



Love You Like a Sister (Mix)

By Robin Palmer



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Four soon-to-be-stepsisters must learn to work together as they try to make their parents' wedding day a day to remember in this witty M!X novel in the tradition of *Bridesmaids*.

When Avery was two, her parents divorced, and it's just been Avery and her mom ever since—the Two Musketeers. Until Avery opens her email—on a non-holiday and not her birthday—and receives a bombshell announcement from her father. Not only is he moving back to the New York area, he is remarrying—and his soon-to-be wife has three daughters. Avery's future stepsisters. Holy. Moly.

Avery's father is determined to make them all one happy family, so he and his fiancée ask the girls to be the bridesmaids in the upcoming wedding. And they want the girls to help with the something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue. Meaning that Avery and the girls—who clearly want nothing to do with her—are going to be forced to spend time together.

It's one (hilarious) disaster after another as Avery tries to help and get to know her future stepsisters—who are all dealing with their own issues with the wedding. From spilling a chocolate-y drink on a very expensive dress when they go dress shopping, to turning her future step-mother's hair bright blue days before the wedding. Can they all manage to make the wedding a day to remember—or will it be memorable for all the wrong reasons?



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Editorial Review

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Love You Like a Sister

One



I had no idea when I woke up that Saturday morning that it would go on to be known in my diary as TDIAC.

TDIAC is short for “The Day It All Changed.” While I don’t think of myself as a lazy person, writing out “The Day It All Changed” can be pretty time consuming. And I can think of a lot better ways to spend my time—like going through Pinterest and Etsy for inspiration for my jewelry line that I have. I’m a jewelry designer. The name of my company is Avery Lynn. (Lynn is my middle name.)

A lot of the jewelry designers I admire use their first and middle names for the names of their companies, so I do as well. Luckily, I have a jewelry-designer-sounding name. Unlike, say, my friend Mary Helen O’Donahue.

The day started like most Saturdays did—with my mom stumbling around the kitchen mumbling, “How could I have forgotten to fill the coffeemaker again?” while I went through the garage sale section of Craigslist and came up with a list of ones for us to hit before everything good was gone. Since it was July, there were a lot of them. Summer was a good time to have them, because the weather was good.

Professional garage salers got there a lot earlier than we did—even before the official start time. But because I was dependent on someone who couldn’t drive without first having her coffee, I’d have to wait until I had my license to become one of those.

I had inherited my love of vintage stuff from my mom. But while she headed toward the racks of clothes when we got to a sale, I hit the tables where all the random odds and ends were: buttons, felt flowers that had fallen off hats, earrings that were missing their mates. Because most of that stuff was pretty useless, it wasn’t expensive, which meant that I could end up going home with a lot. Which, for a businesswoman like myself, was helpful. I might have been only twelve and going into seventh grade, but I had already made fifty dollars in profits over the last year.

Sometimes, just to make conversation, the person having the garage sale would ask me what I planned to do with the stuff I was buying, but I always played dumb and said, “I’m not sure yet.”

But of course I did know—I was going to use it as part of a piece of jewelry. All of my pieces were made from found objects—that was my thing. I was afraid if people knew the real reason, they’d charge me more. Plus, it wasn’t a total lie—most of the time I wasn’t exactly sure what I was going to use it for.

“Those people in the white house with the red door on Wisteria are having another estate sale,” I announced. Mom always said that an estate sale was the same as a garage sale, except people thought they could get

away with charging more when they called it that.

From behind me I heard the skittering of coffee beans on the floor. Not only couldn't my mother drive before having her coffee, she couldn't see, either.

"Can we go?" I asked.

"Mm," she grunted, which was Early Morning-ese for "yes."

The last time we had been there, I had found a bag of twenty-five antique-looking Chinese coins that I got for five dollars. I put them on leather cords to make chokers, and when I wore one to school, my teacher, Ms. Fournette, said it looked like something you'd see in *Lucky* magazine, which I took as a huge compliment. I gave her one for Teacher Appreciation Week, and she wore it a bunch of times.

I got so excited about garage sales that I wondered if I had inherited it from my dad as well. I made a mental note to put it on my TTAMDNTISH list. TTAMDNTISH stands for "Things to Ask My Dad Next Time I See Him," which is also somewhat time consuming to write out.

Because I barely ever saw him, the list tended to be on the long side. My parents had gotten divorced when I was two, and for most of my life he had been living across the country in California. He e-mailed me on my birthday and holidays (well, two holidays—Christmas and Thanksgiving), and if he happened to be in New York for work, he'd take me to dinner, but that happened only about once a year.

"Mom?"

"Mm," she grunted. Obviously the coffee wasn't ready yet.

"Does Dad like garage sales too?" I asked. Sometimes when the list got really long (which it was at the moment because I hadn't seen my father in one year, four months, and twelve days), I asked her the questions. Otherwise I'd never get through the list when I saw him, especially because he always asked for the check before I was even done with my meal.

The pattering behind me stopped. "I don't know," she replied, suddenly sounding awake. "Why?"

I turned toward her and shrugged. "No reason, really," I replied. "Just wondering."

Now that I had brought it up, I wished I could take it back. Mom got really weird whenever I brought up my dad. She'd answer my questions, but I could tell from the way her voice got all high, like my music teacher Mrs. Malone's, that it wasn't her favorite subject. I did know, however, that every time she looked at me, she felt like she was looking at him. At least, that's what I heard her tell her best friend, Maggie, a while back. It was kind of crazy how much I looked like him. Same stick-straight caramel-brown hair. Same blue eyes. Same heart-shaped face. Mom, on the other hand, was the opposite: curly blond hair, green eyes, super tall. No one could believe we were related, even though she had, like, a billion framed photos of when she was pregnant with me around the house.

At least she didn't say mean things about him in front of me, like my best friend Lexi's mom did about her dad. If you ask me, it was totally unfair to do that to a kid, especially a kid like Lexi, who tended to cry at commercials, especially ones about families getting together for holidays. But no one bothered to ask me, so I just kept quiet about that. I didn't even tell Lexi, and we told each other everything.

Mom came over and took my face in her hands. “Have I told you yet today how much I love you?”

“Nope. You haven’t said anything because you haven’t had your coffee yet,” I replied.

The freckles on her nose scrunched up as she smiled. It was like looking at my own face, except for the freckles. I wished I had some. “Well, I’m telling you now. Can you add it to the list of previous ‘I love yous,’ please?”

I smiled back. “Done.”

“How many does that make?” she asked.

This was one of the bazillion different routines we had. Sometimes I rolled my eyes and told her she was being corny, but the truth was I secretly loved it. “At least one for every day I’ve been alive.”

“Good. And you’ll let me know if I miss a day?”

I nodded. “I will.”

She leaned in and kissed me on the forehead. “I’m counting on that.”

“Mom?”

“What is it, lovebug?”

“You need to brush your teeth.”

She laughed. “I love that I can always count on you for the truth.”

* * *

It was slim pickings by the time we got to the house on Wisteria with the red door. From the looks of it, whoever lived there was big into fishing and boats, because most of the stuff left behind was in the shape of a fish or a boat. Unfortunately, other than a stuffed animal in the shape of a monkey, which might have made a cool purse with the stuffing taken out and a strap sewn on, there was nothing all that interesting left. And when I examined the monkey more closely, I saw that he was missing an eye, which kind of creeped me out.

Mom, on the other hand, was psyched, because she found a caftan to add to her collection. A caftan is a long, flowy robe-type thing that women (and some men) wear in countries in the Middle East and Africa. She loved them because they were what she called “boho,” which was short for “bohemian,” which meant “usually very colorful and somewhat weird.” I guess you could say that my style was on the boho side as well. My boho-ness was more like fuchsia cotton shirts with embroidery and beads from a store called India Fashions in Queens near my grandparents’ apartment. Which was what I was wearing that day, underneath overalls, with a pair of yellow Havaianas flip-flops. I definitely had the colorful thing down.

Luckily, there was another garage sale nearby, a few blocks over on Gardenia. The town where we lived in New York had an area called the Garden District, where all the streets were named after flowers. We lived on Tulip Drive, which made sense for me, seeing that tulips were my favorite flower.

As we walked up the driveway, I could tell I had hit the jackpot. It was like craft central, with everything from easels to glue guns to a Maxwell House coffee can full of beads. I was particularly excited about the box of paintbrushes I found for two bucks. I needed brushes for Painting Pals, which was this weekly get-together at an art gallery in town on Wednesday nights that me and Lexi liked to go to. Our latest project was a painting of a dorse. When I told Mom about it, she squinted her eyes, so that her freckles scrunched up even more, and tilted her head like she always did when she was confused, because she had no idea what a dorse was. No one did, on account of the fact that Lexi and I had made it up. A dorse was an animal that had the body of a horse and the head of a dog. Lexi was better at drawing than I was, so she drew it, and I was in charge of filling it with paint because I had a steadier hand and better concentration and therefore stayed within the lines.

I pulled out my iPhone, which I had gotten from my grandparents for Christmas, so I could text Lexi and tell her.

major score @ garage sale, I typed. I wasn't a fan of capital letters, so I always typed in lowercase. Except for school stuff—then I used them. Otherwise I would have had points taken off my grade.

BARRETTES?!?!?!? Lexi immediately typed back. She was addicted to her smartphone and had it with her at all times. She even used to take it with her into the bathroom, but after she dropped it in the toilet and had to get a new one, she stopped doing that. She was also what Mom once called an “enthusiastic communicator,” which explained why she used extra punctuation and lots of caps even when she wasn't yelling. Lexi was also on a barrette kick. Unfortunately, they weren't a big garage sale item.

nope. paintbrushes! I typed, adding an excited emoji. I was a big emoji user. Sometimes when I didn't feel like doing my homework, I'd dream up new ones. Last week I was all excited because I had come up with a yoga one, which was a person sitting with her legs crossed and her eyes closed, meditating. But when I Googled “yoga emoji,” I found out someone had beat me to it. At least I knew I was on the right track.

Oh. Well, can you see if they also have BARRETTES????

already checked. negative.

Well, YOU'RE A GREAT FRIEND for checking!!!!!!!!!!

thx. gotta go. call you when i get home. I loved Lexi, but sometimes I had to cut her off. Otherwise she would want to text for hours.

As I was putting my phone back in my bag, it dinged with an e-mail. When I saw who it was from, my eyes got so wide they felt like they were being overstretched.

To: Avery Lynn

From: Matt Thompson

Matt Thompson, aka my dad. Dad wasn't a good e-mailer. Well, maybe he was, but he wasn't when it came to me. The few times I had written him on nonholidays just to say hi and tell him what was going on in my life, it had taken him an entire week to get back to me. After that I stopped trying. Since Christmas wasn't for another five months, and my birthday wasn't for another seven, the fact that he was writing to me was very weird.

I clicked it open.

Dear Avery,

I know it's been a while since I've been in touch. Sorry about that—but there has been a lot going on in my life. I have some great news—I'm moving to Connecticut for a new sales job, which means that we'll be able to see each other a lot more often. I'll only be a half hour away. And even better news—I'm getting married. Her name is Lana and she has three daughters of her own. You're all very close in age (14, 12, and 8), so you'll have a lot in common.

I know this is a lot to take in, and I really hope we can get together and talk about it. I'll be in town starting this weekend, and if you're free next Sunday, I thought we could get together for brunch then.

Dad

After I finished reading it, I plopped down onto a blue slipcovered couch.

"Sweetheart? What's wrong?" my mom asked worriedly. "You're as pale as a ghost."

Which, for someone who had olive skin like I did, didn't happen often. "It's Dad," I said, dazed. "He's . . . getting married."

My mother sighed and joined me on the couch. "He was supposed to call you and tell you," she said under her breath as she put her arm around me.

I whipped my head toward her. "Wait—you knew about this?" I asked, stunned.

She looked as guilty as the time I found her at the kitchen table eating my Halloween candy. She took a deep breath. "Yes. Yes, I did."

As she reached out to stroke my hair, I leaned back. I couldn't believe she had known about this and hadn't told me!

"He called me a week ago and let me know."

"You've known about this for a week?!" I squeaked.

"Yes," she admitted. "And while I can understand why you're upset that I didn't tell you, it really wasn't my news to tell—"

"I know you're great at keeping secrets, but you're not supposed to keep them from me!" That was another thing we didn't have in common. I was awful at keeping secrets. Especially when it came to birthday gifts. I always ended up telling the person what I got them beforehand.

"Sweetheart, I can understand why this news is upsetting—"

"I didn't say I was upset by it," I said stubbornly as I fiddled with one of the straps of my overalls. Was I upset? I didn't even know. It wasn't like I even had any memories of my mom and dad ever being together, so who cared if he married someone else?

“Especially the idea of having three new stepsisters,” she went on.

At that, I could feel tears begin to sprout from my eyes. If I am going to be honest, that part hurt a lot. I mean, my dad couldn’t have been bothered with me for ten years, but now he was going to live in a house with three girls he wasn’t even related to?

“But I think you should give your dad a chance,” she said. This time when she went to stroke my hair, I let her. “People can change, you know.”

“He wants me to go to brunch with him,” I said, wiping my eyes.

“Good. Hopefully, they’ll have pancakes wherever you go,” she replied. “You know you do your best thinking over pancakes.”

I managed a smile. Mom always knew how to make me feel better.

“Only if there’s real maple syrup,” I replied.

“Well, of course. Who could possibly eat pancakes with fake maple syrup?” she said as she drew me close and kissed the top of my head.

I might not have had much of a dad, but I had an awesome mom.

Users Review

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