

The GINGER BREAD BAKERY

THE SWEETEST THINGS ARE
WORTH THE WAIT

LAURIE GILMORE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE PUMPKIN SPICE CAFÉ*

THE GINGERBREAD BAKERY

Dream Harbor Series
Book 5

LAURIE GILMORE



HarperCollins *Publishers*

OceanofPDF.com

HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

First published by HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd 2025

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Cover design © Lucy Bennett/HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd 2025

Cover illustrations: Kelley McMorris / Shannon Associates

Map illustration © Laura Hall

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A catalogue copy of this book is available from the British Library.

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Source ISBN: 9780008728090

eBook Edition © September 2025 ISBN: 9780008728083

Version: 2025-07-30

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For all the readers that demanded Annie and Mac's story from the beginning...

Here we go!

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DREAM HARBOR

Playlist



- Landslide** - Haley Klinkhammer
- is it new years yet?** - Sabrina Carpenter
- So It Goes...** - Taylor Swift
- Astronomy** - Conan Gray
- good 4 u** - Olivia Rodrigo
- Stick Season** - Noah Kahan
- Fine Line** - Harry Styles
- True Love** - Ariana Grande
- MAYBE** - Gabriela Bee
- IDGAF** - Dua Lipa
- Merry Xmas, Please Don't Call** - Bleachers
- Christmas Song** - Phoebe Bridgers
- Dress** - Taylor Swift
- Coffee** - Chappell Roan
- us.** - Gracie Abrams, Taylor Swift
- Wildest Dreams** - The Native
- Overkill** - Holly Humberstone
- Please Please Please** - Sabrina Carpenter
- Sweater Weather** - The Neighbourhood
- Here With Me** - d4vd
- Juna** - Clairo
- Mystical Magical** - Benson Boone
- 18** - One Direction
- Iris** - The Goo Goo Dolls
- So High School** - Taylor Swift



Chapter One

Now

Annie Andrews liked most people. She was friendly and outgoing, very involved in Dream Harbor affairs, never missed a town meeting, supported local business with a fierce loyalty, and ran the Dream Harbor High alumni committee. In high school she was voted most school-spirited and most likely to become president. Her bakery was a beloved, town institution and had won 'best window display' three Christmases in a row. She babysat for her nieces and nephews, she dutifully petted every dog she passed on her morning walks, and she'd had the same best friend since kindergarten, which she felt spoke highly of her character. Frankly, she was a freaking delight.

There was one person, however, that her delightfulness simply could not extend to. One human on this planet that she *could not* be nice to. Mostly because she didn't want to. Mostly because she hated him.

And for the next three days, she was stuck with him.

'Annie,' Hazel hissed, nudging her shoulder. 'You're glaring again.'

She was glaring again. Right at the stupid face of Macaulay Sullivan. And she would have kept glaring until his head went up in flames if it weren't for the fact that they were at Jeanie and Logan's *rehearsal before the rehearsal* brunch, which was not even a thing but Jeanie wanted a mini-celebration with just the wedding party before the craziness of the wedding weekend really kicked off this evening with the actual rehearsal dinner. And who would deny the bride her wish? Not Annie. Because Annie was a nice person. Unlike some people.

Mac winked at her like he was reading her thoughts.

'I object,' she blurted out, interrupting Logan's very brief, very gruff thank-you speech to his groomsmen. The group was currently crowded around a table at The Strawberry Patch Pancake House. Unfortunately, it was rather dead at 11 a.m. on this particular Friday in December, so the whole table heard the words she hadn't actually been meaning to say out loud.

Logan, Jeanie, Hazel, Noah, Kira and Bennett all turned to look at her. Mac smirked. Annie barely restrained herself from reaching across the table and strangling him.

'I don't think this is the part you get to object to,' Noah pointed out with a grin. Hazel elbowed him in the side, and he yelped.

'You don't think we should get married?' Logan asked, brow scrunched like he was working through a puzzle, because why the hell wouldn't she want her best friend and his lovely fiancée to promise to love each other in front of the whole town?

'No! Of course, I don't think that! That's not ... I didn't ... that's not what I was talking about.'

'Then what were you talking about, *Annabelle*?' Mac asked, his stupid smirk smirking even harder.

'You! I was talking about you!' She was nearly shouting now and several patrons from other tables were turning in her direction. 'I object to you being part of the wedding party,' she said, lowering her voice and leaning across the table toward him, narrowly avoiding her syrupy plate. 'I don't know how you waseled your way in here. You were never friends with Logan. You *bullied* him.'

Mac put up his hands in defense. 'First of all,' he said. 'I didn't bully him. Some good-natured teasing, maybe.'

'You called him Old MacDonald all through second grade! You 'e-i, e-i, oed' at him every time you walked by!'

Mac shook his head. 'How do you even remember all this shit, Annie? Do you have a little notebook where you write down every offense I ever committed?'

Annie scoffed. 'Wouldn't you love it if I cared about what you did that much?'

'Well, you seem to.'

'Ha! I couldn't care less about you, *Macaulay*. I just don't understand why you're even here... Ow! Haze, why are you jabbing me with your pointy elbows... Oh.' Annie looked up to find Jeanie looking at her with tears in her eyes. Shit. She'd made the bride cry.

'Is it going to be like this all weekend? I just wanted us all to have a good time.' Jeanie sniffled and Logan looked like he may actually strangle Annie, if she didn't fix this immediately.

'No, no, no. We'll behave. Right, Mac?'

'Yep. Best behavior. Promise.' He crossed his heart, and Annie had to bite back every word she wanted to say about how Mac's promises were worthless. But her friends still had no idea why she hated Mac so much, and she sure as hell wasn't about to tell them. And besides, she'd just made a promise to Jeanie to behave like the grown adult she was. And *her* promises did mean something.

She could suck it up for a few days. She could resist her urge to throttle the man across from her for a mere seventy-two hours. For her best friends, she could do it. Logan had been like a brother to her since they were five. With Hazel, they were inseparable. And now Annie loved Jeanie just as much. She would not screw up their wedding weekend.

'Really, Jeanie. I'm sorry. I will keep all Mac-related commentary in my head from now on.'

The entire table, including Mac, looked skeptical.

'I'm serious! I will put all my personal feelings aside for the weekend.'

Bennett leaned toward Kira and whispered, 'Do we know why she has such strong personal feelings?'

Kira shrugged. 'Complicated history?' she whispered back.

'Not complicated,' Annie cut in. 'We don't have any history at all.'

Mac flinched at that, something like sadness or regret flickering in his eyes. But Annie didn't dwell on it. She couldn't. Not if she wanted to keep her sanity. She pushed a smile onto her face and turned back to Jeanie.

'Nothing is complicated. In fact, it's all quite simple. Two of the people we all love most in the world are getting married. And we,' Annie gestured to the table of friends in front of her. 'Are going to make sure it's the best wedding weekend ever.'

'Good,' said Logan. 'Because Mac is here as one of *my* groomsmen. Some of us have put second grade behind us.'

Annie was getting nauseous from all the words she was swallowing, but she did it. For her friends. For the sake of this wedding, she would not say that it went far beyond second grade for her. 'Of course,' she said instead. 'Mac's your friend. I get it.' She raised her glass of orange juice and everyone joined in.

'To Logan and Jeanie.'

'Cheers!'

Everyone clinked their plastic, juice glasses together, and Annie was relieved to see the smile back on Jeanie's face and a slightly less murderous expression on Logan's. Phew. Wedding-crisis number one averted. Sure, she was the one who started it, but at least she'd fixed it.

No thanks to Mac.

Her gaze flicked back across the table to where he sat, laughing with Bennett and Kira. It didn't help matters that he was still as infuriatingly handsome as he had been in high school. Not that she would have admitted it at the time.

She'd never been friends with Mac. They'd never made sense together.

It was exactly what she'd told him eleven years ago.

But Mac had never been good at listening.

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