

# Unlocked- KM

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Janessa Morgan has recently moved from sunny California to a small town in Michigan to live with her aunt, leaving behind years of pain and loss. She hopes for a chance to start over. Will she be able to find happiness in Bloomingdale? A funny, outgoing new friend and a cute, understanding crush are sure to help, but darkness lurks in the background.



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## Chapter One

I took a deep breath as I stared at the sign above me. Bloomingdale High School, it said. Finally, I convinced my legs to actually move. I had to get it over with somehow, so I decided to try 'quick and painless'. I pulled open one of the outside doors, walked forward a few steps, and opened another, inner, door. Inside, there was a medium-sized lobby. In front of me and to the right was the door to the front office. It was surprisingly heavy as I pulled it open and stepped inside.

Behind the desk was a woman. She looked nice and that helped calm my nerves just a little bit. She looked up as the door closed and smiled.

"Hello. I'm Mrs. Brynner. You must be Janessa Morgan." She held out a hand and I shook it cautiously. She began rummaging through a stack of papers on her desk then pulled out a seemingly random one and thrust it in my direction.

"Here's your schedule," she smiled.

I thanked her and studied it. My first class was Advanced Placement Government. I shook my head as I perused the rest of the list. I had no idea where any of the classrooms were in this school.

Mrs. Brynner seemed to read my mind. She smiled again. "I'll find someone to show you around." She picked up the phone, dialed a number from a chart on the wall, then spoke quietly to whoever answered. "She's on her way," she told me a minute later, while setting the receiver down.

"Thanks," I murmured. Then I sank into one of the plush red chairs that sat by the office window.

While I waited, I examined the room. The chair I was sitting in was right next to the door. A few steps forward and to the right was another door, leading to a smaller office. Back past the desk were more doors. Random decorations were everywhere. A poem was taped to a shelf, a stuffed cardinal sat on a small table between the chairs, and an old typewriter had been turned into a plant pot.

The door creaked open and a beautiful girl walked in. she had long, wavy blonde hair, the type of tan you either get from a lot of sun or a bottle, and cerulean blue eyes. She smiled brilliantly at me.

"Hi! I'm Brooke."

I smiled back uncertainly. "I'm Janessa."

"Janessa? That's a cool name."

"Thanks."

She seemed pretty nice. I stayed quiet as Mrs. Brynner told her to give me a tour and make sure I knew where all of my classes were. Brooke nodded. Just then, the bell rang. Brooke rolled her eyes.

"How about we just wait here until the halls clear? I wanna keep you to myself for now."

I shrugged. I actually liked the idea. Meeting everybody at once would be very overwhelming. Brooke sank into the chair next to mine. She turned sideways to face me.

"So. Where are you from?"

I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. "California."

"Oh! Have you met any stars?"

"Yeah," I said bluntly.

"Ooh! Who?" She bounced excitedly in her seat.

"Nobody important. Believe me," I glowered.

"Oh." She looked downcast for a moment. Then she brightened "Was he cute?"

I glanced at her. "Why do you assume it was a guy?"

"I don't know Was it?"

"Yeah," I sighed.

"Okay, I was right. Now was he cute?"

"I guess."

A trilling bell sounded, literally making me jump. I got up and started gathering my things.

"That's the minute bell. It lets you know you have a minute to get to class," Brooke said.

I nodded, storing this in my memory. "Can we just get this over with?"

"Well you just sound so happy to be here, don't you?" Brooke put her hands on her hips

I saw Mrs. Brynner open her mouth and shook my head. "No, you're right. I'm sorry. It's just.... I've never gone to a new school before and I'm really nervous."

Brooke laughed and opened the office door, ushering me outside and saying, "I understand."

She started pointing things out. Across from the office were double doors that led to the gym bleachers and another, single, door off to the side that led to the gym. To the right of the office and across the hall was another set of double doors that led to the auditorium. Brooke led me down the first hallway. There were benches against the walls, which were decorated with, I assumed, pictures of the students. One wall was completely made into a trophy case. The end of it didn't display any trophies, though. It was full of art work. Next to the display cases was a cork board covered in announcements and posters telling students not to drink or to text while driving.

We had reached an intersection. Another hallway crossed the one we were standing in. on the other side were vending machines, emergency exit doors, and the bathrooms. Brooke turned right she led me all the way down to the end there were more doors leading outside.

"That's the teachers' entrance," Brooke said. She turned to face back the way we'd come. "On the right side of the hallway are Mrs. Chancey, Mrs. Laney, Mrs. Carter, and Mr. Farnes. On the left side are Mrs. Rogan Mr.

Sandford, Mrs. Beales, and Mr. Levitt."

I was quiet for a second, trying to take in all of the information. "Okay."

She smiled and linked her arm through mine, then she dragged me back through the intersection. There were the regular blue lockers on one side, but on the other side were red lockers of different sizes.

Brooke noticed me looking. "Those are the band lockers. That door in the middle of them leads to the band room."

Further down the hall were benches in the shape of a 'v' with windows. I walked over and looked through the windows. They looked down on the library Brooke tapped me on the shoulder.

"C'mon. We need to finish the tour." I nodded and followed her.

Across from the benches was Mr. Jonson's room and the distance learning lab. Then we went down two small flights of stairs. To the right was a silo and the doors to the library. To the left was another hallway. According to Brooke, there were only four rooms highschoolers needed to worry about. Those were Ms. Simon's class, Mr. Doherty's class, Mr. Cass's class, and the cafeteria. Apparently, there were three more hallways forming a square with the one we were standing in, but they were for the middle school kids.

Brooke led me back upstairs and helped me find locker 232. After I put my stuff away, we went back to sit on the benches overlooking the library.

"Thank God that's over," Brooke sighed. She looked at me and narrowed her eyes. "Look, I hate to do this to you, but I have to warn you. Stay away from Mack."

"Mack?:"

"My boyfriend."

"No problem. Believe me, I've had enough of guys for a while."

Brooke tilted her head to the side. "Feel like talking?"

I shook my head. "Not really."

"Oh."

We sat in silence for a long moment. Then Brooke stood up and held out her hand.

"Schedule."

I handed it to her slowly. I didn't know why she wanted to see it. She had already shown me where every class in the school was. She examined it.

"We don't have any classes together," She said, handing it back.

I smiled a little. That was fine. Brooke was a little overwhelming.

She looked at her watch. "We should probably get to second hour. You have Mrs. Carter, right? For AP English?"

I nodded.

"Do you remember where her class is?"

I nodded again.

She waved at me, then disappeared into Mrs. Jonson's classroom. I turned the other way and walked all the way to the other end of the hall. Then I turned and checked back the way Brooke had explained it. A minute later, I knocked on the door of the classroom. A young, pretty teacher opened the door. She smiled and ushered me inside. She quieted the class down.

"Guys, this is our new student." Then she put her twinkling blue eyes on me. "Introduce yourself to the class and tell them a few things about you."

I nodded and stepped up to a podium that sat in the front of the room.

"Um. Hi." I heard a few snickers but ignored them. "My name is Janessa Morgan. Um... I moved here from California and I live with my aunt. Um.... is there anything you want to ask?"

A girl's hand shot up in the front row. "Have you met any celebrities?"

I had to resist the urge to roll my eyes. "Yes."  
"Seriously?"  
"Yeah."

Another girl raised her hand. "Who?"

"Does it matter?" I asked, exasperated. "It wasn't anybody important."

"Oh."

"Are you single?"

The question came from the back of the room where a group of guys were whispering together. The one who had asked smiled at me. His blonde, skater-boy hair bordered eyes that were the deepest blue I had ever seen.

I raised an eyebrow at him. "Why do you care?"

"Cuz I might want to take you out sometime," he winked.

"What if I don't want you to take me out?" I asked seriously.

His face filled with shock as his friends laughed and jeered at him. I guess he wasn't used to rejection.

"Okay, okay," Mrs. Carter laughed. "As funny and entertaining as this is, you guys have reading to do and dialectical journals to work on." She looked pointedly at the huddle of boys in the back. They all mumbled unintelligible responses, then the only sounds in the room were pages turning and the scratch of lead on paper.

Mrs. Carter turned to me. "ave you read The Poisonwood Bible yet?" When I shook my head, she pointed to a bookshelf at the back of the room. "Go find you a copy of the book while I find you papers explaining the dialectical journals."

I nodded and went to the back of the room. As I perused the shelves, a paper ball landed at my feet. I grabbed a copy of the book and turned to go back to Mrs. Carter.

"Will you go out with me?" It wasn't the same guy I had embarrassed. He sat, smirking, and just listened. It was one of his friends.

"No, will you go out with me?"

"No me!"

"Me!"

I ignored the chaotic whispers. Mrs. Carter looked at me apologetically as she handed me my papers. I just smiled and shook my head like it wasn't a big deal, because it wasn't, really. They were just stupid, annoying boys. I sat down and began reading. They weren't very far into the book, so I could catch up pretty quickly.

Lunch came unbearably slow. The guy from my English class was in every one of my other classes. He hadn't said anything else to me, but I could feel his eyes following my every move. I still didn't know his name, either. Everybody either called him Puff or Coco, even the teachers. I didn't understand why.

When the bell rang after chemistry, I packed up my things slowly while the other kids trickled out of the classroom. Soon, I was the only person left in the room, or at least I thought I was. I turned around to leave and froze. The guy from English was standing behind me. I jumped. He just watched me with an amused expression.

"What the heck?! You scared the crap out of me!" I exclaimed.

He laughed quietly. Then he said, "Hey. Sorry about this morning. I was being kind of a dick."

"Yeah," I agreed. "You were."

"Forgive me?"

"What is there to forgive? I don't even know you." I tilted my head. "I'm still trying to figure out if you're Coco, the secret, backwoods drag queen, or Puff, the chain-smoker."

He stared at me for a second then burst out laughing. His laugh was loud- unrestrained. It sent shivers down my back.

"That was funny, but how about we just go with Mack?"

An uneasy feeling spread through me. "You're Mack?"

"Have you heard of me?" He smiled crookedly.

"Yeah," I answered, slinging my bag over my shoulder and walking out of the classroom. He followed. "Your girlfriend told me about you."

"I don't have a girlfriend."

"One of your exes, then."

"I only have one ex and she moved to Texas two years ago." He moved in front of me, blocking my way down the hall. "Who were you talking to?"

"Look. It's none of my business." I walked around him.

"The hell it isn't."

I looked up at him in shock. "What?"

"Of course it's your business. I asked you out. You deserve to know I wasn't just messing with you."

At that moment, we rounded the corner to the cafeteria hallway, and there was Brooke leaning against the wall.

"Was it her?" Mack asked quietly as Brooke pushed away and walked toward us.

"Nope," I lied, walking quickly and getting away from there.

"Hey, babe," I heard Brooke coo behind me. I didn't hear Mack's response.

I grabbed a slice of pizza, in the cafeteria, and a juice and stood, looking for someplace to sit.

"Janessa!"

I looked around. A girl from my chemistry class was waving me over. I signed in relief and headed over to sit down.

"Thanks," I smiled.

She shrugged. "No problem. You'll probably only sit here for today, though."

"Why's that?"

She opened her mouth, but the answer came from across the room.

"Janessa! Janessa Morgan! Come sit with us!"

It was Brooke. The girl I was sitting with raised an eyebrow at me. I winked back.

"Sorry!" I yelled. "I'm already sitting with someone!"

The girl smiled. "I'm Becca."

"Janessa."

She looked worried, like I was gonna disappear all of a sudden. I grabbed a lock of her long, auburn hair.

"You know what? I'm glad you invited me to sit with you. I'm gonna need a friend in this jungle."

"Isn't Brooke your friend?"

I frowned. "Not really my kinda friend."

Becca smiled, relieved.

I took a bite of my pizza. It was a little greasy, but otherwise it was surprisingly good. I glanced around the lunchroom. There weren't many obvious cliques and the ones I could see seemed to bleed into the other ones.



I saw Brooke at a table with a bunch of other students. She was talking animatedly. The girls were nodding, excited, but the guys weren't even listening to her. They were all grouped around Mack, laughing loudly. He caught my eye and I looked away.

"What's with Mack?" I asked.

"Mack?" Becca looked bewildered. "Oh!" she exclaimed, smacking her head. "You mean Coco."

"So it is Coco? Or is it Puff?"

She laughed. "It's both. His nickname is Coco Puff."

"Who gave him that name?"

"His friends."

"Why?"

"Apparently girls are cuckoo for him."

I stared at her and she started laughing. When the giggles had finally ended I asked, "So what's the deal with Brooke? Is she the lucky girl who snagged the school's eye candy?"

Becca's mouth dropped open. "Actually she's..." she trailed off, staring behind me. "coming this way," she finally finished.

I turned around and, sure enough, there was Brooke, sashaying our way, followed by her entourage of giggling girls. Mack glanced up and, seeing me, led his gang over, too.

"Hey, Janessa!" Brooke trilled.

"Hey," I said dully.

Brooke raised her eyebrows at the other girls as if to say, See? I told you I was friends with the new girl.

"We decided if you couldn't come to the party, we'd bring the party to you."

"I'm sorry. It's a weekday. My aunt won't let me have a party," I said, feigning innocence.

Brooke stared at me dumbfounded, while Becca snickered beside me.

"She's messing with you." Mack's eyes were filled with laughter.

Brook finally seemed to understand and smiled dryly. "How about this weekend, at my place? Is that off-limits?"

"Actually, I'm hanging out with Becca this weekend." I wrapped an arm around the smaller girl's shoulders.

Brooke looked Becca up and down. "She could come, too."

I shrugged indifferently. "We'll think about it."

"Do you make all of her decisions for her?"

Becca's bright green eyes hardened. "Like she said, we'll think about it."

"Yeah. Right." Brooke rolled her eyes. She turned to her friends. "Come on."

"I'm gonna stay here," one of them said. The other two nodded.

Brooke huffed and stomped away. Mack smiled and sat on the tabletop with his feet on the bench beside me.

"Let me introduce you to everybody." He pointed to each person as he said their names.

Adriana was tall and fit. She was a runner and apparently she was pretty fast because they called her Rocket. Harper was the star of the girls' soccer team. Everybody called her Kicks. Alexia, the only other girl, was very blonde in both senses of the word, and her nickname was Daffy.

The guys had funny nicknames. Braxton, a short, tan guy was nicknamed Scooby. Seth, who was very tall and skinny, was named Porkchop. They called him Porky for short.

"You should see the guy eat!" Mack exclaimed.

The final guy looked a lot like Mack. He had the same haircut, dressed the same, and even had intense blue eyes. His were more of an icy blue, though, and his hair was black, not blonde.

"He's a total Star Wars geek," Mack laughed. "so we call him Brobi Wan Kenobi- Bro for short."

I couldn't help cracking a smile about that. "What about Brooke?"

Mack leaned in and, in a conspiratorial way, said, "Her nickname is Honey. She thinks it's because she's sweet, and it kinda is."

"Kinda?"

He smiled. "Well, she's kinda sweet but, like honey, too much of her is overwhelming. It's like... sickly sweet."

The others at the table nodded. Mack scrutinized me. "You two need nicknames, too."

Becca looked shocked. "Me?"

"Well, yeah. If you're gonna hang out with us more often, that is." He looked at her questioningly

"Of course," she said quickly.

He nodded and looked at his friends. "Help me out. We need a name for Becca."

"You actually know my name?" she asked, disbelieving.

"Of course," he said, mimicking her. "I know everybody's names," he added.

She raised an eyebrow at him. "Uh huh. Sure."

"Honest! I'll prove it."

"How?"

"Point out anybody in this cafeteria and I'll tell you their name. Make sure you know their names, though, so you know I'm not lying."

She glanced around then pointed to a random girl.

"Amber," Mack said smugly.

"You got lucky," Becca said.

"Fine. Choose again."

She did.

"Daniel. Are you happy now?"

She nodded. "Yup."

"Good. Now we can give you a nickname."

"We could call her Corky," Harper, aka Kicks, piped up. "You know, cuz of the curls."

Mack shook his head. "Nah."

"Midge?"

"No."

"Fwiffle?"

"What? Nevermind. No."

The pattern continued. Someone would throw up an idea and he'd shoot it down. The ideas petered out and Mack was frustrated. Apparently it had to be perfect. He looked imploringly at me.

"Any ideas?"

I shrugged. "The best nicknames are usually the simplest or most obvious ones. Honestly, I don't care what you call her. I'm calling her Red."

Mack snapped his fingers and pointed excitedly at me. "That's it! You're a genius!"

"Whatever."

"Now you need a nickname for Janessa," Becca, now Red, pointed out.

He nodded. "We could call you Nessie."

"No thanks," I said. "I do not want to be nicknamed after the Loch Ness monster. Besides, Stephanie Meyer already had that idea."

Becca nodded. They all sat there, stumped.

"Well," Mack said. "Since we don't know you that well, your nickname is TBD. To be determined," he added at Alexia's confused expression.

The bell rang. I went to Advisory class, which was fun, Pre Calculus, which wasn't as fun, and the History of Rock and Roll, which was... interesting, and then I got to drive home.

The house was quiet. My aunt, who I recently moved in with, was at work. She was a nurse at the hospital in Allegan. I went upstairs, threw my bag on my desk, and dropped into my armchair to finish catching up on my English reading. The book was intriguing.

When I got caught up, I signed all of the papers that got sent home with me and went back downstairs. I put the papers on the little table in the entryway where my aunt left her keys after work so she could fill in the guardian sections. Then I went into the kitchen to make dinner.

I had been cooking since I was eleven, so I was pretty good. I wanted to make something amazing for my aunt to thank her for letting me live with her. I finally decided to just make spaghetti. It was my specialty. I made the sauce from scratch, adding in my secret ingredient, mixed it with the burger, and then poured it into a pretty serving bowl. I set it on the table then drained the noodles. They were placed next to the sauce.

I had just pulled the garlic bread out of the oven and poured the dressing over the salad when I heard the front door open.

"Mmm." My aunt came straight to the dining room. "It smells wonderful in here."  
She draped her coat on the back of a chair and sat, gesturing for me to join her. "Do you know how long it's been since I've had a home-cooked meal? I can't cook. I burn water.  
I smiled, watching as she filled her plate. "I know. Dad told me."

She glanced up for a long moment, then focused back on her food. I followed her example, munching on a piece of garlic bread.

"So how was your first day of school?"

I thought of the chaos. "It was... interesting."

"You know, if you go to the gym, they have the pictures of all the students who have graduated from there. You could find your dad. don't look for me, though," she warned. "It's not pretty."

I smiled. "May I be excused?"

"Sure. Just don't take the food. I'm starving."

I took my plates out and put them in the dishwasher then I went back upstairs. I got a quick shower, dressed, then stared at my reflection in the fogged mirror. I was a little too thin and I didn't look completely healthy. I could see my cheekbones clearly, my hazel eyes were huge, and my long, curly black hair was plastered against my pale cheeks. I sighed. I needed to eat more and go outside more.

I walked into my room and crawled into my bed and sat cross-legged. Reaching under my pillow, I pulled out a photo album and a scrap of fabric. I leafed through the photos, stopping a few. Tears formed in my eyes and I let them course down my cheeks.

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I heard a light knock on my door and shoved the book and cloth back under my pillow then quickly dried my face and cleared my throat.

"Yeah?"

A blonde head popped into my room. "Night, sweetie."

"Night, Aunt Caroline."

She smiled and left. I burrowed under my pillows. Sleep found me just a few minutes later.

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