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Ms. Stein

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### The Stars Weren't Supposed to Align This Way

As I arrived at my baby shower, I was immediately smothered by my parents. This was the first time seeing them in a while since they moved to Vermont. I was trying to ease the conversation onto your dad so that I could go to the table that had grabbed my attention, the food table. There were pink-decorated cupcakes, cookies, and every other dessert you could imagine. But the paisley pink cake pops from my favorite bakery is what I really wanted. As friends and family called my name, I snuck a cake pop, quickly ate it, and made my way over to greet incoming guests.

“Make lots of new friends and have fun!” “Okay Mommy, bye, I love you!” Your first day of kindergarten was so special. It was hard to admit the fact that you were growing up, just like it is for many parents. You came home and told me how great the day was and how much you loved your teacher. Moments like these made me so happy.

As time went on, we dressed you up as a princess for Halloween and celebrated your sixth birthday. You loved the pink frosting on the chocolate cake. I gave you an astronaut Barbie because all you could dream about was being an astronaut when you grow up. Always reaching for the stars and dreaming big was your life motto.

When you won the science fair in seventh grade with your model of the planets, I decided to get you a telescope. Every minute of your free time went into that telescope. I still have your journal of drawn constellations and planets that you never wanted to show me. You were always

scared to show me your achievements because you told yourself you could do better and strived to be the best. Ambition. You really are your mother's daughter.

Remember when I took you out to the bakery downtown? You got a pink cake pop and I got a coffee. As we enjoyed yummy treats, you talked to me about your friend drama and I gave you advice from when I was fifteen. "Sometimes, people hurt their friends out of jealousy. It is your job to not let it bother you or react in a negative way. Be there for your real friends who would never be able to hurt you." One thing I loved about you was your empathy for others and how you handled friendships.

"We are so proud of our class of 2023 seniors!" Graduation caps flew through the air like bees swarming a broken hive. Tears streamed down out of all of our eyes. Tears of happiness and sadness for the future that awaits. Your dad gave me a long hug, we were not ready to have you leave us, but will we ever be?

As everyone cheered, the claps faded into heart monitor beeps and the congratulations turned into "she's awake, get the doctor!" I woke up and looked around at the gloomy, dark room. Your father, squeezing my hand with tears in his eyes, looked a lot younger. "The baby didn't make it through the car crash." he choked on tears. With confusion, I looked down at my slightly smaller belly bump, and remembered the crash.

"I'm on my way, I can't wait to see everyone at the baby shower! Okay, I'll see you soon." The key turns into the ignition and I leave my house eagerly to eat pink cake pops. The cravings for them have been strong the past eight months. I already know that's going to be your favorite food. The only thing on my mind is the party as I'm merging onto the highway. Your father texts me, I know I shouldn't read it but what if something is wrong at your party? Everything needs to be perfect, so I open my phone. I click the wrong buttons a couple of times

typing in my password but eventually it is unlocked. “Your parents just arrived, let me know when you are close by. Love you!” I look up and down from my phone. “On My Way! I Lo-  
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