

# Chapter 1

The Dallas heat scorched Frannie's lungs, and the humidity plastered her hair to her neck and shoulders. She grabbed her long blonde hair into a ponytail and rummaged in her purse for something to hold it off her neck.

"This weather is something else. I need to get out of this outfit before my nylons melt to my legs."

The cab line at Love Field was short. "It shouldn't take long to get to the university," her father said, "if we can find a cab big enough to hold all that stuff you and your mother insisted you couldn't live without. There aren't enough days in the semester to wear everything you brought."

Three suitcases fit into the back of the Yellow Cab station-wagon with the steamer trunk wedged into the back seat, leaving little space for Frannie. Her cramped position mirrored the tightness in her chest that increased as the cab neared the Crestmont campus. She took a deep breath as they pulled up in front of a four-story, red brick Colonial building set well back from the street.

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“I’m Sally Adams,” said a young woman, reaching out a hand to help Frannie from the cab. “I’m one of the Resident Assistants here at Hadley Hall. What’s your name?”

Frannie took Sally’s hand but said nothing.

“I’m Gerhart Braun,” Frannie’s father filled the void. “This is my daughter, Frannie. She left her voice somewhere between the airport and here.”

Embarrassed, Frannie blurted, “I’m Frances Estelle Braun. Please call me Frannie.”

Sally nodded. “You’re going to love Hadley Hall. Let’s get you checked in.” At the end of the long walkway, they climbed the wide circular steps to the porch that ran the length of the building. Students and families sat in white rocking chairs and on swings anchored to the high porch roof. Sally pushed open one of the ornate double doors into the formal lobby of Frannie’s new home, a large space dotted with comfortable groupings of chairs and sofas.

Sally stopped at the baroque, hotel-style front desk. “Let me introduce you to Mrs. Crandall, our dorm mother.” Mrs. Crandall welcomed the Brauns while Sally picked up the keys to Frannie’s suite.

“Males are allowed in the suites only on move-in day,” Sally explained as they walked toward the end of one first floor wing. She unlocked the suite and handed the key ring to Frannie. Three suitcases sat on the floor of the sitting area by a group of four comfortable chairs with two lamp tables and a coffee table. There was an area to one side for small kitchen appliances, and a Jack and Jill bathroom separated the two bedrooms. “You’re the first to arrive,” said Sally. “Select the bedroom you like.”

Frannie peeked into both rooms. “I like this one,” she said, dropping her purse on one of the twin beds. Her father hauled in the suitcases, heaving two of them onto Frannie’s bed and the third onto the other.

Sally handed her the room key. “Add this to your keyring. The small key is to your suite’s mailbox in the lobby. If you lose a key, replacements cost two dollars.” Then she took a document from her pocket and unfolded it on Frannie’s desk. “This is a

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campus map,” she said. “Hadley Hall’s right here on the oval. The building behind us is the Student Union. The cafeteria is on the second floor. The quickest way up are these outside stairs. The Bookstore’s on the first floor, and the Game Room is next to it. When we’re not in class, most everyone is either in the Student Union or in the Library off to the left of Sheppard Hall at the top of the oval. Across the oval from us is the Simpson Science Center and Thompson Hall where you’ll register tomorrow. You’ll learn where everything is in no time. If you have questions, stop by the front desk.”

“Thanks, I need to get out of this outfit,” Frannie announced. “Philly summers are hot, but never this hot!”

As Sally turned to leave, two young men arrived lugging Frannie’s trunk. Sally pointed to Frannie’s bedroom and they dropped it unceremoniously inside the door.

Mr. Braun said, “Sally, I’ll come with you. Frannie, start unpacking while I ask Sally about lunch. We’ll have a few hours to visit before my flight home.”

Left alone in the suite, Frannie opened the suitcases and stacked piles of clothing onto both beds and both desks, then draped clothes for the closet over both chairs.

Discarding her favorite travel outfit on the floor, she toweled herself dry, then put on a pink mini skirt and a white peasant blouse. She traded her stacked heels for strappy white sandals that she dug out of the trunk, then slid a beaded bracelet onto her wrist. She smiled at her blue-eyed reflection in the mirror. “Cool!”

She began with the closet but quickly ran out of hangers. She opened all four drawers of her dresser, then sighed. “*I don’t know where to begin... Mom would know. Good Lord, I have more stuff than will fit in these drawers!*”

“We have reservations for lunch,” her father announced as he crossed the sitting room. Sally recommended a Mexican restaurant just a short walk from here.” He stood in the doorway, hands on hips, head shaking side to side, “You haven’t made a dent in this

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mess. Twitch your nose like Samantha on *Bewitched*. We should go now, you'll have to do this later..”

Frannie sighed, “I wish it were that easy.”

“Learning to do for yourself is one of the reasons we agreed on a college away from home,” her father reminded her. “Your mother can’t take care of you forever.”

“Maybe I should have listened to her and stayed in Philly,” Frannie pouted. I could have gone to Temple and lived at home, and all this stuff would still be in my drawers and closets where it belongs. What was I thinking?”

“You can settle in later. I see you’ve changed, and I am not taking another step outside in this jacket.” He removed his tie, folded it into his jacket pocket, then searched in vain for a hanger. He settled for looping the jacket over the closet doorknob, then rolled his shirt sleeves to the elbow. “Not the look I usually go for,” he grinned, “but this is Dallas and I don’t plan to die of heat exhaustion.”

Frannie grinned at the reprieve and searched for her purse, tipping several piles of clothing onto the floor in the process. “Here it is,” she cried as she spied the strap peeking from beneath a pile of folded sweaters. They tumbled in disarray as she pulled the purse free. With a shrug at the mess, she followed her father out of the suite.

“This is an attractive campus,” her father said. “It’s big enough, but not too big.”

*La Cantina* was a busy place, with Mexican tiled floors and a brightly colored mural featuring dancing señoritas and guitar-playing señores. The hostess led Frannie and her father to a table for two by the windows and handed them menus.

“Looks like we’ll have to order from the pictures,” Gerhart said. “I don’t recognize a single dish. What would you like?”

Frannie pointed to a picture that looked a bit like Philly cheese steak, her all-time favorite. Her father chose something completely unfamiliar. “This might as well be an adventure for both of us. Crestmont was the right decision, Frannie. You’ll learn

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to take care of yourself. Your mom's a fantastic homemaker, but it's time you started managing the things she's always done for you."

"I know you're right, Dad, but I don't know where to start."

"Well, organizing your things will be a good beginning. After all, they are *your things*. I know I'm repeating myself, but you and I chose Crestmont because we knew it would give you the opportunity to succeed on your own."

"I know I wanted to come here," Frannie sighed, "but Mom was so sure it would be best for me to stay home."

"Success for your mother is being an excellent homemaker, but that's not enough for women today. Besides, one salary no longer provides everything a family wants and needs. Crestmont will prepare you for whatever life has in store."

"I'm going to be a nurse. I'll be able to contribute if I have to." "That's true, but at the same time, you'll be responsible for managing your household, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and putting things where they belong. Frannie, homes and dorm rooms don't just take care of themselves."

"I know. I know." Frannie looked defeated.

"You're not a child. You're a bright young woman and you need to act like one. You have the opportunity to learn and grow, and it's up to you to take advantage of it."

"I will, Dad, I promise. I wish you didn't have to go back so soon."

"You'll be fine," her father reassured her. "I know you'll enjoy your classes because you've always done well in school. Time will fly and the holidays will be here before you know it."

Frannie squeezed her Dad's hand and prayed that she'd made the right choice."

They returned to Hadley Hall together to retrieve Gerhart's coat and tie while Mrs. Crandall called a taxi. Frannie and her father waited together at the curb, then shared a long goodbye hug. "You'll be fine, Frannie," he assured her. "Crestmont is a wonderful opportunity for you." He climbed into the cab and Frannie stood waving, not bothering to wipe away the tears

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streaming down her cheeks. She felt a stab of anxiety when the Yellow Cab turned at the end of the oval and disappeared.

She stood for several minutes, then swiped at the tears. *“I can do this!”* She turned toward the dorm, then stopped, unable to face the confusion in her room. She pulled the map from her pocket. *“I can check out the Student Union, just long enough to get my bearings and maybe meet a good-looking guy. That would be cool.”* The Student Union clock showed 2:45. *“I can take an hour and still have time to unpack before dinner.”* She wandered about, peeking into the bookstore and glancing at students and their families seated in the conversation areas. She climbed the stairs and found the cafeteria. The cavernous room took up half of the second floor. It was empty, but the *Beach Boys* blared from a boom box in the kitchen. Alone and overwhelmed, she understood how

Alice must have felt as she spiraled down the rabbit hole.

“You new?” The voice startled her. Frannie turned to see a tall, good-looking young man leaning against the wall, grinning and drinking in the full length of her. His straight black hair was not quite shoulder length and he sported a two-day beard. He wore tight faded bell-bottom jeans and an untucked cowboy shirt with the top three pearl snaps undone. “You’re cute,” he commented. “Want me to show you around? The action is downstairs.”

Frannie took a breath, a bit less anxious now that someone was talking to her. She looked him up and down slowly, just to let him know she’d noticed. “I’d love a tour.” Then she added with a coy smile, “You’re not bad-looking either.”

“Stephen Barton,” he said, reaching out a hand, “from Midland. I’m a sophomore, Liberal Arts.”

“Frannie Braun,” she said, “from Philadelphia. Is Midland in Texas?”

“Yep and the best view of Midland is in your rear-view mirror.” Frannie grinned, positive that he’d said that a million times before. Stephen threw an arm around her shoulders and pulled her along, pointing out the large ballroom that occupied the other half of the second floor. Downstairs they passed an open area with study carrels and the bookstore, then stopped at the

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Game Room. “C’mon in,” he said, propelling her across the room toward a group of boys playing darts. They watched several games, Frannie enjoying Stephen’s arm draped across her shoulders. Then he stepped in to play, winning four games in a row with Frannie cheering each victory.

He invited her to play and beat her handily. “I need to get a lot better at this to give you a run for your money,” she said, then spotted the clock. “Oh no, it CAN’T be after five! Stephen, I have to go. Thanks for the tour, and for the games. I hope we’ll run into each other again.” She hurried out of the Game Room and ran to Hadley Hall.



Sally ushered Robin into the suite. “Your other suitemates, Leslie Bleu and Katie Grayfox, have taken that room, so you’ll be sharing this one with Frannie Braun.”

Robin pushed the door open and gasped, “What the hell!” There was no one inside, but clothing covered every piece of furniture and most of the floor. “Shit!” She turned to Sally, “There isn’t a square inch left in this room for my stuff. I don’t even have a bed! Leave it to some rich bitch to think she owns the whole world.”

Embarrassed, Sally set Robin’s suitcase on the floor and shrugged, not knowing what to say.

With a wicked smirk, Robin said, “No problem. I can take care of this.” She scooped up everything from one bed and threw it onto the other, creating an untidy mountain of clothing. Sally backed out of the room. Robin cleared her dresser, desk, and chair in the same manner. She stood back, inspecting her side of the room. She lifted one of her suitcases onto her bed, opened it, and draped several items over her arm. When she walked into the closet, she found one short section of rod empty of clothing, suitcases on the floor below, and not a hanger in sight.

Robin shouted, “You’ve gotta be shittin’ me!” She stood glaring into the full closet.

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Frannie stepped into the doorway and stopped short, her eyes wide and mouth moving like a fish out of water. “Hey! You took my bed!”

Behind Frannie, Leslie and Katie entered the suite. Frannie’s exclamation stopped them in their tracks.

“I WHAT?” Robin yelled, glaring at Frannie. “Both beds were covered with crap! ONE of them HAD to be mine, and neither of them had your name on it.”

Frannie stammered, “I meant to be back earlier. My father took me to lunch and...”

“Who the hell ARE you? Some rich kid with MAIDS?”

“I was hanging clothes, but I ran out of hangers... and Dad made lunch reservations, so I had to leave. I... I thought I would be back earlier.”

“Look. I don’t give a damn! Just get hangers! Then get enough stuff outa this closet so half of it can be mine. Find somewhere else for your suitcases, like under your bed, or out in street for all I care!” Noticing the two girls standing mute outside the bedroom door, Robin shrugged. “Obviously, she thinks she owns the place. She’s claimed the whole room for herself. What did she expect me to do, set up camp in the bathroom? Oh, of course not, cuz that’s full of her crap, too.”

Frannie insisted, “I was going to leave you half. I just didn’t know where to put everything.”

The tall brunette entered the room one step ahead of the second girl who was the image of an Indian princess. “I’m Leslie Bleu and this is Katie Grayfox. We’re your suitemates.”

“I’m Robin Hart, and I have no idea who *she* is.” Robin jerked her thumb toward Frannie.

“My name is Frannie, Frannie Braun... and I’m not rich and I’m definitely not what you called me earlier.”

“Well, glad to meet both of you.” Looking to Katie for support, Leslie continued, “We’re finished unpacking, so we can help you two get settled if you’d like? Frannie, how ‘bout we go to the front desk and check out options for hangers? I could use a few myself.”