



MELISSA de la CRUZ STUDIO

HER INSTAGRAM
IS TO DIE FOR.

Live Your
Best Lie



JESSIE WEAVER



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Dear Reader,

Here it is! I am so excited to be sharing with you the second novel from my studio. Jessie Weaver's debut is a timely, irreverent, thrilling read that features a murder mystery inspired by our culture's fixation with popular social media figures.

We've all heard of influencers like *Live Your Best Lie's* Summer Cartwright, whose every post inspires her millions of followers to slurp down green smoothies, wake up each morning doing sun salutations, and perfect that bouncy ponytail. The world follows Summer's every move— because she lovingly documents each one! The reach and influence social media stars have are not to be underestimated. And if you doubt me, my fifteen-year-old daughter just made us order a hummus bowl inspired by a famous YouTuber from CAVA in Culver City for dinner because “they looked good on TikTok.” (Dear Reader, they were not.) LOL!

But do we ever really know what's happening behind those perfect posts? Who *is* the girl behind the account? And what is she hiding underneath that filtered façade?

Turns out: Summer's Instagram was more than to die for. Someone's killed for it.

Reminiscent of *One of Us Is Lying* meets Agatha Christie, with a dash of *Gossip Girl* snark, this is one fun beach read teens will devour.

Go ahead. Use that face filter app. Pretend you're partying in Ibiza.

Live YOUR best lie!

xoxo
Mel

Melissa de la Cruz



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JESSIE WEAVER



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HYPERION
Los Angeles New York

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*To Ben, who believes in me so
much, I can't help but believe in
myself*

PART 1

#TooPrettyToDie

The_Summer_Cartwright

Update post from #SummerLand 🌞 ✨

K, first of all, I don't photoshop my lips or my butt, but thanks to so many of you for thinking I do. You're the sweetest everrrr!!! You should see my food baby after the burger I just scarfed. 🍔 Hah!

This Wednesday at 10 a.m. PT is the next **#SCYogiAdventure**. A dozen of my closest friends are coming to my loft to do yoga in my living room with @SierraDitmer of @HomeGYM, and you can, too, via my livestream!! After, we'll make green smoothies with protein powder from @PowerBoost. Link to recipe in bio. **#ad #PowerBoost #selfcare**

Prepare yourself for the most embarrassing moment of my life in this week's posts. It involves my green smoothie and Ryan Gosling's labradoodle. 🐶 Literally dying of shame. Oh, and there's a paparazzi photo to go with it. Cringe!! Also keep an eye out for my next **#SummerAlwaysDatesTheWrongGuy** reel in which I react to A and me breaking up dramatically in the courtyard at school. Ugh. Someone bring me Rocky Road and a giant spoon?

This week in **#SummerLoves** . . . * Soy lattes from the Beanery * Lying in the grass with daisies in my hair bc **#Cali** * Sushi * Reading your DMs!!! * Posting no-makeup makeup secrets for youuuu * Dirty little secrets that I'll take to my grave . . . or will I? *

Speaking of graves . . . it's **#spookyszn!** 🎃 🧛 🧟 Stay posted for stories from my Halloween party tonight for all things spooktacular. It's going to be scary fun.

You guys are the best. I wish I could give you all the biggest hug ever. ✨ squeeze ✨

Love,

SumSum 💖



🕒 POSTED 7 HOURS AGO

ONE

Grace Godwin

Saturday, October 31

5:17 p.m.

Grace buzzes Summer's loft with one hand and tugs the hem of her dress with the other. If she'd taken a second to think before calling her Lyft, she would have brought her color-blocked watermelon costume to change into instead of wearing it. She's two hours early for Summer's Halloween party, because she promised she'd help set up.

Halloween is about little atmospheric touches, Summer said when she texted her on Thursday. *No one's better at detail stuff than you, Gracie Grace. You know you owe me. Pleaaassssee?* She followed it up with, *With a pineapple on top?* and a picture of her pouting in the pineapple dress she bought as her costume. Ever since Summer met that fruitarian on her trip to Bali in June, she's been almost religiously into fruit and swears she'd be a fruitarian, too, if the scientists of the world would get their act together and create a fruit replacement for cheese.

She also has a spiritual relationship with Gouda.

Summer's pouty face picture was overkill. Grace would have helped her set up without any begging, because she's always been the girl willing to stream streamers or blow up balloons or do calligraphy on envelopes. Feeling needed is a rush. Besides, after her fight with Summer a few days ago, she's been going above and beyond, even measuring on a scale of one to Grace.

She's lucky Summer is even talking to her. Tonight has to go smoothly.

So she texted Summer back, saying, *No biggie, I can be there a few hours early*, even though it was kind of a biggie because she had to call out sick from her shift at the taco truck. Grace feels awful about lying to her boss, Sofia, but she's deemed this lie a

necessary evil. Though she really, really hopes Sofia doesn't bring get-well tacos to her house. Her mom would murder her for ditching work.

Not to mention that Grace should be using tonight to work on her *A Separate Peace* essay for AP Lit. Her teacher told her it might stand a chance in a scholarship contest hosted by the College Board, and Grace needs all the scholarship money she can get. College isn't cheap.

Still, she and Summer have been friends since middle school. You make sacrifices for longterm relationships.

A gust of wind glues a long strand of Grace's brown hair to her lip gloss. Shivering, she unpeels it, then hugs her arms around her chest. Even in Los Angeles, the October air has enough bite that she wishes she could have worn the polka-dotted tights she picked out to go under her watermelon dress, but apparently, polka-dotted tights aren't sexy. And why be a whimsical fruit if you can be a sexy fruit?

While she waits for Summer to buzz her up to her fifth-floor penthouse loft, Grace glares at the jack-o'-lantern that leers at her from its pedestal on the stoop. *Stop being such a perv, Jack*, she thinks. *My eyes are up here*, then automatically feels bad for being rude. In her head. To a pumpkin. She blames her dress, which hangs off one shoulder, for being way shorter than is comfortable. It's why she bought tights in the first place. She's pretty sure if she moves the wrong way, everyone will see her butt, or at least the hot-pink underwear that Summer slingshotted at her from across her bedroom yesterday when Grace mentioned her predicament. "Match your panties and no one will notice," Summer told her.

"I think they might."

"Whatever." Summer rolled her eyes when Grace tried to protest. "If anyone posts photos of your ass online, I'll hunt them down and destroy them."

Grace wasn't sure if she meant the photos or the photographer. With Summer, it could go either way. Summer shimmied so the feathery headband atop her blond hair bobbed. "You like my pineapple top?"

"Gorg."

And it really was. Unsurprising, because Summer makes anything look fabulous. Her closet is packed with Prada and Gucci but also with vintage finds from the secondhand

shop, because . . . the environment. One time she wore a boxy skirt from 1991 with the buttons undone halfway up her thigh, and suddenly on TikTok, girls modeled cute-again 90s items from thrift stores for the #SummerCartwrightChallenge. Her closet fan account reposted her pics with comments like *OMFGGGG this is everything!* and *True beauty inside and out!!*

So if Summer has a fruitarian revelation and says Grace should be a watermelon, she'll be a freaking watermelon. Besides, she can't afford to piss Summer off again.

Just as Grace is beginning to think Summer isn't home—her memory is famously short, which sometimes makes Grace feel like a walking reminder app—Summer's voice echoes tinny through the call box.

“Gracie! You said you'd be here at five.”

“Sorry! Traffic.”

For a moment, Grace thinks Summer might not let her in, then the door buzzes. Relieved, Grace takes the elevator to the top floor. Summer meets her at the front door to her loft, barefoot and fastening her earrings. In her yellow-and-gold dress, her tanned legs seem longer, and her hair is pure sunshine. She looks much older than sixteen.

“The party is in less than two hours, and the decorations are . . . ugh.”

Grace knows her job. When Summer fishes, Grace takes the bait. “I'm sure they look amazing.”

“And I've posted so many reminders about this party on Instagram, and I'm going live right at seven, and I look like a banana. I can't look like a banana in front of five million people, one, because I'm supposed to be a pineapple, and two, aren't bananas slutty?”

The word *banana* sounds weird to Grace. If she hears a word too many times over, she either becomes certain that it isn't actually a word, or her brain overloads with fun facts about the word until she goes on a *Jeopardy!*-level rant. For example, bananas are scientifically considered berries, because their seeds are inside. Also, banana peels, when applied daily, can cure warts.

“Bananas aren't slutty, Sum, they're fruit,” Grace says. “Anyway, does it matter?”

“You don't have five million people judging your every move. No one cares what you do.”

Grace has less than a thousand followers on Instagram, most of whom followed her after

Summer tagged her in pictures, and she's logged onto TikTok exactly one time to see what the fuss is about. So no, she doesn't really care what people online think, because no one online cares about her.

"Well, you look like a pineapple to me," she says. Because Summer has told her a thousand times she has to cut it with the fun facts, Grace doesn't tell her that pineapples can be used to tenderize meat.

When Summer motions for Grace to follow her from the foyer into the living room, Grace's jaw drops. The Cartwrights' luxury loft is always impressive with its cathedral ceilings and museum-quality art. But wow. These decorations are not "ugh," especially compared to the Halloween dances Grace went to in her middle school gym, which involved punch bowls shaped like skulls and orange streamers strewn over the basketball hoops.

In the living room, floor-to-ceiling black fabric drapes over the windows, and sheets cover the furniture. Someone's managed to hoist an actual *Phantom of the Opera*-style chandelier above everything. The DJ platform in the corner is the only reminder that it's the twenty-first century. The overall vibe is . . . Grace takes a moment to consider. Sumptuously undead? It is incongruous with Summer's pineapple costume.

"Sum." Grace widens her eyes. "Your place looks—"

"Like a funeral parlor? I know."

"I was going to say like the Haunted Mansion at Disneyland."

"I guess? The decorator thought we should go more refined, but people are going to be too depressed to, like, dance or anything. And this might be my last party, so it has to be perfect."

Grace is confused. "What? Why do you say that?"

Summer shrugs. "You don't think the decor is too much?"

"No." Grace doesn't miss that Summer ignored her question, and she feels a moment of anxiety that she forces herself to swallow down. Panicking won't help her fix things with Summer. "You got black lights, right?"

“Yeah, and some colored ones.”

“Perfect. Lighting will make the room.” Grace perches on the edge of a sheet-draped sofa.

“Your family coming tonight?”

Summer flops beside her. “Julian and Miranda are in Dubai until next Friday.”

“Business trip?”

“For my dad, yeah. He’s meeting with some sheikh about using his land for that new movie he’s making next spring? *She Falls Hard* or something like that. Mom’s going for the spas.” She rolls her eyes at the word *spas*, but who knows with Summer’s mom. She’s probably sleeping in a salt cave for the duration of her trip.

“So you’re alone?” Grace asks.

“No. Harrison is staying here while my parents are gone.” Summer narrows her eyes. “He’s coming to the party, too, if that’s what you’re asking.”

Grace rolls her shoulders and takes a deep breath. She hasn’t seen much of Summer’s brother this month, what with everything she’s had going on, but for the past year Summer has been trying to set her up with him. Grace wants to date him. She really does. Or maybe she wants to want to date him.

Harrison, a film studies major at UCLA, has no problem shoving a camera into Grace’s face when she’s doing things like eating cereal first thing in the morning or brushing her teeth, because he thinks unguarded moments are the most real. He and Summer argue about that a lot, actually—whether or not what she does is reality. Harrison says her page is too cultivated, too look-at-me-being-perfectly-flawed. Summer says she’s putting her best foot forward. Grace refuses to be the tiebreaker, because she thinks both of them are dead wrong. Even though she hasn’t always been able to keep her business offline, it hasn’t stopped her from trying. With Harrison at the party, she doubts she’ll be able to stay off camera.

Summer and Grace spend the next hour applying their makeup (black seed-shaped freckles on pink cheeks for Grace, and glittery gold eyelids and lips for Sum) and sipping smoothies, Summer’s current obsession. Green for Summer, strawberry-banana for Grace. Then while Grace sets up the black lights and calls the DJ to make sure he isn’t running late, Summer samples the food the caterer prepared.

“Oh my god, Gracie,” Summer says. “The lobster crostini are to die for. Don’t forget to try some before they’re all gone. Laney’s coming, and I know how much she eats.”

Grace pins her cellphone between her shoulder and face to give Summer a thumbs-up. The DJ needs driving directions. She also tries to ignore Summer’s comment about Laney, who probably eats a very normal amount.

Once the DJ arrives and starts the music, the loft buzzes with potential energy—the kinetic will come later once the guests arrive—but Grace’s stomach burns like she chugged acid or, like, a gallon of coffee. Maybe she should have eaten something when Sum offered while they were doing their makeup. It probably wouldn’t have helped, though, because it’s butterflies that are making her feel sick. Adam is coming tonight. Grace hasn’t seen him since he and Summer broke up at school last week, and she’s not 100 percent certain she can keep it together around him all evening. Summer should have uninvited him. Secretly, though, Grace is glad she didn’t. Even though she and Adam have been weird with each other for months, she still likes knowing he’s there.

Five minutes before seven o’clock, Grace shuts off the main lights and turns on the black lights. Summer drops dry ice into the punch to make it smoke. They both slide their feet into impossible heels.

They take simultaneous deep breaths.

Then the doorbell rings, and the party begins.

The_Summer_Cartwright

#Bestie appreciation post!!!

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My best friend G is the actual best. For real, though, I know you guys think your best friend is better than she is, and I'm so happy for you. But you're sadly deluded, because no one is more loyal, more supportive, more awesome than G. She's the girl you call in a pinch, because she's always willing to do what needs to be done.

.

You know how I went live last week from the back of that ambulance because I had a cramp in my side and thought I was dying? Turns out, I kind of was. I had **#appendicitis!** Literally, if I hadn't gotten to the hospital when I did, I could have died. **#tooyoung #toopretty #jkIswear**

.

Anyway, I had promised you guys a tour of my renovated bedroom, and G made it happen. That voice you heard narrating when "I" went live? Obvs not mine. Haha! I just didn't want to let you down while I was slurping Jell-O in a hospital bed. Drop a comment below to tell me what you think of the new room! **#homedecor**

#renovating #interiordesign

So seriously, let's all take a minute for gratitude. Everyone say "Thank you, G!" I'll wait. Good job. Anyway, I'm back now, better than ever, ready to be with you, my other besties, on the Gram.

.

Love you muchly!! SumSum



AUGUST 29, TWO MONTHS AGO

TWO

Adam Mahmoud

Saturday, October 31

7:55 p.m.

Adam is late for the party, but he still pauses at the door to Summer's loft. Inside, the music thrums with a bass that resonates like a growl in his chest, and for a moment, he considers turning around and going home, watching reruns of *Family Matters* until he falls asleep. He hates showing up anywhere by himself. Summer told him once that arriving alone to a party makes a statement, and it was up to the person arriving to determine what that statement would be: *Here I am, confident as hell*, or *Here I am, a loser alone*. He wouldn't give Summer the satisfaction of scaring him away.

Besides, Halloween is the perfect time to be someone new. It's not every day that he can shred a white button-down so it shows the dark brown skin on his chest, and coat his eyelids with gold liner. There's something about dressing like a pirate that makes him feel reckless, less worried about being the guy Summer expects him to be. He's not her boyfriend anymore.

Bouncing on the balls of his feet, he takes a breath and knocks, three hard raps. When Grace Godwin opens the door, the volume of the music doubles.

"Adam." She blinks twice, then looks down at her clipboard. "You came."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"No. Um . . . sorry. You were late, so I wasn't sure that . . ." Grace tucks a strand of hair behind her ear and makes a mark on her clipboard. "You're good to go in."

"I got caught up playing *Mythos*. My team had set up a raid . . . Anyway. Lost track of time."

Grace smiles. "Did you kill all the bad guys and save all the good guys and get all the loot?"

She's teasing him, but gently, which is one of the things Adam loves about her. He can nerd out about *Mythos* and other video games, and even though Grace isn't into them herself, she'll listen. Adam never told Summer about *Mythos* or his Twitch channel, because he knew she'd think it was stupid.

"Nah," he says. "Some noob blew up the bridge."

"Bummer."

"Whatever. I logged off after that."

Adam wants to tell Grace a million things, like the only reason he knocked instead of going home to finish the raid with his team was her. But he doesn't. Instead, he tries to make her laugh.

"You the bouncer?"

She doesn't even smile. "Summer's worried about uninvited guests."

"Because everyone wants to hang out with Summer?"

"She's been getting DMs from private accounts ever since she announced her book deal. Mostly just people telling her that no one cares about her personal life, or threats to sue if she writes anything that makes them look bad. You know how it goes. Probably just other influencers who know she could trash them, and it would totally be true. But a few got creepy."

"How so?"

"One guy said he knows where she lives. He included pics of her bedroom, which freaked her out."

Adam is sure that whoever is DMing Summer got the pics off her own Instagram. If she doesn't want people knowing what her bedroom looks like, she shouldn't post about it to five million people. But he wants to agree with Grace, to get her on his side again, to talk like they used to a year ago when it was effortless. Tonight, he's so full of wants and fears that he might explode. He hasn't talked to Grace since breaking up with Summer last week, and for the first time in months, he feels hopeful that maybe the time could be right for the two of them.

So he only says, "Pics of her bedroom? She should probably tell someone about that. Police or whatever."

“What could they do? You can’t get a restraining order on someone whose only name you know is TrollKing6969.”

For a millisecond, Grace looks Adam in the eyes, and she’s Gracie again. An instant later, she’s not. Even though he’s gone to school with her since sixth grade, tonight she looks new, her hazel eyes more luminous, the round apples of her cheeks more pronounced. What if she’s outgrown him?

If someone were to ask Adam who Grace would be in the movie of his life, he’d say the girl next door. What he’d try to explain is how complex that cliché is—how it means knowing someone for years, wanting to be near them, taking them completely for granted until it’s too late. But what if it isn’t too late?

He leans in to give her a hug, but Grace sidesteps, gesturing for him to come fully into the foyer. She locks the door behind him. “Make sure you use the hall bathroom, because the front one is clogged. You’re the last to arrive, so I’m going to check on Sum. See you around?” And before Adam can stop her, Grace disappears into the living room.

He wanders after her, not sure what to do or who to talk to, his arms tingling with the sensation of absence. So she didn’t hug him. It’s not a big deal, is it? She’s busy. Because he’s so lost in his own head, he collides with Laney Miyamoto at the entrance to the living room.

“Ouch.” She rubs her elbow. “Watch where you’re going!”

Adam’s head is too full of Grace to fully process how random it is that his chem lab partner got an invite to Summer’s party. Laney isn’t Summer’s usual. Adam doesn’t even know her that well, since she’s new to Westwood Preparatory Academy this year, but what he does know about her he’s not sure he likes. She’s . . . prickly.

Tonight, she’s pulled her shiny, dark hair into a high ponytail, and her oversize T-shirt, one of the ones that makes him wonder if she’s wearing shorts underneath or not, is splattered with fake blood. Cardboard cutouts of different breakfast cereals—Lucky Charms, Cheerios, Cap’n Crunch—are pinned all over it. She’s clutching an alarmingly huge knife. Adam hopes it’s rubber.

“What are you supposed to be?” he asks.