

EXCERPT: *Seven Stitches*

Portland, Oregon

Saturday, March 9, 2058, 8:17 a.m. Pacific standard time

I wrapped two of Rose's fresh-baked biscuits in a dishtowel and raced back upstairs in my nightgown to my mother's room. Jessa and I were a gluesome twosome most Saturday mornings, a mother-daughter binary sharing biscuits in Jessa's bed.

I opened my mother's bedroom door. Jessa's bed was its usual self. Jessa says it's a waste of time to make your bed except to change linens. Desks should be organized. So should bathrooms, closets, kitchen shelves, Chicken Hacienda, and the goat shed. Beds—hers was "the Jessa nest" and mine "Meryem's mess"—can be any way you want.

The note taped to Jessa's headboard read:

QUICK TRIP. HOME SOON.



A look outside showed Jessa's car juicing up on morning sun, so she'd biked or walked somewhere. Or maybe she took the streetcar. She might be at the farmers market buying something luscious. Or at The Anthony smoothing things over between Auntie An and Grandma. She might be home any minute.

I snuggled into the Jessa nest, unwrapped the biscuits to breathe in their buttery aroma, and then wrapped them up again. I waited. Four minutes. Five.

Still, fresh-baked biscuits demand immediate consumption. I sat by Jessa's desk, switched on our PerSafe receiver, and thumbed her code. Three seconds later, the PerSafe flashed her coordinates: 45°43' 19" N, 123°56' 02" W.

Manzanita—one hundred fifty kilometers away.

Cyber hiccup, I thought. My mother wouldn't go to the coast without me. I vid-voiced her.

"Good morning, lovey!" Jessa sparkled in the sunlight, her magenta hair looking extra purple, shinier than mine.

"Are you really in Manzanita?"

She laughed. "Yup. Just south of Neahkahnne Mountain. Sorry. It's for work, lovey. Boring, boring, boring. I'll be home late this afternoon. We'll do something fun then."

Manzanita is never boring. I waved a biscuit in front of the screen. “You’re missing fresh-baked biscuits,” I said, which was easier to manage than telling Jessa she should have invited me. We could have been a gruesome twosome on the coast. I took a bite. “Yum!”

Jessa scrunched her face. “I sacrifice for science. Save a biscuit for me.”

I took another bite. “Maybe. Is that a guy I hear in the background?”

Jessa looked to her left, then back at me, all smiles. “Yusuf is a colleague from Istanbul. He . . . well, you might say he’s in charge of our fieldwork this morning. He’s going to have dinner with us. Tell Rose, okay? Whatever she makes will be delicious.”

I brushed a crumb from my lips. “Can’t your work wait until Monday?”

“Listen, biscuit breath, Yusuf says we’re ready. I have to go. See you in a bit. Love you.”

I frowned and clicked off, not bothering to say love you too, or good-bye. She was having fun on the beach. I was stuck at home. Unfair.

I wedged my feet into flip-flops and wrapped Jessa’s biscuit to take to Munchkina and Chewsette. My goats loved treats. My goats didn’t sneak out without me. My goats cherished my company.

I was walking to the goat shed out back when the neighborhood dogs started barking like crazy. My legs felt wobbly, as if they had delinked from my brain. My flip-flops vibrated against the soles of my feet.