

Getting Lei'd
by Ann Omasta

Chapter I

Jilted at the altar. These are words that I never in ten trillion years would have thought would apply to me. Okay, technically, I'm not at the altar yet, but I'm already in the white dress. Besides, getting jilted by text message should count for double or triple points, right?

I keep looking from my cell phone to the full-length mirror in the coatroom-turned-bridal-party-prep-area in the quaint, white-steepled church, which my fiancé and I had recently started attending because I envisioned it as the perfect place to exchange marital vows. The reflection staring back at me from the mirror with big brown eyes is beautiful, and I'm not one to say that (or even think that) about myself. Well, my likeness would be beautiful, if it weren't for the mouth hanging wide open in shock.

The ladies in the room with me are bustling around excitedly. My eyes blink quickly as I work to process the sterile text message and attempt to devise a way to share the bombshell news.

Time seems to slog slowly past. I stare at the mirror and a bride gazes back at me. I tilt my head to the side wanting one last glimpse of her in all her Swarovski-crystaled glory. What I am about to say will ruin her big day.

When I finally speak, my voice sounds croaky and muffled, almost like I am underwater. "The wedding is off."

The room goes silent. Everyone is completely still for a moment. I guess they were able to hear my life-altering, shocking mumble.

My practical, ever-rational mother is the first to speak. "Don't be silly, Dear. Everyone gets wedding day jitters. Just smile and say your vows. It will all be over in a jiffy."

I cringe slightly at her attempt to comfort me. The fact that she views a wedding day as something to get over with quickly, rather than a blessing to cherish as one of the most wonderful gifts that life has to offer speaks volumes about her relationship with my dad. I can't focus on that right now, though.

Mother begins moving about the room as if her dismissive words negated my previous statement. I guess she thinks telling me to 'get over it' will make everything fine. In my mind, I picture her checking 'calm high-strung daughter' off her list of things to do today.

The other women in the room remain motionless. Their eyes roam around uncertainly while their bodies remain frozen in whatever position they were in when I made the announcement. I feel hysterical laughter beginning to bubble up inside me. They look like they are playing a grown-up version of the game 'freeze dance' and the music has just stopped.

Mother just doesn't get it. I watch her fluff the deep purple ribbons on my bouquet of daisies as she shuffles about, business as usual. *She's going to lose the game*, I think, and I'm horrified to hear the impending giggles burst out of me.

Since we aren't playing the musical game, my maniacal chortling serves as the catalyst for resumed activity. Suddenly, I am surrounded by five of the ladies I love most on this Earth. There are only five because my best friend, Lizzie, is conspicuously absent, and now I know why.

I turn my phone so the group can see the text from my now-former husband-to-be, Gary. I watch as each of them read the words, some of them moving their lips as they do so. The shock, pity, and outrage move in waves throughout the group.

“What in tarnation?” This outraged question comes from my wildly irreverent grandma, Baggy. Although she looks like a sweet (although slightly shriveled) little old lady with her freshly set silver curls, bright pink lipstick, and lemon yellow sweater, she is anything but. “He can’t do this. I’m going to give that snot-nosed little wiener a piece of my mind.” With that, she whirls around, shaking her white leather Aigner handbag in the air like a battle weapon.

If I weren’t hysterical, I would be amused by her typical show of spunk. Baggy has never been the typical grandmother who sits quietly in her rocking chair knitting red mittens. Even as a child, I had known my grandma was different. In fact, her nickname, Baggy, was my toddler version of ‘Bad Grandma.’ The moniker is so appropriate that it has stuck to the point that everyone now calls her Baggy, even non-relatives.

“Mother, no.” My mother grabs Baggy’s arm as she smoothly slides into her usual role of ‘voice of reason.’ A role she relishes, even with her own parent. She glares down at Baggy through her half-glasses, which are perpetually precariously perched on the end of her nose. I decide that one of my mother’s odd talents is having glasses that always look like they might fall off at any moment, yet somehow managing to keep them on. It is a trick that works great for intimidation – that and her 5’ 9” height, which she uses to full advantage.

Looking at the two of them, I wonder – not for the first time – how Baggy survived my mother’s birth. Baggy has shriveled slightly with age, but she was always diminutive, and my mother is not what anyone would describe as a small woman. She can’t possibly have been a tiny baby.

Baggy tries to yank her arm free as she lets out a rallying cry for the group. “We won’t let that good-for-nothing, low-life bag of worms get away with this.” She continues to hold her purse with her free fist in the air.

Realizing she can’t break away from her daughter’s firm grip, Baggy tries to start a chant. “Get Gary. Get Gary.” The women in the room look around seeming uncertain of what to do. A few of them join in on the chant before it peters out.

Once the chant fizzles, Mother decides Baggy is not as much of a flight risk and loosens her hold on her forearm. Baggy seizes the opportunity and tries to make a break for it. As Mother realizes what is happening, she whirls around to try to stop Baggy.

In her haste, Baggy trips over my sister’s heels that she has left in the middle of the room (in typical Ruthie fashion). Baggy agilely tucks and rolls her tiny body – just like she always claims she’ll do when falling – in order to avoid breaking a hip.

My formidable mother fails to let go of Baggy and falls much less gracefully than her elderly, spry mother.

The rest of us stand there looking at Mother and Baggy for a moment, uncertain if either has been injured. When Baggy shakes her head, her pin curls don’t budge. She proceeds to spring up like the Energizer bunny before saying to her daughter, “Get up, you big weenie. I have almost twenty-five years on you, and I’m fine.”

I hold my hand out to help Mother stand. She is much larger and less agile than Baggy, and it takes both of my hands to help heft her up. She groans once she is upright and puts a hand on her back, wincing a little.

“You just need to learn how to fall,” Baggy tells her, putting her hand on Mother’s shoulder. “You’ve never been a good faller,” she adds seriously.

Suddenly, the ridiculousness of the entire situation sinks in with me and I begin to giggle again. The whole group turns their attention back to me as the laughter turns to tears.

“Well, let’s go then.” Baggy pulls me out of the room. This time no one tries to stop her, and I silently pray that she isn’t dragging me off to ‘Get Gary.’

With Baggy, it’s hard telling what ‘get’ means. He might not survive it. Although I’m completely humiliated and furious, I don’t wish the man dead, but with my wild grandma, you just never know.

Chapter 2

Baggy drags me to the silver convertible classic Mercedes that was meant to be my post-ceremony ride. The top is down on the pristine car and there are a myriad of cans tied to the back. I can't help thinking that Gary will not be at all pleased when he comes out and finds that someone has been messing with his precious car. That's not my problem anymore, though, I guess. I had been exceedingly close to making his quick-to-anger testiness my problem for a lifetime.

Baggy jumps in the driver's seat as if she plans to take the car. I have let her lead me out here, but now I decide to speak up. "We can't take this car, Baggy. It's Gary's pride and joy."

"He owes you. Come on," she orders me. I hold my ground, so she acquiesces a little. "We'll bring it back. Eventually." She adds the last word under her breath. I can tell by her tone that she is exasperated by my lack of adventure. She seems to think I should agree that grand theft auto is no big deal.

I stay in my spot, so Baggy decides to play dirty. She shakes her head sadly saying, "You get more like your mother every day."

That does it. She knows exactly how to push my buttons. Even though I know what she's up to, I can't ignore it. I huffily get in the passenger's seat as she searches for the keys.

"I know they're here somewhere." She checks under the floor mat and in the console. "Jackpot!" she yells excitedly when she lowers the sun visor and the keys fall into her lap. "What kind of dipwad leaves the keys to such a beautiful car out where anyone can find them. He deserves to have his car taken," she informs me with a wink and a huge smile.

She adjusts her seat forward as far as it will go and turns the engine over. When it rumbles to life, she yells out gleefully, "Yee Haw! Purrs like a pussy cat." She delves into her white purse and draws out a turquoise scarf to tie over her curls. I shake my head to decline her offer of the orange one she draws out from deeper in her pocketbook.

We both look up when we hear my sister running at full tilt towards us. She has her violet bridesmaid's gown hiked up and she is making good time, considering the heeled pumps she is wearing, evidently having retrieved them from the middle of the floor where she had left them as a tripping hazard. Billowing behind her are several clear plastic dry cleaning bags.

Ruthie hurls herself toward the backseat of the car yelling, "Go, go, go!"

Baggy doesn't hesitate. While Ruthie is still in midair, she slams the car into gear and presses the gas pedal to the floor, lurching the car forward. Amazingly, Ruthie lands in the backseat and isn't injured.

Baggy has two modes when driving (and in her life) – all out and stopped. She is so vertically-challenged that she peers out the windshield by looking through the space between the top of the steering wheel and the dashboard. I say a silent prayer and buckle my seatbelt as we race through town at almost three times the speed limit.

The wind is whipping through my hair when I turn to ask Ruthie, "What's that?" I use my head to indicate the bags she stole from the church.

"It's the tuxes." She beams, obviously proud of her theft.

I'm not sure what the point of taking them was. "Umm, I don't think they'll be needing them now that the wedding is off."

Ruthie pouts a little, as if I've just rained on her princess parade. "Well, Gary will have to pay late fees because we aren't taking them back on time."

"Yeah, stick it to him!" Baggy is obviously on board with the thievery.

I can't help thinking the only people we are really hurting are the rental company and anyone who has them rented next, but I decide to hold my tongue. In some strange way, I suppose it's sweet that Ruthie was willing to do this to avenge my wedding day dumping. Besides, I don't need to be told again that my rational voice of reason sounds just like my mother's.

"Where are we going?" I ask Baggy in an attempt to change the subject.

"Away" is her simple response, and I decide that for once in my life, I'm just going to go with the flow and see what happens. If anyone deserves to get away right now, it's me.

"We're just like those crazy broads, Thelma and Louise," Baggy shouts over the hum of the speeding car.

Her proclamation makes me hope she doesn't intend to drive us off a cliff, like the characters do in the movie. Nothing would surprise me with Baggy. The problem is, she and Ruthie would come out of the crash completely unscathed. Even though I'm the only one in a seatbelt, the best-case scenario for me would probably be a full-body cast. I'd tense up all over, while the other two would just enjoy the ride down.

I shake my head to try to clear it. I don't want to be negative. I love my grandmother and sister, but they do seem to live charmed lives. If I'd try half the crazy, irresponsible stunts they pull, I'd be dead or in prison. Today is the perfect example. Being dumped on her wedding day is something that wouldn't dare happen to Baggy or Ruthie. They simply wouldn't allow it.

I catch a glimpse of my reflection in the side mirror. I'm still in the white gown, but my hair has now been whipped into a snarled beehive of rats. I glance back at my sister who looks windblown, but wild and free. Baggy's hair remains perfectly coifed under her scarf.

Looking at these two, reminds me that even though I'd like to be as carefree as them, I'm just not. I seem to be built differently than they are. Maybe I'm more like my mother than I thought. Ugh.

Mother didn't get dumped on her wedding day, though. Double ugh. The more in control of my life I try to be, the more of a hot mess I become.

Chapter 3

We drive and drive. I try to relax and just enjoy the high-speed ride, but I can't keep my mind from returning to the fear that Baggy's driving is going to kill us all. The fact that the woman has never been in an automobile accident (a detail that she loves to remind us of whenever the opportunity arises) is simply shocking. I'm guessing that she has caused an enormous number of fender benders in her wake. She just careens on too quickly to notice.

'Jive Talkin' by the Bee Gees comes on the radio, and Baggy cranks up the volume. She and Ruthie are singing and bee-bopping to the catchy tune as if they don't have a care in the world. I try singing a little and nodding my head to the beat, but I feel silly, so I stop.

The song ends and Baggy turns the blaring radio down slightly. I use the decreased volume as an excuse to ask again where we are headed, since I don't know how much longer I can endure the near-constant fear of riding in the car with Baggy at the wheel. If we go too much longer, I'll probably develop a killer migraine.

"What? I can't hear you over the banging tunes!" Baggy yells over the still-loud music. I adjust the volume further down and repeat my question.

"We're cruising," is Baggy's cryptic answer.

I consider asking her to pull over so I can get a sweet tea. Even though I don't really want one, since my stomach is kind of churning, it seems like it would be a good opportunity to change drivers.

In the end, I decide to continue taking my life in my hands by letting Baggy drive. I don't really feel like taking the wheel, and my sister's driving isn't much of an improvement over Baggy's.

I clear my mind as much as I can under the circumstances, close my eyes, and let the whipping wind wash over me.

Chapter 4

When I wake up, we are in Atlanta. I can't believe we have driven for over five hours. Baggy has slowed down somewhat for the exit ramp off the highway, but still takes the curve way too fast. I squeeze my eyes shut, certain that we are going to drift into the retaining wall. Miraculously, we stay on the road, somewhat in the lane.

Once my heart rate begins to return to a more normal pace, I regain my wits enough to realize we are heading towards the airport. "Are we flying somewhere?" I inquire jokingly, but almost afraid to hear what their answer will be.

"Tell her." Baggy makes eye contact with Ruthie in the rearview mirror, practically bouncing with anticipation.

I turn around to find Ruthie's eyes glistening with excitement. I'm concerned about what is coming, but raise my eyebrows at her, letting her know to spill it. "We're going on your honeymoon," she announces.

I have about forty-seven questions about this odd declaration, but can't seem to formulate one, so I just sit there staring until their hair-brained idea gushes out of her.

"While you were asleep, we decided that you shouldn't miss out on a fab vacay to Hawaii just because that dillweed dumped you." I cringe a little at her harsh word choice, so she throws in a haphazard "Sorry" before continuing. "By the time we thought of it, we had driven too far to get you back to the airport in time to catch your first flight."

She pauses to take a breath, but I decide to wait for her to continue rather than attempt to ask the right questions. "We do have plenty of time to catch your connecting flight, though."

I furrow my brow a little, so she adds, "I borrowed your phone and saw that your connection is in Atlanta. It works out perfectly because we were already practically at the ATL."

"That sounds reasonable," I acquiesce before adding, "But I don't want to go on my honeymoon by myself."

"That's why we're coming with you." Baggy jumps in. "Won't this be a hoot?" She's obviously proud of herself.

Not wanting to dampen their spirits, but unable to avoid stating the obvious, I say, "You two don't have tickets."

"Oh fiddle-faddle." Baggy waves off my valid point as if it has no merit. "It will all work out." If it were anyone else, I would doubt it being possible, but I have learned from experience that once Baggy sets her mind to something, nothing gets in her way.

Chapter 5

Sure enough, even with the more stringent security measures in place, Baggy manages to secure two tickets on the same flight Gary and I were supposed to be on. I can't imagine how much two last-minute tickets to Hawaii must cost, but Baggy always seems to have an unending supply of crisp hundred dollar bills in her billfold. I'm sure she whipped a sizable stack of them out and handed them over to the surprised ticket agent.

We stop to use the assembly-line airport restroom, and I realize that I was too quick to check my suitcase that had been in the trunk of Gary's car. I have no clothes to wear on the airplane, other than my wedding gown. This is less than ideal.

If I hadn't been in such a state of shock, I'm sure I would have thought of this sooner. I'm not overly surprised that Baggy and Ruthie both stood silently by as I checked a bag of casual clothes, rather than mentioning that we might want to change out of our formal-wear first. I'm sure they consider it even more of an adventure in our fancy bridal attire.

I attempt unsuccessfully to tame my wild rat's nest of hair as we wash our hands in the giant metal trough. Giving up my hair as a lost cause, I point out another seemingly-obvious fact that they probably haven't bothered to consider. "You two don't have any luggage."

"Oh, barnacles," Baggy sort-of curses. "I guess we'll have to buy some grass-skirts when we get there." Her eyes light up with a new thought. "Do you suppose I can find one of them coconut bras that will show off my bodacious tatas?"

I can't help but smile at her as I glance at her flat, droopy chest. Anyone else her age would be joking, but with Baggy, I'm guessing I should prepare myself for the sight that I'll never be able to unsee of her dancing around in a coconut bra in public.

One thing this little getaway is sure to be is unforgettable. Adventures with Baggy always are.

As we sit at the gate waiting to board the aircraft, I have a panic attack. What if Gary and Lizzie are on the flight? If Baggy and Ruthie were able to secure tickets, maybe Lizzie did too.

The image of the pre-wedding breakup text from Gary flashes into my head, unwanted. "*I can't do this. Lizzie and I r in love. Sorry.*"

The fact that he deemed it appropriate to relay this information by text is maddening. His word choice infuriates me the most, though. First off, when sending a text of this magnitude, is it really too much trouble to spell out the word 'are'?

The 'Sorry' at the end really irks me too. He couldn't even be bothered to insert an 'I'm' in the half-assed apology? Yes, you are sorry, you ridiculous jerk. Unbelievable. I suppose the way he typed it is infinitely better than if he had said 'We're sorry.' I don't think I could handle that.

I know this isn't how it should be when two people are getting ready to promise to spend the rest of their lives with each other, but the betrayal by my lifelong best friend hurts more than that of my almost-husband. I wish the text had said that he is in love with her, not that *they* are in love. It hurts so much more knowing that my best friend since the first day of kindergarten would do this to me. I guess my feelings about this whole fiasco prove that it is probably a good thing that today did not turn out to be my wedding day. I was evidently about to marry the wrong man.

Apparently, I dodged a bullet with Gary. That doesn't excuse the manner in which he chose to dump me, though. Inconceivable. That's all I have to say about that right now.

Chapter 6

When they call for the boarding of first-class passengers on our flight, Baggy and Ruthie hop up and head to the gate. They are half way there when Baggy realizes I'm still in my seat.

She turns in my direction with a perplexed look. I can see the moment realization dawns on her. I try to get up and close the gap between us because as I watch Baggy's facial expression evolve from confusion to understanding to irritation, I know that she is about ready to unleash a flurry of annoyance. At least if I am in closer proximity to her, less of the crowd at the gate will hear her ranting.

The long, white dress slows me, so I only make it two steps in Baggy's direction before she starts. "You mean to tell me," she is shaking her bent pointer finger at me. I stop in my tracks because everyone within hearing distance is already looking at us anyway. Baggy continues, completely undaunted by the attention drawn by our spectacle, "that cheap-assed bastard didn't even spring for first class tickets for your *honeymoon?*" She emphasizes the last word with righteous indignation. "He has shitloads of money. What is he saving it for – a special occasion??"

After a few quiet chuckles, the crowd turns in unison in my direction awaiting my response. The innocent bystanders look like they are watching some ridiculous train wreck of a tennis match that they can't tear their eyes away from.

I feel like an absolutely ridiculous mess, standing here with my unruly hair, wearing my now-rumpled wedding gown. People have even looked up from their cell phones to see how this will unfold. If there's one thing I am uncomfortable with, it's being the center of attention.

Ruthie can't stand it when all eyes are on me either, so she quickly jumps in. "My sister would appreciate some privacy in this time of great embarrassment and shame," she says to the crowd at large.

I feel like kicking her in the shin. I know there isn't any malicious intention behind her words, but she has somehow managed to make this mortifying situation a thousand times worse. At least everyone is looking at her now. That is the way she and I both prefer things to be.

I close the gap between us so Baggy, Ruthie and I can talk to each other without including the entire room. People are still staring at us, but normal hushed conversations and cell phone usage begin to resume. "You two are causing a scene," I hiss at them.

Both of them look surprised and taken aback by my reproach, so I soften my tone. "Go ahead and get on the plane." They seem uncertain, so I fib, "I like sitting in coach. It's a great opportunity to people watch."

"I could trade tickets with you," Ruthie offers. I appreciate the gesture, but also know she would be devastated if I took her up on it.

I refuse, as she had likely known I would, but the relief is still evident on her face. "If you're sure," Ruthie smiles, already grabbing Baggy's hand and dragging her to the burly female ticket agent.

Nodding in answer, I smile as I listen to them giggling and skipping towards the airplane door. Looking down at my pearly white dress, I vow to be more like them on this adventure. I will have fun and enjoy the moment. That is my new mantra – easy, breezy Roxy. That's me. Well, the Hawaiian me, anyway.