

honey
on
your
mind

Waverly Bryson Takes New York



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chapter one

“I can’t believe you’re giving up this great apartment,” Andie said. “Do you know how many people would kill to live here for so cheap?”

I squinted at her. “You can’t believe I’m giving up this *apartment?*”

She laughed and took a sip of Diet Coke. “I mean, I can’t believe you’re *moving*. You know I’m totally going to miss you.”

“Thank you. That’s much better.”

She rolled her eyes. “Please, we’ve been over this like a thousand times. You know I hate you for leaving me.”

“I know, I know. I sort of hate myself right now.” I looked around the nearly empty living room, the families of tiny dust bunnies skittering across the hardwood floors. The whole place looked much smaller now than in my memory of when I first saw it. Had it already been ten years since college? Part of me could still remember what it felt like to move in...my first real apartment...my first real job...my first taste of real life.

My thoughts drifted from the past to what lay ahead—and the woman who, albeit inadvertently, had made it all happen.

Wendy Davenport, ugh.

Several months earlier, my good friend Scotty Ryan, a features reporter for the *Today* show, had invited me to appear on a Valentine’s Day segment about love and dating. At the time, I was writing a newspaper column on those topics, so it was a good

fit, not to mention great exposure. Overall, the appearance had gone well, despite the fact that I was unexpectedly ambushed by Wendy, who also had been invited to appear. I hadn't known it at the time, but Wendy had been jockeying for a position as a TV talk show host. She showed me up on stage by asking some pointed questions about my *personal* love life that I wasn't prepared to answer at all, much less before millions of people.

Since then her syndicated advice column, *Love, Wendy*, had been turned into a full-blown TV talk show on NBC, and they'd made Scotty the executive producer. Shrugging off our rocky introduction, Scotty thought I would make a good addition to her show, and he was higher up in the decision-making food chain than she was.

Then came the phone call that changed my life.

It was a part-time gig, but part-time in TV pays the rent. It would also give me a financial boost to get my online project, Waverly's Honey Shop, off the ground. In a moment of inspiration, I'd recently launched a small line of T-shirts, tote bags, and other products with fun slogans about trying to figure life out (my personal favorite was I KNOW NOTHING, BUT AT LEAST I KNOW THAT), but it was stalled until I could improve my cash-flow situation.

"Waverly? You still there?"

I blinked. "Sorry, yep, still here. What did you say?"

"I asked when you're going to meet up with Paige."

I closed my eyes and scratched my forehead. "Um, I know the answer to that. I really do."

"So it's on your calendar?"

I opened my eyes and nodded. "It most certainly is. It's just that my calendar is currently located in a box somewhere, a box whose location is currently uncertain."

“You’ll love her. She’s by far the nicest person in my family. In fact, she’s too nice.”

I raised my eyebrows. “Nicer than you?”

She coughed and took another sip of her drink. “Yeah, right. Like you or anyone I’ve ever met would use the word *nice* to describe me.”

I laughed and reached for a broom propped against a wall. “Good point. I’m really looking forward to meeting her.”

“You know, now that I think about it, she might give you a run for your money in the ‘bad date’ department.”

I turned around. “*Excuse me?*” I’d yet to meet anyone who could match my repertoire of dating horror stories.

“You’ll see. I told you, she’s a bit too nice for her own good.” She pointed at me. “And as *you* know all too well, missy, nice girls get dumped on a lot.”

I opened my mouth to protest, but we both knew she was right. I considered myself a nice person, and though I had a boyfriend now, my romantic history was, shall we say, *checkered*.

As I stood there holding the broom in silence, Andie finished her drink and took another look around. “So are you all packed? The taxi’s coming at the crack of dawn, right?”

My eyes wandered across the room until they came to rest on a tangle of black cables sticking out of the wall. I still didn’t know what half of them were for. I nodded. “I’m actually not bringing all that much with me. I realized once I started going through my clothes how I never wear most of what I own anyway. So I’m pretty much going to start over after I’m settled. It’s a good excuse to go shopping in New York, don’t you think?”

“Definitely. Did you end up sending all your furniture with the movers?”

I began to sweep. “Most of it. I sold some stuff on craigslist and gave some to Goodwill. I figured it would be fun to do a bit of decorating when I get there. Maybe hit some antique shows, flea markets, that sort of thing.”

She put a hand on her hip. “Look at you, all Brooklyn hipster already. I’m impressed.”

I laughed. “Brooklyn Heights is *hardly* the hipster part of Brooklyn. It’s basically cute brownstones surrounded by cute coffee shops. And guess what? I got my new landlord to paint the walls in—”

She interrupted me. “Don’t tell me. Various shades of green and blue?”

I narrowed my eyes. “How did you know that?”

“Hello? You’ve only been saying for years that you wanted to paint your walls various shades of green and blue.”

“I have?”

“OK then, someone clearly hasn’t been listening to herself. Anyhow, part of me is a little jealous of this big adventure of yours. I’ve always wanted to live in New York.”

“Really? I didn’t know that.”

“Yeah, Paris, London, and New York. I’ve always thought they would be fun places to live at some point. I mean, look at all the action in my life right here, and San Francisco is a *fraction* of their size. Can you imagine how much trouble I could get into if I left here?”

“I’m afraid to even think about that.”

She nodded. “Oh, you’ll be thinking about it soon enough. Believe me, my dear, now that I have a couch to crash on, I’ll be coming to visit you on a regular basis.”

“You’d better.”

She rubbed her hands together. “Oh, I will. Now let’s go to Dino’s. McKenna’s probably arriving soon, and I’m starving.”

I leaned the broom against the wall and picked up my purse from the floor. “Sounds good. I think this place is clean enough that I should get my security deposit back.”

As we left the nearly empty apartment, I tried not to look back.

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“The usual?” Andie barely glanced at me as she flagged down the waiter. We always ordered the same thing, so I just nodded in agreement. Within seconds, a frosty pitcher of Bud Light appeared on the table between us. They knew us well at Dino’s.

I picked up the pitcher and poured us each a glass, then slowly looked around the restaurant. “I’m really going to miss this place, Andie.”

“And this place is really going to miss you. But *you*, my friend, are on to bigger and better things, so let’s be adults and deal with it.” She raised her beer for a toast.

I sighed as I clinked my mug against hers. “Believe me, I’m doing my best.”

“So Jake’s meeting you there?”

I nodded with a smile at the thought of seeing Jake again, especially of seeing his blue eyes again. “He’s going to help me unpack and get settled. He flies in Friday afternoon, and the movers arrive Saturday morning.”

She covered her heart with both hands. “So romantic. At least you’ll be living on the same side of the country now.”

“Yeah, that should make things a lot easier. Not that I don’t like Atlanta, but I’m getting sick of those long flights, not to

mention the airplane hair.” Jake and I had officially been a couple for six months, but it had been nearly a year since we first kissed and almost two since I’d met him. He’d been living in Atlanta that whole time—which meant an awful lot of bad in-flight movies...and flat airplane hair.

“Totally understandable. Airplane hair blows, especially when a hottie like Jake’s waiting for you on the other side of security. She took a sip of her beer, and then gestured toward the entrance. “Hey, there she is.”

I turned around to see an uncharacteristically disheveled McKenna approach our table. I stood up to give her a hug, but she stiff-armed me.

“I have fresh baby puke on me. You’d be wise to keep your distance.” She looked exhausted.

I laughed and sat back down. “It’s nice to see you too.”

McKenna plopped into a seat next to Andie, whose eyes bulged at the post-baby boobs. “Holy hell, woman. Have you registered your cannonballs with the police department? You could do some serious damage with those things.”

McKenna hung her purse on the back of her chair. “Always a comedian. I’m sorry for being late. Hunter was stuck in surgery, Elizabeth was having a fit trying to latch on, and I just couldn’t get out of there. Then, of course, I hit traffic on the bridge. You know how it goes.”

Andie picked up her beer and smiled. “Actually, I don’t know how it goes, because I, as you know, am blissfully childless and live right here in the city. Did I mention I took a nap this afternoon?” She yawned and stretched her tiny arms over her head.

McKenna laughed. “Suck it.”

“I’ll leave that to your daughter,” Andie said.

McKenna laughed again. “I hate you right now. I’m laughing, but I’m hating.”

Andie took a sip of her beer. “Hey now, *you’re* the one who got married and pregnant. It’s not my fault that I’m well rested and having regular sex.”

“Still hating you,” McKenna said.

“So Elizabeth’s not sleeping through the night yet?” I asked.

McKenna shook her head. “It’s brutal. I adore the munchkin, I really do, but I’ve never been so sleep-deprived. Even in my early days of investment banking, it wasn’t this bad. Who would have thought such a small person could wreak so much havoc?”

“She’s not that small,” Andie said. “She’s sort of a chunk, if you ask me.”

McKenna put her hand over Andie’s mouth. “Seriously, could you shut it? I don’t want to do something that will get me arrested.”

I tried not to laugh. “Thanks for making the effort to come into the city, Mackie. It means so much to me that you’re here on my last night.”

Her face went soft. “Oh gosh, Wave, are you kidding? I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. I still can’t believe you’re going to become a New Yorker.”

“You and me both. But I just felt like I couldn’t turn this opportunity down, no matter how scary it is.”

She nodded. “Definitely, there’s no way you could have said no. I’m going to miss you to death, but I’m so excited for you.”

I interlaced my fingers in front of me. “I’m terrified, but I agree.”

“I feel like I’m about to start the next chapter in *The Book of Waverly*—if I ever had the time to read anything besides the side of a diaper box, that is.”

“Hello? I’m trying to eat here,” Andie said.

McKenna ignored her and put her hand on my shoulder. “I’m so proud of you, Wave, I know how hard change is for you, but I think this will turn out to be the best thing you’ve done for yourself in years.”

I raised my eyebrows. “Better than when I finally grew out my bangs?”

Andie sipped her beer. “And thank God you did. No one with a cowlick should *ever* have bangs. Those things were totally crooked.”

“Thanks for the reminder,” I said.

“My pleasure.” She reached for a fresh slice of pizza. “So tell us more about the new job. When do you start?”

“In two weeks.”

“I can’t believe you’re going to work for that woman after the way she treated you,” Andie said. “Talk about a bitch.”

I sighed. “I know, but I don’t think I’ll be working *with* her all that much, to be honest. I’ll just be taping a segment for two shows a week, three if it goes well. If I’m lucky, maybe I won’t have to interact with her at all.”

“A control freak like that? I doubt it,” Andie said.

“So the rest of the time you’ll be dealing with getting your honey products off the ground?” McKenna asked.

“Yep.”

Andie pushed her hair behind her ears. “That and learning how to act normal on TV. We know how well that went last time.”

I winced at the memory of my one previous television appearance. Not a *complete* disaster, but hardly a smashing success. “This is true, and I promise to get better. As for the honey products, Waverly’s Honey Shop may be a breakout phenomenon in our little world of three, but if I want to kick it up a notch, I really

need to, well, kick it up a notch. I'm so glad Andie's cousin is going to help me with that."

"At least the TV job will help you pay for it," McKenna said.

I nodded. "Thank God. Bootstrapping my little business is turning out to be a lot more expensive than I thought it would be."

"I can't believe everything worked out this way," McKenna said. "It's almost like it was meant to be."

"I know, talk about perfect timing," Andie said.

I picked up a piece of pizza and thought about the rent-controlled apartment I'd just given up. "I hope you're right, my friends, because otherwise I just made a huge mistake."