



PACK YOUR BAGS,
MAGGIE
DIAZ

Written by **NINA MORENO**
Illustrated by **COURTNEY LOVETT** and **ASIA SIMONE**



SCHOLASTIC PRESS / NEW YORK



Text copyright © 2023 by Nina Moreno
Illustrations copyright © 2023 by Courtney Lovett and Asia Simone
All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC, SCHOLASTIC PRESS, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-338-81861-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

23 24 25 26 27

Printed in the U.S.A.

37

First edition, May 2023
Book design by Maeve Norton

★ CHAPTER 1 ★

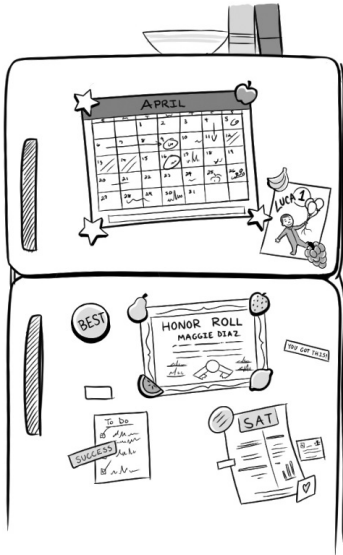
After being majorly stressed out for the first half of the school year, I realized that seventh grade is a piece of cake. Sure, I had to get grounded, almost fail math, and try out a bunch of different clubs, but it all worked out perfectly.

Just like I planned.



Now I've got a phone and I'm no longer sharing my bedroom with my abuela and her stash of vitamins. I'm even allowed to hang out at the beach with my best friends, Zoey and Julian, *without* parental supervision (though my mom still watches my GPS location like a hawk).

My independence is all thanks to the golden ticket of my latest very shiny report card.



I recommend that anyone trying to get out from under their parents' thumb make honor roll, if they can swing it. It worked like a charm for my sometimes strict but usually okay Cuban American parents.

"Magdalena! Get in here right now!"

Well . . . it mostly worked.

I slide into the kitchen in socked feet while wearing a mostly clean school uniform and find the kitchen in its usual weekday-morning chaotic state.

My baby brother, Lucas, is in his high chair at the table making an epic mess of his morning oatmeal. Dad is attempting to fry a bunch of bacon with only his left hand since his right arm is now in a sling thanks to a recent injury at work. Caro is working on some school assignment at the table. Now that it's her second semester of eleventh grade, the only thing my annoyingly perfect older sister can talk about is applying to college. And



that’s only when she isn’t going all intense drill sergeant on me as she “helps” me practice for next week’s track-and-field tryouts.

Abuela is pouring a round of Cuban coffee while listening to the radio report local news in rapid-fire Spanish. Mom is frantically searching the cabinets above the sink.

“I cannot find a single cup. Why can I not find a single

cup in this house?” She spins toward me. Her hair’s a little frazzled—almost as bad as my own morning bedhead. “How many dirty cups are in your room right now, Magdalena?”



That's two times she's full-named me in less than two minutes. Not a good sign at any point, but especially bad on a frantic Monday morning. I hated it when Abuela moved in with us last summer and took over half my room and one of my bunk beds with all her minty medicine and old lady knickknacks. It was an invasion of privacy and major loss of independence.

But I'd never been so tidy.

Now that she is living in the tiny house Dad built for her in our backyard, my personal habitat is back to its natural, messy state.



My report card is the shiniest thing about me these days, but that's okay. It's what Mom would call work-life balance. If she wasn't mad about the three cups with varying levels of water currently in my room.



“I’ll wash every single one of them,” I promise Mom.

“*Maggie*,” she whines as she continues her search for some kind of glassware or mug, but

at least we’re back to Maggie instead of Magdalena.

My phone buzzes in my pocket. I grin as I take it out and check the screen. I’ve had it for two months now, but I still get excited whenever I get a text.



Mom’s still on the hunt for a cup, but she doesn’t bother to open and look



in our dishwasher, because for whatever reason, my family doesn’t use ours. It’s a place to store pots, pans, and all the plastic containers Abuela



refuses to throw out and instead hand-washes before reusing.

Thankfully, she gives up the search and focuses on her tiny cup of strong Cuban coffee instead.

Mom's a little tense seeing as how it's her first day at her new job as an official accountant. She finished her degree in December and is going from the frying pan to the fire (as Dad jokes *again* before *definitely* burning the bacon, as evident by the rank smell in here) because it's tax season. I've never heard of this season. As a kid from Florida, the only seasons I know about are summer, summer junior, that one intense cold front we get in January, and hurricane season.

I grab a slice of pan tostado and am about to add an extra dollop of butter when Caro suddenly shouts, "I am *so* over polynomial equations!" and startles all of us in the kitchen.

Seventh grade put a lot of pressure on me to figure out who I am. But according to Caro, it's even worse in eleventh grade, because everyone wants to know who you're going to become next.

"¿Polynomial . . . qué? Qué es eso?" Abuela asks. She's wearing teal leggings and a very flashy and bright



windbreaker jacket. Inspired by my journey through clubs and activities last semester, Abuela is now tackling several different hobbies and sports, in search of her own self-discovery. And she's wrangling every retired old person she knows along the way.



Who am I to talk her out of it? My school club-hopping quest totally worked out. My grades have never been better, and it turns out that I actually do like running.

Plus, I'm hanging out with my best friends all the time. My best friend Zoey is a killer flutist in band, and my

other best friend, Julian, is an amazing artist who even got to design and paint a city mural across from my favorite bakery.



We've all figured out our extracurricular skills and now that we're past winter break, my next big plan is to officially make the track team, keep my grades up to continue impressing my parents, have fun with Julian and Zoey, and have the *best* spring break field trip ever with my friends.

The seventh-grade spring break trip is a huge deal. It's four days and will be



my first time going anywhere without my parents. I'm daydreaming about possible locations when Mom shrieks, "*My blouse!*"

I nearly spill my juice as Dad yelps at the stove over the sound of angry bacon hissing and spitting oil.

Mom snatches up a paper towel, grabbing way too many in her panic. The roll starts to rapidly unfurl behind her before Abuela jumps forward and tears the sheets off. Mom doesn't even notice as she quickly blots at the brand-new coffee stain spreading across her shirt.

"I'm going to be late now!" Mom races down the hall toward her room in total meltdown mode.

Dad switches off the stove and comes over to Caro and me. He quietly but seriously says, "I need advice."

"Stop trying to cook bacon with only your left hand," I tell him.

"It's about Valentine's Day. Your mom has been so stressed, I want to make sure I get her something really good this year," he says with a big cheesy smile.

"Gross," I say around a bite of toast.

"¡Qué romántico!" Abuela sings.

"That's sweet, Dad." Caro stops packing up her homework to smile at him. It's that lovesick smile of hers. Now that she officially has a girlfriend cooler than her, she's

been all moony-eyed and listening to crybaby acoustic songs in her room all night. “Alex is taking me to an escape room.”

Dad looks impressed. “Fun!”

“Probably to escape *you*,” I tease.

Abuela takes the opportunity to tell us all about a recent episode of her current favorite telenovela where some dude took his lady love out on a moonlit horseback ride by the ocean.



“By moonlight? Sounds dangerous,” I say.

“No, it sounds romantic,” Caro argues wistfully.

Dad looks thoughtful, like he’s taking a mental note.

It’s official. Love is in the air at the Diaz house. I grab my backpack and race right out of there before I get infected, too.