

LOGLINE: The past has become the present and challenges their future while one denies the other finds acceptance; each one can determine their path, but what will they choose?

Chapter 1 summary Funeral. Two of the three girls are at a funeral. They are reconnecting for the first time. Their best friend has died and they are uncertain of where they stand. Carrie is talking in her mind about that one summer day that drove them apart.

Ch 2.2A Lisa

I can't believe who I am looking at right now. Carrie. She looks amazing. Immaculate as always. Money does buy everything. Almost. Why does it take such an event to get us all together again?

I look around me and see half filled lives and wonder if things could have been different for all of us while finding a spot to sit. People are crying truckloads of tears. I don't think some of the tears are real. At least not like her husband's. The poor man is being held up by his brother. I have never seen him this distraught. Steve, the man who was always calm. His middle name was serenity and now he can't even walk without help. He really does love Tammy. Tammy the magical glue that holds our friendship together.

“Carrie, how are you doing? It has been such a long time since we last saw each other.” Lisa reaches out for a hug, but Carrie politely ducks it by looking into her purse.

“I’m doing well. Things could not be better.” Carrie begins to flip the left wrist. She notices that Lisa is watching her and nervously laughs.

“So many people are here today Carrie. I didn’t think there would be this many. We should probably go over to the house afterwards and see if her family needs anything.”

“Hmmm, maybe. I need to find a seat.” And away she saunters with her polished walk down the aisles but with a wrist that can’t stop moving. Some of my best memories are of the three of us and how we would spend our summers and weekends together.

Carrie turns back around and looks at me and with a whisper of a grin, “Are you still painting water towers in the middle of the night?” With a shrug of my shoulders I follow Carrie and sit next to her.

Sitting down I remember that for the longest time I was envious of Carrie. She had so much and I so little. Carrie wore the right name brands like Jordache jeans and Guess while I lived with whatever I could find at Mitchell’s that didn’t look like Mitchell’s clothing. Carrie was sweet to find something in her closet every other week that was too short or small for herself. It was like magic that the clothes always fit perfectly. At the time I thought the clothes really did shrink in the dryer, but I now know better. Carrie and your house were my second family. They were more of a family than my own family.

I lean into Carrie. “Did the dryer really shrink the clothes?” She begins to giggle and I can see the old Carrie peeping through a crack in her face. The minister begins his sermon. I think back to what my brothers taught me.

My brothers taught me to never show fear or whatever they had planned was going to be much worse. I didn’t know anything about country life when we first moved here. I was from the city and thought that girls had to wear dresses in country schools. I hated dresses. All I had ever known were jeans and t-shirts. I really did not want to stick out from my brothers and have them tease me even more than they already did.

The lady at registration reassured me that I would not have to wear dresses every day. I had some preconceived idea that girls wore dresses like Little House on the Prairie. I was in for a bit of a shock to discover that our classroom not only didn’t have an air conditioner but it also didn’t have a ceiling fan and to think having air conditioners and ceiling fans in rooms are normal these days. In some ways the Old Rock Pile wasn’t too far off from Little House on the Prairie. I wonder if you had ever gone back to our old school.

The minister catches me daydreaming by asking me to step forward and give a little speech. I had forgotten about the speech. Slowly walking up to the front of the church I pause in my step because I am unsure of what I am going to say. I hadn’t really thought about it until that moment. I take a deep breath. “One of my first memories of Tammy is a camping trip. We met at Sandy Beach. My dad had dropped me off and left

in a cloud of dust. He became just a dot on the road. I was very scared. I thought that maybe I was at the wrong place and then Tammy's family and all the other kids pulled up about the same time. We started to giggle because her family's car was nicknamed The Beast. The first thing we had to do on that camping trip was make a latrine. We had to dig a hole in the ground and put up a tarp for privacy. Tammy's face turned as red as a summer tomato from all that work. I remember after digging the latrine she refused to use it because Tammy said she had worked too hard to mess it up and didn't want to clean it out for the next person. Tammy was full of kindness and as you can see she had a bit of a stubborn streak. I will miss her stubborn streak the most" my voice cracks at the end of the sentence.

I quickly sit back down fighting a losing battle with tears and look at Carrie and flashback to that same day with her mom pulling in with that big red Cadillac and Carrie looking absolutely beautiful. It was September and still hot. The humidity was thick in the air. Everyone's hair looked like we had just stepped out of the sauna and Carrie was picture perfect. Grandpa D was taking what seemed like a hundred pictures of her that day. He was always taking pictures of his grandkids. He would tell people that pictures captured memories. Carrie's blond hair was smooth without a hint of frizziness and for once the uniform did not look like a sack of taters. (Personally, I think her mother had it tailored to fit her.) While the rest of us were wearing mix matched clothes and some already had dirt smudged on our faces. Carrie was mortified by how she looked. She kept flicking her wrist and pulling at her clothes. Her mother made such a fuss over imaginary dirt and her posture.

That night we sat around the campfire. We were tired from all the activities. That summer was the hottest on record at the time. The three of us were huddled together listening to ghost stories.

The embers had begun to die down in the fire pit. They were glowing eyes that would occasionally blink. Did they blink from the heat or were they just surprised to see us huddled up under a blanket on a Texas summer night? Our marshmallows caused a slow black gooey waterfall that trickled off the sticks. Tammy's marshmallow dropped from the stick and fell on an ember forever blinding it. Tree branches reached out like knobby old fingers ready to grab and suck us back into the shadows. Chiggers nibbling on legs. The memory made me want to scratch my legs. Grandpa D with the ever present camera around his neck was just warming up on his ghost stories and here we were, the three of us shivering in the hot Texas night air. What an imagination he had. We were such innocents to believe that there really was a Bologna Man. A man that would come back to town to avenge some imaginary wrong and kidnap kids who disobeyed their parents. I miss the innocence of youth. Where did our innocence go? Did it leave the night at the lake when we were teenagers? Why do some forget while others can not forgive?

Carrie takes her time to walk the front of the church and clears her voice. Looking to the left and to the right her eyes settle on Lisa and begins, "Tammy was full of kindness. She would tell us that kindness was a muscle and that you had to practice it every day. The more you practiced kindness the stronger you would be as a person. I

believe that Tammy was the strongest person I knew. There was never a day that passed that she didn't show the world the true person she was in life." She continues to stare at Lisa. Her eulogy is quick and to the point and no unnecessary words or emotions except for the single tear that drops down her face to perfectly smudge her mascara. Carrie did everything with precision. Some may have thought she was unmoved by her friend's death, but she had learned a long time ago to not show her emotions.