

M.G. HIGGINS

IGGY

ADMIT ONE





WH/TE
L/IGHTNING
BOOKS

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PORTLAND AND LAS VEGAS

#1 DONUT SHOPS (BASED ON YELP REVIEWS)



PORTLAND
VOODOO DOUGHNUTS



LAS VEGAS
RONALD'S DONUTS

PORTLAND

POPULATION 619,000

LAS VEGAS

POPULATION 613,000



PORTLAND
8.6 MILLION

LAS VEGAS
41 MILLION



I HOPE I DON'T MEET ONE OF THESE!



CHAPTER 1

COYOTE AVENUE

The plane jerks. I open my eyes. “Ignacia Suarez?”

The flight attendant smiles down at me. So does the jolly plastic Santa pin on her collar. “We’ll be landing in Las Vegas in ten minutes. Stay on the plane until everyone else is off. Then someone from the airline will meet you. They’ll take you to baggage claim. Okay?”

“Okay,” I answer.

She continues up the aisle, collecting trash.

I sit up straight. Look out the window. The ground is flat and brown. So different from Oregon. I wish Dad hadn't moved so far away. And to Nevada of all places.

"I'm sure you and your stepmom will get along fine," says the woman sitting next to me. I'd told her why I'm flying alone. I'm spending winter break with my dad and new stepmom.

I let out a shaky breath. "I hope so."

"Remember, she's as nervous to meet you as you are to meet her. I'm sure they've got your holiday all planned out. You're going to have a great time."

I hope she's right. "What were those places you said before? The fun things to do?"

"Well, let's see," she says. "There's the Big Apple Coaster. Adventuredome. The Big Shot ride. Adventure Canyon. Your parents will know where to go."

It sounds like fun and makes me feel a little

better. Maybe this won't be such a terrible winter break after all.



“Iggy!” Dad waves from baggage claim. He looks a little heavier. But otherwise the same. Five foot seven. Pizza-crust-colored skin. Thick black hair.

“Hi, Dad.”

He lifts me off the ground. Grips me in a bear hug. “It’s so good to see you. I can’t believe it’s been over a year.”

“Yeah.” He feels good. Smells good too. Lime aftershave, just like I remember.

I wish he didn’t have to set me down. But he does. Now I’m face-to-face with Tiffany. Dad sent me pictures. But seeing her is still kind of a shock. She’s tall. Thin. Blonde. The complete opposite of my dad. Opposite of everyone in my family.

Tiffany is wearing a stiff white shirt. Her hair poofs out like a blonde helmet. The only parts of

her body not at attention are her eyes. They sag at the ends. It's like she's already tired of me.

“Hello, Iggy. It's nice to meet you.” She sticks her hand out.

“Hi.” I shake her bony fingers.

“Your father has told me so much about you.”

I have no idea what to say. *It's not nice to meet you. You should have left my dad alone. Given him time to get back with Mom.* I don't say anything.

Dad clears his throat. Takes my suitcase. “Okay. Let's go.”

We drive forever on a freeway. Then another freeway. Then down lots of streets that all look alike. We pass houses that all look alike. Dad turns up Coyote Avenue and pulls into the driveway of a white house. The front yard has one skinny tree. Four spiny cactuses. And a lawn of bright white rocks instead of grass.

“We're here,” he says proudly.

I follow them inside. Go through a white living

room. Down a white hallway. Into a white bedroom where Dad sets down my suitcase. “We really want you to feel at home here. Don’t we, Tiff?”

“Of course,” Tiffany says softly.

Dad gives me another hug. “I’m so glad you’re here. Make yourself at home. I have a little work to do.” He winks and leaves.

Tiffany smiles awkwardly. Pats my arm the way you’d pat a baby’s back to get the burps out. “Go ahead and put your things away. The bathroom’s down the hall. Let me know if you need anything.” She skips out of there like bees are chasing her.

I call Mom’s phone. Get her voice mail. “I’m here.”

Then I text my best friend, Sophia.

IGGY:

Merry Saturday before Xmas from
Las Vegas!

IGGY

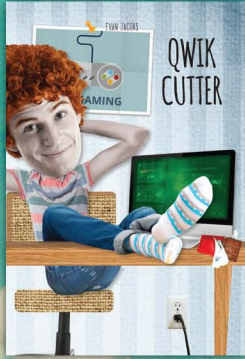
I look around the super-neat room. Just a bed, a dresser, and a desk. Nothing out of place. My bedroom in Oregon has yellow walls. A purple bedspread. I haven't seen the top of my desk since I was three. Which is exactly the way I like it.

This is an alien planet.

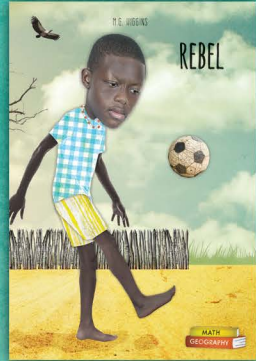
I need to get out of here.



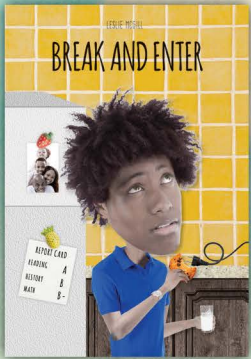
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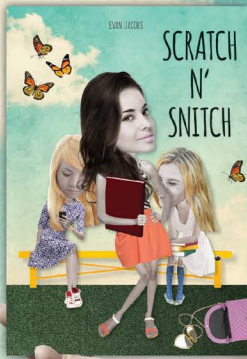
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IGGY



PORTLAND, CHOCOLATE,
NORMAL FAMILIES



STEPMOMS, WHITE PAINT,
ROCK LAWNS

THE HOLIDAY BREAK IN LAS VEGAS WAS GOING TO BE EPIC. THERE WAS SO MUCH TO DO. AMUSEMENT PARKS! HOOVER DAM! THE STRIP! BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED. "DON'T YOU HAVE HOMEWORK?" IGGY'S DAD ASKED. SO MUCH FOR HAVING FUN. AND BEING STUCK AT HER DAD'S PLACE WITH HER NEW STEPMOM WAS BORING. THEN SHE MET LUCAS AT THE PARK. HIS FAMILY WAS DEFINITELY NOT DULLSVILLE.



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