

Chapter 1



A ROBIN-EGG, BLUE-SKY MORNING

Risha Scott held a box of muffins and stared up at the Twin Towers. She loved visiting her mom's office at the World Trade Center. It was fun to walk through the busy, crowded plaza, with its fountain and sculpture and bright flowers. Risha loved the buzz of thousands of people, all going to work in the Twin Towers. Today she and her best friend, Max, got to spend the whole day there! They had to visit a professional workplace as part of their fifth-grade career project. Max's dad worked

downtown, too, but his office didn't allow visitors.

"I call that chocolate chip muffin!" Max said as they walked into the lobby with Risha's mom. They waited to sign in at the security desk. Then they'd take the elevators up to the ninety-first floor of the North Tower, where Risha's mother worked.

Risha yawned.

"You're not tired already, are you?" her mom asked, laughing.

"You got me up so early!" Risha said as they waited for the elevator. "But I'm not complaining. Today is going to be amazing." Risha had on her navy blue dress with Mom's pretty pink-and-purple scarf tied at her neck. Mom wore the bright purple dress Risha loved, with her cool red-framed glasses and black shoes with little bows on top. Last night, Risha and Mom had even painted their fingernails

the same color, a sparkly pale pink. Max was dressed up, too, wearing his dad's favorite red tie.

It was perfect September weather, with a robin's-egg-blue sky. On their way to the office, Max and Risha had gone with Mom to vote in the primary election for New York City's mayor. They'd walked another three blocks to pick up muffins for everyone in the office at the fancy bakery Risha loved. Now Risha and Max would get to help Mom at work all day.

"You know what's going to be amazing?" Max tapped a poster on the wall. It was about the Paul Taylor Dance Company's performance in the World Trade Center's outdoor plaza that night. After work, they planned to buy picnic food and stay to watch the show. Risha and Max had taken ballet lessons together when they were younger. Max was

still dancing, but Risha had switched to gymnastics in fourth grade.

“That’ll be you someday,” Risha said, pointing to the men on the poster. She gave Max a fist bump.

“Here we go,” Mrs. Scott said as the elevator doors opened. She worked on such a high floor that it took two elevators to get there! When they stepped off the second one, Risha led them down the hall to the office. Mom’s company worked with big transport ships to make sure they were following rules and being safe. To be honest, Risha didn’t really want to do that kind of work when she got older. She was more interested in being a gymnast and an art teacher. But missing school to spend a whole day downtown with Mom was too great a chance to pass up.

They shared the muffins, and there were a few left over. Mrs. Scott looked at her watch.

“I’m going to take a muffin down to my friend at Port Authority. You can hang out in the conference room, and I’ll be right back.”

She brought Risha and Max to a big room at least three times the size of Risha’s bedroom. It had a long table with fancy, cushy chairs that spun around. Best of all was the wall of windows that looked out toward the Empire State Building.

“Whoa!” Max said.

Risha smiled. She’d seen the view before and was excited to share it. She pulled her colored pencils and sketchbook out of her backpack. Later, she’d need to take notes for their career project, but for now, she wanted to draw the buildings outside.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes. Then I’ll introduce you to some people you can interview for your project,” Mom said, and closed the conference room door behind her.



“This rocks,” Max said. He polished off his muffin in three bites and pulled *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* from his bag.

Risha looked up from her drawing and laughed. “Haven’t you already read that like three times?”

“Gets better every time,” he said.

Risha went back to work on her drawing. A few minutes later, she heard a sound like an airplane. It got louder and louder. She looked out the window.

A plane was flying low in the sky. Too low! Risha stared as it roared past the Empire State Building.

It was heading straight toward them.