

Chapter 1: The Hospital

Quinn's POV

The sound of my alarm rang out in my bedroom, jerking me awake and reminding me of the very little sleep I managed to get. Working the night shift and then switching to the day shift at the hospital always threw me for a loop. Slamming my nger on the snooze button, I rolled over, trying to get ve more minutes in my warm cocoon of blankets. One minute into my snooze, however, my door burst open, and in danced a very chipper and annoying Brianna. Bringing with her the aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

"Rise and shine!" she sang, setting a full cup on my nightstand.

"I appreciate the gesture, but I've decided to quit and sell felt pictures instead," I groaned. She dropped herself onto the side of my bed and threw the covers back, exposing me to the chilly morning air from the cracked window.

"Come on! It's a beautiful October day, and we'll have a great time at work!" She shook me excitedly and energetically as her long black hair tickled my face. "We are ready, we are strong, we are amazing!"

"Your morning positive armations are giving me a migraine." I grabbed the cover and tried to draw them back over myself, hiding from her cheery morning personality. She grabbed the duvet in return, stood up, and threw it entirely off the bed. "Hey!" I yelled, sitting up.

"Come on, sunshine, we have to be at the hospital in an hour." Brianna turned and opened the door to my closet, icking the light on. I heard hangers being moved back and forth as she looked for something to borrow, which made little sense to me, seeing as we changed into scrubs as soon as we got into the locker room. Swinging my legs over the side of the bed, I grabbed the hot coffee cup and took a sip, letting it warm me before I got up to join her in the closet.

"Can I borrow this?" she asked, holing up a gray cable knit sweater.

"Sure, you're just gonna take it off in thirty minutes anyway."

"Hey, you never know who you're gonna meet along the way," she told me, batting her long eyelashes above her bright green eyes. I rolled my eyes, grabbing a pair of jeans and a tan sweater.

"Are you done in the bathroom?" I asked, standing in the doorway of the closet.

"Yeah, it's all yours," she said, not looking at me as she continued to rie through my clothes in just her bra and underwear, her perfect curvy body on full display. Going into our shared bathroom, I grabbed my coffee on the way out, taking another much-needed sip. After I turned the shower on, I glanced at myself in the small square mirror above the sink. My caramel honey shoulder-length hair was greasy and ready for a wash. I didn't have time for that today, so I grabbed some dry shampoo, spraying it liberally over the roots, showing what I would look like in twenty years. Two French braids would have to do until my shift was over tonight.

Since we only worked four days a week, our shifts were twelve hours. Luckily, today was Friday, and I had this weekend off. My 27th birthday passed two days ago, but I hadn't gotten a chance to celebrate yet. I pinned my braids up so they wouldn't get wet as I took my quick shower, taking one last sip of coffee before hopping into the hot water.

Once dressed, I joined Brianna in the kitchen for our usual breakfast of frozen waes, rst, reheating my coffee in our tiny dorm side microwave. We ate around our small circular table, which only t in the kitchen because we shoved it in the corner. Only two chairs t around it, but we made it work since Brianna and I were the only ones who ate there.

After breakfast, we went to the parking lot and got into my car for the quick ten-minute drive to the hospital. The only reason I had a car was because my grandmother left it to me after she passed away last year. It was old and had quirks, but it worked, taking us from point A to point B. I parked in our usual spot in the parking garage, and Brianna and I headed into the hospital, saying hello to a couple of our coworkers along the way. We both worked as nurses in the emergency department at one of the hospitals in Boston. We have been working here for ve years and living as roommates since college.

"Cutting it a little close today," our fellow nurse and friend Tanner joked as we entered the locker room.

"Sorry, someone decided to sleep in this morning," Brianna said sarcastically, opening her locker and placing her purse inside.

"Stayed out too late partying?" Tanner asked, already in his blue scrubs.

"Something like that," I said, checking on the status of my braids in the small mirror on my locker door.

"Maybe we'll get a massive trauma today that should wake you up," Tanner added, closing his locker.

"Only you would wish for someone to get so hurt they have to come to the ER," I told him, pulling my scrub top on.

"You know full well that most people who come to the ER don't need to," Brianna said over the top of her locker.

"Let's go, ladies!" Tanner yelled from the doorway. I checked my hair one more time in the mirror before shutting it and following Brianna and Tanner out onto the oor of the ER. One of the other nurses at the desk slammed the phone down and yelled,

"Incoming trauma. Multi-vehicle accident with severe injuries."

"Yes!" Tanner exclaimed, throwing his hands into the air.

"Gotta love the morning commutes," Brianna said.

"We barely got one foot in the door," I complained, grabbing gloves and a gown. I tied Brianna's gown, and she did the same for me as we waited for the incoming ambulances.

In no time, the ER was ooded with several gurneys. A school bus full of middle school kids had rear-ended an 18-wheeler going down the highway. I was currently setting the broken arm of a twelve-year-old girl.

"Well, you've had quite a morning," I joked, trying to ease the fear and tension on her face as she looked around at all the other kids being treated.

"Where's my mom?" she asked, terried about what was happening. The adrenaline was still high because she didn't seem to notice the pain her arm would be experiencing. She was shaking, even though I had given her several blankets.

"I don't know, sweetie, but she'll be here soon. Once I'm done here, I'll see if I can nd her."

"Quinn, I need you over here!"

"Morgan, I'll be right back," I said, reassuring her. Dr. Hildabrand was performing CPR on a boy who didn't look like he was older than thirteen and had just been brought in.

"Push one of EPI and charge the paddles to 200." I had taken over the ambu bag compressions while another nurse pushed the EPI into the boy's central line. "Clear!" he shouted as he placed the debrillator paddles on the boy's bare chest. He shocked him, checking the monitor for sinus rhythm. Nothing appeared on the screen, so he yelled, "Charge again, clear!" Letting go of the bag, I looked at the monitor, hoping to see even the slightest sign. The second time they shocked him, I sighed in relief as the tiny blip on the heart monitor soared to life.

Thankfully, we had gotten him back, and knowing he was in good hands with everyone else, I went back to Morgan, who now had tears streaming down her face, looking at the boy we had just shocked back to life. What an intense morning these children had. All they had been doing was riding the bus to school like any other day, and in the blink of an eye, many of them found themselves in the emergency room. Parents were beginning to ood the reception area now, and I knew it would soon be my duty to nd and reunite some of those families.

I enjoyed my job working in the ER very much. Knowing I was helping to save lives every day was a satisfying feeling. I loved helping people and making sure they were safe. It was my little contribution after what happened to my parents.

When I was seven years old, my parents got into a head-on collision on their way home from dinner. It had been a drunk driver who hit them, and neither of my parents made it out alive. My grandmother raised me from that point on until she passed last year from cancer.

After I nished putting a cast on Morgan's broken arm, I went to nd her parents. They were sitting together in the waiting room, her mom sitting in a chair chewing on her nails while her dad paced back and forth in front of her.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gonzalas?" I asked as I approached. Morgan's mom jumped to her feet, nearly knocking me over in her attempt to get right in front of me.

"Is Morgan alright?" she breathed, covering her mouth with her hand.

"Yes, she has a broken arm and a few bruises from being bumped around, but other than that, she's okay," I told them with a smile.

"Oh, thank God," her mom sighed as her dad placed an arm around her shoulder.

"I can take you back to see her if you'd like," I said.

"Yes, of course!"

After reuniting Morgan and her parents, I continued my shift with the other patients in the ER. It was nearing the end of the day, and after everything that had happened, I looked forward to the entire weekend off. Standing at the nurse's station, putting information onto the computer, Brianna came bounding over to me.

"So, are you ready for tonight?" she asked, with a bright, mischievous smile in her eyes.

"What are we doing tonight?" I asked, not looking away from the computer screen.

"Celebrating your birthday, duh!" Brianna responded with an air of 'you should know that' in her voice.

"We just worked a crazy twelve-hour shift," I told her, noting the time on the clock was almost seven at night.

"All the more reason to celebrate. And besides, no place around here gets poppin' until midnight." I opened my mouth to protest, but she held her nger up. "No! No excuses. You're going out and gonna have a good time!" I wanted to argue with her, but I knew better. This was usually how it went when she wanted to go out. I protested and said I didn't want to go out. She forced me, and then we ended up having an excellent time. It was our routine, and who was I to ruin that?

"Fine," I agreed with a slight smile. Tanner had come to stand beside Brianna, and they looked at each other, smiling. He must be in on this idea as well.

"Perfect! We'll all go back to your place to get ready," he said.

"You have clothes?" I asked Tanner.

"I brought some with me. Did you think I wasn't in on this entire thing?"

"I should have known as much," I joked.

"Finish your charts, and we'll meet you in the locker room," Brianna told me.

"We still haven't decided where we're going," I reminded her.

"Oh, my asking you was a formality. I know exactly where we're going," she winked. Tanner and she walked away, leaving me to nish my charts in peace, until one of the doctors, Victor Gilbert, came to take my nish in front of me. He leaned on the counter and smiled at me while I rolled my eyes internally. Talking to him was like talking to wallpaper. Victor was arrogant and thought he was the most fantastic doctor in Massachusetts. No one felt like dealing with the fallout of telling him the truth.

"I saved six patients today. I believe they call that all in a day's work," he chuckled. I just looked up from my charts and gave him an awkward smile. "Any big plans this weekend?"

"Nope, not much happening to me."

"That's too bad. I have a date." I was unsure how he wanted me to respond to that, so I kept it short.

"That sounds nice," I replied, signing out of the computer system to prepare it for the next person. "Have fun," I added.

"Yeah, this girl has been begging me to go out for months, so I nally threw her a bone."

"Cool, well, as I said, have fun." I started to walk away, and he began following me. "Don't you have patients to go check on? Six is a lot for one person."

"That's nothing. I've handled way more than that in one day," he chuckled.

"That's great. My friends are waiting for me in the locker room, so..."

"I thought you said you didn't have plans."

"We're just going out to celebrate my birthday. It's nothing crazy," I told him.

"That's exciting. Where are you going?"

"I don't know. They planned everything. But I'm gonna be late if I don't head out now."

"You guys should go to this charming restaurant on Main Street. It takes months to get a reservation, but I know the owner, so I could always give them a call and help you out." He gave me a cocky smile like I should be thanking him or something. The sight made me want to vomit.

"I think we're gonna pass," I said.

"Why? It's not like you don't..."

"Victor! There you are." I looked around him and saw one of our neurologists, Zander, approaching us. Victor sighed but turned around to face him.

"I've been paging you for ten minutes. You asked for a neurology consult on your patient in room three." Taking the opportunity, I ducked through the door to the locker room, where Brianna and Tanner had already changed out of their scrubs and were waiting for me.

"Where have you been?" Brianna asked, annoyed at having to wait for me.

"Victor cornered me while I was nishing up and followed me here. I only got away because Zander distracted him." I opened my locker and began changing out of my scrubs and into my clothes. Brianna was never going to let me go out in a sweater and jeans. She probably had a whole outt waiting for me at home. After changing, the three of us climbed into my car and returned to our apartment.