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Opening extract from

Forgotten

Written by

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CAT PATRICK

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This is for my girls.
Later, when books are for reading, not eating.
I hope you'll be proud.

‘Nothing fixes a thing so intently in the memory
as the wish to forget it.’

Michel de Montaigne

Friday

October 14 (Thurs.)

Outfit:

- *Straight-leg jeans*
- *Navy tunic with the little flowers (wasn't dirty – back in the closet)*
- *Blister-inducing red flats*

School:

- *Bring book for English*
- *Get Mom to sign permission slip for history*
- *Spanish quiz tomorrow (not on syllabus)*
- *Read over history homework in the morning . . . too tired . . .*

Notes:

- *Ate tons of carbs today (Mom bought mint chocolate chip ice cream!) EXERCISE!*
- *Ordered tights for Halloween*

ONE

Aren't Fridays supposed to be good?

This one started badly.

The note on my nightstand didn't tell me anything useful. My eyelids wanted to stay closed; my favourite jeans were in the hamper, and there was no milk in the fridge.

Worst of all, my cell phone was dead: the shiny, candy red one that I'll have until it falls into a gutter; the one that has the calendar and reminder bells and is essentially my portable, socially acceptable security blanket.

'You'll be fine,' my mom said during the drive to school this morning.

'How do you know?' I asked. 'I could have a huge math test today. There could be a school assembly that I won't know about.'

'It's just one day, London. You'll be fine without your phone for one day.'

'Easy for you to say,' I muttered, looking out the window.

Now, right now, standing here, I have proof that my mom was wrong. I am *not* fine without my phone for one day.

Today is the day that I needed a new T-shirt for gym class. Had it not been dead, my phone, the phone my mom and I programmed together at the start of the year with important little reminders like this one, would have instructed me, in its tiny block lettering, to bring a shirt for PE today.

Therefore, today is the day I'm standing in gym shorts and my winter sweater, wondering what to do.

I can't very well wear a sweater for basketball (which is what we're playing, according to the board near the locker room door), so I ask Page if she has an extra top. We won't ever really be friends, but she still responds overenthusiastically. 'Sure, London, here you go. Forgot your clean shirt again, huh?'

Again?

I make a mental note to jot myself a real note later, while at the same time wondering why today's note didn't mention bringing a gym shirt.

Page interrupts my train of thought. She smiles and hands me a bright yellow oversized tee with a beaming cat on it that reads: 'Have a purr-fect day!'

'Thanks, Page,' I grumble, as I take the shirt from her and quickly put it on. It nearly covers the shorts – shorts! – that I'm already wearing. Why my locker contained shorts and not some other warmer, cuter piece of bottom-covering sportswear, I have no clue.

Note to self: add 'bring pants' to note to self, too.

I feel like Page is watching me. I glance at her and, yep, she's watching me. We exchange pleasant nods before I throw my street clothes into the locker, slam it, and head out to the gym.

As I walk, two thoughts run through my mind. First, I wonder whether Ms Martinez will let me go to the nurse's office for a Band-Aid to cover the painful heel blister that I can feel grating against my sneaker with every step. And, second, I can't help but thank my lucky stars that only the twelve other hapless souls with first-period gym class will see me in this hideous ensemble.

Unfortunately for me, Ms Martinez is a coldhearted woman.

'No,' she says, when I ask to go to the nurse's office before the game begins.

'No?' I ask in disbelief.

'No,' she says again, black eyes daring me to argue. She holds her whistle at the ready.

I'm not stupid, so I don't press the issue. Instead, I hobble back to the bench, join my teammates, and vow to play through the pain.

Then halfway through what I can only assume is the lowest-scoring basketball game in high-school sports history, a noise ricochets through the echoing gym that all at once makes my arm hairs stand on end, my eardrums seize up, and my teeth chatter.

For a moment, I don't know what's going on.

Ms Martinez waves her arms in the direction of the exit, and my classmates begin lazily walking towards the doorway.

That's when I get it.

We are having a fire drill.

We, the students of Meridan High School, are going outside. All 956 of us. While I, London Lane, am sporting a bright yellow cat T-shirt that says 'Have a Purr-fect day!' and too-short shorts for the entire student body to enjoy.

Yep, it's a good Friday indeed.