

BACK TO THE PRESENT

By Chrono Eclipse

DING DONG

Anna heard the doorbell ring, causing the muscles in her skinny body to tense up all at once. She knew who was at the door and was not looking forward to letting them in.

“Mom!!! Somebody’s at the door!!!” Anna’s kid sister, Becky screamed from the middle of the living room rug as the 10-year-old played a game on her tablet.

“Anna, honey? Can you get that? It’s probably your friend!” Anna’s mom, Lisa, called out from the kitchen.

“She’s not my friend...” Anna mumbled, grinding her teeth.

The high school girl rolled her eyes and let out an exasperated sigh as she dragged her feet to the door.

DING DONG DING DONG DING DONG The doorbell rang several times in a row.

“Anna?” Her mom yelled.

“I’m coming!” The mousy teenager called both out to the door and back to her mother with an exasperated tone.

She swung open the door to reveal a very pretty blonde girl dressed in a red and white cheerleader’s skirt and jersey. The girl had her hands on her hips and an annoyed look on her flawless face.

“Took you long enough!” The cheerleader smirked.

“Hi Sara...” Anna said unenthusiastically as she motioned for the blonde girl to come into her house.

The two young women were both Juniors at Whittier High School and couldn't be less alike. Sara was one of the most popular girls at the school, captain of the cheerleading team, only daughter from a wealthy family, stylish, cool, outgoing and dating Grant Fox, one of the hottest guys in school.

Anna on the other hand was shy, bookish, unathletic and completely inexperienced when it came to dating or really even being social. Also unlike Sara she was fashion illiterate, standing there in the hallway with unkempt plain brown hair and an unflattering collared shirt tucked into her shorts.

“Oh my god! Are those rainbow toe socks!” Sara gasped in laughter pointing toward Anna's feet.

The nerdy teen tried to hide the toes of her knee socks by tucking one foot under the other. She blushed and frowned at Sara's uncanny ability to point out people's flaws and insecurities.

“Uh yeah, um, if you wouldn't mind taking off your shoes please too...” Anna mumbled.

“My shoes are probably cleaner than this carpet but... whatever.” Sara said, slipping off her flats and standing barefoot on the rug looking like she'd rather be literally anywhere else than here.

The two girls stood in the entryway for a moment avoiding making eye contact with each other.

“So...” Anna began to say, desperate to get this group project over with.

“Hi! You must be Sara!” Anna's mom Lisa interjected cheerfully as she hurried into the room.

The 42-year old woman held out her flour-covered hand to shake hands with the blonde teenager. Sara looked warily at the older woman's hand causing Lisa to realize the issue.

"Oh! Haha, sorry! I've been doing some baking all afternoon." Lisa explained apologetically.

The middle-aged woman, who resembled an older, squatter version of Anna with a pear-shaped figure, developing double-chin and crows feet, rubbed her hands on the front of her mom-jeans leaving powdery flour handprints on her clothing. She then held a mostly clean hand back out to the young girl.

"NBD Mrs. Strickland. Thanks for having me over!" Sara replied with a big charming fake smile across her pretty face.

"Oh please! Call me Lisa! And I'm just thrilled to get to meet one of Anna's friends! She never has anyone over." The older woman replied.

"Mom!" Anna growled, seething with embarrassment.

"But what are we all standing around the hallway for? Come in! Come in!" Lisa insisted, beckoning the girls into the living room.

Anna watched as one of the popular girls in her school looked around, scrutinizing her modest abode. Becky popped her head up from behind the couch excited by the new house guest.

"I hope you saved some room for dessert because I baked three different kinds of cupcakes with your names on them... your names aren't literally on them of course, haha but there is an Oreo crumble batch, a peanut butter cup batch and red velvet cupcakes!" Lisa informed the teens cheerfully.

Sara flashed the older woman an apologetic smile.

"Ooo I actually don't like, eat sugar... or carbs... or gluten..." The cheerleader explained.

“Oh... Oh that’s alright. I can figure out another snack for you girls...” Lisa said, sounding a little disappointed.

“Mom...” Anna sighed just wanting to move on.

“You know what? I think we have some mini-carrots in the fridge!” Lisa announced, clapping her hands.

“I’ll have the cupcakes!” Becky declared from the couch.

Lisa looked over sternly at her youngest daughter.

“I don’t think so, munchkin! Especially not at this time of night. Speaking of which... screen time’s over! Hand over the device.” The mom told her little girl, holding out her hand to receive the tablet.

“Awww! Seriously! Just one more game! Pleeeease!” Becky begged in a whiny voice.

Her mother shook her head, unswayed.

“Uh-uh. You know the deal. An hour of screen time after dinner and that's it. It’s not good for your eyes to be staring at this thing all the time!” Lisa informed the child.

Becky pouted and folded her arms in protest.

“No it won’t! Everyone stares at their phones like all the time now mom and they’re fine! What am I even supposed to do now?” Becky whined.

Lisa smirked at her daughter.

“When I was your age I would have so much fun coloring or playing with toys. Real toys that you could touch and hold in your hands – like barbies and my little pony dolls. You have so many great toys up in your room.” Lisa suggested.

Becky rolled her eyes and gave a bratty sigh of exasperation.

“They’re so booooooring! When you were a kid you only played with that stuff because they didn’t have computers and smartphones yet!” The little girl insisted.

Her mother flashed her a stern look.

“Hey, it’s not up for debate Little Miss. Now head upstairs, your sister has a friend over.” Lisa ordered.

Anna cringed again at her mom’s usage of the word ‘friend’.

“Uh actually we’re going to go do our assignment in my room...” Anna informed her mother.

“Oh great! You girls head on up and I’ll come by in a minute with those snack carrots and whatever you want to drink!” Lisa said cheerfully.

“I would love a La Croix, Lisa.” Sara requested.

“Now *that* I can do! Anna only drinks Mountain Dew but I love sparkling water!” Lisa said, flashing a smile to her eldest daughter.

Anna blushed, once again feeling embarrassed.

“Thanks and um, sorry again about the cupcakes. It’s just like – I’m a cheerleader so I really want to treat my body like a temple.” Sara said sweetly.

“Oh don’t worry about it dear. I’ll just bring them over to Richard’s house tomorrow night. They do say the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach!” Lisa replied with a chuckle.

Anna’s face turned red as she brought up her slender hand to hide it in shame.

“Oh my god mom...” She growled in disbelief.

“Lisa! You cougar, you! You have a hot date for Saturday night?” Sara asked playfully.

Now it was Lisa’s turn to blush and let out a girlish giggle.

“Oh it’s nothing much... We just began seeing one another. It’s honestly the first bit of romance I’ve had since Anna’s father passed away a few years ago.” Lisa explained.

“Oh I’m so sorry.” Sara replied.

“It’s okay. It’s been a while now and it’s been nice with Richard – he’s very sweet.” Lisa told the interested teenager.

“That’s great! I bet it’s hard to meet someone new at your age – er, I mean, how did you two meet?” Sara asked.

Lisa smirked at the girl’s save.

“He has a physical therapy office in the business park I work in. We see each other in the morning and chat as we wait in line for coffee.” The older woman said, happy to share the details.

“Oh yeah? Is he cute?” Sara asked with a grin.

Anna’s eyes went wide and she looked like she was going to melt into the floor from embarrassment.

“Well... I don’t want to brag – but yes! He’s a ‘hottie’ as you kids would say! The ladies around the business park all say he looks like Ryan Gosling!” Lisa confided giddily.

“Yassss queen! Go Lisa! Get on with your bad self!” The blonde girl giggled, fist bumping her classmate’s mom.

“Welp! Yeah so... we better get going uh and finish our project...” Anna abruptly interjected, turning to run up the stairs to her room.

“Oh okay! You girls have fun. I’ll be up with your snacks and drinks in a few minutes!” Lisa said, waving them off.

As they entered Anna’s room the tall nerdy girl once again felt scrutinized by her peer as Sara twirled around the room snorting at the Anime and Marvel movie paraphernalia decorating the space along with various robots of all different sizes that Anna had bought or build herself and the giant poster of Robert Pattinson hanging above her bed.

“Wow... big twilight fan?” Sara asked judgmentally with a smirk.

“No!... He’s just a really talented actor and... and he’s going to play Batman next year...” Anna mumbled defensively.

“Oh so you have a crush on Batman...” Sara teased with a giggle.

Anna sputtered, not knowing how to respond. Sara didn’t seem to care either way, instead she strutted through the room like she owned the place and hopped onto Anna’s bed, laying on her stomach and kicking her feet up behind her.

“So like... you better start working on the project. I have to bounce in a few... I’m meeting Grant and some friends for a party up at the lake... I’d invite you to come but... we’ll probably be skinny dipping and making out and I don’t want to, y’know, embarrass you...” Sara said as she pulled out her phone and began tapping on it.

Anna adjusted her glasses and then folded her arms across her modest chest and scowled at the popular girl.

“What the heck is that supposed to mean?” Anna asked indignantly.

Sara raised a perfectly sculpted eye at the nerdy girl and smirked as if to say ‘c’mon, you know exactly what I mean’. From her itty bitty titties to her skinny legs to her pale skin and acne riddled face, Anna wasn’t exactly Venus on a half shell.

“I mean... it just doesn’t seem like your scene. I mean like – have you ever even hooked up with someone before?” Sara asked pointedly, narrowing her eyes in an almost cruel way.

“What? I um... I–” Anna sputtered again, flustered.

“Yeah... that’s what I thought. I mean, no offense Anna but you’re kind of a loser.” Sara said with a look of feigned sympathy on her face.

Anna gasped in anger at the cheerleader's bluntness.

“I mean that in the nicest way possible. You’re just like too... I don’t know. But like you’re not going to get anywhere in life if you’re just, like, doing mathematical equations all of the time!” Sara said, trying to be honest with the girl who she saw as a charity case.

“Actually math has a tremendous amount of practical application in everyday life–” Anna attempted to correct the blonde girl.

Sara rolled her eyes.

“I mean with the real important stuff, like getting guys to like you! Like, for real, even your mom can get a date and you can’t!” Sara scoffed.

“Maybe I don’t want to waste all my time fending off boys whose brains are all singularly focused on having sexual intercourse!” Anna rebutted.

Sara clenched her jaw, the nerdy girl had hit a sore spot. The cheerleader did love having a boyfriend and getting the attention of all of the boys at school when she pranced down the hall but truly hated the fact that all of them constantly tried to pressure her into having sex – even Grant.

“Well but like, wouldn’t you rather focus your time on doing stuff you enjoy?” Sara asked.

“I enjoy doing math! I’m good at it!” Anna yelled as if that were the most obvious thing in the world.

Sara rolled her eyes and glanced around the room again.

“Yeah well, maybe when it comes time for prom you can build yourself a stupid robot boyfriend...” The cheerleader smirked and then returned to scrolling on her phone.

Anna was about to ask Sara what was so good about being popular when her little sister burst into the room.

“Becky! Get out! We’re studying!” Anna snapped at her sister.

The little girl scrunched her face up in frustration.

“But I'm boooooored! Mommy won’t let me have my ipad back until tomorrow...” The pigtailed girl whined.

“So? That’s not our problem.” Anna said, pointing toward her door.

Becky chose to ignore her older sister and turn her attention to the visitor.

“You’re a cheerleader?” Becky asked Sara.

“Uh-huh....” The blonde girl nodded without pulling her eyes up from her phone.

“I want to be a cheerleader when I grow up!” Becky insisted.

This got Sara’s attention and she sat up and turned to the little girl.

“Oh yeah? You have to be really athletic to be a cheerleader or you won’t make the squad.” Sara said in a patronizing tone.

“I am! I am! Look what I can do!” Becky insisted.

The girl then lifted her arms up into the air and then rolled onto her hands in a cartwheel. Sara clapped approvingly.

“Nice! Can you do a handstand?” Sara asked her.

The little girl shrugged and shook her head.

“I can do a flip though!” Becky offered.

She then rolled into a ball and tumbled forward across the floor.

“That’s great! But that’s not a flip, that’s a somersault.” Sara corrected.

Anna stood there sighing in exasperation as her kid sister and her assignment partner bonded, while ignoring that she was even still in the room.

“Do a flip!” Becky commanded the older girl.

“There’s not enough room for me to do a backflip in here. But I can show you a handstand.” Sara offered.

The little girl grinned and nodded vigorously. Sara smiled at her and hopped up from the bed. She then stretched down to touch her pedicured toes.

“So you start off by bending down and laying your hands flat on the floor, can you do that?” Sara asked.

Becky nodded.

“Yeah I can bend completely in half! Mommy says I move like a rubber band!” The girl bragged proudly.

“Good! I’m totally the same way. You have to be super flexible if you want to do cheer or dance or anything like that.” Sara informed the child.

Anna snorted, not seeing the point of any of this. She herself was not particularly flexible and constantly got mocked in gym class for her inability to stretch the way that some of the more athletic girls like Sara could.

“Now, watch me first and then you can try, basically you want to kick up off the ground to lift your feet up above you. It might be easier to kick off your bed or the wall at first, to practice.” Sara instructed.

The teenager then demonstrated, kicking her feet off Anna’s bed and doing a handstand in the center of the room. Her skirt flipped up revealing the athletic shorts underneath. She held the position for a few moments as Becky squealed and clapped excitedly. Finally she dropped her feet back down onto the bed and hopped into a folded leg position.

“Ta-da!” The cheerleader said with a flourish.

“Yay!!! Now me! Now me!” Becky cried happily.

“Okay stand in front of me and put your hands on the floor like I did...” Sara instructed the girl.

Becky did as she was told and bent forward putting her hands on the rug and then kicked her feet up onto the bed and Sara took the girls ankles, helping her into the handstand. After a few moments of the girl squealing and giggling, Sara brought her legs back down.

“Now, when you practice make sure you’re either wearing shorts or stretch pants or something. If you do this in a skirt you’re just going to end up showing all the boys in the playground your panties?” Sara warned.

Becky grinned, red faced and shrugged.

“So?” She asked.

Sara giggled, impressed with the little girl’s ‘o shits given’ attitude.

“Wow Anna! Even your kid sister is so much cooler than you!” Sara declared.

Anna was fuming as Becky sat on her bed trying to mimic the mean girl's posture.

“Okay! Out!” Anna said, ordering her sister out of her room.

“No fair! I was having fun!” Becky cried.

“I don’t care! We need to work.” Anna insisted.

Becky looked at her older sister defiantly.

“Let me stay or I'm telling mom that you were messing with dad's old stuff again!” The little girl threatened.

Anna froze, clenching her jaw. Her father had been an engineer and an amateur inventor like herself before he passed away. A lot of his old projects were still downstairs in the basement and Anna liked going down there in the time between when she got home from school and her mom got home from work to tinker. She had her own workshop down there now as well but her mother still didn’t like the idea of Anna messing with any of the failed projects that her father had left. ‘They’re too dangerous, just stick to your little robots...’ Her mom would tell her.

“Fine. You can stay here. You can watch my TV and play on my phone.” Anna conceded, handing her smartphone over to the girl.

She turned the flat screen on the wall across from her bed and Becky cast an old episode of Fuller House onto it.

“Where are you going to work?” Sara asked.

“We are going downstairs to my workshop. We’re going to build a robot.” Anna informed her partner leaving no room for argument.

“Great...” Sara said sarcastically.

On their way down to the basement they bumped into Lisa again who was carrying a tray with a plate of carrots and humus as well as a can of Mountain Dew and La Croix on it.

“Oh! Girls! I was just heading up to bring you this!” Lisa said, handing the tray over to her daughter.

“Thanks mom, I'm taking Sara down to show her my workshop.” Anna said, hoping that her mom wouldn't mind.

“Okay hun, just be careful down there. You know there's a lot of your father's stuff down there...” Lisa warned.

The sounds of Ed Sheeran blasted from speakers in the kitchen.

“Cool tunes Mrs. F- I mean, Lisa! Rockin' out to Ed Sheeran!” Sara said, playfully dancing to the music.

“Oh? Is that who this is? I like just putting on playlists Spotify recommends to me while I do the dishes.” Lisa admitted.

“We'll be careful mom.” Anna insisted as she dragged her project partner down into the basement.

The basement was dark and unfurnished. Most of the room was strewn with cobwebs and looked like it hadn't been touched in a long time, except for a small workbench and area covered in sawdust, loose washers, nuts and bolts. This was clearly Anna's workspace. Sara tiptoed around the floor trying to find a clean space to stand.

“Why did you make me take off my shoes if we were going to go to such a gross dirty place? I'm going to get tetanus walking around down here!” The cheerleader whined.

“Here! Take this and go stand over there where you're not in the way!” Anna directed the blonde girl, shoving the tray of snacks into her hand and pointing to a small carpet in front of a bunch of objects covered in sheets.

Sara took the tray and hopped as best as she could over to where she was told to go, setting the tray down on top of a flat surface behind her and then brushed off the bottom of her feet and pouted at her project partner.

“What are you going to do?” The cheerleader asked.

Anna stood surveying her materials and took a pencil and laid out some drafting paper, rubbing the eraser of the pencil against her soft lips as she thought about what she was going to build.

“Well... since I basically have to do this whole project myself, I'm going to build a self-powering self-automated robotic helper. “ Anna explained proudly.

“From scratch!?” Sara asked, thinking that that sounded impossible.

“Uh... yeah... I’ve been wanting to build one for a while.” Anna said as she began drawing up schematics.

“I’m so bored. I want to go meet up with Grant, I don’t want to stand around in this dingy-ass basement and watch you like try to build Wall-E or some stupid shit. Why can’t we just bring in one of the things down here and say we made it together?” Sara asked, flipping the cloth off of the machine nearest to her.

The object underneath was a large electronic tower with a globe in the center of it and a bunch of rings around the globe.

“Don’t touch that!” Anna snapped angrily.

Sara tossed up her hands.

“Okay geez! Chill out! I was only looking to see what it was. There’s so much weird shit down here.” Sara said, looking around.

“I can build this tonight. You can leave if you want. I’ll just tell Ms. Thompson that I did it all myself.” Anna said pointedly.

Sara rolled her eyes and sighed but didn't move from the spot she was standing on.

"Fine but like, just for the record I was suggesting an easy solution that would get you out of doing all this work too..." The cheerleader reasoned.

"I like to build things." Anna said flatly.

"Okay Tony Stark..." Sara said sarcastically.

Anna turned around to look at the blonde girl in surprise at the reference she made.

"I thought you said comics were dorky." Anna observed remembering the time that Sara had grabbed a stack of comics from Anna's open locker and loudly mocked her for bringing them into school.

"I watched the movies..." Sara admitted with a glaring sneer. "My boyfriend made me watch them." She then added quickly as if absolving her of ridicule.

Anna raised an eyebrow and then shrugged and went back to drafting.

"You know, you don't have to pretend to be disinterested in everything to get people to like you." Anna said without looking up.

Sara scoffed at the brunette girl.

"I don't pretend to be... I... what do you know! You spend all of your time in a windowless basement with no friends and like you're probably going to live your whole life as a virgin!" Sara hissed bitterly.

Anna moved over to another part of the work bench and began to pull out tools, plugging in her electronic soldering tool and scanning her drafted plans onto a computer screen.

"Do you think being popular just means you have it made for the rest of your life?" Anna asked over her shoulder.

Sara held up her arms.

“Yes!” The blonde yelled indignantly.

“If you don’t work hard and study you won’t get into college, or not a good one anyway...” Anna pointed out.

“Uh, my dad can just make a contribution to any school I want to go to...” Sara pointed out like the answer was obvious.

“Oh right, you’re rich so you don’t have to work or try to achieve anything...” Anna grumbled as she slipped on her goggles.

“What do you want me to say? That I'm blessed because I'm pretty and my parents have money and people like me? Oh I'm sooooo sorry! Y’know, maybe if you tried a little harder on your appearance and being likeable one of the guys from the good part of town would actually show interest in you and then you wouldn’t have to work! That’s what my mom did. She didn’t have what I have but she was pretty and she knew how to play the game!” Sara ranted.

The cheerleader tossed her hand back in emphasis of her point and knocked Anna’s open can of mountain dew off of the tray. It tumbled through the air and landed on the strange electronic tower that Sara had uncovered, spilling the soda all over it.

“Oh my god! What did you do!?” Anna screamed, pulling off her goggles and running across the room.

“It was an accident! Calm down!” Sara said defensively.

“This was my dad’s!” Anna cried, gaping in disbelief at the spill.

The tall nerdy girl grabbed a dusty rag and tried to mop up the liquid. As she did so the tower lit up brilliantly and whizzed to life. The globe in the center began to spin and the rings around it rotated on different accesses.

“Oh god! It’s all sticky! It’s ruined!” Anna moaned in despair.

“What is it?” Sara asked, a little nervous about how it had seemingly turned on without being plugged in.

“I don’t know! I just have to get the soda you spilled off of it!” Anna insisted.

“Here – this is basically club soda and club soda is supposed to clean up anything.” Sara said, grabbing her La Croix.

“No don’t-!” Anna screamed.

But it was too late. The cheerleader poured the contents of her can onto the machine causing it to spark and smoke. Before the girls could do anything a wave of energy burst from the tower and a large flash of light blinded them.

When their eyes readjusted the two high schoolers gasped at each other. They were wearing completely different outfits. Anna was wearing a baggy neon green sweatshirt with squiggly designs on it and swishy pants as well as crimped long wavy brown hair. Sara was dressed in a hot pink mini-skirt, a black belt, an acid wash white denim shirt and a black vest. Her blonde hair was pulled into a top ponytail with a scrunchy.

“What are you wearing!?” Sara asked, completely weirded out that her classmate had changed outfits in the blink of an eye.

“What am *I* wearing? What are *you* wearing?” Anna responded.

Sara looked down at her own outfit and screamed.

“Why are we both suddenly dressed like we’re going to a Saved By the Bell cosplay party!?” Sara cried.

Anna looked over to see that her workspace was completely changed. The computer was gone and a lot of her tools were either different or missing.

“Something really odd is happening...” She said looking around.

“Girls? Are you okay down there? I thought I heard screaming.” Lisa called down from the basement entrance.

“Mom!” Anna yelled as she ran up the stairs to make sure her mother was okay.

“Hey! Wait for me! I can’t like do anything in this stupid stiff skirt!” Sara whined as she attempted to hop back to the stairs in her leg-hugging polyester miniskirt.

The girls got to the top of the stairs only to be greeted by Lisa wearing a baggy blouse, spandex pants and leg warmers.

“Are you girls all right? What was all of that yelling about?” Lisa asked, looking at the teenagers with concern.

“Mom, what happened to your clothes?” Anna asked, having never seen her mom dressed like this before.

“What? Oh this? I was just doing my aerobics in the living room.” Lisa explained assuming her daughter was referring to the mismatched outfit.

“Uh, when did you get all of the retro furniture?” Sara asked, glancing around to notice that everything looked very different than it had when they went downstairs.

Some oldies music was playing out of an old fashioned boombox on the kitchen counter.

“Oh Sara hun, who did you say that this artist was again? Phil Collins?” Lisa asked, referring to the song currently playing.

Sara shook her head and looked bewildered.

“I have no idea who that is.” She said softly.

Anna looked around and then turned to hurry up to her room. Sara quickly followed her. As they entered the nerdy girls bedroom they found Becky sitting on the floor playing with a Polly Pocket and watching an episode of the first season of Full House on a boxy television.

“What the heck...” Anna gasped looking around her room. The comic and anime stuff was completely different – old skool. There were Chris Claremont’s X-Men comics and Akira paraphernalia as well as a heavy amount of 80s Transformers. Above her bed was a poster of Michael Keaton’s Batman.

“Woah – this is seriously freaking me out. Why is everything different?” Sara said

“I don’t know!” Anna replied, noticing that her laptop and most of her electronics were gone.

Sara went to her bag by the bed and opened it, sifting through the make-up and hygiene items.

“Wait! Where’s my phone?” The cheerleader cried frantically.

Becky giggled at the question.

“Seriously! I can’t find my phone!” Sara exclaimed.

“Uh have you tried looking in your house?” Becky asked, giggling some more.

“No! I brought it here. I had it with me on the bed!” Sara insisted in full crisis mode.

The little girl looked up at the teenager like she had three heads.

“Why would you bring your phone over here?” She asked, finding the whole idea funny.

“Nevermind her, let’s just call it. Becky, what do you do with my phone?” Anna said, holding out her hand to her little sister.

The girl looked up at Anna and shrugged, not understanding the game that the older girls were playing.

“I didn’t do anything with your phone.” She said, finding the situation less funny now.

“I gave it to you before we went down to the basement. Now where is it?” Anna demanded, not in the mood to put up with her little sister's bratty attitude.

The little girl got up silently and went over to Anna’s bedside table and pointed to a landline phone made in clear plastic so that one could see all of the inner workings of it.

“Is that... is that a landline?” Sara asked in disbelief.

“It’s your stupid phone! You asked me where your phone was and I showed you now can I go back to watching the show? It’s a new episode!” Becky whined.

Anna and Sara looked at each other and then to the TV, where a young John Stamos was holding a diapered Olsen twin.

“That’s not a new anything. This show went off the air before we were born.” Sara said, feeling a pit in her stomach.

Anna looked around and spotted the TV remote, grabbing it from the floor. She aimed it at the TV and began to surf through the channels.

“Hey! No fair! I’m telling mom!” Becky cried as she stomped out of the room.

The TV flipped through an episode of Baywatch, Growing Pains, COPS, Rosanne, and the Cosby Show. Each channel made the girls cringe a little harder. Finally a new broadcast came up showing footage of President George H.W. Bush holding a press conference.

“President Bush!?” Sara asked, reading the screen. “He was like the president when we were babies!”

Anna shook her head, beginning to get a sense of what was going on.

“No you’re thinking of George W. Bush... this is his dad.” She said somberly.

“How do you know that?” Sara challenged.

“I pay attention in history class...” Anna smirked at the panicking cheerleader.

“But why are they saying he’s president now?” Sara asked frantically.

“Because we traveled into the past...” Anna said, hardly believing the words as they came out of her mouth.

“What? We can’t be in the past! That’s stupid! That’s not a-” Sara’s words were cut off as Anna pointed a trembling finger across the room.

On the wall next to Anna’s desk was a calendar displaying the year 1989.

“We traveled back to 1989.” Anna said in quiet disbelief.

“1989!? Like the Taylor Swift album!? But what about your mom – and your sister! She sure as hell wasn’t alive in 1989!” Sara cried.

Anna shrugged, shaking her head.

“I don’t know...” She stated honestly.

Sara began to dump out the contents of her bag and look around Anna’s bed.

“I have to call home. I need my phone!” The blonde girl insisted.

“It’s not here – it doesn’t exist yet... use the landline.” Anna instructed.

“The land line!? What am I a grandma?” Sara asked flippantly.

“There aren’t any smart phones in 1989...” Anna pointed out.

Sara sighed and gave in, marching over to the phone and picking it up. She looked down at the numbered buttons.

“I don’t know what the number is! I just select ‘home’ from my phone list!” Sara whined, not knowing what to do.

Anna looked at the notebook on her desk where notes on her homework were neatly written down instead of on her laptop where she would normally keep them. In the margins of the paper was Sara’s name and a phone number under it.

“Here, try this.” She said pointing to the number.

Sara looked down at the paper and then up at Anna, bursting out laughing.

“OMG! You wrote my phone number in your notebook? What a dork! You have a crush on me or something?” Sara teased.

Anna sighed and closed her eyes, trying to shore up her patience for the obnoxious popular girl.

“Just try the number please...” Anna groaned.

Sara dialed the number into the phone.

“Dial tones are so weird! I’ve heard them in old movies before but-” Sara observed as she dialed the number on the notebook.

A young voice on the other end picked up the phone.

“Uh hi... oh sorry... I think I called the wrong number. I’m trying to reach my mom, Heather?” Sara said into the phone, not expecting to hear a teenager like herself answer the phone.

Anna couldn't hear what the girl on the other end of the phone said but whatever she responded caused Sara to contort her face in a look of confusion and disgust.

"No she's not! My mom's name is Heather!... I don't *have* a sister! I'm an only child!... No, I didn't hit my head!... *I'm* not a spaz, *you're* a spaz!" Sara shouted angrily into the phone and slammed the phone down on the receiver.

Anna looked at the blonde girl as she snorted in anger.

"...Um, what happened?" The brunette asked.

"Some... some... *girl* claimed that she was my sister Heather and she told me my mom's name is Donna!... Which is so stupid because that's my grandmother's name!" Sara vented.

Anna's eyes went wide and her jaw dropped.

"What?" Sara asked as she noticed Anna's reaction.

"Sara... I think that was your mom on the phone." The bookish girl gasped.

"No way! That girl sounded younger than *me*!" Sara dismissed the notion.

Anna pointed back over to the calendar.

"Yeah but... how old do you think your mom was in 1989?" She asked pointedly.

Sara gulped as she looked from the year on the calendar to the phone she had just hung up.

"So... so my parents haven't even met yet?" The cheerleader cried.

Anna shook her head.

“But – what about your mom... and... and your sister! And us! We’re all the same age as we were back in 2021!” Sara insisted, trying to find a way for Anna’s theory not to be true.

“I don’t know... maybe only the people in this house traveled back in time...” Anna hypothesized.

“We have to find a way to get back! My boyfriend isn’t even born yet and I hate 80s fashion!” Sara exclaimed.

Anna thought for a moment, tapping her lips with her finger. Her eyes lit up.

“That machine! My dad’s machine that you spilled soda on! He must have built an actual honest-to-god time machine!” Anna shouted excitedly.

The two teenagers quickly ran out of the room and back down the stairs.

“Can we use the time machine for our class project? It feels like it’s an automatic A... If it works again, I mean.” Sara asked as they hurried down the stairs.

“If it doesn’t work again I don’t think we have to worry about coming up with anything for the class assignment since Ms. Thompson is a literal baby in diapers right now.” Anna retorted.

“How do you know how old Ms. Thompson would be in 1989?” Sara asked.

“Like I said, I’m really good at math.” Anna replied as they reached the basement door.

“Wait! If we’re going back downstairs I want to put my shoes back on!” Sara said before Anna opened the door.

The blonde teen turned to the doorway and looked to see where she had taken off her slip-ons. In their place were a big clunky ugly pair of lavender purple clog sandals.

“Ew no! No way in hell I'm putting those on!” Sara said in disgust.

She turned around and they hurried down into the basement.

“Okay – time to go back to the future!” Anna said, rubbing her hands together excitedly as they stood in front of the whizzing electronic tower.

“You really think it will work?” Sara asked nervously.

“Yeah, I’m really good at figuring out stuff like this... okay see, I think this gauge is the year – it says 1989, i’ll just ratchet it up to 2021. Pass me that tool over there.” Anna said pointing to her tool box.

Sara dutifully grabbed the item Anna requested and handed it to her brainy partner.

“Please work! Please work! Please work! I don’t want to live in a world without Youtube...” The cheerleader said, crossing her fingers.

“There! It should work but.... I don’t see a button to engage.” Anna said, looking around the tower.

“What do you mean?” Sara asked.

“There’s no big ‘Start the time travel button’!” Anna explained.

“How did it work the last time?” Sara prompted.

“You poured half a can of sparkling water on it!” Anna shouted.

“Okay well when I can get my car to start sometimes I give in a firm thwap and then it works again!” Sara suggested.

“That can’t possibly be true– No don’t!” Anna cried.

But it was too late. Sara slapped her hand hard across the toward causing it to shake and emit a series of loud beeping and gear grinding noises before blasting out another pulse of bright light.

When the light subsided the two women bent over coughing and waving dust from around their faces.

“Oof, I don’t remember feeling this sore the first time we *ahem* the first time we did it.” Sara groaned as she attempted to clear her throat.

“What’s wrong with your voice? It sounds strange...” Anna observed, noticing that the cheerleaders' normally young high-pitched lilty voice sounded hoarse and throaty, like a middle-aged smoker’s voice.

“Yeah I think I breathed in a bunch of dust and it made my voice all scratch-wait Lisa? Where’s Anna?” Sara asked, looking at the salt and pepper haired older woman standing in front of her wearing a business suit.

“I’m Anna... Sara!?” The older woman asked back with a gasp as her eyes focused on the frumpy, out-of-shape blonde matron standing in front of her in stained sweatpants and a corny inspirational t-shirt.

Sara shook her head in disbelief causing her newly gained jowly cheeks to jiggle. Her lined forehead furrowed as she held up chubby pasty hands with visible veins and dry older skin and began to scream.

“We’re old!!!” Sara cried as tears began to pool below her newly gained crow's feet.

“I’m 49 and you’re 50.” Anna said in almost a whisper as she herself observed her older arms and felt the looser skin of her neck.

“How do you know that!?” Sara wailed.

“Math... you were 18 and I was 17 and we traveled back from 1989 which added an additional 32 years to our ages...” Anna explained, it all making sense now.

“But... but... we’re supposed to be teenagers in 2021! Not frumpy old women!” Sara cried in horror.

“But the machine must have registered us as teenagers from the year 1989.” Anna said calmly.

“Oh my god – look at my boobs! They’re all fat and saggy now!” The former cheerleader lamented as she hefted her drooping breasts into her hands and let them flop back down in her t-shirt.

Anna looked down at her own chest and smiled. Though similarly saggy, they were at least bigger than they had been when she was a teenager.

“We need to go back! And fix this! I look like a soccer mom!” Sara pleaded.

She turned to look around frantically for the machine. Anna did as well but it was nowhere in sight. The basement in fact was a completely furnished apartment.

“Where did it go!?” Sara cried looking around.

The walls of the apartment were decorated with hokey signs like ‘Live, Laugh, Love’ and ‘Home is Where the Heart Is.’ Most of the furniture was painted dusty rose and there were lots of little frog figurines everywhere. Sara stopped her panicked sobbing for a moment to harshly judge what she was seeing.

“Dear god, is this your apartment? You really did grow up to be a sad, pathetic loser spinster huh... uh, no offense.” Sara blurted out.

Anna looked at the matronly blonde with annoyance on her aged face.

“You can’t just say ‘no offense’ after you say something mean! That’s not how it works.” Anna insisted.

Something about being older and how well her current outfit fit her made Anna feel empowered to speak up for herself more.

“Sorry... we have to go find that time machine though!” Sara said sheepishly.

The women turned to the stairwell behind them and headed up it much slower than they had the last time. Both middle-aged women found that their legs felt heavier (Sara actually reached down the back of her sweats to feel her chunky thighs with her hand and recoiled at the touch of cellulite dimpling along her legs.) and their backs ached as they climbed each step.

“How are you so much thinner than I am? You, like, never played any sports and you ate and drank like crap!” Sara whined, panting and out of breath as she lumbed after Anna up the stairs.

Anna turned around and shrugged.

“I don’t know, maybe I lived a healthier lifestyle after my metabolism bottomed out.” The graying brunette offered as a possible explanation.

Sara poked her flabby gut that was peeking out from under her shirt.

“No one would believe that I used to be a cheerleader.” She lamented, trying to pull her shirt around her muffin top.

They got up to the top of the stairs and opened the door but rather than finding themselves back in the first floor of Anna’s house they found themselves outside of the house at a side entrance.

“Where are we?” Sara asked and then proceeded to hack and cough.

“I think we’re at my house but... it’s a lot bigger...” Anna said.

The two older women plodded around the building to the front door and went inside. Sure enough it was Anna’s house the way that it had been in 2021 but with significant upgrades and expansions. The kitchen looked completely redone, the TV was bigger. There was a whole addition of a dining room and family room added on to the other side of the stairwell. As the ladies walked in and marveled at the changes an old woman hobbled down the hallway with the aid of a cane to greet them.

“Oh girls! Is everything all right? I heard a lot of yelling and screaming.” The gray haired old woman rattled, adjusting her bifocals on her wrinkled face.

Anna fixed her own glasses and blinked at the sight of the grandmotherly lady in her mid 70s standing in front of her.

“Mom?” She gasped.

Lisa craned her aged face upward to look at her middle-aged daughter. The older woman’s neck was loose hanging skin that dangled under her chin.

“What is it dear? Oh I hope you gals are arguing about rent again. Go easy on her, Anna. Sara’s had a very hard time this past year and I can’t imagine Costco pays especially well. I used to work retail back when you were a baby, it’s easy to forget that we didn’t come from means... so maybe you can find it in your conscience to let this month slide dear...” Lisa counseled her daughter in a quavering voice.

“Rent?” Anna asked, confused.

“Costco!?” Sara exclaimed, thinking that she wouldn’t work there in a million years.

“Lord knows, you girls have been friends for so long it’d be a shame for it to end over something as silly as a little money. Why I remember when you were both in high school – couldn’t be more different but you were still thick as thieves!” Lisa continued.

The two women looked at one another wondering if Lisa had gone a bit senile in her sudden old age. They had been far from close friends.

“Um look mom, we’re looking for a machine, a big tower with lights and-” Anna tried to explain.

“And a spinning orb!” Sara added.

“What’s that now? Oh all of these fancy devices all look alike to me! Why Becky’s daughter was showing me some fancy watch do-dad that you can make phone calls from!” Lisa responded, shaking her gray head.

“Becky’s... *daughter*?” Anna asked with a gulp.

“Yeah, that’s what I said isn’t it? Little Sophia... although I guess she’s not so little anymore. She’s in high school now with Sarah isn’t she?” Lisa asked.

“In school with me?” Sara asked.

Lisa chuckled and shook her head.

“Oh no dear. I meant the other Sarah. Anna’s Sarah. You’re a little too old for high school these days aren’t ya? Heh.” Lisa said, smiling and patting the middle-aged blonde on the shoulder.

“But...” Sara attempted to protest that statement.

Anna was standing speechless and wondering what ‘Anna’s Sarah’ meant. Her mother however was quickly shuffling out the door.

“Well anyway, I’m glad you gals were able to work things out. I’ll see you later. I’ve got a date!” Lisa said with a wry smile crossing her thin wrinkled lips.

“A date!?” Anna balked.

“Yep! A date with my physical therapist! Have to go twice a week since my hip replacement. Not that I mind. He’s quite a handsome fellow! A bit too young for me though, but boy if I were 30 years younger...” Lisa said, whistling.

She winked at her daughter and daughter’s friend and then hobbled out the door.

“Your mom got really old... I hope my parents are old like that!” Sara gasped.

Anna didn't respond, she had a theory and thought that Sara might not like the alternative to her parents getting old like Lisa did...

The two women hurried up the stairs to the second floor as fast as their middle-aged bodies would go. They got to Anna's room and opened the door. The room obviously belonged to a teenage girl but not Anna. All of the geek decor and robot stuff was gone - replaced with various cheer and gymnastics trophies, posters of pop singers and tons of fashionable teen clothes strewn around everywhere.

"So wait... is this *my* room now!?" Sara gasped looking around.

Between the pom-poms hanging from the closet handle to the perfume and beauty products on the desk to the selfie station in the corner it did look a lot like the room Sara had back at home.

"No... I think that was your room downstairs in the basement..." Anna said, reasoning out the clues.

"Shut up..." Sara whispered in dread.

"Mom?" A teenager called behind them.

Sara and Anna turned around to see a tall, attractive girl with braided brown hair standing in a cheerleading outfit in the hallway. Neither woman responded. They just stared at her silently.

"Hello.... Mom..." The girl repeated.

Finally Anna raised a finger up to point at herself as if questioning if that was who the girl was addressing. The teenager nodded with a sarcastic smirk.

"Hi uh... honey..." Anna stammered. She had never even considered having kids and now she had a nearly fully grown teenage daughter.

"What are you and aunt Sara doing in my room?" Anna's daughter asked.

“Aunt Sara!?” Sara balked.

“Uh yeah... I'm a little too old to call you ‘aunty’ anymore...” The teen replied.

“I was um... we were just looking for something... have you seen a large uh... glowing tower-like object?” Anna asked, swallowing hard and internally freaking out.

“No... I don’t like... pay attention to your stuff. Did you check your room?” The teen suggested in a huffy voice.

“Uh no... and my room is...?” Anna asked her daughter sheepishly.

The high schooler sighed deeply and rolled her eyes.

“Where it always is mom...” She replied.

Anna decided that it wasn’t worth pressing the question further and looking even more foolish than she already did. Logic would dictate that if she was the mom of the house now that her room would be the master bedroom. She led Sara down the hall to Lisa’s old room, hearing her spoiled daughter slam the door behind them.

“I’m guessing that this is my room...” Anna explained pushing open the door to the master bedroom.

The ladies walked into the room to look around. On the wall opposite from the door was a large framed image of a magazine cover showing a middle-aged Anna (Though heavily photoshopped to remove her gray hairs and love handles) posing while holding some kind of device. In bold letters across the bottom of the cover it read: Robot revolution! This engineer turned tech company CEO is changing the way we approach robotics.

“What the f-” Sara gawked at the image while reaching around to scratch her chunky behind that itched a whole lot more than it ever did when she was a teenager.

Anna was beaming with pride and happiness as she stared at the framed cover. She wanted to find the magazine itself so that she could read the article and look at some of the things she had built!

“This is so awesome...” The nearly 50-year-old whispered as she folded her arms confidently over her saggy chest.

Sara couldn't stand to look at it a moment longer and moved to look around the room for the time travel machine. She attempted to look under the bed, groaning as she bent down onto her knees. Her joints popped and crackled, aching as her flabby body struggled to move and bend in ways that she had been able to do without any issues literally an hour ago.

“C'mon, we have to find that stupid time machine thingy. I can't stand being a fat frumpy loser for a moment longer while you're freakin' Karen of the year over there!” Sara gripped before having a small coughing fit as she knelt on the floor.

Anna was busy marveling at all of the family photos lining her dresser and nightstand. There was a photo of her in a cap and gown posing next to her proud-looking mom at her graduation from MIT - now the class of 1994 instead of 2026 like it was going to be. Next to it was a photo of her on her wedding day, looking to be in her late 20s, marrying a very handsome tall young man; a photo of her in the hospital at 31 holding her newborn baby daughter; a photo of a family picnic a few years later; pictures of her daughter growing up through dance recitals, soccer games, school pageants and birthday parties and more recent photos of her and her husband, now both sporting touches of gray in their hair along with laugh lines and softer physiques standing proudly behind an angsty teenage girl who would rather be scrolling through her phone than posing for a picture with her parents.

“Are you going to help or not? Bending over to look under everything is killing my back!” Sara complained gruffly.

Anna's crinkled eyes focused on the man who seemed to be her husband. Even if he was a bit younger than her he seemed to be in his 40s by now - an old man from her teenage perspective but she also thought he looked incredibly

handsome and charming. The thought that this man might be interested in holding her hand, wrapping his arms around her, staring into her eyes and looking at her like she was the most beautiful person he'd ever seen - wanting to kiss her! It made her tremble excitedly just thinking about it.

"Hello! Earth to dork! I don't think the time machine's here. Where can we look next?" Sara asked as she rubbed her aching back and groaned.

"Um... maybe downstairs in the kitchen?" Anna suggested, no longer particularly interested in finding the device.

"God, more stairs? Okay give me a second to sit down and catch my breath - oof!" Sara sighed, as she plopped down on the side of the bed, out of breath.

It was a completely new sensation to the formerly athletic girl. It felt like her whole chubby, middle-aged body was working against her. She lifted her flabby legs up onto the bed and furrowed a lined brow as she cringed at the sight of her newly gained cankles.

"Oh god, I have bunions! And my feet are all veiny... this is the worst! When I'm back to normal again I'm so getting Grant to give me a foot massage." The 50-year-old declared, sounding like a sad, thirsty, cougar.

"Come on, let's go downstairs and find my dad's device... or at least some BenGay or something..." Anna said, motioning for Sara to get up.

The graying brunette held out her veiny hand to the aged blonde who took it and stood up with a winded groan. Anna glanced back at her magazine cover and grinned one more time before heading out of the bedroom.

They made their way slowly, back down to the kitchen, hearing voices coming through the back door as they entered. Anna gasped at the spitting image of her 42-year-old mom walking into the house with a messy-haired 10-year-old boy in tow.

"Adam! Don't forget to take your sneakers off before you go into the house." The Lisa-look-alike instructed the child.

“I know mom!” The kids said, kicking off his shoes without taking his eyes off of his iPad.

“Um...” Anna mumbled, staring at the woman like she was watching a ghost – how could her mother both be an old woman and her normal age right now?

The 42-year-old brunette looked up at Anna and Sara and smiled happily, accentuating the lines on her rosy, tired face.

“Oh great, you’re home. Where’s mom? I’m supposed to drive her to her physical therapy appointment.” The woman informed them.

The identity of the woman was on the tip of Anna’s thinning lips but she couldn’t bring herself to say the name. Sara beat her to the punch.

“Becky!?” The overweight blonde exclaimed.

Becky chuckled and brushed some of her dull brown hair from her aging face.

“Wow, haven’t been called that since I was a kid!” She jovially replied.

Anna remained silent, taking in the fact that her baby sister had gone from a 4th grader to a PTA mom in a single afternoon.

“Mom, can I go watch TV?” The little boy asked in a whiny voice that reminded Anna very much of his mom at that age.

“Okay but only for an hour. I don’t like that you’re constantly staring at screens all of the time – it can’t be good for your eyes.” The middle-aged woman said, affectionately mussing up her son’s hair.

“Fine...” The boy agreed and then ran off to the living room.

Becky looked back up at the other women both gawking at her in the kitchen.

“Becky! You’re like – a MILF!” Sara shouted in disbelief.

“Ha! Thanks. I’d feel a lot more MILF-tastic though if I could lose this weight on my hips and ass!” Becky responded, showing the woman the extra flabby around her thighs and waist leading to her having a similar pear-shaped figure to her mother at that age.

“What-” Sara began to reply but stopped when Becky held up a finger to pause her as her phone began to buzz in her purse.

“Oop, hold that thought - Hello, this is Rebecca.” The woman answered the phone with the seriousness of an adult professional, a stark contrast to the silly little girl Anna had grown up with.

Becky - or now, *Rebecca* hung up the phone and shrugged.

“I guess it was the wrong number. You were saying? Hey, have you seen mom, we’re going to be late for her appointment.” Rebecca said quickly, moving around the kitchen island to head into the rest of the house.

“Yeah she already left...” Anna said, finally breaking out of her trance to address her adult sister for the first time.

“Ah damn! She must have taken an Uber. I got tied up picking Adam up from soccer practice. The new assistant coach is a serious catch and this newly single gal might have just scored a hot date for this weekend!” Rebecca declared, aiming her thumb at her face and sticking out her tongue devilishly.

Anna’s first instinct was to insist that her sister was too young to date but then had to rationally remind herself that her ‘little’ sister was a grown mother of two now - a literal soccer mom.

“Oh hey - sorry to hear about your divorce Sara, I know you two had been separated for a while but I also know from experience actually making it official is sometimes the toughest part.” Rebecca said sympathetically for the former cheerleader.

“Divorce!?” Sara yelled.

“Well, of course I have no idea what a third one must feel like...” Becky added quickly.

Sara let out a cringing cry and rushed over to the sink to get herself a drink of water. She splashed some on her face to see if she could wake up from this bad dream. Rebecca leaned in close to her older sister, pointing conspiratorially at the blonde woman.

“Hey has she been – y’know, this morning?” Rebecca asked Anna, making the motion of guzzling booze as she said ‘y’know’.

Anna shook her head. She didn’t know how to explain to her sister that she and Sara had actually time traveled and seemingly broken reality making them all 30+ years older than they should be.

“Oh Sara I almost forgot! Adam found this on the steps as we were coming in. It’s yours isn’t it? It was next to your ashtray.” Rebecca said, sliding a cell phone across the counter to the chubby older woman.

Out of all of the differences this new reality has created one thing Sara definitely recognized was her phone. She let out a sigh of relief as receiving her old friend and quickly picked it up to check her texts and PMs.

As the phone unlocked she saw that her background had changed from a still from the classic film ‘Bring It On’ to an image of a chubby infant gurgling into the camera.

“Who is this baby!?” Sara shouted out loud, staring accusingly at her phone.

She had a sinking suspicion that this kid was hers. Her mind went a million miles a minute, debating the fact that she did always want to become a mom eventually – but she was too young to have a baby! She was 18 for Christ's sake! She didn’t want to have kids until she was at least out of college and married to her dream guy, maybe living in a house they owned in a nice neighborhood somewhere. But the idea of raising this baby in the basement apartment of

nerdy Anna's family's house - changing diapers and breast feeding and waking up all hours of the night to deal with the baby crying - that all sounded awful.

"Ooo, is that a picture of your grandson? I want to see!" Rebecca clapped excitedly.

But not as bad as suddenly finding out that she went from high school to becoming a grandmother in a day!

"Grand... I'm sorry, did you say *gulp* *grandson*?" Sara stammered, dropping her phone onto the counter.

Rebecca picked the phone up and pulled up the photos scrolling through the baby pictures.

"Oh my god, he's adorable! I remember when Adam was this age... it really feels like it was yesterday! Anna? Do you remember when Sarah was this age?" Rebecca asked as she flipped through the photos.

"Um... no?" Anna said, equally stunned and confused.

"Awww here he is with his mommy... he really does have her eyes. So precious..." Rebecca cooed looking at the pics.

Sara peaked over to the boy's mother and saw a beautiful red-headed woman who looked like she could be Sara's older sister. The idea that this grown woman in her mid-20s could be her daughter was making the now 50-year-old feel dizzy.

"What time is it? I have to run and go pick up mom before she decides to uber back home. Mind watching Adam for a few? Oh and hey tell Sarah that I'm planning on being there Saturday morning for her cheer meet!... Ah, those were the days... I miss cheering, don't you miss it Sara?" Rebecca asked the older blonde.

Sara nodded emphatically, still wrapping her head around the fact that she was a grandmother.

“Honestly I'd settle for being able to touch my toes again! Never mind being able to do a high kick without throwing out my aching back!” Rebecca chuckled as she headed out the door shaking her head.

Sara took a series of deep breaths and picked up her phone again, she began to frantically scroll through it.

“What are you doing?” Anna asked, seeing the determination in her former classmates' lined face.

“I'm calling my parents! I'm not going to be just like... stuck here as a divorced grandma in that stupid apartment downstairs... they'll know what to do and how to fix this!” The middle-aged blonde declared.

As she scrolled frantically through her phone her breathing got quicker and sharper and her face became more panicked.

“It's not here... why isn't it in my phone!? Where did it go?” Sara asked on the verge of tears.

“Where did what go?” Anna asked gently.

“The ‘home’ listing in my phone. Like my parents' numbers, there's no number in here for Home or Mom or Dad!” She exclaimed in alarm.

Anna thought about it for a moment and then took a deep breath, shoring up the confidence to help her panicked friend.

“Try looking for ‘Heather’.” Anna suggested.

Sara scrolled up and sure enough found a Heather in her phone contacts.

“Why would I put my mom in my phone as ‘Heather’?” Sara asked, looking to Anna sincerely for answers.

“Just... just call it.” Anna pushed.

Sara warily set the phone down on the counter and pressed the call button, putting the phone on speaker so that Anna could hear it.

“Hi Sara...” Heather answered, sounding exasperated to be getting this call.

“Mom!” Sara exclaimed excitedly.

The voice on the other end sighed loudly.

“...No Sara. It’s me, Heather.” The woman replied, clearly at the end of her patience.

Sara looked to Anna in confusion and then back to the phone.

“I’m calling because-” Sara began to say.

“Sara, I know why you’re calling. You’re calling for the same reason you always call. You want to borrow money.” Heather said, cutting her former daughter off.

“No I-” Sara started to interject.

“My husband and I can’t keep bailing you out all the time.” Heather said flatly.

“Your husband? You mean dad?” Sara asked, bewildered.

Heather made a disapproving scoffing noise into the phone.

“Listen, calling Charles your ‘sugar daddy’ was only barely cute when we were in our 20s but now - you’re 50 years old Sara! 5 - 0! What example are you setting for your daughter? Or your grandbaby? I know this year has been hard for you. I really do. But you need to take responsibility for your own life. We can’t keep bailing you out. It’s wonderful that Anna is putting you up in her spare apartment out of the goodness of her heart, god knows what a saint that woman is for putting up with your flakiness for so long - you’re so lucky to

have a friend like that. You should be thanking her every single day that she doesn't kick you out onto the street-" Heather lectured into the phone.

Sara blushed as her former mother complimented Anna and considered for a moment taking the call off of speaker but ultimately decided to let it continue.

"So no, Sara, no we're not going to lend you more money. It wasn't anyone's choice but your own to drop out of college and marry that first jackass and it wasn't anyone's choice other than your own to make the same mistake two more times!" Heather stated in frustration.

"But mo-" Sara tried to argue.

"I don't know, maybe you can talk to your manager at Cosco about picking up some extra shifts... I don't know, it's not my problem anymore. You're a 50-year-old grandmother now, that's really too old to be expecting other people to fix your own messes for you! I love you and my heart breaks for you Sara, no matter what, you'll always be my big sister but I really have to draw the line here." Heather finished.

Sara stood there stunned as her mother called her 'big sister'.

"Sara? Sara are you still there?... Do you have anything to say?... Sara?... Well that's just great. Very mature..." Heather hissed sarcastically as she hung up the phone.

The blonde girl slapped her pasty hands against her weary eyes and lined forehead.

"My mom is my younger sister now! And my broke-ass grandparents are my mom and dad!" Sara howled in disbelief.

Anna had no idea how to respond. It really seemed like things were just getting worse and worse for the former popular girl. She put her hand gently on Sara's shoulder, rubbing her back in support. The chubby woman pulled Anna into an awkward hug and cried on her shoulder for a few moments.

“I’m sorry I said all of those mean things to you! You’re not a loser. I’m a loser!” Sara sobbed, hugging her taller friend tightly.

Anna patted Sara’s back awkwardly trying to console the aged woman.

“It’s... it’s really okay.” Anna told her.

The doorbell rang and Anna happily used it as an excuse to pull out of the hug.

“Aunty Anna! Someones at the door!” Adam yelled from the couch.

Anna hurried to the door and opened it to find Grant Fox – the hottest guy at her high school standing at her doorstep. The matronly brunette blushed and began to play with her hair at the sight of him, her adult confidence she had been building over the course of the afternoon melting away as her brain regressed to her ‘Awkward teen virgin with a crush’ state of being.

“Oh um, Grant! What are you doing here?” Anna asked almost inaudibly as she stared down at her stockinged feet, too nervous to make eye contact with the high school boy.

“Grant? Did she say Grant?” Sara peeped from the living room asking the boy on the couch who just shrugged indifferently.

Sara looked down at her middle aged gut and felt her jowly cheeks and cupped her soft saggy breasts deciding if it was better to let Grant see her in this body, while she was old enough to be his mother or if she should just never see her boyfriend again.

“Uh hi Mrs. Hunter is uh, Sarah home?” He asked, also looking a bit nervous and intimidated by the middle-aged business woman.

“Oh god – oh god – oh god! Tell him uh... tell him i’m in the shower! No he’ll just want to come join me... uh tell him i’m sick! Uh... tell him...” Sara called from the living room teetering around trying to figure out the best way to break the news that his girlfriend was now more than 30 years older than him.

“Uh Sara she’s...” Anna began to say, trying to figure out how to explain the same problem to the hot teenage boy.

Sara began tearing through a coat closet to find a trench coat and scarves to hide her wrinkled, flabby body from the boy, maybe if she tried to talk in a high pitched younger voice again he wouldn’t notice that his girlfriend had gone from a perky 18-year-old to a frumpy 50-year-old since the last time he saw here.

“Sara is...” Anna stammered again looking back to see how her friend wanted her to handle this situation.

“Right here mom.” Anna’s pretty daughter called out as she ran down the stairs.

“Sarah!” Grant exclaimed happily as the hot teen came down to greet him.

“Baby!” Sarah giggled as she leapt into the boy's arms and wrapped her perfectly toned legs around him.

“Baby!?” Sara asked, dropping the hat and scarf she was planning on using as a disguise.

“Sarah!?” Anna gasped realizing that in this new reality her daughter was named after her closest friend.

The two teens made-out passionately in the doorway for several excruciating minutes. The two middle-aged women stood there watching them with their jaws wide open. Finally the teens pulled away to catch their breath.

“Hey mom, I'm going out for the evening. I'll be back after dinner. Don't wait up.” Sarah said with a giggle as she clutched Grant’s hand and headed out of the house.

“Bye Mrs. Hunter! Bye ma’am!” Grant said waving to Anna and Sara respectively.

The two matronly former teens stood in shocked silence for a minute.

“D-did my boyfriend just call me ‘ma’am’?” Sara asked in disbelief.

“I don’t think he’s your boyfriend anymore...” Anna said, trying not to grin. She was incredibly tickled by the idea that HER daughter – a child that she had given birth to, was now dating THE Grant Fox! She had somehow managed to raise one of the most popular girls at her high school!

“I... I need a drink. Want to go to a bar? We’re so old now they won’t even card us.” Anna said sounding, incredibly depressed.

Anna reached into her pocket and pulled out her wallet.

“It won’t matter if they do – because my ID says that I was born in 1972!” The graying former high school girl pointed out.

“Great...” Sara groaned sarcastically.

Anna peaked at a bank statement slipped in with her cards as well and her eyes went wide.

“Drinks are on me and uh... no need to worry about the rent this month, bestie!” Anna said, hugging the blonde woman happily.

A few weeks had gone by and both Anna and Sara had started to get used to their new lives. Anna had struggled at first to step into her job and her husband might have wondered why she suddenly seemed so inexperienced and giggly in the bedroom but she treated both like an end of the year exam and studied her ass off so that she could get better.

Sara had begun to obsessively work out and diet, trying to melt off the middle-aged spread. She had already lost 10 pounds but running every morning and advanced yoga didn’t come nearly as easy for her 50-year-old body as they had when she was a teenager. She often cut corners or cut sessions short to veg out on her couch and watch daytime TV. She quit Cosco and Anna had gotten her a job in her company's marketing department. It was

going only... so-so since all Sara had in experience was 3+ years of high school. She signed up for Tinder to get back to dating again but couldn't bring herself to swipe right on any guys even close to her own age. She met and began to bond with her adult daughter, bravely accepting her new 'grandma' status in order to spend more time with her baby grandson. It felt nice, even if part of her 'popular girl' teenage brain was judging her life incredibly harshly.

One afternoon Grant was over, making out with Sarah on the couch. Anna, Becky and Sara were drinking some wine in the kitchen and chatting. Grant was beginning to feel really uncomfortable at the fact that his girlfriend's mom's blonde friend who lived downstairs seemed to constantly stare at him whenever he was around.

"Hey babe... can we like... maybe go upstairs to your room? All of these old ladies around are really starting to freak me out..." He suggested, looking warily over to Sara who was undressing him with her eyes.

Anna's daughter pouted.

"My nana is sleeping in the room next to mine... But I know somewhere we can go..." Sarah said with a mischievous grin on her face.

She took her boyfriend's hand and brought him through the kitchen, past the gaggle of middle-aged women and out to the back yard. They entered a large shed, disconnected from the house at the very back of the property.

Sarah turned on the light to reveal a bit of den, with a couch and a carpet and a mini fridge along with a work bench, tools and a bunch of other objects covered in tarps and sheets.

"Woah, what is this place?" Grant asked, looking around.

"It's my mom's old workshop. She hasn't really used it in years - not since her company made her a state-of-the-art lab at her job... now it's mostly just used for storing old junk and for you and I to have some private alone time..." The teen girl purred, pulling her boyfriend into a kiss.

Minutes later the two teens were pulling off each other's clothing on the couch, making out with one another. Grant tugged off his shirt and bumped into a large tower-like object. It lit up and began to whirl.

“Ah shit, sorry... what is that thing?” He asked as the machine smoked and beeped.

“How the hell should I know? Just some stupid thing my mom probably made-” Sarah responded.

Suddenly the tower burst into a flash of bright light.

The end...