

## “Summer”

I breathe in the smell of my coconut sunscreen, although, it doesn't really smell like coconut. It smells like summer at the cove with my friends. It smells like Dad and like packing gear for camping. It smells like the river with the cousins, too afraid to step in the water because of the crawdads. I rub it in, Lana Del Rey's *Radio* playing on my Bluetooth speaker. I stuff another corner of waffle into my mouth.

“Are you taking your own car?” my sister asks, poking her head in the door.

“Yeah,” I say.

“Okay,” she says and turns away. A few minutes later I heard her truck roar to life and zoom off. I continue wandering around my room getting ready and finishing my breakfast. Eventually, I make my way to the kitchen to make a latte, tie a bandana over my hair, throw my wallet and phone into a backpack, grab my keys, and head for my car, locking up the house on my way out. I slide into my '06 Taurus, roll the windows down, back out of the driveway, music blaring, and head towards the motel my sister and her husband bought a few months back. They moved to the coast once they were married, leaving our parents and me four hours away. The motel needed some work and I adore the coast, so I volunteered to come stay with my sister for the summer and help them fix the place up.

I've been cleaning and painting while Natalie and Miles have been doing the renovations. I cleaned my dance studio back home and enjoy the undivided time for audiobooks and music.

When I pulled into the parking lot, another car sat beside my sister's old Tacoma. And it wasn't Miles's either because he came with Nat, and he doesn't have a convertible Mustang. I grabbed my bag off the passenger seat and kicked my door shut, double-clicking my key fob to set my car alarm.

“Hey Nat, there's another car in the parking lot,” I told my sister as I slung my backpack onto the front desk counter.

“I know,” she replied, “Miles has a family friend who needed a summer job, and the extra help will get this place in shape before summer is over.”

“There you are!” Miles called walking down the hallway towards us. “Layla, this is Trigger, Trig, this is my sister-in-law, Layla.”

“Nice to meet you,” the tall dark-haired boy said, reaching out his hand to shake mine.

“Hi,” I replied, reaching out mine as well, with a smile.

“He'll be helping with the painting and cleaning,” Miles added.

I gave a nod and grabbed my headphones out of my backpack. “I finished the third floor except for two rooms,” I said.

“We’ll leave you two to that, Miles and I are moving on to the first floor,” Nat said grabbing her coffee and taking Miles's hand.

Grabbing my bag, I started toward the staircase. I could hear Trigger behind me, and I held the door to the stairwell open for him, “Thanks,” he said.

We jogged up the stairs to the third floor.

“Do you want to work on them together, or each take a room?” Trigger asked.

“It’ll probably get done faster if we each take a room,” I replied.

He nodded and we each started into the last two rooms on the third floor. I left one earbud out so I could hear him ask questions or make comments as we both worked on our rooms.

I brought my Bluetooth speaker the next day and we’d take turns changing the music as we cleaned, a soundtrack that ranged from country to rock’n’roll to pop, in the span of an hour. This was how we spent most of that week, cleaning, painting, and jamming out to music.

I spent that Saturday working at the motel with Nat and Miles, but Trigger had taken the weekend off.

“Miles and I are going out for dinner,” Nat said and handed me a \$50 bill, “Go enjoy your Saturday night.”

“I’m in a good rhythm, I’ll finish this room first,” I said, and Nat nodded, “Don’t forget to lock up.”

The motel had code-operated doors, but there was also a manual deadbolt we locked whenever we left.

I got back to work, music blasting as I finished cleaning the bathroom of room 20. I turned around, ready to lock up and go get food when Trigger startled me from the doorway. “Sorry,” he said, chuckling at my startled look. I put my hand on my heart as I tried to catch my breath, laughing myself.

“Hey, do you want to go grab dinner?” he asked.

I grinned, “Really?”

“Yeah,” he said.

“Can I change first?” I asked, looking down at the ratty clothes I worked in every day.

“Well, you already look great, but yes,” he replied, and I’m pretty sure I blushed.

“Fifteen minutes?” I asked.

“Whenever you’re ready,” he replied.

“Oh, here,” I said handing him my phone after creating a new contact and filling in his name. He punched in his number, and I texted “Hi.”

He smiled as he pulled out his phone and put my contact in.

We locked up the motel and I drove back to my sister’s house. I took a fast shower, and quickly put on a little makeup. I put on a little green sundress that complimented my hair and slid into my sparkly flip-flops. I sent a quick text to Nat too,

ME: I’m going to dinner... with Trigger.

NAT: Like a date?!

ME: I hope so.

NAT: Be home by midnight

ME: Probably before then, but okay.

NAT: HAVE FUN!!!

ME: You too!!

I grabbed my purse and locked the house. Trigger was waiting in the driveway in his Mustang. He looked up at me and smiled.