

Penguin



Readers



ONE

A Geek, A Jock, A Criminal, A Princess

OF US

A MURDER

IS

Who would you believe?

LYING

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CHAPTER ONE

Monday, September 24th

Bayview High School, near San Diego, California

Bronwyn Rojas

2:55 p.m.

I'm looking at my phone when I hear a voice. "That's old news, Bronwyn," says Simon Kelleher. "Wait till you see my next **post**!"

I hate it when anyone finds me reading About That, Simon's horrible **gossip app**, and certainly when it's Simon himself. I set off down the corridor, and he walks beside me.

"Whose lives are you **ruining** next, Simon?" I ask him.

"If all these Bayview High students didn't cheat and lie, I wouldn't have anything to write. Anyway, where are you going? Are you going to do more great things?"

I don't answer, but he's still with me when I get to Mr. Avery's science lab. He starts laughing as I push the door open.

"Bronwyn Rojas is in **detention**!"

"It's a mistake," I say. Then, I see who is in the room and I'm surprised. Except about one person. Nate's been in trouble since fifth grade, which is probably the last time we spoke to each other. He's on **probation** at the moment for selling **drugs**. So Nate isn't a surprise. But Cooper and Addy are. Cooper, the school's baseball star and most popular jock, and Addy, the pretty, blond, **homecoming** princess, are part of the same group of friends. Why are all of us here?

"Mr. Avery," I say, "it wasn't my phone that you found in my bag."

“So that happened to you, too?” says Addy. “It wasn’t my phone in my bag either.”

“Same for me,” says Cooper. “Did someone put phones in our bags?”

Nate just nods.

“Somebody **tricked** us,” says Simon.

Addy and Cooper and I agree. Nate is silently balancing on the two back legs of his chair.

“Maybe it was somebody who spends a lot of time in detention,” Simon says. “Somebody who thought it would be fun to trick some good students.” He’s looking at Nate, who doesn’t answer. But I can’t believe Nate would do it. It would be too much like hard work.

“You know my rules, Miss Rojas,” says Mr. Avery. “No phones in class. Now, you can all write five hundred words on ‘How technology is ruining American schools.’”

Cooper Clay

3:05 p.m.

After five minutes, my hand is hurting; I’m not used to writing with a pen. Simon is searching his backpack. “Where’s my water bottle?” he says.

“No talking, Mr. Kelleher,” says Mr. Avery.

“But my water bottle is missing. And I’m thirsty.”

Mr. Avery points toward the back of the room. “Get yourself a drink.”

Simon gets up, takes a cup from a pile near the sink, and fills it with water from the tap. He sits down again, holding the

cup, and speaks to Nate. “Hey! Did you put those phones in our backpacks?”

Mr. Avery looks up.

“Why would I do that?” asks Nate.

Simon opens his mouth to answer, but suddenly we hear a loud crash. We all run to the window. In the parking lot, a red car and a gray one have crashed into each other. Mr. Avery looks **annoyed**. “I’d better make sure no one was hurt. Miss Rojas, you look after things until I get back.”

Simon follows Mr. Avery to the door, and I think he’s going to leave, too, but he turns and raises his cup to us as if he’s saying, “Cheers!” Then, he speaks to Addy. “How are you going to spend your time now that homecoming is over? There’s a lot of time between now and senior **prom**.”

Addy doesn’t answer because you are likely to find anything you say on About That. Simon acts like he doesn’t care about anyone, but sometimes I wonder if that’s true. He was voted on to junior prom court last spring, and he seemed happy about it. Maybe people voted for him because he had agreed to keep their secrets.

“What do you mean?” I ask him.

“Well, you’re all **stereotypes** from a teen movie, aren’t you?” he says. “Addy’s a homecoming princess. You’re a jock, Cooper.” Then, he points at Bronwyn and Nate. “You’re smart—a ‘brain’, in fact. You’re a **criminal**.”

“What about you?” asks Bronwyn.

“I’m the storyteller who sees everything,” Simon says.

“There’s nobody like that in teen movies,” Bronwyn says.

“But, Bronwyn,” replies Simon as he drinks the cup of water, “this is real life.”

I wonder whether Simon is going to **post** something on his stupid **app** about Bronwyn. People get really hurt. My friend Luis and his girlfriend **broke up** because of it. What he posted was true, like it always is—but there’s no need to tell everyone. And, if I’m honest, I’m worried about what Simon **could post** about me.

When Simon drops the cup and it falls to the floor, I think he’s acting. But then he starts making awful noises.

It’s Nate who realizes what is going on. He **kneels** by Simon, saying, “He’s having an **allergic reaction**. Have you got an EpiPen, Simon?”

Simon nods wildly. Nate starts throwing things out of Simon’s backpack. Bronwyn says, “I’m going to find a teacher and call for an ambulance.”

She runs out of the room.

“Simon! Where is it?” shouts Nate. But Simon can’t talk. He’s **gasping** for **breath**.

Mr. Avery runs back into the room with some other teachers and Bronwyn.

“We can’t find his EpiPen,” says Nate.

Mr. Avery stares and looks really frightened for a moment, then he says, “Cooper, get the EpiPens from the nurse’s office.”

But I can’t find any in the nurse’s office. I can hear the ambulance getting closer, and, when I get back to the lab, paramedics are already lifting Simon on to a stretcher and one of them is pushing an EpiPen into him.

“Can you come with us?” one of the paramedics says to Mr. Avery. He nods and follows the stretcher out of the room, leaving the four of us. I realize everything has happened in fifteen minutes, but it feels like hours. Addy is crying. “Is he OK now?” she asks.

“I don’t think so,” Nate says.



Addy Prentiss

3:25 p.m.

I try to text Jake, but my hands are shaking too much. So I call him instead.

“Baby?” he says, sounding surprised. We always text each other.

“Jake” is all I can say before I start crying again. Cooper puts his arm round my shoulders and takes the phone from me. He tells Jake about Simon, and says we’ll meet him outside.

“Simon is allergic to **peanuts**, of course,” someone says.

“I suppose we should keep the cup,” a teacher says, picking it up.

Jake is outside, and I fall into his arms. Cooper explains more about what happened.

“God, Addy,” Jake says. “Let’s get you home.”

While he is driving me home, I say **miserably** to Jake, “I was the only one who was useless. Everybody was great, even Nate Macauley.”

Jake touches my arm. “Don’t talk like that,” he says. “It’s not true.”

He only wants to see the best in me. If that ever changed, I don’t know what I would do.

Nate Macauley

4 p.m.

When Bronwyn and I get to the parking lot, it’s nearly empty. I’ve known her since we started school, and we don’t spend time together, but I feel comfortable with her.

“I was supposed to get a ride,” she says. “But . . .”

“I can get you home,” I say, nodding at my old motorcycle.