

## Hubris

Belinda felt weightless as she cycled blissfully along the narrow path. The sun's warmth crept over her back and the wind rushed past her face, carrying with it the sweet scent of jasmine. She smiled as she thought about her neatly packed suitcase standing at attention in the hallway by her red front door.

She'd worked hard. She'd earned this. Joel had made it clear that only one of them could attend the conference in LA and given them a week to prepare. Each night she'd stayed up well after midnight working on her presentation, analyzing every nuance of the business, refining each slide until she could recite it in her sleep. The graphics were gorgeous, her pitch was flawless. Joel had lapped it up.

Kurt had been prepared, she'd give him that, but it was unfortunate that he'd had such a heavy cold and delivered his presentation in such a nasally whine. Meanwhile she had oozed good health and good vibes. Kurt had been gracious and she had tried not to gloat, but nothing tasted sweeter than success hard earned.

She heard it before she felt it. The piercing, vicious squawk as the magpie dived with ferocious speed. She swerved, one arm flailing above her head, trying to ward off the attack. Its beak bore in to her helmet as she lost control of her bike and careered into a pole. The impact sent her flying through the air and she landed awkwardly, her leg twisted unnaturally beneath her.

'Broken?' Joel repeated incredulously when she called from the hospital. 'Jesus Bel, I'm so sorry.'

A week later, she hobbled in to work and smiled ruefully at Rosie the receptionist. Rosie was idly scrolling through emails while simultaneously polishing off a donut. She spied Belinda glancing mournfully in the direction of Kurt's empty chair.

'I know, sweetie, life sucks, doesn't it?' she said blithely, as she licked pink sticky icing from her middle finger.