
Lucky T

by

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Chapter One

On a warm and sunny Saturday morning, Carrie Fitzgerald stepped out of her walk-in closet wearing a lime green miniskirt. It was so short, she was positive she could never, under any circumstances, bend over in it. Her blond hair was held up in an impromptu bun with a No. 2 pencil. She had just run up to her room with her best friend, Piper Breslin, and begun trying on a multitude of eye-popping outfits that they bought during their crack-of-dawn shopping spree. The Westfield San Francisco shopping center had never been hit that hard that early in the morning before.

“Does this make me look sexy or skanky?” Carrie asked.

Piper checked herself out in Carrie’s floor-length mirror and stuck her tongue out at her reflection. The electric blue tank top that she’d grabbed off Carrie’s reject

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pile was clinging in all the wrong places. While Carrie had a very sleek figure that would make a supermodel envious, Piper was on the shorter, slightly rounder side.

“How do I put this without hurting your feelings?” Piper said with a smirk. “There’s a hooker in LA that wants her skirt back.”

“Hey, I can’t help that I’m all legs.” Carrie tugged at the hem of the skirt, hoping a few more inches of material would magically grow.

“I don’t know how you do it,” Piper said as she watched Carrie gawk at herself in front of her mirror. She could totally tell that Carrie was admiring the lift of the push-up bra she had bought at Victoria’s Secret.

“Do what? Look like a streetwalker no matter what I put on?” Carrie joked, her brown eyes teasing. “Why do I have to be so tall and skinny?”

“Yep, tall and skinny. With big boobs. Must be a nightmare,” Piper said with a deep sigh of frustration. “How do you manage to look so good even when you look bad?”

Carrie smiled. This is one of the many reasons she and Piper had been soldered together at the hip since kindergarten. They had this unbelievable relationship that bordered on sisterhood. No one else could tell Carrie that she looked cheap and then seconds later compliment her. No one else would put up with Carrie’s complaining about sprouting up to five foot ten earlier in the year (despite the fact that it helped her make the varsity basketball

team, even though she was only a sophomore). No one else could ever replace Piper as Carrie's best friend.

"C'mon, Piper. Let's stay focused. I have to find the perfect outfit for tonight," Carrie said as she threw a few more clothes-draped hangers on her bed.

"So what are you and Jason doing for your anniversary?" Piper asked while yanking off the blue tank top. The static electricity made her long, curly brown locks frizz out.

"I don't know. I'm just glad that we're doing whatever it is alone. We've been hanging out in these big groups lately." Carrie put her hands on her hips and peered at the three remaining items that lay in front of her—a pair of cropped green cargo pants, a long denim skirt with a slit up the side, and a short white ruffly skirt—wondering which one Jason would like. She really wanted to look good for him on their one-year anniversary, especially because he took such good care of himself. Jason Miller was the only guy in their school who actually took some pride in his appearance. An all-star player on the football team, Jason had a rock-hard body and a gorgeous-looking face that Carrie got to cover in kisses every day.

"Well, you two will have lots of fun," Piper said seductively. "If you know what I mean."

"Ick, stop. That dirty voice really creeps me out." Carrie took off her skirt and the red honeycomb-stitch sweater she was wearing and then grabbed a

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pair of Miss Sixty low riders. Piper was right, though. Being with Jason was a lot of fun. Every Sunday they drank lattes and ate chocolate chip scones in a different Starbucks within the borders of downtown San Francisco. They had a regular movie night at the Castro Theater on Market Street. On the weekends they usually ran around to concerts and sporting events and house parties.

Yet the only thing they didn't do was talk about anything substantial, which Carrie always thought was a bit weird. Not that Jason would just sit next to her and space out. But still, it wasn't as if he and Carrie ever got into a heated discussion about the death penalty or even traded their most-embarrassing-moment stories. Tonight, however, things were going to change. Carrie was all about learning what was going on in Jason's brain (in addition to the kissing, of course).

"Did you get him a present?" Piper asked. She flopped backward onto Carrie's bed and spread her arms out so that they draped off the edges.

"We agreed not to buy each other anything," Carrie replied. "Wait a minute—he doesn't have a surprise for me or something, does he?"

Piper stretched her arms above her head. "Not that I know of."

"Come on," Carrie persisted as she poked Piper in the stomach. "What did he get me?"

"Ow! Carrie, I swear," Piper said, trying to fend her

off. “He saves all his deepest, darkest secrets for my brother. Now stop jabbing me with your bony fingers.”

“But if you knew something, you would tell me, right?” Carrie said.

“Yes, of course,” Piper huffed. “If I find out anything between now and tonight, I promise I will call you.”

“Good,” Carrie said with a satisfied grin.

“Why don’t you wear that cute floral dress you wore to the freshman dance last year?”

“Because I totally spill out of that now,” Carrie replied.

“Uh, that’s the point.”

“Very funny,” Carrie said while returning to the closet. “I have a shirt in mind anyway. I just need to find something else to go with it.”

Piper sat up and began to rearrange Carrie’s pillows so that she could prop herself up and watch her friend try on the next outfit, which was her tenth of the afternoon. Underneath the avalanche of fluffy shams and a few stray stuffed animals, Piper noticed that something was wedged between the headboard and the mattress.

“Hey, something’s stuck in your bed,” Piper said, yanking on the object forcefully.

Carrie ran out from the confines of her closet and yelped as if Piper had stepped on a small puppy. “Wait, no! You’ll rip it!”

But in a few seconds Piper finally pulled whatever it

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was loose, and her mouth went completely agape. In her hands was an old T-shirt that Piper thought Carrie would have thrown out years ago. After all, she got it when she was in fifth grade.

“I can’t believe you still have this,” Piper said with astonishment.

Carrie was completely embarrassed. “I know it’s weird. Please don’t tell anyone, okay?”

There could only be one explanation for why Carrie wanted to keep this under wraps.

“You don’t still—you can’t possibly—” Piper stammered.

“I know you don’t believe me, Piper,” Carrie said as she put the T-shirt on very carefully. “But it’s true. This shirt is lucky.”

“I can’t do it,” Carrie said to Piper, who was now standing in the middle of Carrie’s closet, rummaging through the crowded racks.

“Yes, you can,” Piper replied confidently.

Carrie was now lying faceup on her neatly made queen-size bed. She looked around her room, which was much more airy and sunny now that summer was approaching. Her cream-colored walls were decorated with posters of foreign landscapes her father had sent her from his many trips, hung only at right angles. Her notebooks were neatly stacked on her antique desk and all her books shelved by height on the built-in bookcases. In

general, Carrie reserved her mess for the closet, where she could always close the door on it.

But now Piper was attacking it like Mary Poppins on Red Bull.

“This is a waste of time,” Carrie said. “I’m not going to take it off.”

Piper wasn’t deterred at all. “This superstition thing has gone too far, Carrie. Ever since you got this T-shirt, you’ve been obsessed with luck.”

“That’s not true.”

“Really? You don’t convulse at the sound of a plate breaking or hyperventilate when I step on a crack? Do you *really* think my mother’s back is going to break?”

“No!” Carrie said, picking up a stuffed porpoise and throwing it at Piper.

“So you’ll stop this nonsense and take off that T-shirt?”

Carrie sat up and looked Piper in the eye. “No!”

Piper buried her head in her hands and walked slowly over to Carrie. “Okay, explain yourself, because I have no idea what’s going on in that fat head of yours.”

“My head isn’t fat,” Carrie said. “It just seems bigger because—”

“Yeah, you’re tall and skinny. Whatever.”

Carrie smiled down at the familiar green star on the chest of her red baby T. This shirt had brought her luck in every area of her life, and wearing it made her feel as

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if she could do anything. She had the proof to back it up.

“I’m telling you, every good thing that has happened to me is because of this lucky T.”

Carrie had an extensive list going of all the positive moments that occurred after she got the T-shirt. She wore the lucky T to varsity basketball tryouts and was the only sophomore who made the cut. She had the shirt on during auditions for every school play since the fifth grade and won the lead role every time. Her grades had soared and she hadn’t gotten anything less than an A on any test, which made sense because Carrie always wore her lucky T on exam days.

Piper didn’t seem the least bit convinced. “So you’re saying it’s more believable that the shirt has magical powers than you’re just an awesome person who achieves great things?”

“Girls!” Carrie’s mother called up from the kitchen. “Lunch will be ready in fifteen minutes. What’re you doing up there?”

Carrie was about to answer when she heard the sound of her mother coming up the stairs. Knowing Carrie and Piper were modeling their new clothes as they usually did after squandering their allowances, her mother would want in on the fashion show.

“I hope you both didn’t spend your life savings,” her mother said when she entered the room. She wore a wry smile on her smooth, cream-complexioned face (the woman never left the house without her SPF 45 slathered

on). Her light brown hair was pulled into a high ponytail, only the gray streaks here and there indicating that she was not, in fact, Carrie's sister.

"Nope, we just spent yours," Carrie said playfully.

Her mother didn't really invest much money in her own wardrobe. Thus she had worn her current outfit of batik-print skirt, huge purple sweater, and beaded necklace every day since she had welcomed Carrie into existence. She did, however, spoil Carrie when it came to clothes, and Carrie knew it was mostly because her mother was still feeling pretty bad about the divorce, even though it had been years and years ago.

"Well, Carrie, since you and Piper are already fooling around in the closet, why don't you make a pile of any stuff you might want to toss and I'll give it to Celia?" her mother said, turning from the door.

Carrie's mother's best friend, Celia DeMarco, was always collecting clothes and canned goods for some charity or another.

"What's the cause of the week?" Carrie asked.

"India, I think," her mother said, brow furrowing. "Or is it Tibet? I don't know. I'll ask her. I'd help, but I have to keep an eye on the cucumber soup."

"Cucumber soup?" Piper looked as if she might puke.

"I was kind of hoping for burgers," Carrie said.

"Sweetie, we had meat loaf on Thursday. That's enough red meat for one week," her mother said.

"But I need my protein!" Carrie protested.

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“I’ll throw in some tofu,” her mother replied, and then headed back to the kitchen.

“Having a nutritionist for a mother sucks on so many levels,” Carrie pouted.

“So, are you going to answer my question?” Piper said, returning to the depths of the closet.

Carrie begrudgingly got off her bed and met Piper in a mound of clothes. She was really hoping that her mom’s interruption would have somehow confused Piper enough so that she’d forget what they were talking about.

Maybe the T-shirt wasn’t that lucky after all.

But just when Carrie had begun to question the whole theory, she got down on all fours, yanked a tangled button-down from the floor, and paused. There, sitting at the very back corner of the closet, was the Skechers box she had used as a time capsule back in middle school. It was tattered around the edges and covered in smiley face stickers with the warning *Open and Die!!!* scrawled across the top in red marker. Carrie smirked, sat down cross-legged, and pulled the box reverently onto her lap.

“What’s that?” Piper asked, plopping down next to her.

Grinning in anticipation, Carrie carefully removed the rubber bands that held the box together, snapping a couple in the process. She lifted the box top and was greeted by a glossy photo of her and Piper, age ten, dressed up as flappers for Halloween. Wearing far too

much makeup and glitter, she and Piper were striking modeling poses—one hand to the hip, the other to the head—and grinning at the camera.

“Oh God. I remember that Halloween. You forced me into dressing up like that when I wanted to be a witch,” Piper said with a laugh.

“Ugh, you and your witch phase,” Carrie said. “I’m so glad you outgrew that.”

Next up was the program for the fifth-grade play, *Anne of Green Gables*. Carrie opened to the cast list, a whoosh of giddiness rushing over her. How was it that after all this time, it was still so cool to see her name right there at the top? She ran her fingertips over the type, then down the list to Piper’s name.

“Hey, Orphan Girl #2,” Carrie said. “You still remember your one and only line?”

“Eh, it was something about you having fiery red hair,” Piper replied.

“Wish we hadn’t used my wig to mop up the Great Diet Coke Spill of 1999.” Carrie giggled.

Under the program was a heavy sheet of white paper, folded in thirds like a letter. Carrie opened it and her heart nearly stopped.

“This is it,” Carrie said, handing the letter to Piper.

Piper leaned back against a bunch of ordinary shirts that hung from the closet wall and read about Carrie’s lucky T.

International Airways

Dear Carrie Ann,

The air in Morocco is heavy and thick and full of spices. Walking through a crowded market district yesterday I almost got dizzy from all the colors and scents and sounds. I stumbled into a souvenir shop to take a breather from it all and met this crazy woman. You would have loved her. She had braids all over her head and her eyes were drawn out with makeup so she looked like a cat. We started talking and when she heard I had a daughter, she insisted I buy the enclosed for you. She swears it will bring you good luck. I don't know if that's true, but I hope it is. No one deserves good luck more than my best girl. And besides, I figured it might be BAD luck to pass it up. (I know it looks like something a tourist would wear—the shirt is pretty much the flag of Morocco, after all—but I swear the lady said the green bejeweled star is all hand-stitched!)

I think of you every second when I'm on these adventures, wishing you were with me so you could see all the beauty there is in this world. One day we'll take a trip—just you and me—anywhere you want to go.

I'll see you soon, kiddo. In the meantime, wear this lucky T and remember that I'm thinking about you all the time.

Love and kisses,

Dad

As she finished reading, Piper gazed at Carrie, who suddenly seemed very sad.

“I remember when I first read this letter,” Carrie said, taking the paper out of Piper’s hands. “It was on the day it all changed. . . .”

THE DAY IT ALL CHANGED:

THE INCITING UNLUCKY MOMENT

Sloppy joe. Of all the things in the world Carrie could have spilled on her brand-new, pink Abercrombie hoodie, it had to be sloppy joe. Not only was it gloppy and mealy and a bizarre orangey brown that screamed, “I will never come out no matter how many times your mom washes me!” it also advertised to the world that she had dared to try to eat the sloppy joe at all. Something no sane person who had a life at this school would ever do.

Carrie rushed to her locker, holding her arm at an unnatural angle over her chest in an attempt to hide the stain. This had to be the worst day ever in the history of fifth graders. Not only had she missed the bus by five seconds, thereby giving Chris Beren and Greg McCaffrey ample time to laugh at her through the back window as it pulled away and left her in the dust, halfway on her run to school she had realized she’d forgotten the index cards for her oral book report this afternoon. She had

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been nervously awaiting the humiliation of English class and the inevitable detention all day, and now this. It was going to be bad enough telling Ms. Russo she wasn't prepared for her report while everyone stared at her. But there was no way she could do it with this stain spread across on her chest. She'd die first.

Carrie yanked open her locker and dropped to her knees to pull out the duffel bag that was wedged in the back. Inside was a big red T-shirt with a glittery green star on the front. A T-shirt that she had, in the weeks since it arrived, refused to wear. Just looking at it made her face flush with anger and hurt. Her father had left. Her father had left and all she got was this lousy T-shirt.

She hated the thing. He'd bestowed it upon her as if it was some kind of consolation prize. As if it would make everything okay. "You can't have a dad around, but hey! You've got this T-shirt!" How lame could he be? And it was supposed to be lucky? Please. As if anything her dad gave her could be lucky. But at the same time she couldn't bring herself to throw it away. The thought of her dad in that shop in Morocco, of him telling some strange lady about her, of how he was psyched to send her something that might bring her luck—it made her heart swell. It was crazy, the number of emotions one stupid T-shirt could bring out of her. She was going schizo and she was only ten years old.

The warning bell rang and Carrie's heart hit her throat. There was no choice. This was all she had to

change into. She ran to the bathroom with the T-shirt clutched in her fist. All she had to do was make it through the rest of the day. Then she could go home and have her nervous breakdown.

THE DAY IT ALL CHANGED:

LUCKY MOMENT #1

Okay, just tell her the truth. Tell her the truth and maybe she won't embarrass you to death, Carrie thought as Ms. Russo stepped to the front of the room. The woman was at least six feet tall, with short brown hair and broader shoulders than Mr. Latke, the former-U.S.-wrestler-gym teacher. There wasn't a more intimidating person on earth. You did not forget homework for Ms. Russo. It just didn't happen.

"Well, class, I hope you're all prepared for your oral book reports," she said, raising one eyebrow behind her glasses as she scanned the room. Twenty fifth graders froze in place, afraid even to breathe in front of her.

Since the beginning of the year, no matter what, Carrie was always in the first group of kids picked to do oral reports or read aloud from books. Not only that, Ms. Russo only called on Carrie to answer the questions she didn't know the answers to, never the ones she did know. When it came to Ms. Russo's class, Carrie never seemed to luck out.

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I'm dead. I am so, so, so, so dead, Carrie thought.

And then the woman did the oddest thing. She smiled. "But only three of you will have time to present today because today is Lauren Dillon's birthday and her mother has sent us all cupcakes!"

Nineteen fifth graders all turned to look, slack-jawed, at Lauren Dillon, whose face went from its natural milky white to fire-engine red in less than ten seconds.

"And those three lucky students are . . ." Ms. Russo dipped her hand into the plastic top hat she always placed their names in for such butterfly-in-the-stomach occasions. It read *Congratulations!* across the brim in silver letters. Carrie and her friends thought this was kind of a sick joke considering what it was used for.

Please don't say my name . . . please don't say my name . . .

Carrie didn't really think the silent begging was going to work since it never did, but there wasn't much else she could do.

Ms. Russo pulled out the first piece of paper and unfolded it. "Carlos Almeda."

Carlos groaned. Carrie's heart soared.

Please don't say my name . . . please don't say my name . . .

"Ashley Walters."

Ashley, A student that she was, sat up slightly taller and smiled.

"And . . ."

Please don't say my name . . . please don't—

“Micah Taylor!”

Carrie's eyes popped open. She hadn't even realized she'd scrunched them shut. This had to be some kind of miracle. No one was ever going to know she forgot her book report. There would be no public humiliation. No detention. She couldn't believe her luck.

THE DAY IT ALL CHANGED:

LUCKY MOMENT #2

Half an hour and three boring book reports later, the class gathered around Ms. Russo's desk to check out the cupcakes. They were chocolate with white icing and pretty yellow and pink flowers all over them.

“Ooh . . . I want that one,” Ashley Walters said, pointing out the cupcake in the back corner. The one with the huge pink flower on top.

“Definitely the best flower,” Abby Simpson agreed with a little nod. Abby was an authority on all things in the world that were the best of their kind.

“Back to your seats, class,” Ms. Russo said, clapping. “I'll hand out the cupcakes.”

There was no question of who would get the cupcake

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with the big pink flower. Abby Simpson would get it. Abby Simpson got everything. All the teachers loved her. All the students loved her. Abby Simpson's life was perfect and everyone in the world seemed to silently agree that this was the way it should be and that they would help perpetuate this reality in any way possible.

Carrie didn't even bother to covet the big pink flower. It was Abby's, plain and simple.

She watched as Ms. Russo handed out the cupcakes, one by one, going up and down the aisles. She sat back slightly when Ms. Russo came to her. When the cupcake was placed in front of her, her brown eyes widened.

It was the cupcake with the huge pink flower.

Carrie turned to look at Ashley. Ashley gaped at the cupcake, as did Carlos and Greg and Delores Mancini. The cupcake had not been given to Abby. Their entire universe was askew.

THE DAY IT ALL CHANGED:

LUCKY MOMENT #3

That afternoon Carrie walked out of math class after receiving a 100 percent grade on a pop quiz and was instantly grabbed by Piper. Piper's brown hair had been

twisted up into five mini-buns that morning and they were all popping out and unraveling at random angles all over her head. The hair, along with the fact that she was wide-eyed and frantically jumping up and down, made her look like a mad scientist.

“Carrie! You got it! You got Anne!” Piper screeched, her braces flashing.

“I did!?” Carrie shouted, all her blood rushing to her head.

Each year in primary school one class in each grade got to put on a play for the rest of the school, and each year Carrie had hoped it would be her class. But year after year some other teacher’s students had been chosen and Carrie had never gotten the chance even to step foot onstage. Whenever she had been ushered into the auditorium to watch another production, she had imagined herself up there, smiling under the lights, wearing some amazing costume, delivering her memorized lines perfectly. She had envied the kids who walked around with their dog-eared scripts and got to spend an hour after lunch each day rehearsing in the auditorium. It all seemed like so much fun. And Carrie always knew she could be a great actress if given the chance. Wasn’t her mother always telling her how dramatic she was?

Now she was in middle school. And in middle school they put on only one play a year and everyone got to try out. The auditions last week had been intensely

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nerve-racking, but Carrie had done her best and had been dreaming about winning a role ever since. Something with a couple of lines, maybe. Maybe even something with a lot of lines.

But the lead? She never thought she would get the lead.

“You have to see!” Piper said, grabbing Carrie’s hand and pulling her down the hall.

“The cast list isn’t supposed to be posted till tomorrow,” Carrie said as she dodged other students, her heart pounding a mile a minute.

“I know. But I was just coming back from gym and I saw it and your name is right on top,” Piper replied. “Come on!”

Piper and Carrie ran together back down the crowded hallway to the auditorium where a klatch of people had already formed around the list on the door.

“Excuse me! Big star coming through!” Piper shouted, shoving people this way and that.

“Congratulations, Carrie,” Melissa Staller said as they passed by.

“You’re Anne!” Danielle Yung screeched, grabbing her up in a hug.

But Carrie didn’t believe it until she saw it, right there in front of her eyes.

Anne Shirley Carrie Fitzgerald.
Piper was right. Carrie was a big star!

THE DAY IT ALL CHANGED:

LUCKY MOMENT #4

Carrie was still grinning when her bus pulled up to her stop that afternoon. It was a beautiful, blue-sky day in San Francisco, and from the top of her hill she could see the sun reflecting off the bay water and glinting against the Golden Gate Bridge. Why had she never noticed the perfect view before? Why had she never noticed how perfect everything was?

The door popped open and Carrie got out of her seat.

“Carrie! Wait!”

It was Abby Simpson. She walked up from the back of the bus, where she sat with her friends every single day. Her blond curls framed her angelic face as she blithely blew a big Hubba Bubba bubble that popped and went right back into her mouth instead of sticking all over her face. She was wearing those cool new strappy sandals that no one else’s parents let them wear. And her toenails were painted hot pink with a Hello Kitty sticker on each of the big toes.

“Here,” she said to Carrie, holding out a small pink envelope. “Hope you can come,” she added with a smile.

Stunned, Carrie took the envelope and stared at it.

“Thanks,” she muttered.

“Oh,” Abby said. “Nice shirt.”

Somehow Carrie turned and managed to step down from the bus without letting her quaking knees go out

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from under her. She couldn't believe what she was holding in her hand. As soon as the bus disappeared around the corner, Carrie tore into the pink envelope.

It read in swirly gold script: *Abby's Having a Birthday Slumber Party and You're Invited!* Carrie grinned. An invitation to one of Abby's parties! She had been waiting for this her entire life. Her moment had finally arrived.

"This is the best day ever!" Carrie said aloud, turning to run down the block. She couldn't wait to tell her mother about everything that had happened. About the book report and the cupcake and the quiz and the play and the party. It was the luckiest day of her life.

Carrie paused at the foot of the steps that led up to her house, suddenly recalling the panicked rush she had left in that morning. Hadn't this started out as the unluckiest day ever? With the book report and the sloppy joe incident?

She looked down at the invite again and saw the green star on her chest glittering up at her. Her heart did a cartwheel. The T-shirt. All the good stuff had started happening after she put on the T-shirt. Was it possible? Could it be that this T-shirt really was good luck?

Suddenly Carrie was overcome with a warm and fuzzy feeling that started in her chest and radiated out through her entire body. This T-shirt was magical. This T-shirt had changed her life. And she was never taking it off again.

* * *

“So why didn’t you ever tell me this story before? Anytime I ever asked you why the shirt was lucky, you just said, ‘Because,’” Piper said.

“I don’t know. I was afraid you might think I was an idiot,” Carrie explained.

“Ugh, I would never think that,” Piper replied. “But I still don’t understand why you believe the shirt is lucky. So you had *one* good day.”

“No, there’s more to it than that,” Carrie said assuredly, dropping the letter back in the box and replacing the rubber bands. “Amazing things happen to me when I wear it. Like the day last spring when you told me that your brother’s best friend from camp, Jason Miller—the guy you’d been saying was perfect for me since the sixth grade—was transferring to our school.”

“Pure coincidence,” Piper remarked.

“I wore it the day Jason asked me out,” Carrie retorted.

“Every girl in school was jealous,” Piper remembered.

“I had it on during my PSATs and got a 1450 combined.”

“Yeah, that’s kind of odd. You’re not *that* smart,” Piper said sarcastically.

“Oh, that’s nice,” Carrie joked.

Suddenly Piper’s face got serious. “Carrie, I’m just concerned that you might be holding on to this idea for the wrong reason.”

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“What reason is that?” Carrie asked as she discarded unwanted clothes into a pile on the closet floor.

“It’s not going to make your dad come home.”

Carrie stopped dead in her tracks. “Excuse me?”

Piper sensed the tension in Carrie’s voice, so she tried to be a little gentler. “I know that you miss him and that you only get to see him two or three times a year. But he’s been working out of New York for years now. I don’t think wearing the shirt is going to make him move back to San Fran.”

Carrie stood in silence for a moment as she picked up a chunky gray sweater of her dad’s that would never come back in style. True, she was mad at him when he first moved out. In fact, for years after that, she was really angry that he never seemed to make much of an effort to spend time with her at all. While Carrie tried to let go of the bitter feelings little by little, in Carrie’s mind the luck of the T knew no boundaries. It had the power to do anything, and since all those good things started to happen the instant she put it on, maybe a part of her *had* hoped that one day, it would make her lucky enough to bring her family back together. Carrie wasn’t ready to give up that hope. Not now. Not ever.

“Piper, I don’t know why you’re so worried about this. So I think this T-shirt is lucky. Big deal! What’s it to you?” Carrie’s tone of voice had an edge to it that Piper wasn’t used to at all.

“Lunch is on the table!” Carrie’s mom shouted from downstairs.

“Coming!” Carrie yelled. She stomped out of the closet, put a pile of clothes near her door, and then turned to look at Piper.

“You’re right, Carrie. It shouldn’t bother me at all,” Piper said sullenly. “I’m sorry I even said anything about it.”

Carrie sighed. She realized that snapping at Piper wasn’t going to help anything. Besides, Piper was just looking out for her. Carrie walked over to Piper and put her arm around her friend’s shoulders. “Listen, it doesn’t matter. Everything is fine. Better than fine, actually. I’m going to have a wonderful date with Jason tonight. You’re going to have a fun time at your brother’s party.”

“We’ll see. I don’t have the advantage of owning a lucky T-shirt, though,” Piper teased.

“Wish I could spare mine,” Carrie said with a wink. “Nah, even if I could, I wouldn’t give it to you.”

“Care, that’s so mean!” Piper pinched Carrie’s upper arm.

“I’m only teasing.”

“Girls, let’s go!” Carrie’s mom shouted again. The distinct smell of cooked cucumbers wafted throughout the house.

“If we’re summoned again, she’ll make us eat sprouts and flaxseed oil,” Carrie said woefully.

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Then she took Piper by the hand and they scampered down the stairs. When they got to the kitchen, they saw Carrie's mother pouring a vat of cucumber soup down the trash compactor.

"What happened?" Carrie asked.

"I think the tofu was bad. It started smelling very odd," her mother replied. "And Celia called. She's having some crisis with her meditation class and wants me to come over and help her recenter. You're going to have to grab lunch with Piper."

Carrie pressed her lips together to avoid breaking into a grin. Piper was doing everything she could to stop herself from unleashing a full-blown hyena laugh.

"Try not to be too smug, ladies," her mother joked. Then she kissed them on the forehead, grabbed her purse, and headed for the door. "I'll see you both later, and have fun tonight!"

"Good luck finding Celia's center," Piper called out.

They both looked down at the sparkling green star on Carrie's chest and grinned. Another checkmark was added to the lucky T's win column.

"Mickey-D's, here we come!" Carrie said, knowing that as long as she had the shirt, life was pretty much near perfect.



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