

Roadtrip for
~~ONE~~
~~TWO~~

Roadtrip Romance • Book Two

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All characters are fictional, and any resemblance to real people, either factual or historical, is purely coincidental.

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This book goes out Whitney Mitchell, Jonathan and Demeree Whitt, and Cassie Henley, who helped me out the few times I got to explore Dallas for myself over the years. I love you all and appreciate all you did for us when we were in that big city.

1



“**N**o. No, no, no.”

That voice. It sliced through Bree Henley’s heart sharper than any knife, reverberating pain she thought had finally subsided. But no. Her throat tightened, and she squeezed her eyes shut, willing the strength for this encounter.

She glanced up from her paperback despite knowing who stood there. How could she not? She was supposed to be here with him—back before he’d called everything off. Nathan Hart, her ex-fiancé.

In his plaid button-up and grey pants, he looked just as handsome as ever. She’d always had a thing for slightly nerdy guys, and his glasses and rumpled hair fit the bill from the moment she’d spotted him across a mutual classroom during their sophomore year of college. Too bad he’d decided he couldn’t trust her.

“Hello to you too.” Somehow her words came out normal instead of shaky like her insides.

“What are you doing here?” He motioned to the hard plastic airport seat she occupied.

“Traveling.” She crossed her legs, hoping to appear nonchalant. “You?”

“Bree, be serious. There’s no way you’re here in the same airport I am without something being up.”

“No? I suppose you’ll go all Humphrey Bogart on me and ask why out of all the airports in all the world, I had to pick yours? Though I didn’t realize you owned this one.” She glanced over her shoulder at the hustle inhabiting DFW. “It’s nice.”

His jaw tightened as if holding back words. “Please tell me we’re not headed to the same place.”

“Unless you tell me where you’re going, I can’t answer that. Although I’d say it’s a fairly safe bet, all things considered.” She pulled a ticket from the front pocket of her purse, using the time to swallow one last lump of emotion. “This says Houston.”

“The cruise?”

“The cruise.” She lifted a brow. “Though why you chose to book a cruise, I don’t understand. I thought we’d agreed to go to New York City.”

He glanced around, and then his shoulders slumped, and he slid into a seat next to her. “You wanted to go to New York City. I didn’t care where we went. And this was cheaper.”

“Cheaper? You managed to find a cruise around the Caribbean cheaper than a week in New York City?” She shook her head. “And you call me the travel guru.”

He tensed, and she realized she’d just opened old wounds again. The ones that cut him much deeper than she’d expected. Enough for him to decide he didn’t trust her enough to go through with their wedding. The wedding that should have happened the day before, back in Tennessee.

She ran a thumbnail around the left-hand finger, still

missing the ring that'd lived there for over a year. He wasn't the only one with unhealed wounds.

"Who gave you the information to be able to take this trip?" He crossed his arms and kept to the far edge of his chair as if afraid of touching her. "And how did I not see you on the flight from Nashville?"

"Skye said she got it from Josh. And he helped me change my flight to one out of Memphis since that's where I'm living right now." Bree tucked her ticket back in its place and glanced over at the screen announcing loading times. Weren't they supposed to leave soon?

"Josh." Nathan groaned his brother's name. "I should've known. Let me guess. Skye said you should take the trip, that I couldn't get a refund anyway, and it might as well not be wasted?"

"Pretty much." Almost exactly, in fact. Skye and Katie had told her it would be a great way to work through her depression over the relationship falling apart. Soak up some sun, maybe even meet someone new. She'd never believed the last part, but the sun and waves had sounded good. Not to mention all the desserts probably on board. Hadn't even thought to ask if Nathan might be going too.

And now they had a whole week to look forward to being trapped on a boat—wait! Would they have to be in the same room? Part of her considered backing down now, but why should she be the one to give up this trip? He was the one who didn't want to be with her.

"They set us up." The words escaped his lips as more of a growl.

"I guess Josh basically gave you the same spiel?"

"Yep. And stupid me, I bought it hook, line, and sinker. You know I can't stand to waste money."

"So, you were going on the cruise by yourself?"

“I for sure wasn’t taking Josh.” Nathan scoffed. “My baby brother can be a lot of things, but he’s not who I want next to me on a cruise.”

She nodded, though his words sliced her already wounded heart. Apparently, she wasn’t who he wanted next to her on a cruise either.

“And you were going by yourself?”

She motioned around to prove there was no one else with her.

He opened his mouth, but static crackled before the intercom kicked on.

“Flight 453 to Houston has been canceled due to weather.”

“Canceled!” Nathan jumped up, knocking over his carry-on. “I have to find another flight. I’m supposed to meet the ship this afternoon.”

Bree’s gaze wandered to a nearby television, something she’d paid no attention to earlier. She tugged on his sleeve. Unless she was mistaken, there wouldn’t be another flight. And probably not a cruise, either.

“Bree, I have to go talk to the lady at the counter.”

“Look.” She pointed to the screen.

A huge red blob swirled off the coast of Texas, orange and green spinning off it and covering most of the state. How had she missed hearing about a hurricane? Not to mention not noticing the rain lashing the windows around them.

“Something tells me that cruise isn’t leaving Houston today.”

Nathan slumped down into the seat once more. “So much for not wasting money.”

“Won’t they give you any of it back? I mean, I know they wouldn’t let you cancel for a ... when our original plans fell through.” She pinched her lips together for a second before

charging forward. “But surely they can’t hold the weather against you.”

He nodded once. “There’s a clause about natural disasters. But it might take me a few days.”

“At least you won’t have to worry about losing your money.” She wrapped her arms around her middle. What now? She should probably see if there were any flights back to Memphis, where she’d been rooming with Katie while she figured out her new life plan.

“Guess I better see about finding a way back to Nashville.” He rose once more.

So much for their friends’ and brother’s good intentions. The odds just didn’t seem to be in favor of this relationship working. Bree stifled a sigh and took a deep breath. Time to put those dreams aside for good. Though it wouldn’t be easy after nurturing them for several years.

The more she thought about going back right away, the more depressing it seemed. She’d meant to take this whole week and spend it relaxing and having fun. Why should she let a hurricane ruin that? There was still plenty to do elsewhere. The options were endless—as long as she didn’t mind using her credit card.

She grabbed a travel magazine off the table next to her. One that happened to be for Texas. The serendipity wasn’t lost on her. As she flipped through pages of cowboys and local flora, several bright photos caught her eye. Dallas. Why not? She’d never been here before. Why not stay a few days and explore?

Might as well take the lemons thrown at her and make some lemon squares. Maybe she’d even buy a pair of boots.

“Nothing at all?” Nathan leaned as far over the counter as he dared. There had to be something leaving DFW today. At this point, he didn’t even care which direction it was headed.

“I’m sorry, sir.” The employee shook her head. “The hurricane is spinning storms off all across the state, and we’re actually under a tornado watch right now. Possibly a tornado warning for Dallas county in the next hour. Nothing is taking off until this mess gets past us. My best suggestion is to take the hotel voucher, get some rest tonight, and we can try again tomorrow.”

“A whole day lost.” He stepped back and shook his head. “This has to be the worst honeymoon in the history of the world.” Especially since it wasn’t technically a honeymoon.

“I’m sorry, sir. I can’t control the weather.” The worker glanced past him at the people waiting for him to make up his mind.

“Let me talk to my fiancée—Bree. Let her know we’re stuck for now.”

“Of course. I’ll be here when you’re ready.”

He took a few steps back toward Bree and stopped. It wasn’t actually his responsibility to let her know an update. He’d had no plans of taking this cruise with her—not since calling off the wedding. Besides, she was an old hat at planning trips, considering all those road trips she’d taken with Skye and Katie. She was ahead of him when it came to figuring this out.

And wasn’t that one of the reasons he’d ended it? Not because of her travel acumen, but because he wasn’t good enough for her. And the more they’d fought while she traveled all over the south with Skye and Katie a month ago, the more he’d realized things would only grow worse. Especially if they lived together every day, in the same apartment, while trying to make him into something he had no idea how to be.

Bree glanced up, her dark brown hair falling away from her face. Those blue eyes that used to crinkle at the edges with a smile just for him now met him in an icy stare. He couldn't walk away without telling her something.

"What's up? Get a flight?" She closed a magazine and set it down as he approached.

"Nope." He sank back into one of the chairs. "The hurricane is causing problems in more than just Houston, evidently. There's some tornadic weather close by, and all flights are delayed until things calm down. She offered a hotel voucher for the night and said I might be able to fly out tomorrow."

"Bummer." Bree pulled her phone out and started searching for something on the internet.

"What are you looking for?"

"First, I'll try and get a refund for my flights. Then I thought I'd see about finding a hotel and a rental car."

"A rental car? You won't need a car if you stay at the hotel here at the airport. That's what the voucher is for."

"No offense, Nathan, but I don't want to stay at the airport hotel. I want something closer to downtown so I can explore and play tourist." She pressed the phone to her ear and started answering the questions of whoever had answered.

Play tourist? Here? By herself?

He should just walk away. Nothing held him to her anymore. He'd ended that a month ago. And yet a war raged in his chest, volleying excuses, guilt, and frustration back and forth at the thought of abandoning her to a strange, big city in the middle of a thunderstorm and possible tornadoes.

She was still his friend—at least in theory. And a fellow Christian. Should he at least try and talk some sense into her?

"Perfect. Yes. Thank you so much. You too." Bree ended her call and gathered her things.

"Where are you going?"

“To see about renting a car and finding a place to stay for a few days. I’ve never been to Texas before, so I plan to soak up as much of it as I can this week.”

“Bree, wait.” He caught her arm and warmth shot through him at the contact.

Slowly, her eyes shifted to meet his, slightly wider than they’d been a few moments before. The noise of the airport faded away as if they were in their own bubble. What was going on? He wasn’t supposed to still be attracted to her. And then she blinked and reality crashed around him again.

Her shoulders dipped slightly, as if he were a heavy load she bore. “What, Nathan?”

“I’m just not sure it’s safe for you to run around all over Dallas by yourself.”

“I’m an adult. I mean, I was old enough to be planning a wedding a few months ago. Old enough to be a college graduate. Old enough to move out of my parents’ place and get a job. People travel by themselves all the time. I’ll be fine, but thank you for your concern.”

“Seriously, Bree. What if something happened to you?”

She shook her head, grabbed her suitcase, and took off down the concourse. He snatched his own things and speed walked after her, dodging mothers with clingy children, oblivious tourists, and suited businessmen. How had she gotten so far in such a short amount of time?

Her eyes barely cut his way as he fell in beside her. “Are you following me?”

“I feel responsible.” Why was he winded when she wasn’t?

“Why?” She stopped in the middle of traffic, causing some unkind words to be thrown her way. “There’s no reason to. It wasn’t your choice that landed me here today. You gave up the right to feel responsible when you called off the wedding.

You're free. Go ... do whatever it is you want to do now." She flicked her hands at him and started walking again.

"I don't know what I'll do yet, so at least let me make sure you safely get to your rental car."

A huff that would've done an elephant proud escaped her cute lips. "Fine."

Nothing else, but he'd take it. Though why he felt it was a victory, he had no idea. She was right. He didn't have to look after her anymore.

He blinked and noticed she'd pulled ahead, so he picked up the already frantic pace, hopping on the escalator right behind her to head down to the rental car area. What he'd do after that, he had no idea. Staying in an airport hotel held no attraction for him. Texas had never been on his bucket list to visit, though, so staying didn't sound great either.

She paused and perused the different companies. Did she know which were better, cheaper, safer? Had she ever rented a car before?

As if realizing she looked uncertain, she pointed herself toward one and took off again. He noticed it boasted lower prices and nodded his approval before following. The man behind the desk offered a smile and rose to shake her hand.

"Let me guess. Your flights were canceled?" He chuckled. "We're getting a lot of that today."

"Flight and cruise." Bree flashed him a grin. "I don't have anything else to do, so I figure I'll just explore Dallas for a few days."

"Well, welcome to our beautiful city. It's not usually as wet as it is today." He chuckled at his own joke. "What are you looking to rent? We don't have a ton of options right now because of how many people are bypassing the grounded planes, but we do have a few left."

“I don’t need anything fancy. Just something to get around in.”

Nathan winced at her ignorant words. She would end up with the lousiest model the place had. Would it even go a whole week without breaking down or leaving her stranded?

“Okay, let me pull up my inventory. Meanwhile, I’ll need your driver’s license and insurance information, please.”

Bree started rummaging in the giant yellow bag she called a purse, finally pulling out her bright blue wallet. Nathan pressed his fingertips to his temple. Why was he even down here? Wouldn’t it be better to let her take care of herself and not think about it anymore? If they hadn’t both been conned into taking the cruise, he wouldn’t be worrying about her right now. Not much, anyway.

“You, too, sir.” The clerk pointed at Nathan.

“I’m sorry?”

“I need your license and insurance, too.”

“No—I’m—”

“We’re not—”

He and Bree both broke off as they protested at the same time.

“Oh, I’m terribly sorry. I assumed you were together. I’ll be with you in just a minute.” He turned back to Bree. “Can you wait a moment? I need to check with my associate on something.”

“Of course.” Bree nodded.

Nathan sighed. This day just got better and better. What else could possibly go wrong? He’d gone from looking forward to some sun and good food to standing in the basement of the airport in a rain-soaked Dallas with no plans for either. With his ex-fiancée.

The clerk returned and showed Bree the options, talked her through the fee she’d have for being under twenty-five—her

reaction had him stifling a chuckle—and all the restrictions and rules that went along with it. Bree nodded and signed all the appropriate lines, then whipped out a credit card. So irresponsible. Had she even found a job yet?

“Sir?” A firm voice behind him caught Nathan’s attention. He turned and found two airport security guards looking at him as if he were a thief.

“Yes?” Nathan swallowed a lump of shock. What was going on?

“We need to ask you a few questions.”