

Chapter 2

Kylie's POV

My mouth falls open as the Green Pine Country Club gates come into view ahead.

Wow. Just wow.

Holy s**t!

I have never seen anything like it. The white wrought-iron entrance goes at least 40 feet high and is connected to a white stone wall fence the same height, and we have been riding next to it for at least two miles before we even reached this gate.

This place has got to be massive.

I shake my head.

Unreal. This place, this incredible place, is going to be my new home.

Feeling giddy with excitement, I lean forward, eager to see what is on the other side of the stone walls. I expect my uber driver to pull up to the quickly approaching gate, where a guard box sits in the middle to check membership and IDs, but we drive past it, without even slowing down.

Turning my head to watch it by, I look apprehensively towards the front seat of the driver.

"Um... I think that was where I am supposed to go."

I point my thumb over my shoulder and glance back.

The Uber driver doesn't even glance at me in the rearview mirror. "You said that you were starting work here, right?"

"Yes..."

"Well then, Missy, that would be the staff's entrance, which is another mile around the back."

"Oh. Okay."

I bite my lip, lean back against the seat, and look out the window at the tall white stone wall that seems never-ending.

'Staff's entrance' sounds less than ideal, but I can't complain. This is an amazing opportunity for me.

I left a not-so-great situation to be here, it was my way out, my freedom. So, if I have got to go through a 'staff's entrance instead of the impressive tall gate that we just passed, I am perfectly me with that.

I am nearly eighteen, and I just got my GED, followed quickly by my acceptance into an online university a few weeks ago, and I plan to make something of myself one day.

Although, I haven't quite gured out what that something is going to be yet...it will be something important. Something impressive.

I worked really hard to get good grades on my online homeschooling classes, as I wasn't allowed to go to public school, and I received a lot of scholarships based on my grades and nancial situation. (Which is that I have no nancial situation.)

My parents died when I was three years old, or so I have been told. I had no family of my own that was willing to take me in. Therefore, I was put in the oh-so-lovely foster care system.

There were a few times when I was close to being adopted, but for one reason or another, it always fell through last minute.

Guess it just wasn't meant to be.

The last foster family that I lived with was by far the worse, and they also happened to be the ones that I was with the longest, nearly four, quite miserable years.

They had three daughters, and I was the same age as the middle daughter. She didn't want me to go to school with her, stating that I tried to compete with her in both grades and boys, so her parents made me sure out how to homeschool online if I wanted to continue my education. Which was totally ne by me, I got to do extra courses that way without all the stupid high school drama. It also gave me time to myself, away from my witchy foster sisters, who weren't exactly sisterly, or friendly in any sort of way, towards me.

My foster parents told me that the moment I turned eighteen, I was no longer welcome in their home. What they meant was, the moment we are not getting paid for you to live here, you are out.

Fine by me. It wasn't like I wanted to stay there. I wanted to get out.

Hell, I couldn't wait to get out.

I would have left on my own even if they hadn't said they were going to kick me out.

There was just the whole, I have no money and nowhere to stay problem that I had to gure out.

I had a job at a local gym where I gave tennis lessons to kids and enjoyed the benets of getting to play there on my own for free as a perk.

It was nice to have something to distract me from my boring life and my sometimes-cruel foster family.

I was able to save a little money, but my foster parents never gave me a dime in all the years that I was there, making me pay for everything I ever needed, clothes, shoes, rides to work, hygiene products... so the little I saved wasn't even enough to pay for a deposit and rst and last month's rent at even the cheapest place I could nd in the previous city that I was living in.

That is how I found this job. I was trying to nd cheap housing and a exible job that I could do while doing my schoolwork when it started in the fall, which led me to some deep diving research.

I mean, like hours and hours...

I nally came across this ad for a tennis pro at a Country Club from some random email, and the added bonus, it is completely across the country from my foster family.

Score!

The pay was decent enough, hours were exible, and they literally included housing and free meals.

It couldn't be more perfect.

Not to mention that I get to live on a beautiful Country Club property. Well, it was beautiful from the one picture that I could nd.

It is such an exclusive club that it requires a password to enter their website. Kind of strange, but hey, maybe that just means that their clients will tip well.

I feel a lurch of nerves as the driver takes a right and I see a second, smaller, but still impressive, gate ahead.

This must be it.

The 'staff's entrance.'

It feels strange going out on my own like this. I mean, I feel like I have been on my own my entire life, but to pick up and move across the country, I feel both proud of myself for being so brave, and terried to the point that I feel a bead of sweat drip slowly down my back.

What happens if I get red?

They evn me here and even sent this driver to get me.

I wouldn't even have enough money to y back to my old foster family, not that they would take me in...or that I would ever go back there and admit that I needed help.

But seriously, what would I do? Where would I go?

The driver rolls down his window and an old man in a blue polo, with a white GPCC logo embroidered on his front pocket, with what looks like a tree and a...umm, is that a paw?

The driver mumbles something about the new employee and the guard leans further down to glance at me in the back.

I give him a timid smile and realize how stupidly tall he is. He has got to be several inches over 6 feet.

He lazily motions the driver forward before heading back to his box and making the gate start to slowly open, stretching his long legs out in front of him and watching us as we drive by.

I lean forward to look out the window again.

The road is lined with white and pink owering trees and looks like something out of a painting.

Whipping my head back and forth until I nearly get whiplash, I try to take it all in.

It just feels so surreal, I cannot believe that I get to live here!

There are paths winding in and out from the road, ponds sometimes visible through the trees, cute little benches, and ornate gazebos.

It is beyond stunning.

A world of difference from the dingy city I had just moved away from.

There is the biggest break yet in the trees, making way for a second road, and I catch a glimpse of the perfectly manicured golf course, where I can see two men in the distance leaning against a golf cart.

My heart starts pounding against my chest in excitement.

I made it. I'm here. I am nally on my own.

My life, my real life that isn't controlled by people who couldn't care less about me, is socially starting!

There are more roads veering off the one we are currently on, and the driver takes a left onto a narrow road, lined with further spaced-out trees.

It only takes a few seconds for buildings to come into view.

All beautiful white stone and brick buildings match the wall that encircles the property. There is one larger building, then several smaller ones lined up behind it.

As we get closer, I catch a glimpse of a huge, sparkling blue lake just behind the buildings, with several boats on it.

"Here you are."

The driver grunts as he pulls in front of the largest building, which has a large, half-circle driveway in front of it, with four golf carts parked along it.

A young woman, in her early twenties, comes out of the building, wearing a short khaki skirt that shows off her mile long legs, and a white button up blouse with the same logo as the guard had on the chest, with several of the top buttons undone to show off her massive, pushed up cleavage.

She has tall, nude-colored heels on and a high, bouncy blonde ponytail, and as we stop directly in front of her, I notice her make-up is awful and she has huge diamond studs in her ears.

She is ridiculously pretty, and I suddenly feel overwhelmingly self-conscious.

I tug absently on my too large, hand me down faded blue blouse.

The immaculate woman lifts a manicured hand absently in our general direction and looks at her cell phone with a frown, typing away furiously as I gape at her for a moment before the driver coughs and I realize that he is waiting not so patiently for me to get out.

Full of nerves, I step out onto the pavement and look around.

Not only is this place beautiful, but the weather matches its perfection, with just the right amount of breeze whipping my hair across my face, making me want to throw my hands out at my side, close my eyes, and do a cheerful spin.

But I won't. I don't want to seem like a crazy person.

Swiping my hair back and tucking it behind my ears, the feeling of being self-conscious doesn't lesson as I look at the pretty blonde on the other side of the car, who still has yet to look up at me.

The driver opens the trunk and roughly places my small suitcase and duff bag on the ground and gets back in the car without a word and takes off. Leaving me all alone, just standing here awkwardly across from the woman who was still typing away on her phone, wondering if she would ever acknowledge me.

There is a movement to my right, and I turn to watch three men in polos walk around the large building. The one in the center is talking animatedly, while the man to his left is laughing, and the man to his right runs his hand through his short, dark hair with a frown.

It takes a moment to realize that my mouth is hanging open and I quickly snap it shut, trying to drag my eyes away...but I just can't.

All three of the men are as tall, if not even taller, than the guard had been, way over 6 feet, and they all are absolutely, gorgeous.

Their polos are not like the guards, they don't have the country club's logo on them. Instead, they all look expensive, and ted, very ted, almost like their huge muscles are about to burst out of the sleeves when they swing their golf clubs.

A mental image of the men's polos exploding off to reveal their muscular chests as they swing comes to mind and I hurriedly try to dismiss it as I continue to study them.

All three look like they could be models. And they all look to be in their mid to late twenties.

The one in the middle, pausing in his story while the other guy laughs, catches me looking at them and gives me a wink. And I am pretty sure that even my toes turn red. I quickly look away and back at the blonde in embarrassment.

The blonde who is no longer frowning at her phone. Instead, she has a massive smile on her face as she looks over at the men.

"Mr. Delmor. Mr. Terrence. Mr. VanKerr." Her voice is like honey, practically purring when she says 'VanKerr'. "How was your round of golf today? Will you be dining with us this evening in the restaurant?"

"Staci, you look beautiful as ever." The man in the middle, wearing a navy-blue polo, gives the blonde woman a wide, ity smile, and I am surprised that she doesn't faint. I think I would if that smile had been directed at me. I might even if it isn't directed at me.

She giggles girlishly and waves her hand as if to dismiss him, even though it's clear that she loves it and totally wants more of it.

"Oh stop, Mr. Delmor, you are making me blush."

"And who is this?" The man who had been laughing, wearing a white polo and beige shorts, with slightly longer, wavy hair that falls sexily over his forehead nods towards me. "New member?"

"This is Kylie." Staci walks over to me and grabs my forearm, raising her eyebrows in a meaningful expression towards the men. "She is our new tennis pro and just arrived."

I watch the two men exchange equally meaningful looks and a fresh wave of nerves washes over me.

What was that look? It feels as if I am missing something here...

Staci gives my arm a painful squeeze and I realize that everyone is waiting for me to speak.

"Oh, uh...hi there." I lift a hand towards the men and inwardly inch at how croaky and child-like my voice sounded.

Two of the men smile and lift their hands to me in greeting.

"Welcome, Kylie." Says the man in the white polo.

"Can't wait to get a lesson from you." The man in the navy winks at me again.

The third man, the tallest of the three, wearing a red polo that looks like striking against his black, short-cropped hair and dark stubble around his face, gives me the faintest of nods, but remains silent.

My stomach does a nervous ip as I make brief eye contact with him.

He is by far the most handsome of the three with his dark locks and piercing blue eyes, but something about him makes me slightly uneasy, even though I have a hard time tearing my eyes away from him.

"We better be off. Bye, ladies." Navy shirt gives one last grin and lifts a hand in farewell as they each climb into a separate golf cart and take off.

Staci and I watch them for a moment before she lets go of my arm and steps back to look at me, placing her hand on her hip and running her eyes up and down, taking me in.

"So. You are Kylie."

I nod.

"Not quite what I was expecting."

Her eyebrows pull together in slight confusion while I just stand there, awkwardly.

Because that is just what I do now.

Stand around awkwardly.

Staci lifts a perfectly manicured eyebrow at me, "You do speak English, correct?"

I feel another blush creep up my neck.

"Oh, um, yes. Sorry..." I glance over my shoulder nervously in the direction that the three men drive off to.

Staci laughs, "Well, I guess I understand. Meeting some of the members here for the rst time can be a bit...overwhelming."

I feel a bit of my nerves start to fade as Staci gives me a more genuine smile.

She makes her way over to my luggage and tries to lift the handle of the suitcase, but I take it from her, the handle doesn't extend anymore, which is why it was handed down to me in the rst place.

"Do all the men here look like that?"

I'm only half joking as I point my thumb over my shoulder, still feeling a little dazed.

Staci laughs again and adjusts her cleavage.

"Most, thank god. And I plan on snagging myself one, one of these days." She sounds wistful and determined all in one.

I stare at her as I throw my duff bag strap over my shoulder.

She catches me looking at her and she places her hands on her hips.

"What? Why do you think that I work here? I mean, isn't that why women work at places like this? We want to nd a rich man to...marry. Of course, most clubs don't have as many young and good-looking men, trust me, I have worked at a few before here. I even was a member at one when I was a kid, nothing like here, though." She gives a little laugh. "Nothing is like here."

I follow Staci, wide-eyed, as she takes the stairs to the front of the building, her heels clicking loudly against the stone steps.

"I tried to get on here for two years before I nally got hired. It's impossible to get into, and they never seem to hire new employees. Heard about the place from a random girl at a club one night, and knew it was where I needed to be. Now I have been here four years. Thought I would have found my m...umm, partner by now. You know, the one and all that, but nope. Not yet. Not for lack of trying though."

Staci gives a dramatic sigh as she holds the door open for me.

"One day though. Soon. I can just feel it. But in the meantime, I keep it fun until I nd the one. I have my eye on Mr. VanKerr right now, he was the one in the red polo just now. He doesn't talk much, but god, he is so freaking hot! I have seen him at the pool with his shirt off, and I can only imagine how sexy he is in bed, know what I mean?"

Staci grins at me over her shoulder as I follow her to the center of the room.

In bed?

I haven't even had my rst kiss yet! I have no idea what she means.

Well, I mean, I know what she means. I just can't relate. At all.

But yes...he is good looking. In an extremely intimidating kind of way.

Staci turns around and spreads her arms wide.

"This is the employee lounge. This is where you can have meetings, socialize with other employees, and we even sometimes have events you are a tennis pro, you might family visit, there are a few rooms designated here for them to stay. Of course, sometimes our employees use them for other reasons too." She gives me a sly look and giggles.

What is she talking about?

Oh.

Oh!

I clear my throat, ignoring this and continue looking around the room.

"There are also restrooms to the side of the building that the members use often when they are going, as well as a drink station. Even though you are a tennis pro, you might be asked to help with drink carts, events, workout classes... Our yoga instructor just up and left, and ran off with one of the club members (Staci makes a pouting face and crosses her arms), so you will most likely lead those classes for a while. You know how to do yoga, right?"

Staci gives me another once over before she leads me to an open door that I peek in to see a large dining room with several cafeteria style tables and chairs.

"Uh, yeah. Sure. I can totally do that."

I think I goggled by some yoga classes at my gym back home. I have no idea how to do it, but I can pose it. It looks like just a bunch of stretching. How hard can it be?

"Great. Now over here is a sort of lounge area, pool table, television, and table tennis. You are probably pretty good at table tennis, right? Being a tennis pro and all."

She picks up one of the small rubber paddles and vaguely waves it around as she leans against the table.

"There are tournaments held here all the time, well, at the main building I mean. It's pretty intense. In fact, everything is super intense here. All the members are constantly trying to one up each other, you'll see. Those men we just saw, they are massive. I have been in a few." She sounds proud of herself as she says this, iping her ponytail behind her, and giving me a secretive smile. "There are very impressive."

I nod, but I keep thinking of something else she said.

"You mentioned my house, am I not staying in this building?"

Staci laughs, "This is not a residential building. No, the smaller stone buildings behind this are the staff's housing."

I forgot to move my feet for a moment as we round the corner of the building to see several small homes lining a winding path that look very similar to the employee lounge.

Wow. I get to live in one of those buildings?

"Follow me, I will walk you to your place before I have to leave."

I rush forward to catch up, my duff bag bouncing against my back, and follow her down the paved sidewalk in front of the employee houses.

"Each house comes with a golf cart. There are specic outlets to charge them outside your house. This is a really, big club. I mean, huge, so you wouldn't want to walk everywhere, you would almost certainly be late, and you cannot ever be late. People pay a lot of money to be here, and they get upset if you waste their time, especially some of the younger members." She rolls her eyes.

"You just want to make sure that you coordinate with your roommate so that they don't take the golf cart and leave you behind." She looks at me with wide, innocent eyes.

"We had a girl lose her job that way once. This girl didn't like her roommate, so she kept leaving early and leaving her roommate behind, making her roommate have to walk everywhere, she kept showing up late and eventually got red because of it. It was a lot of drama."

Staci waves her hand dramatically in front of her.

I have a feeling that Staci does not mind drama.

I secretly hope that girl she is talking about is not my roommate.

"Any who, now I get a place all to myself." Staci laughs. "Just kidding! It totally wasn't me."

"Oh...uh, ha ha." I am not quite sure that I believe her.

"But seriously, I do get my own place. I was the rst building, right next to the employee recreational building." She points her thumb over her shoulder without looking back.

We turn to the right, reaching the end of the row of small stone houses.

"Here you are! This is your new home!" Staci gestures to the last house.

It is the only house facing a different way than the others, getting more view of the lake and the pier to the right of us.

"Oh! Wow! It's...just...so nice!"

Do I get to live in that?

My lips turn upward as I shake my head in slight disbelief and resist the urge to jump up and down while squealing in excitement.

It might be small, but it's mine.

Mine.

No foster family.

I almost want to pinch myself.

Staci whips out her phone beside me and her eyebrows crease as she reads something on it.

"I have to go." She doesn't look at me as she speaks, distracted. "One more thing, there is a midnight curfew for staff, stick to it. And there is a gated forest area on the East side of the club, you aren't allowed there. That's it, Dean is home, so you can go right in. He will show you around." See you!

Staci turns and throws a hand over her shoulder, still looking at her phone as she walks away, her heels making faint clicking sounds as she goes.

"Oh, uh ok. Bye!" I turn, still smiling, to look at the house again...and then her words sink in.

Wait...Dean? He? My roommate is a boy?

I turn back to call after Staci, but she is already turning the corner and quickly disappears out of sight.

Huh. She really moves fast for someone in heels.

I look back at the house and take a deep breath.

Well.

Okay then.

I can do this.

I totally got this.

Living with some random boy can't be worse than living with my last foster family.

Still...I feel my ears already turning pink just in anticipation of meeting my new male roommate, I awkwardly drag my broken suitcase up the pavers to the somewhat oversized front door of the small house.

I lift my hand to knock, but before I can, the door swings open.

My face is level with a naked, incredibly muscular, male torso.

I swallow and move my eyes up the tanned, broad chest, way up, to eventually meet the face of a stunningly, handsome man grinning down at me.