

LOOPHOLE

“Mack tapped her fingers on her head impatiently. Every one of her fans were waiting for the release of the sequel to her *New York Times* bestselling novel, *Loophole*

‘Mack? Are you still there?’ Someone tapped her shoulder. It was her friend Riley, who worked at the Philz Coffee in Pacific City. ‘Yeah. I just can’t think of anything for the sequel. I’ve just been feeling so distracted lately.’ Mack complained.

‘Well, you can worry about your book later. There’s something wrong with the closet. It’s not unlocking.’ Riley explained. ‘Can’t you just unlock it with the key?’ Mack asked, as Riley dragged her toward the closet. ‘I’ve tried that, but it still won’t open. Let’s try pulling the door at the same time.’

They counted and pulled with all their might. They still weren’t able to open the closet. Though, when Mack leaned against the door, she fell through the door. She hit her head hard against the ground with a loud *thud*. ‘Mack!’ Riley yelled. Riley threw herself against the door, but she wasn’t able to go through like Mack.

‘Are you okay in there Mack?’ asked Riley, worried. ‘I hope,’ Mack replied. She stood and saw there was a glowing, blue circle about her height, floating in the dark. Mack stood there for a few moments, staring at the circle, before walking toward it. She held out her hand, as if to protect herself.

She let her fingertips touch the circle, ever so slightly. Once her skin touched the portal, she got sucked into a void. Mack only saw the void for a few seconds before being pulled into another dimension.

This dimension was a beautiful place full of lush plants. It felt like a magical fantasy, and she loved it. Though, it seemed almost too familiar. It felt as though she had already been there, but she knew she had never been there before.

Mack finally acknowledged the towering palace behind her. It was beautiful and made of crystals and metal. It had tall sparkling walls covered in swirls of silver and gold.

Suddenly, a path appeared before her. It was a long path leading to the place. Again, she felt a sense of déjà vu as she walked along the path. When she arrived at the palace, she was greeted by guards bowing to her and several "Your Majesties". The guards rushed to open the door for her as she awkwardly curtsied them. The inside of the palace was decorated with exotic flowers, more crystals, and silver.

So. Much. Silver.

As she was walking around, staring at the walls and decor, she accidentally bumped into someone.

'I am so sorry, Your Majesty!' the man said. He looked awfully familiar as he bowed to her. 'Excuse me, do you know where I am? I think you're mistaking me for someone else,' asked Mack. The man laughed and laughed before he realized that she wasn't joking.

'Your Majesty, are you feeling well? Would you like me to call the doctors?' worried the man. 'Um, no. I'm doing fine, thank you. Please, could you tell me where I am? My friend is probably really worried about me and-' Mack stopped herself when she realized she was teleported somewhere else in the palace. In the room were lots of chairs and a crystal throne in the middle. The throne was empty, but all the other chairs were filled with people, staring at her.

The same man from before nudged her from behind to walk down the aisle. Mack nearly tripped when she realized she was somehow changed into a long, fluffy dress.

Then she remembered. This was her story.

She was in *Loophole*.

Behind the throne, she spotted a glowing blue circle, similar to before. She ran up the aisle and around the aisle to try and get behind the throne to the portal. Mack saw that the portal was nearly half her size now, and seemed to be shrinking by the minute. 'Your Majesty! Come back! Where are you going?' The man from before kept urging her to stay with them, even though she didn't know them. Mack banged her head against something when she tried to crawl through and nearly tripped.

Mack was in the same void as before, except she wasn't being flown through like before. Now that it was more still, she got to study it more. It was made of thick and thin lines of colors. When she tried to touch the wall of the void, it burned her skin.

But, at the touch of her skin, a small hole opened in the wall. Mack gasped when she saw Riley pacing around the cafe. Mack stuck both hands in the hole and tried to make the hole bigger so she could fit through, and eventually, she fell through the hole.

'Riley!' Mack shrieked. Riley didn't seem to notice Mack, so Mack shook Riley's shoulder. Still, Riley didn't notice her. 'Riley stop joking around, it's not funny.' Riley kept pacing around, ignoring Mack.

Then, a realization hit Mack: Was Mack gone forever?"

"Juniper? Are you ready to go? The shop closed five minutes ago, so we need to hurry," Skylar urged. "Yeah, I'm ready. I was able to write a bit more today, but I didn't make much progress on the book." As they walked out of the Philz Coffee, Juniper noticed a glowing blue circle under the bench right outside the cafe. Juniper blinked and rubbed her eyes and the circle was gone.

But then, she saw the circle again near the stairs. It was the portal just like in her story.

Juniper was now a part of the loophole.