

# Molly Unplanned: Chapter 1

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PLEASE TELL ME *he's with you.*

My eyebrows pinch together as I stare at the text. By *he*, Zoe means Glen, my boyfriend—and soon-to-be roomie.

I type back:

*He'll be here any second. He's picking up the cashier's check for the closing.*

Glen's twenty minutes late. That's not like him, especially for something as important as handing over our savings for a down payment on a small house. *My savings, technically.* Glen's assets are tied up, but he'll cash them out and move his half of the money into my account before my first semester of grad school tuition is due. We have it all figured out—a sound, solid plan. I love that about Glen—he's sound, solid. Dependable...and now twenty-one minutes late.

I glance up at the attorney and closing agent, giving them an awkward smile. It's just the three of us in this sunny, whitewashed conference room. Ironic that my dreams of owning a cozy home that I'll drench in color will come to fruition in this starkness. The agent taps her pen on the long, shiny table.

"I'll try calling again." I press Glen's number and listen to his phone ring and ring and ring. "He must be on his way."

After sharing that hopeful statement, I'm lost for anything else to say. If Glen were here, he'd carry the conversation. He's more comfortable with strangers than I am. Then again, if he were here, we'd be busy signing papers and there wouldn't be a need for meaningless chitchat.

Where in the hell is he? If he's stuck in traffic or had a last-minute client emergency, how hard would it be to send me a quick text? My pen seesaws up and down, blurring until it looks like a nervous moth caught between my fidgety finger and thumb. When Glen finally gets here, I'm not sure if I'll use it to sign the papers or jab it straight into his eyeballs. *Where is he?*

My phone buzzes with a response from Zoe, distracting me from my violent thoughts.

*Tell me you're sitting down.*

The smoldering knot in my gut sprouts flames. Why would I need to be sitting? The worst possible scenario jumps into my brain. Two seconds ago, I'd had—hypothetical—thoughts of—hypothetically—hurting Glen. If something bad has happened to him and those were my last thoughts...

With shaky fingertips, I type back:

*Sitting. What's wrong?*

A picture snaps onto my phone along with Zoe's new message:

*This posted ten minutes ago.*

The image is a screenshot of Kimmy Clark from a social feed. She's a teacher Zoe and I work with at Carter Elementary. A whippersnapper straight out of undergrad—only three years younger than me but a decade more immature. Regardless of how I feel about Kimmy, I'm happy to see her rather than a picture of Glen's intestines splattered across the highway. She's flipping the bird at the camera with her puffy pink lips scrunched together in an obnoxious pucker. The caption reads, "Later, bitches."

I'm not in a mood for e-stalking or gossip. I direct my irritation over Glen's tardiness toward Zoe.

*So what?*

*Recognize the shirt?*

*I haven't memorized her wardrobe.*

*I mean the guy's.*

I squint, now noticing a man next to Kimmy, off to the side of the frame and half hidden by her fabulous glossy hair. One of his hands has its fingers splayed, reaching toward the phone that took the picture. His other hand holds a small pillow in front of his face—it looks like one of those little airline pillows. I do, in fact, recognize his green striped polo and type back furiously.

*I bought it for him at Kohl's. Literally 8 gazillion other men have the exact same shirt.*

I calm after rereading my supremely logical words. Except the shirt isn't the only thing that's familiar. The guy's arms are hairy—like Glen's. But lots of men have hairy arms. Like Glen's.

Zoe takes longer to reply this time. She's probably giving me time to absorb. But absorb what? This is absurd. She can't honestly believe Glen's on a plane with Kappa Kappa Kimmy

when he's supposed to be here with me...and a cashier's check...drawn from money I transferred to his account. Finally, Zoe responds:

*Has he shown up yet?*

The attorney and the closing agent murmur to each other across the table. The attorney is on my side, two chairs away from me. They're probably discussing the weather, or the Brewers, or the pathetic frizzy-haired girl whose boyfriend has possibly stolen her money and run off with the town trollop. I dial Glen's number again. No answer.

Despite the blazing sun beaming onto the back of my neck through the wall of windows behind me, a sudden chill makes me shiver. I want to untie my hair and let the dark mess of curls fall to cover my neck, my face, hiding me from my awful thoughts. He'll be here any second, and then I'll feel ridiculous for having them. Ridiculous would be a welcome replacement for the dread that's overtaken me.

The closing agent gives me a soft, apologetic smile. "I have another appointment in half an hour. If he doesn't arrive within the next few minutes, I'm afraid we'll have to reschedule."

I nod, trying to shake my nerves into balance. "I'll try his office. Maybe he got the days mixed up." I rifle through my wallet to pull out his business card and then dial the main number of the insurance office where he works. I let out a grateful whimper when someone answers on the second ring—it's good to know there are still living, breathing, phone-answering humans out there. "May I speak with Glen Jansen, please?"

"I'm sorry, Glen Jansen is no longer with this office. Angela Hartstrom is now handling his accounts. I'll transfer you to her."

I'd tell her not to bother, but I can't breathe. My body's forgotten how. A voice says hello, and I drop the phone to my lap, gulping for air that my throat can't remember how to swallow.

"Miss Peters?" The lawyer asks. "Are you okay?"

"I'll get some water." The closing agent dashes out of the room.

The lawyer moves toward me and places a hand on my back. For the life of me, I can't remember his name. "You need to breathe," he says.

*I'd like to, buddy. I'd really like to.* My chest stings, and tears leak out the sides of my eyes. Now I wish the picture *had* been of Glen's intestines.

A hand clamps around my jaw and twists my face sideways. I lock wide eyes on the attorney. “Blow out,” he says, followed by a gust of his minty-fresh breath in my face to demonstrate.

I doubt I have enough air in me to muster a breath, but what do you know—his nose crinkles as I blow a huge, not-so-fresh breath onto him. *Eau de* red onions.

“Here you go.” The closing agent returns and plops a Styrofoam cup filled with water onto the table. I gaze into the tiny pool, knowing it measures only a fraction of the tears I’m doomed to spill during the coming weeks.

He’s on that plane with Kimmy.

I gave him my entire savings.

How could I have been so stupid?