to be inside in ten." She gives Cathy the evil eye. "Last question, Cathy."

I try not to laugh as Cathy's perky expression changes to a look of pure terror. My publicist may look young and cute with her round face, long, layered blond locks, picture-perfect petite figure, and wrinkle-free face (is it Botox or youth? I may never know. Laney won't let me see her driver's license), but Hollywood insiders and the media know better. Underneath that white Calvin Klein pantsuit and

carefully tanned exterior, Laney is a Category 5 hurricane. She will do anything and everything to protect her clients. Why do you think she has one of the biggest A-list rosters in Hollywood?

“Sorry to hold you hostage, Kaitlin.” Cathy sounds flustered for the first time tonight. “Last question: Your Broadway run is only eight weeks. What are you going to do after that ends?”

Um...I don't have a clue.

That's the terrifying truth. I've been trying not to think about it, but it's hard not to—especially when everyone keeps bringing it up. My agent, Seth, says I've had offers but nothing worthwhile, and that's what gives me nightmares. “I'm exploring my options but can't say anything just yet,” I tell Cathy. “I will say I can't wait to sink my teeth into a new challenge.” There. That sounded okay. There is no way I'm telling Cathy I have no job lined up.

“Like what?” Cathy moves the microphone closer.

Uh-oh.

“Interview over. We're going to miss the start of the movie,” Laney snaps, and pulls us away before I have to answer.

The flashbulbs pop as we hurry down the rest of the red carpet and past my film's oversized movie poster. It's so cool. Drew Thomas and I are hiding behind a crumbling wall, and we're all sweaty and battle-scarred. Before we head inside, Austin and I pause for a final photo in the brightly lit butter-yellow exterior lobby directly below the Mann

Village Theatre marquee. Then Laney pulls Austin and me through the theater doors and rushes us through the cavernous lobby. I glimpse mosaics, murals, paintings, and photographs of the California Gold Rush on the walls, but Laney doesn't give us time to sightsee. I guess I should just be happy I'm here for a premiere. This place has hosted some of the coolest ones in Hollywood (think *Twilight* and *Spider-Man*). It was built in 1931, and people still rave about its huge auditorium (it has over 1,300 seats), incredible architecture, and dome-like arches trimmed in gold. There are sculptures throughout the lobby and scrollwork everywhere, but my favorite thing is the six-pointed painted star on the auditorium ceiling. I won't get to stare at it tonight, though. We're running really late. Someone from the studio hands Austin and me popcorn and soda, takes a picture of us holding them, and ushers us to our seats. The lights are dimming, so I can't see where my castmates are sitting, but I know Mom, Dad, my brother Matty, and my personal assistant, Nadine, are seated behind us.

"You almost missed the credits," Mom scolds before my butt has even touched the seat.

I want to tell Mom that's impossible, but the movie is about to start, so I'll have to tell her the first of many new HOLLYWOOD SECRETS later.

HOLLYWOOD SECRET NUMBER ONE: Premieres don't start till the stars are seated — whether that's ten minutes late because you're talking to *Access Hollywood* or two hours late because your names are Brad and Angelina and

you have to get your ever-expanding brood to bed first. Movie premiere start times are figurative. If the stars are scheduled to appear, no one from the studio will start the film till they arrive. The bigger the star, the later the arrival and the less likely you'll see them in the theater. Another thing to know: the lights will dim right before the biggest star shows up so that no one in the audience knows where they're sitting (if they actually stay at all. Some stars do the red carpet and then slip out the back door to avoid sitting through their new film more than once).

"The movie is starting," Dad reminds Mom, and that's enough to make her hold her tongue — for now.

I take a few kernels of popcorn, then sit back and enjoy.

* * *

Two hours and seven minutes later the end credits are rolling, and Austin follows up his praise with a kiss on the cheek, which is good, because my mom and dad are right behind us. "That. Was. Awesome," Austin congratulates me.

"I know, right?" I practically squeal. The lights are coming up, and the chatter in the theater is loud and boisterous. People are smiling and laughing, and I think they liked the movie.

Austin laughs. "Why do you sound so surprised?"

"Well, you know," I tell him without actually telling him anything. Sure, I've seen a rough cut, but my meticulous director, Hutch Adams, is known for making a lot of

last-minute changes. Whatever tweaks he's made work, because I like the movie even more than I did when I saw it the first time.

"Kate-Kate, that was wonderful." Mom reaches over the seat to hug me and I almost choke on her perfume. ("It's Victoria Beckham's! She gave it to me personally and if she walked by, she'd want to smell it on me," Mom insisted when Matty and I staged an intervention to tell her that maybe she'd been using a tad too much.) Like her perfume spritzing, everything about Mom is carefully packaged. She's a tall, toned Hollywood machine who does not leave the house without Crème de la Mer on her tanned face, her blond hair blown out, and designer labels on every inch of her body. (Tonight she's wearing a Michael Kors silk tunic and black fitted Gucci pants. The underwear are probably Dolce Gabbana.) "I think your work in this puts you on a whole new playing field," Mom tells me. She has one hand on me and one on her BlackBerry, which she starts typing on furiously with her thumb. "I'm telling Seth he should start fielding offers for more blockbuster-type films or action TV shows. Maybe we can get you a role on something like *Lost!*"

Mom has been hounding Seth about my next project ever since it was announced that *FA* was ending. Mom's still not convinced that a Broadway show is going to advance my career, but Seth thinks *Meeting of the Minds* is going to move mountains (his words, not mine). The play is a teen-centric drama, which isn't an entirely new concept, but it's more

PG-friendly and comical than other teen-driven shows like *Spring Awakening*. At the same time, the show's issues—race, coming of age, peer pressure—are a step up from my character development on *Family Affair*. “This could be the highbrow *High School Musical* of Broadway,” Seth declared. “Without the singing. Or dancing. It doesn't need it! This show has bite. It could be huge!”

“Sweetie, can we just enjoy the movie premiere first?” Dad tries to pry the BlackBerry from Mom's dark red fingernails. He's much bigger than she is. Matty and I call our parents Barbie and Ken, because that's seriously what they look like, even though Dad is nowhere near as put together as Mom is. Most days he doesn't even iron his standard Ralph Lauren golf shirt before putting it on. Tonight Mom must have dressed him because he's in a smart-looking beige suit. Still, I notice the white shirt underneath looks a tad wrinkled. “You can tell Seth when we meet with him before we leave town next week.”

The words hit me like a bad review.

I'm leaving Los Angeles.

My home.

Next week.

And Austin is not coming with me.

In seven days, I am moving to New York for a few months while Austin will be here in Los Angeles and then in Texas for a summer lacrosse camp he's been dying to attend. I know Seth's right about the play being a huge opportunity

for my career, but what about my blissful love life? Austin and I have never been apart for more than two weeks! How are we going to deal with being three thousand miles away from each other?

I guess I shouldn't complain. All this was supposed to happen sooner. Originally I was supposed to be in New York in April and start the play in May, but then the show's original London lead, Meg Valentine, got off crutches before everyone thought she would, so I got bumped back to a June start date for rehearsals and a July and August run, which is...
PRINCESS LEIA WATCH!

I pull out my new iPhone — I've upgraded from my trusty Sidekick — and jot down another item I have to remember to pack for my move (I'm lost without my Leia watch). My iPhone has a dozen "note to self" lists on it already and it's only a week old.

Where was I? Oh, yeah, my new play start date. I was happy about it — more time with Austin! Yay! — but some of us weren't so thrilled.

"Mom." I hear a familiar whine. "I told you a zillion times already, I'm sure I can pull some strings and get Kates a cameo on my show."

That would be my younger brother, Matty, talking. His ego is much bigger than his actual age, fifteen. (We just celebrated his birthday.) He's signed more autographs and shaken more hands tonight than he has in his life. And this is probably only the beginning. After years of bit parts and commercials, Matty has hit the big time with his new TV show, a

remake of *Scooby-Doo*, directed by my *FA* director, Tom Pullman. Matty has to be on set in late July to start shooting the season (which will premiere in October), so he and Dad have to leave New York earlier than the rest of us. I think Matty was hoping to go all *Gossip Girl* and take the New York social scene by storm, but now he's whining that he won't have as much time to do it. But what is he complaining about? He has a paying gig to come home to, one that everyone in town is gaga over. *Entertainment Weekly* is calling *Scooby* "the must-see show of the new season." And *Celebrity Insider* says it's this generation's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I can't say I'm not a wee bit jealous as I stare at my brother, who looks a lot like a young Brad Pitt with his new short blond hair, green eyes, and gray Armani suit.

"Let's move, people," Laney barks, making even my long-time personal security, Rodney, jump. "The car is out front to take you to the after-party, and I want to get you guys in it before fans start asking for autographs."

"Can you imagine the horror?" Nadine quips so that only I can hear. I bite my lip to keep from laughing.

Rodney whips into work mode, puts his trademark black sunglasses back on, and uses his large frame to clear a path for my family to make our way out a side door of the theater and into the waiting Escalade idling near the curb. I follow his dark, shiny bald dome through the crowd. We slip in without commotion and are at the next red carpet outside the Crown Bar on Santa Monica Boulevard before I know it.

The white building looks as if it could be someone's house instead of a hip lounge. It has lush greenery in the front and a candlelit outdoor patio. Inside, the mood is very old-school Hollywood romantic, making me think Austin and I would like hanging out here if it wasn't so scene-y. There are chandeliers everywhere, lots of dark wood, distressed mirrors, padded walls with textured wallpaper, and intimate banquettes. In the middle of the place is an octagon-shaped bar. I hear the food here is pretty good. It's classic American bistro with burgers and flatbread sandwiches, with fish and chips thrown in. Tonight everything is being served appetizer-style. We head to the back of the place, where we have a reserved banquette; everyone drops their gift bags and rushes off to network. Everyone except me and Austin.

"So," I say softly, my voice barely audible over the DJ and the noise of the packed party. But I know Austin heard me.

Austin stares back at me. "So." He weaves his fingers through mine. "Seven days left."

I nod, looking away from his blue eyes and trying to blink back tears. I focus on his silver cuff links. I bought them for him a few months ago. They're tiny lacrosse sticks. "Seven days."

"I've been thinking of our last hurrah before you go." Austin gives me a quizzical look. "How do you feel about —"

"Katie-Kat!" Mom's voice is louder than even the DJ's, and he has a microphone. I look up. Mom is a few tables away.

She's waving her hands wildly and standing next to a short, plump man in a wrinkled dress shirt. "I need you!"

"I'll be right back," I promise Austin, squeezing his rough, calloused hand.

I scoot out of my seat and talk to Mom's new "friend," who turns out to be a TV producer working on a mid-season series about cocktail waitresses in Vegas (blech). Before I get back to my table, I see my *PYA* director, Hutch Adams, and zip over for a quick hello (with a drink in hand, he's always much friendlier). Then I run into my obnoxious *PYA* costar Drew, and though he and I aren't on good terms, I do my job and pose with gritted teeth for a few pictures. I try not to think about the fact that Drew's garish pinstriped black suit, striped shirt, and tie completely clash with my soft pink dress. (Who wears so many stripes together anyway? Does Drew think he's Ed Westwick channeling his alter ego Chuck Bass? Drew may be dark and handsome, but he'll never be as legendary as Mr. Bass.)

Next I shake hands with a few executives from other studios whom I've never met. (Seth would be happy), stand patiently and listen while an actress I barely know laments the lack of good jobs available for twenty-somethings ("Everyone wants teens!"), and do a quick interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, the sole print outlet allowed at the party. As I talk to the reporter, I sneak wistful glances at my table. Austin is talking to my best friend, Liz Mendes, who must have slipped in while I was gone. She missed the

premiere because she had a kickboxing tournament. When my interview is done, I start walking quickly, eyes straight ahead to avoid being stopped again, but someone blocks my path.

“There you are, K!” Sky Mackenzie, my former *FA* costar and current *PYA* one, sounds like she’s in a huff. She rolls her eyes at me. “Where have you been?”

“Sky!” I say, and without thinking I give her a hug. She instantly stiffens, but I don’t care. Even with our notoriously volatile history—Sky and I never got along during our decade-plus run on *FA*, even though we played fraternal twins—I’ve surprised myself by actually missing her. I even miss our bickering. “How have you been?”

“Outrageously busy and in demand,” Sky says with a toss of her long raven hair. She looks extra tanned (but thankfully not orange. That’s happened to her before), and she’s wearing a fitted, strapless silver ruched dress that she’s paired with calf-length blue leggings and black Coach heels. “I went to Les Deux last week, and Winston’s Bar on Thursday, and had meetings at Wagman’s on Friday—they can’t wait to work with me again—and I’ve been tanning and reading *my* script for *my* new show and...”

I stare at Sky as she talks about her packed schedule. Normally I would think she’s being smug, but despite her boasting, she seems nervous, and her dark eyes have shadows underneath them. I know this girl. We practically grew up together on set. “Sky,” I interrupt quietly.

She stops short and her cocky grin fades. She waves a

hand in the air, her dozen bangle bracelets sliding up to her elbow. "I'm bored."

"I know," I chime in, and put an arm on her shoulder without crushing her lacquered hair. It's an acquired Hollywood skill. "Me too."

"I thought I would love a little R&R," Sky dishes. "Time for Palm Springs, a shoot-down to Cabo, you know? But it gets old. I miss work. I *need* work. I can't wait to get on set in July. I just wish it was in town rather than in Vancouver." She makes a face, pursing her plump (fake. Shh!) lips.

"At least you have a show to go to." The words slip out and hang there. Wow. Did I really just say that? Do I miss having a show? Why am I admitting that to my supposed rival?

"Please, K, not the pity act," Sky clucks. "You're doing the Great White Way! You're going to get total cred and get some plum role working with Clooney after this. My show could be canceled after three episodes." Her eyes open wide, as if she can't believe she just admitted that to her nemesis.

I can't help but giggle. "We're pathetic."

Sky actually cracks a smile. "We are, aren't we? We've only been out of work for two months, if that!"

"Excuse me, Sky? Kaitlin?" A guy in a tux holding a video camera approaches us. "Sorry to bother you. I don't know if you know me, but I'm Ryan Joseph, Media Relations for *Family Affair*."

"Ryan!" I say, excited. I barely knew the guy, but anyone from *FA* is a friend in my book. "How are you?"

He looks relieved. “Good. Tough getting in here tonight, but Tom said if I didn’t catch you two here, I might never see you together again. We thought this could be fun to post this week, before the final episode airs next week, and...”

“What are you talking about, Raymond?” Sky asks impatiently.

“It’s Ryan,” he says, looking nervous.

I shoot Sky a look and gently tuck a lock of my blond hair behind my chandelier earrings. “*Ryan*, what do you need?”

Ryan’s shoulders relax a little. “Tom Pullman sent me. He was hoping you guys would do a YouTube shout-out for the last episode of *FA* that we could put up ASAP. Let me just call Tom and he can explain more.” He punches the number I know so well into his phone, and within seconds Tom is on the line and Sky and I are listening in to his request. Something short, sweet, funny, maybe in character even. Pretty please?

Sky and I look at each other, and I see the small sparkle in her eye. We’d do anything for *FA*. “We’ll do it,” I answer for both of us. Sky doesn’t try to stop me.

After Sky does a quick makeup touch-up and I do a pat of powder on my shiny nose and a swipe of nude shimmer gloss, I stop quickly at our table to say hi to Liz and to apologize to Austin for the delay. Next thing I know, Sky and I are huddled on the glowing candlelit outdoor patio, where it’s much quieter, shooting a two-minute impromptu promo for our (almost) dearly departed TV show.

“We’re back!” Sky yells, throwing an arm around me and

making me giggle as the camera records. “Miss us much?” She blows a gum bubble through her hipster wine-colored lips, and it pops loudly.

“Sky,” I scold. “No chewing gum.” I figure Ryan will rewind and redo, but he’s still taping. Okay then. “The *Family Affair* finale is fast approaching, and you don’t want to miss a second of it,” I tell the viewers.

“K means business,” Sky interrupts. “Don’t upset her. We don’t need her winding up in Cedars Sinai again.” I shoot her a dirty look.

“Or Sky drowning her sorrows at a karaoke bar,” I retort, and receive an elbow to my ribs. “You guys *don’t* want to hear her sing.”

“Or K cry. Again,” Sky deadpans.

“Or Sky over-tan herself to combat boredom,” I quip, and give her the evil eye.

The two of us look at each other and start to laugh. “Some things never change,” I tell the camera. “Like us. You know you love the drama.”

“*Family Affair*,” Sky adds. “The series finale, next Sunday at nine. Be there or be ...?” She looks at me.

“Square?” I question.

Sky shakes her head. “You really are a dork.”

I start to laugh some more. Soon we’re both uncontrollable. Ryan stops recording.

“That was clever,” he says in amazement. “You guys seem like you really like each other.”

We both stop laughing at once.

“Are we done here?” Sky asks. Ryan nods.

The two of us head inside, and Sky turns to me. I see the smallest of small smiles on her dark lips. “I’ll see you around.”

“Sure,” I tell her, knowing it’s probably not the case, and for some reason that makes me sadder than I would have thought. “Good luck with the —”

BOOM!

Someone pushes me and I bang into Sky, sending her backward into a waitress carrying a tray of drinks. The three of us crash with a thud so loud that DJ Bizzy actually stops spinning.

“What the hell?” Sky jumps up and shakes liquid off her. My dress and even the tips of my hair are drenched, and the poor waitress is covered in spilled drinks. Rodney is at my side in seconds and helps me up. I turn to see who I banged into, and my jaw drops. “Ava? Lauren?” I say awkwardly. “I didn’t know you were invited.” Eek. That sounded rude.

Ava Hayden and Lauren Cobb, two girls I spent more hours with this spring than my best friend, stand in front of me with their arms crossed. They’re scowling, but they look amazing. Ava’s long blond hair is pulled back, and she’s rocking a cream chiffon Monique Lhuillier dress with a purple sash that I’ve always loved. Lauren’s wearing what I think is a Roberto Cavalli sheath in black, but she’s made the look her own by adding lots of chunky boho jewelery — maybe too much. Her brown curly hair is down and super shiny. For a split second I wonder whether their outfits were lifted. The

two have a nasty habit of deciding to stuff new dresses into their purses at Saks, which is just one of many reasons we stopped hanging out.

“Have a nice fall?” Ava stares at me darkly, her long, thin ivory face twisted into a deep frown. Lauren laughs so hard the unrecognizable drink in her hand splatters all over, missing her dress by inches. “Sorry,” Ava adds coolly. “Guess we didn’t see you. Kind of like the rest of this town.”

“You pushed me?” I’m flabbergasted. Yes, we’re no longer friends, but we didn’t end on such bad terms. We just sort of sailed away from each other — me with motor full-throttle, but still. I never said a bad word about either of them to the press and I definitely could have after the havoc they caused at my *Sure* photo shoot.

“Aw, your dress,” Lauren mock sobs, and puts a hand to her heart. She cocks her head to one side, her brown eyes so wide they seem to squish her high cheek bones. “To be honest, it’s sort of an improvement.”

“Marchesa is so last month,” Ava adds.

“K, are you going to let these D-listers talk to you like that?” Sky comes to my defense.

I remove Rodney’s hand from my arm and walk over to the two of them. “Don’t do this,” I say quietly so that only they can hear. “We’re not friends, but we don’t need to be enemies. Don’t we all have enough of those?”

Ava smiles thinly. “I never have enough enemies. Congratulations! You, my friend, just moved to our number-one spot.”

“Why?” I’m dumbfounded. “Can’t we just leave each other alone?”

“It’s more fun this way,” Lauren coos. “Ava and I like drama, didn’t you know?”

“You mean you like any chance you can get to get some free publicity,” Sky interjects sharply. The girls ignore her.

“I can handle this, Sky.” I’m shaking and on the verge of tears. Everyone in the room is agape at the scene. My whisper-thin soft dress is clinging to my legs gracelessly, soaked in red wine, and I know a picture of me looking this pathetic will show up in some rag or another tomorrow, thanks to camera phones. I’m humiliated. I don’t want the trouble, but if they’re going to give it, then I have no choice. “I think you two should leave.”

“And what if we don’t?” Ava taunts. “We never miss a party at Crown Bar. Even if it’s for a premiere as lame as yours.” Lauren snorts.

“That’s it!” Sky yells, scaring even me. “This is our movie and I won’t let you talentless posers bash it — especially when it rocks and you two are just jealous that the best offer you’ll ever get is for *Celebrity Rehab*.” She jabs a long, bony finger at them every other word, then makes a crazy hand motion to a nearby bodyguard and to Rodney, her plum polish flashing black in the low lighting. “Toss them out.”

Whoa. I need to sound more assertive like Sky sometimes.

“You can’t do that, Sky, and I don’t think you want to either,” Ava says smugly. “We were invited. Now, go throw

your temper tantrums somewhere else. You really don't want to get on our bad sides again, do you?"

"You've been uninvited," I say before Sky can answer the question. "Invite or no invite, this is our movie, not yours, and neither of you is welcome here. Not after this." I nod to a studio executive who has been watching the whole exchange. She motions to the private security.

"Ladies, you're going to have to leave," one of the guys says in a gruff voice.

"I knew you were weak, Kaitlin, but I had no idea you were this much of a baby," Ava murmurs.

"Bye!" Sky says gleefully. "I'm sure there's some C-list party happening at some totally over 'hot spot' that would be happy to have you guys."

I try not to snort, but it escapes my lips, and Lauren's eyes narrow like slits.

"You're both going to be sorry for this," she snaps.

"I doubt it," I tell her, my confidence coming back. That felt good. What's she going to do to me? I won't even be in town next week.

The security reaches for Lauren's and Ava's elbows, but they snatch their arms away, click-clacking out of the room in their matching five-inch Charles David platforms. I can't help but giggle—they look like gangly, agitated giraffes. DJ Bizzy goes back to spinning, and someone from Wagman's hands Sky and me towels. They even ask if we want someone to get us new dresses, but I decline. Sky looks like she might

say yes, but she sees my face and decides against it. “We’ll dry. It’s hot in here,” I tell the poor assistant.

“We’ll just smell like the hobos down on Hollywood Boulevard,” Sky quips, and then she’s gone before I even turn around.

“Are you okay?” Liz rushes over. “What was that about?” Liz’s dark curly hair is pulled back for a change, and little curls fall around her caramel-skinned neck, which is adorned with a big turquoise necklace that matches her spaghetti-strap mini dress. Her arms look better than the First Lady’s, thanks to daily kickboxing. Despite what’s just happened, I smile. One of the best parts about New York is that Liz is coming with me. She’s bunking with my family while she does a summer writing and directing workshop for high school students at New York University.

“Who invited them?” Austin asks.

“I don’t know,” I admit. “I thought we were on okay terms, but after this episode, I guess I was wrong.”

Liz sighs. “Guess your truce is over.”

“Guess so.” I’m crestfallen. “At least I won’t be here to deal with it.”

Austin looks at Liz. “Speaking of leaving town, Burke, I’ve figured out where we’re going to go before you leave.”

“Without me?” I protest.

“You were sort of preoccupied,” he teases.

“It’s good, Kates,” Liz insists. “You’re going to love it.”

“So now it’s a surprise.” Austin smiles mischievously. “Don’t try to get it out of Nadine or Liz either.”

“Fine.” I take a mini burger from a waiter and stuff the whole thing in my mouth. Fighting really makes a person hungry. While I chomp, I wring out the front of my dress again. Someone snaps a picture of me. And another. Guess I’ll be back in the headlines again this week, after a few months off. It’s weird to think I’ll have to read about it at a crowded New York City sidewalk newsstand rather than on a beach lounge chair in Malibu.

“I’m going to miss Los Angeles,” I say to no one in particular.

“Even all this?” Liz is incredulous as she glares at a cameraman invading her personal space.

I look around and shrug. “Even all this.”

Austin puts his arm around me. “I’ve got to say one thing about you, Burke. You really know how to go out with a bang.”

That I do.

Wednesday, May 27th

NOTE TO SELF:

Interview w/ *People* re: *PYA*: Fri. @ 1.

Ask Nadine 2 get more boxes 4 move.

UPS Pickup 4 boxes: Mon. @ 4.

Get guidebook 4 NYC.

Date w/ A: Mon. Time: TBA.

Flight 2 NYC: Tues. @ 11:15 AM.