

**PRESCRIPTION
FOR
DISASTER**

Broken World, Unbroken Spirit

SUNDAY O BLACKWELL

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Dedication



*I dedicate this book to those who are constantly
struggling with the legal and justice system all
over the world.*

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CHAPTER ONE



Life has a strange and profound way of connecting people. They plodded along with their daily lives, not believing or assuming that someone just a few blocks away would significantly impact their existence.

All the lights in the boardroom were dimmed, making the projector's light shine even brighter. It illuminated a large screen showcasing the statistics and advantages of the new drug Emazorpram. Fifty-year-old Derrien, with his odd triangle-shaped body, stood in front of the screen, directly in the light. For most, the bright light would be blinding or uncomfortable, causing them to at least squint. However, Derrien, empowered by arrogance and self-righteousness, wasn't fazed. His I.D. tag that exposed his consultancy with

Latacar and Marsup blinked in the light and irritated the hospital board members.

Derrien, unperturbed by the eight board members' discomfort or that he was quickly losing their interest forged ahead with boring statistics and case studies. The board members sat at the long, rectangular mahogany table, usually seating twenty-four, and looked lost in the sea of seats. However, Derrien only focused on Dr. Legacy, "Do you understand what this will mean for your hospital?" He knew she would catch his hidden ulterior motives.

Dr. Legacy shifted in her seat, about to speak, but Adam, a board member sitting next to her, gestured assertively to get his point across, "We don't doubt the effectiveness of the drug," he paused. Before he could continue, another board member, who had been silent the entire time, interrupted Adam, "It's the implementation that bothers us."

Derrien took a few steps and stood by the table. He placed his hands flat on the table and leaned forward so everyone could clearly see his determined expression. He sighed, took a deep, exaggerated breath, and said, "Your hospital receives very generous funding because of the staff's spirit for cooperation, like, for instance, Dr. Legacy here."

Derrien gestured toward Dr. Legacy and smirked, bribing a reaction from her.

Dr. Legacy smiled and nodded assuredly at the board members, then looked back at Derrien with a “Was that good enough?” expression. She could read the uncertainty in Derrien’s eyes but merely ignored it.

“I think you should all re-evaluate the priorities, yours and the hospital’s because the methods we employ are non-negotiable,” Derrien stated as a matter of fact. However, it was not received very well by some of the members.

Derrien’s presentation and the debate between him and the members continued for another half an hour while Dr. Legacy remained a silent observer. Eventually, she closed her file, gathered her phone, pens, highlighters, and file, and stood addressing the members and Derrien, “I think we should call this a day. We can resume again when everyone has had time to think about what has been delivered by Derrien.”

The board members grumbled disapprovingly but followed Dr. Legacy’s lead. The light flickered back on, making everyone blink incessantly as their vision refocused, and slowly, they exited the room one by one. Derrien and Dr. Legacy were the last to leave.

Dr. Legacy straightened her white doctor's gown over her black top and white skirt. Her clothes hugged her perfectly shaped body. Anyone passing her on the street would think she was a glamorous model or a young 20-something A-list actress, never a 40-something astute and highly respected doctor. She was a little over average height, 5.7ft, blonde and beautiful, but with a no-nonsense demeanor. Just by looking at her, you knew she was a person with authority who demanded attention when she spoke.

Derrien caught up to Dr. Legacy's quick pace, walking down the corridor. Out of breath and agitated, he vented on Dr. Legacy.

"What was that? I thought you said they were all onboard?"

"They are. I've already administered the drug to several patients. I told you meeting them like this would be a bad idea. It's best if you don't give them a voice. I won't tell you this again," Dr. Legacy said closing the subject. However, Derrien was not finished.

"Then our friend, the lawyer, Trent Bilkes, must stop leaving me phone messages." His reply was more of a threat than a statement. Regardless, Dr. Legacy was surprised at this new information.

“Trent is calling you?” She asked.

They arrived at the elevators. Derrien immediately pressed the ‘down’ button.

Derrien nodded emphatically, “I don’t like lawyers, especially the likes of him leaving me messages. I know the hospital is our mutual client, but it makes me nervous, and I don’t like being nervous.”

“I’m surprised he is calling you. But you should take his calls. He would only call you if it is relevant to the hospital,” she said

“Whatever. The point is your board does not seem to be on board. Is this going to be a problem?”

“The point is, it doesn’t matter. I decide what to administer to patients. Stop worrying and just do your job,” Dr. Legacy said defiantly.

“Drug companies pay me to worry.” Derrien, always with the last word, entered the elevator.

Dr. Legacy grimaced, knowing it was a definite threat. But, being the professional she was and the ultimate goal ahead of them, she brushed it off and headed to her office.

The wail of an ambulance siren carried up to heaven caught Dr. Legacy's attention. She sidestepped to the massive, thick-plated glass windows and peered down on the ant-like world of New York City below her. As an ambulance rushed into the ER entrance, her heart rate hastened. Immediately, her mind focused on the next set of patients to whom the drug would be administered. "Perhaps this is another possible test patient," she hopefully thought, turned, and headed for the elevators to take her to the ER.

In front of the hospital's ER entrance, the paramedics flew out of the ambulance without missing a second before it came to a complete stop. They pulled out the gurney, and the wheels made a clanking noise as they connected to the ground. A Pakistani patient with a bleeding wound in his side, coloring the sheets red, wobbled with the gurney as he was rushed into the hospital by the ER receiving staff, interns, and paramedics. The massive glass double doors automatically opened as they approached, whooshing open and closed. While running to the only available bed, the paramedics informed the interns of the patient's vitals, symptoms, and causes. By the time they reached the bed for transfer, the interns were fully informed, and with a joint effort, the patient was transferred from the gurney to the bed. The paramedics gathered their equipment,

signed off their part, and retreated to the ambulance. Just another patient, just another day.

The patient's I.V. was hung on a stand, and interns immediately rechecked his vitals. Machines were hooked up and connecting cables with pads were stuck onto the patient. The doctors called for tests, the interns relayed vitals to others, and wrote them down on the patient's chart, all while the patient continuously cried and squirmed in distress.

The ER was a constant buzz of noise, voices, and crying from patients or their loved ones. Each person raised their voice to be heard. The curtains around the beds were opened and closed, swishing on the metal rails. Trolleys with equipment were wheeled in and out, and nurses, interns, doctors, patients, and supporting friends and families moved about in no coordinated manner. It was organized chaos.

While the interns and doctors frantically worked to stabilize the bleeding wound, Dr. Legacy arrived. As always, her authoritative demeanor demanded immediate attention. She read Yousef's chart. Sixty-eight years old from Pakistan, no next of kin, no record of any medical history. She held the clipboard to her chest, caught the eye of an intern, and motioned for him to come to her. He took two strides and

stood next to Dr. Legacy so that only she would hear when he spoke.

The intern covertly said, “He doesn’t have insurance.”

Dr. Legacy nodded, acknowledging the hidden message only meant for the two of them. She approached the patient, stood at the side of the bed, and leaned toward him so he could hear her among the doctors and interns chatting and their actions.

“Yousef, do you speak English?” She asked.

Yousef, too concerned with his wound and the excruciating pain he was enduring, did not pay any heed to Dr. Legacy. He cried out in agony with expletives of his native tongue.

Dr. Legacy, determined to get her way, repeated, “Yousef, I am Dr. Legacy. To help you, I need to know if you speak English?”

Yousef nodded. However, whether the nod was an admission to Dr. Legacy’s question or merely a reflex from pain was debatable. Dr. Legacy was not up for any debates and took his nod as a sign that he knew English and understood her.

“Yousef. I need you to sign this consent form so we can give you medicine for the pain.”

She placed the clipboard with the consent form on top of his chest and handed him a pen, “Sign here.” She pointed to the spot where he had to write his signature. Yousef scribbled something. Most certainly not a signature by any means, but Dr. Legacy accepted it nonetheless.

“I also need you to give your consent verbally, Yousef. Do I have your consent to administer the medicine?” She asked.

Yousef, writhing in pain, nodded. Dr. Legacy accepted his consent, took the clipboard, and walked away, not once checking what Yousef’s assigned doctor or interns were doing, what tests were ordered, or their prognosis. She merely walked away unperturbed.

Still battling to contain the bleeding from Yousef’s wound, the intern assisting Yousef’s doctor suggested, “There might be internal bleeding since we can’t seem to stabilize the bleeding. If that’s the case, then this patient is an A-case. Shouldn’t we inform the OR and get him there.”

Yousef’s doctor, preoccupied with the wound, responded, “We’ll get him in for a CT and Ultrasound to

determine any internal bleeding.” He pointed to the medical supplies tray, “I need more gauze.”

The intern hastily grabbed a handful of gauze and handed them to the doctor. He frowned in disagreement, but he was only an intern. The doctor made the life and death decisions.





CHAPTER TWO



Thousands of miles away on another continent, in a modern suburb of London, England, a successful author Jayden Lincoln embarked on an adventure and a bright future with his family. Or so he thought. Not in his wildest dreams could he have foreseen what nightmares his future would entail.

Seven-year-old Tywin Lincoln stood at the entrance of his bedroom with his hands habitually in his shorts pockets, his shirt tucked neatly into his shorts, and wearing a cap bearing his favorite baseball team's logo. He stared at his motionless carry-on suitcase in the middle of the empty, lifeless room. He remembered how excited he was when he chose this particular Star Wars case from the hundreds that tempted him. But, looking at it now amid a space void of life,

he was suddenly hit with a bout of nostalgia. This room had been his hide-out, playroom, and escape room, and welcomed him to dreamland all his life. He touched the wall next to the doorframe where his height had been measured and recorded over the years. His mother, Annabella, had drawn a smiley face next to each measurement. Tywin's finger caressed the inscription. It caused his heart to swell, pushed tears to the brim of his eyes, and an emotional lump lodged in his throat. How could another room replace it?

A large masculine hand rested gently on his shoulder, timeously interrupting his revelry. "The taxi is here, son. Time to go." Jayden spoke softly but with a smudge of urgency.

"How do you know we will be happy there? They don't speak English like we do. I'm afraid I won't understand them, and they will tease me." Tywin lowered his head, trying to disguise his quivering lips and shaky voice.

Jayden recognized the imminent panic rising in his son's mind. His heart ached for his little child's momentary anguish. He crouched down, eye-level with Tywin, held his gaze under the peak of the baseball cap for a few moments, calmed him down, and reassured him without saying a word. He lightly held Tywin's upper arms, just enough so he did not feel so lost in the seemingly vast space of his beloved room. When he

sensed his son was at ease, he spoke soothingly, “You watch American videos on YouTube all the time. It won’t be any different hearing it in person. Mom and I will help you if you cannot understand. We’re all in the same boat here. Hmm, think of it as one of Juniper the Dragon’s adventures. But this time, you’re Juniper’s owner seeking new land to forage. How about that?”

Jayden could see Tywin’s mind tick over, already on his dragon flying over New York City. Tywin’s eyes sparkled a little, and his lips parted in a slight smile. Jayden returned his son’s smile and embraced him in an affectionate hug, “Better? Come on, let’s have a great adventure.” He gave Tywin another hug, rubbed his shoulders, stood, and in one stride, he took the lonely suitcase and wheeled it out of the room, holding Tywin’s hand as they exited the room.

Annabella joined them at the entrance door, rolling her carry-on along the wooden floors, creating the only sound in the hollow house. Her Capri pants and T-shirt hugged her tiny frame. The yellow of her shirt made her dark skin glow. If Jayden hadn’t known better, he would’ve presumed she was going on a Hawaiian holiday. “Gee, Mom, you look so different.” Tywin was impressed at his mom’s choice of travel

clothes since she almost always donned elegant casual dresses, so his surprise was warranted.

Jayden, Annabella, and Tywin exited the house. Annabella closed the door behind them and locked the door. The last click of the lock echoed like an explosion and impacted the finality of this phase in their life.

The Lincoln family faced the home that housed them for so many years, giving them countless wonderful memories. Jayden sighed. It was a shaky sigh. He held Tywin's hand, turned, and they walked to the waiting taxi. Jayden helped the driver load the suitcases into the trunk while Tywin buckled up in the back seat. He sat solemnly, waiting for his parents.

Annabella gave the real estate agent the keys, plopping them into her hands willfully yet reluctantly. She sighed, turned, wiped a tear from her watery eye, and joined the others in the taxi.

After a long, almost silent drive, they finally arrived at Heathrow Airport. Tywin's mood immediately lifted at the sight of the airplanes landing and taking off. To his parents' amusement, he bounded between the hordes of people, luggage, and passenger carts. Waiting in line to board the plane was almost an impossibility. His eagerness was at the brim of lifting off. Fortunately for his parents and the other

passengers, he was a well-mannered child and controlled his excitement.

Tywin settled into his seat on the plane between his parents. At thirty thousand feet, he was engrossed in watching an episode of *Juniper the Dragon* on his device. Jayden rested against the side of the plane, looking out the window. He was intrigued and in awe at the beauty of the clouds. For a moment, he wasn't flying in a plane but floating on a cloud. He was indeed on cloud nine. The plane bumped through an air pocket, and Jayden was no longer floating; he was bouncing on the clouds. The sensation was invigorating. He smiled, perhaps a little too much, but couldn't help it. He was on his way to living his dream.

“Does that smile need a drink?” The stewardess asked quietly, not wanting to disturb Annabella, who had already fallen asleep.

“Wine, please.” Jayden's cheeks reddened, slightly embarrassed.

“Sure. Can I get your son anything?” Tywin looked at her and smiled, “Orange juice, please.”

She handed Jayden his drink and asked, “Is New York your destination?”

“Yes. We’re immigrating. Work opportunities and all that.”

“Oh, that’s exciting. What work would that be?” She carefully placed Tywin’s orange juice on the tray. He thanked her, not removing his eyes from the device’s screen.

“Author. Actually, bestselling author. I have several fan meetings and book signings lined up as of tomorrow.”

“Oh, wow. That’s fantastic. As they say, the sky’s the limit, so good luck.” She smiled and moved on to the next row.

Jayden sipped his wine, smiled, sighed, and stared out the window again, completely satisfied with how his life was turning out. Life was good, and their new life in New York would be even better. He was confident about that. He knew he’d miss his hometown in London, but what was life if not for new adventures and betterment?

It had all happened so fast. Just a few months ago, Jayden’s publisher told him he’d received an interesting phone call from the U.S. office. The U.S. audience was more than enthusiastic about his books, and sales were through the roof. Jayden had not expected this outcome, so he was pleasantly surprised at the news. The U.S. office, without hesitation,

proposed an offer to relocate Jayden and his family to New York, booking fan meetings and book-signing events that would keep Jayden busy for months. Also, a very lucrative offer for a new book was on the table. How could Jayden refuse?

He had a few moments of anguish about how to approach Annabella. Would she be willing to leave her life and her family in the U.K. for a strange world she knew little about? And Tywin, he'd have to leave his friends and grandparents, whom he was much attached to. How would he adjust to a new school, let alone a new country?

To Jayden's relief, Annabella was never reluctant. Her faith in her husband was unmatched. She would go to the ends of the Earth with him if it meant encouraging and supporting his career.

The plane carried her passengers effortlessly across the skies. After almost eight hours in the air, her wheels bounced onto the runway at JFK Airport. The tires screeched, and the wing flaps opened, created a drag to slow the plane down, and brought the plane to a halt. Jayden made sure Tywin watched the flaps open and close. He was in his element with excitement. "That was so cool, Dad." He imitated the

screeching and braking sounds, giggling at his Oscar award-winning performance.

Immigration, thankfully, served no complications or issues, and the Lincoln family, with all their luggage, breezed through the doors into a crowd of people waiting to meet their family, friends, guests, or business associates. Annabella noticed a gentleman holding a sign, ‘Mr. Jayden Lincoln.’ She squealed with glee. Her tiny body hopped up and down excitedly and over joyously. It was the first time being treated as a celebrity, and she couldn’t contain herself. Tywin ran up to the man and exclaimed a little too loudly, “It’s my dad. It’s my dad.” Jayden had to take a minute or two to stop laughing at his wife and son’s reactions and then calmed himself down. He reminded himself to act professionally and not like the kid who scored a candy from the shop owner of the corner café. The man smiled just enough to indicate acknowledgment and engaged with Jayden.

After brief introductions, the man guided the Lincoln family to a black SUV, tinted windows included. Annabella covered her mouth to conceal another giddy squeal, begging to erupt. Tywin didn’t bother.

“Oh, cool. Dad, check out this ride. It’s like from a movie.” He inspected the car while the man loaded their

luggage. Jayden automatically went to help and earned a stern look from the man. “Sorry, a force of habit,” Jayden said sheepishly.

“You’ll get used to it.” The man nudged the door closed and walked to the driver's side door.

Jayden ushered Annabella and Tywin into the car. They slid onto the immaculately clean leather seats. The air freshener engulfed their senses, and even the click of the seat belts exuded first-class.

Buckled up and settled, they glided onto the road to their destination. “I’m to take you to the hotel. The event is being held at the same hotel,” the man offered.

“Yes, I was informed as such. Thank you.” Jayden tried to converse further with the man, asking if he had always lived in New York, if he enjoyed his job, what about New York he liked and disliked, etc. The man replied briefly but courteously, suggesting he preferred not to converse with the client. Jayden caught the hint and turned his attention to Tywin, who was absorbed by the scenery whizzing by, skyscraper after skyscraper.

The black SUV slowly stopped at the hotel entrance. Annabella jiggled her feet a thousand stomps to the second as

she noticed the red carpet and stanchions leading up to the hotel's entrance. The man cracked another slight smile at Annabella's exuberance.

“Come on, Mom, get out. Hurry.” Tywin couldn't wait for his mother to get her act together. There was too much to see and do, and sitting in the car was not one of them.

They exited the car, walked like A-list celebrities up the red carpet into the hotel lobby, and paused in awe of its grandeur. “Wow. Wow. Wow.” For the first time, it was Jayden being impressively vocal. The height of the lobby ceiling seemingly reached the sky, and the outside appeared inside due to the exterior walls made from glass. The beige marble floors, walls, and reception desk gleamed, reflecting the light from the enormous windows. The waiting area was furnished with large neutral-colored leather couches and large coffee tables made from tree trunks. Large palm trees were randomly yet purposely placed throughout the lobby area. It breathed wealth and luxurious comfort.

They checked in at the front desk and were escorted to their room. Again, the Lincolns held their breath, not daring to wake up from their perceived dream. Jayden rolled his suitcase to the bedroom, and at the doorway, he turned and announced, “Remember, the room is free, but anything that is

broken or damaged, I have to pay for.” He gave Tywin an extra glance, which he duly ignored, hurriedly exploring every inch of space. Annabella didn’t even hear him. She was engrossed in absorbing every tiny detail of the decor, furniture, and incredible view. “It’s simply breathtaking,” she mumbled to herself.

“Can I go to the pool?” Tywin asked excitedly.

“You two can look around while I check out my booth. I must meet the organizer, too,” Jayden answered checking his messages on his phone.

“We can go to the pool, but you’re not getting in. There’s plenty of time for that tomorrow.” Annabella had ideas of her own. They were called shopping.

They took advantage of the refreshments in the bar fridge and snacks laid out so enticingly, inviting them to be eaten. Everyone refreshed in a quick shower and changed into fresh clothes. Jayden had to meet the publishing firm's event organizer and coordinator in half an hour. Although the meeting was casual, merely a meet and greet, Jayden, dressed in jeans and a pale blue golf shirt, still looked stylish and overdressed. His tall, well-built frame made every outfit look overdressed.

Exiting the elevator and stepping into the lobby, Jayden said goodbye to Annabella and Tywin and calmly reminded them once more not to spend too much money on the first day. He went in the opposite direction toward the enormous conference center to the left side of the lobby.

As he entered the event room, he was swallowed by the number of booths and people milling around. Slowly, he walked past booth after booth, most very professionally set up, and recognized famous author's names. He eagerly looked for his booth, wondering what it looked like. Had his publishing company done a good job of setting it up? He felt slightly inadequate, realizing this was his first major signing event, especially in New York. He presumed he wouldn't have a huge turnout of fans, unlike the other famous authors sharing the same event. Rather than feel important, Jayden felt honored to be in the same vicinity as these authors.

He found his booth and his heart dropped. The booth was bland, to say the least, with a few chairs misplaced in front. He checked the floor map again, ensuring he was at the right booth. He was. Jayden looked around and wondered what he should do when he noticed a woman rushing toward him, looking rather frazzled and annoyed. "Mr. Lincoln?" she asked, out of breath in her thick Latino accent.

“Yes, I am Jayden Lincoln.”

“Yes. Good. Pleased to meet you. I am Jessica. I am from the publishing office.” She extended her hand and held a pile of papers against her chest with the other. “I’m so sorry your booth is not ready yet. It is unacceptable. If you give me a few minutes, I must find the event organizer to sort it out. Please.” She hurried her words, eager to get the issue sorted.

“Oh, okay. I wondered why it looked so different from the others. Thank you. I will look around while you get it sorted out.” Jayden replied calmly hoping it would calm Jessica down, too.

“Thank you. We will meet here tomorrow at about 9 AM, an hour before the event opens. Yes? Again, I’m sorry about this.”

“No need to be sorry. I will see you tomorrow morning then.”

They shook hands again and Jessica rushed off as if she had never stopped. Jayden took his time wandering through the booths and read pamphlets and brochures about the authors and their books. He picked up a few books and read a couple of pages as he meandered through the aisles. Some piqued his interest and he hovered a little longer at the booth.

When he neared the entrance after covering the entire floor, he realized he had been there for nearly three hours. “Wow, that time went fast,” he mumbled. His stomach agreed. Taking cognizant of his stomach’s complaints, he reached for his phone in his pocket and called Annabella.

Tywin answered on the second ring, “Dad, Mom is shopping. We went to the pool but didn’t stay long. I can’t wait to swim there tomorrow. Here’s mom.” He promptly handed the phone to Annabella.

“Shopping, eh? I thought we discussed this?” Jayden questioned Annabella with a hint of a giggle in his voice.

“It’s only a few cute things I couldn’t resist.”

Jayden visualized his wife’s pout and smiled. “I’m done here for now. I’m starving. Meet you in the hotel restaurant.”

Annabella and Tywin joined Jayden in the restaurant. Annabella only had two shopping bags, as promised, much to Jayden’s relief.

“Let’s celebrate our first day,” Jayden said, holding up the menu. The waiter recited the special for the day, but Jayden had already spotted the lobster on the menu. “I think I’ll have the lobster, please.” He closed the menu and faced Annabella’s wide, surprised eyes.

“Lobster? Are you sure?” She asked and then, not waiting for an answer, or in case Jayden changed his mind, ordered the same.

Tywin went for the double cheeseburger and fries.

They ate their fill, including the mouth-watering cheesecake for dessert and lingered in the restaurant, talking about Annabella’s purchases and their future in New York. Tywin only had swimming on his mind, which he was determined to do the next day, as he was promised.

The evening was perfect, and when they retired to their hotel room, Tywin fell asleep almost immediately, leaving Jayden and Annabella to spend an evening to themselves. Although they were tired from traveling, they laughed and giggled like excited teenagers.

Their first day in New York had ended. Their rollercoaster had merely reached the top of the ride. From here on, the rollercoaster dropped, and it would be one helluva ride.

The sun peaked through the curtains as Jayden’s alarm sounded. The day for the book signing event had arrived. Annabella stirred awake, hugged and kissed her husband ‘good morning,’ and got up to make coffee.

Jayden unpacked his suit and essentials and stepped into the shower. It was about as large as his old bathroom. An hour later appeared from the bedroom into the comfortable living area wearing a navy blue three-piece suit, looking very debonair. He was tall, 6.1 Ft., and well-built with broad shoulders. His dark skin against the white shirt and navy suit spoke out loud. It said, “I own this.” He finished his immaculate look, wearing a cap. Although theoretically, the baseball cap and suit did not match. But on Jayden, it made him look like an A-list movie star. The kind of man girls and their grandmothers swooned over. He was tall, broad, stylish, and casual, all in one perfect package.

Annabella’s eyes sparkled with admiration. She had loved this man for half her lifetime, and there was nothing she wouldn’t do for him. “Excuse me, sir, Mr. Celebrity. Don’t be getting too friendly with them fans of yours, now. Eh. You’re too dashing for your own good.” She gushed, standing on her toes to fix his collar and jacket lapel. Softly and affectionately, she said, “You go get ‘em. You deserve every accolade, my love,” and kissed him tenderly on his cheek.

She hugged Jayden and lingered a moment longer. Jayden reciprocated willingly. “Come on, Mom. Let’s go to the pool,” Tywin whined.

Jayden and Annabella giggled at their son's perfect timing. The Lincoln family walked out of their hotel room ready to take on their new adventure – Jayden to the event and Annabella and Tywin to explore with a little shopping blended into the mix.

At the entrance to the event hall, Jayden paused to capture the scene and locked it into his memory bank forever. He wasn't late. He was a few minutes early, but the hall buzzed with activity. He panicked ever-so-slightly and considered if he should've arrived earlier. Someone brushed past him, relieving him from running down the rabbit guilt hole. He entered and slowly walked to his booth, again passing names he recognized. Nearing his booth, he had to take a double look. Zane Loacke, an author he had admired for the longest time, stood two feet away from him. He couldn't help staring while his mind explored the pros and cons of introducing himself. "Man up," he scolded himself and stepped forward.

The person Zane spoke to left, opening the gap for Jayden. He extended his hand nervously, "Mr. Loacke, it's an absolute pleasure to meet you. I'm Jayden Lincoln."

Zane shook his hand and smiled, "Zane, please. Pleased to meet you. I've seen your booth and was hoping to meet you. Your book looks intriguing."

Jayden's heart pounded in disbelief. How could this famous author be interested in his book? As they conversed, Zane's carefree attitude calmed Jayden down, and he realized that here, between the walls of the event room, the authors were all equal. They expelled the figments of their imaginations onto paper, hoping to make a living. Some succeeded, some barely survived, and others failed. It was how the cookie crumbled.

They ended their conversation with the promise of connecting later, and Jayden settled into his booth. He was relieved that Jessica had come through on her promise to fix the booth's appearance. It had pamphlets, photos, posters strategically placed so his fans couldn't miss it, and plenty of chairs. Jayden looked at the chairs and couldn't imagine them all occupied.

"Is the booth satisfactory, Mr. Lincoln?" Jessica asked. Jayden hadn't realized she was standing next to him. Startled, he cleared his throat, "Yes, it's perfect. Thank you for all your hard work. I appreciate it very much."

"Brooks Brothers Publishing appreciates you, Mr. Lincoln. We anticipate a huge response. Hence, all the chairs." Jessica pointed to the chairs Jayden had been staring at. She was average height and pear-shaped but as feisty as a woman

could get. It was no wonder Jayden's booth endured a remarkable transformation. He was sure that when her colleagues saw her coming on a bad day, they ran. The phrase, dynamite comes in small packages came to his mind. The corners of his lips twitched at the thought, but he maintained his composure as Jessica ran through the program for the day.

The doors would open to the public in fifteen minutes, so Jayden quickly took out his phone and dialed Annabella. "Hello. I'm just checking to see if I still have money in my account or if I have to sell my soul here." Jayden chuckled at his sense of humor.

"Hi, love. Very funny, and no, I haven't spent a cent yet. We're at the pool. Tywin is in his element. I'm not sure I will ever get him out of the water. How is the event? Have you started yet?"

"They're opening the doors soon, so I wanted to call you because I might not get a chance during the day. Jessica said they're expecting a big response, and they've put out a lot of chairs. I'm just praying it's not all for naught. They have made such an effort. The booth looks amazing. Oh, guess what? I met Zane Loacke. He is a few booths down from me. He is everything I imagined him to be. He promised to meet up before he returns home."

Jayden rambled on for a few minutes, and Annabella listened happily because her husband was happy. It was his moment to shine, and she would give him every ounce of support.

“Okay, message me during the day as you move around. Have fun, darling. I love you.” Jayden ended the call as the announcement was made that the doors would open in five minutes. His heart instantly increased its pace by a few beats.

He watched as hoards of people flooded the hall. How would all these people fit in here, he wondered? As Jessica had indicated, all the chairs at his booth were occupied in no time, with more fans hovering around waiting for a chair to become available. Jayden couldn’t believe what he was witnessing. He pinched himself to make sure it was true. He’d had many successful book signing events, but none compared to this.

The first fan approached Jayden. Her eyes shot stars and kisses as she gushed over him. He blushed profusely and nervously giggled, appeasing the fan’s admiration even more. By the time the chairs had completed one rotation, Jayden was over his initial nervousness and acted the part - the bestselling author made every fan’s dream come true with a smile and short dialogue.

Every time he looked up and saw the endless line of fans holding their pre-purchased books to their chests, anxiously waiting for him to put his signature on them, he was filled with excitement. He motioned to Jessica to announce a fifteen-minute break. He needed to stretch his legs and hands but mostly wanted to check in with Annabella and Tywin.

“How’s it going, my love? Any marriage proposals yet?” Annabella teased, answering the call.

“Too many,” Jayden laughed. “It’s out of this world great. I cannot believe how many fans have shown up. I asked for a few minutes to stretch my legs. It’s been non-stop signing since they opened the doors. It’s incredible. Who knew I had so many fans here? Honestly, honey, it’s unbelievable.”

Annabella smiled proudly, listening to her husband’s jubilation. She could hear he was overwhelmed by his popularity. He was popular in the U.K. but seemingly not nearly as in New York.

“Is Tywin still in the pool, or has he shriveled up by now?”

Annabella handed the phone to Tywin, who immediately switched to a video call, “Dad, look at this catcher’s mitt. It’s

awesome. We got a matching one for you, too.” Tywin excitedly held up his mitt to the screen for Jayden to see.

“Oh, wow. That’s a great one. Thanks for getting me one. I’ll play with you when I’m not writing.”

Tywin scowled and sighed, “You’re always writing, Dad.”

Jayden laughed, “I know. I’m sorry, son. But I promise I will make time every day from now on. Life here is going to be different and amazing.”

Tywin’s face brightened, and he handed the phone back to Annabella. She started showing Jayden her purchases for their house, which they would move into after the book signing event.

“Well, there goes my promise to Tywin. I’m going to have to write into overtime to get the next book out so I can pay for all this.”

Annabella laughed, not even trying to justify her spending. Loud screaming in the background made Jayden jump and turn. “What is that?” Annabella asked.

“Some teenage fans are squealing at their favorite author,” Jayden replied.

Jayden ended the call and walked to the booth to rejoin his fans. The group of teenage girls appeared in front of him, blushing and giggling, hugging their books. One squealed, enticing the others as they imitated her enthusiastically.

Jayden realized it was the girls he had heard earlier, “Are you here to see me?” He asked in disbelief.

They nodded in unison.

“I didn’t realize I had such young fans,” Jayden’s surprise echoed in his reply.

“You’re our inspiration. You have hundreds of fans at our school. But we were the first.” The young girl proudly said, as if she were the fan club CEO.

“I want to hire someone like you to write my books one day,” A girl said.

“But, you could write them yourself,” Jayden offered encouragingly.

“Will you spill any secrets of upcoming books?” Another asked.

“Well, that would ruin...”

“What happened to Tyrone? I have to know,” another interrupted.

One of the girls' guardians stepped forward before Jayden could answer.

“You must be the older sister?” He smiled.

The lady smiled coyly and offered her left hand, which intrigued Jayden. Did she think it was a British tradition, he wondered. He switched hands and shook her hand. She twisted her hand mid-greeting to indicate she was not wearing a wedding ring. Jayden had spent the entire morning blushing and hiding his embarrassment, but this beat them all hands down. He felt his ears bleed red, purple, and every other embarrassing color.

Jessica politely rescued Jayden, much to his relief, informing the girls and the mother that they needed to move along since many others were waiting to meet the wonderful Mr. Lincoln.

The day progressed, and Jayden was convinced his hand would ever be the same again. It ached from writing so much. His jaw ached from smiling so much, but he was elated and never wanted it to end. Jessica continually ensured he drank water and set snacks on the table for him to eat between meeting fans. It wasn't very successful, but Jayden didn't mind, even though he was fatigued and occasionally dizzy. His fans were all that mattered.

