

CARINE PAQUIN

THE TRIPLE LIFE
OF CHARLIE

ROCKSTAR
AT
HEART



ÉDITIONS
MICHEL
QUINTIN

CARINE PAQUIN

Carine Paquin is a mother of two children, author, elementary and high school theater teacher, in addition to having taught elementary school for ten years. She never misses an opportunity to entertain or go on stage to give literary presentation. The author has written over forty children's books and intends to write several more.

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CHAPTER 01

I've had to overcome some major challenges in my life. The first was my birth. What? It's true, it's apparently one of the biggest childhood traumas. Luckily, I remember nothing. It happens when we go through a crisis, our memory refuses to remember. It's known as selective amnesia. Could it also be because I was just a small baby? Whatever, it doesn't matter, I was traumatised!

The second challenge I had to overcome was the death of my pet rat. I was eight years old and he died in my arms. I thought for a long time it was my fault. But recently, I read an article that said rats have a lifespan of about three years and mine was five! That's probably what bugs me the most about all this. I had nightmares about that incident for

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ages. I used to dream that a hundred limping rats with long white beards were crawling into my room at night to beat me with a stick. It was horrible!

Finally, the third great challenge is what I'm living through now. My dad is moving away for his new job and has suggested I go with him. My parents have been separated for years (I don't even remember a time when they were together), but they've always lived in the same neighbourhood. Since I was little, I could have dinner at my mom's and sleep over at my dad's on the same night. But everything will change at the end of summer, that is in two weeks exactly. My dad just got offered a job in the Magdalen Islands. An opportunity he couldn't turn down (according to him). A two-year contract that pays well and would be worth it (also according to him), and my parents have given me the choice of going with him or not. A choice I can no longer put off. I feel like I'm carrying a nuclear bomb in my backpack!

I don't want to lose my dad but I don't want to leave my mom either. I tried everything to make dad change his mind and even tried convincing my mom to move too, but nothing doing. In two weeks, Guillaume Paradis leaves for the Islands

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and Carolina Mendez stays put. And me? I, Charlie Paradis-Mendez, still don't know what I'm going to do and I'm torn, stuck in this impasse.

At first, I thought I could spend six months there and six months here, but my parents wouldn't hear of it. They told me I had to choose, because it was out of the question that I change schools in the middle of the school year.

If only I had a brother or sister to help me make a decision. But no! I'm an only child and stuck with this dilemma all alone, as usual.

— What if you made a pros and cons list?

I drop back to earth and look up. Standing in front of me is Emile, my best friend, who's dripping water on the concrete around the public pool. I was so lost in my thoughts that I have no idea as to what he's referring. I raise an eyebrow, as I always do when I'm confused and ask:

— What are you talking about?

Emile grabs his towel, dabs his long hair with it, and then wraps it around his waist as he explains his idea.

— To help you decide whether to live with your dad or mom. You just have to make a list of pros and cons. You go with whichever has the most pros.

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Emile is the perfect imperfect best friend. He's extravagant, funny, a good listener, eccentric, protective and sometimes pretentious. Basically, he's like a brother, but without the downside of being around twenty four seven.

I tease him:

— Wow! What an original idea ... Why did I never think of that? I've already made a list, you know.

I rummage in my backpack and pull out a slip of paper that I put in my friend's damp, shrivelled hands.

Emile grabs the paper, and before looking at it, says to me:

— Ok, I'll look over this list and then you have to come for a swim. You've been thinking this over since school ended. So I'll make the decision for you and then we'll be done with it!

— What?

— You understood correctly, I'll read the list, decide for you, and then, we'll enjoy the rest of our holidays.

I stare at Emile. I don't know if I'm ready to leave a decision this important in his hands. On the one hand, I'm incapable of deciding. My best friend knows me better than anyone, he's no doubt the best person

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to help me figure this out. I take a deep breath and raise a fist. Emile fist bumps me. It's our way of agreeing on something.

He unfolds the sheet.

* Advantages of staying with mom *

1. Stay at the same school
2. Don't leave Emile
3. Keep my friends
4. Be with mom
5. Keep playing in the school band

* Advantages of going with dad *

1. Live a new adventure
2. Have a bigger house
3. Make new friends
4. I get along better with dad
5. Discover life on the Islands
(which, I've been told, is extra!)
6. No longer have to deal with my stepdad

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Emile looks over my list for several minutes, concentrating. He breathes in deeply, closes his eyes and says:

— You're going with your dad.

For several seconds, my heart stops beating and my lungs contract. He actually said, "You're going with your dad?" It's true that I'm excited about this adventure, but on the other hand, I'm afraid to leave my life here, and move away from Emile and all my friends at school.

Tears of relief, fear, anxiety and joy roll down my cheeks ... Basically, for a lot of reasons, I start crying. I jump into my friend's arms and declare:

— I'll miss you so much!

— We'll call each other every night, and you'll come visit me at Christmas. And over March break!

— For sure!

— And at Easter too!

— Yes, yes, at Easter too.

I cry and laugh at the same time, then realize that I'm at the public pool, not really the best place to express my feelings. I compose myself, make straight for the pool and dive in quickly to join my friends Maxyme and Eve, who are practising turns underwater.

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Emile drops his towel and jumps in with us, yelling:
CANNONBALL!!!

Normally, we get told off when we do cannonballs, but today, Emile's cousin is lifeguarding at the pool, so he just gives us a stern look. We laugh. I'm determined to enjoy my last days of summer to the fullest.

In the water, Emile continues our discussion:

— It could be worse, you know.

— How could it be worse?

— Imagine if your mom had wanted to go back to Mexico!

Maxyme, who's swimming towards us, says:

— WHAT, CHARLIE?! You're moving to Mexico? Eve almost chokes on some pool water and moves in closer, intrigued.

— No, no, I'm not moving to Mexico.

Maxyme sighs with relief.

— Ah, I thought your mom was trying to get you to move there.

— Ha! Ha! No. My mom's the last person who'd leave Quebec.

Eve says:

— You never know, sometimes the need to return to our roots is stronger than everything else.

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— Stop talking nonsense! My mom's as likely to move to Mexico as your parents are to China.

Maxyme grumbles:

— As if, my parents aren't Chinese.

— I know, that's why I said it. In any case, my grandparents would never let her go. They never stop talking about how much they love Quebec and how they'll never regret coming here. I've just decided to move to the Magdalen Islands with my dad.

Eve rolls her eyes.

— AH! Ok.

Then she realizes what I've just said.

— WAIT! WHAT?

Maxyme adds:

— Just like that? You've made your decision?

Emile laughs as he says:

— Let's say I helped a little, but I'm sure it's the right choice!

I'm overwhelmed by all the emotions this discussion is bringing up and decide to put an end to it.

— Emile's right, it'll be awesome there!

I dive underwater and tug at my friend's foot to get him to join me. At least at the bottom of the pool, no one can ask me any questions without suffocating!



CHAPTER 02

After enjoying the pool all afternoon, we all head home. Maxyme and Eve take off on their bikes while Emile and I walk. A long trail of water runs down my friend's back because his hair is soaked. My hair is short and already almost dry. Emile doesn't want to cut his hair. I think the last time he did was when he was nine and now he loves wearing his long mane in many different styles.

While we walk, I notice my friend's face is as red as a tomato. I burst out laughing.

- Did you wear sunscreen?
- Yes, why?
- You look like a lobster!

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Emile mimes a pair of pincers and says in a loud voice:

— It's a little preview of the Magdalen Islands!

I laugh hard.

— But for real, am I that red?

— Yes, really!

— It's easy for you to laugh, Ms "I'm tanned all year long!"

I roll my eyes. Emile has always envied my exotic complexion, and I ...well to be honest, I don't envy anyone anything! If I could remake myself, I think I'd choose to be exactly as I am: round face, wavy brown hair, black almond-shaped eyes, brown skin, short but not too short. Maybe I'd add a small beauty spot just above my lip, I think it'd give me an air of mystery! Everyone says I look like my mother, and I like that! Now, I'm not saying that I'm perfect, not at all, it's just that instead of having any other face, I'd rather have my own because it suits me just fine!

We stop at a dep to grab a slushie. While I pour mine, Emile browses the magazine section. As I'm paying, he drops a magazine on the counter and tells the cashier:

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— I'll take this too!

I look at the flashy title : "Quiz Edition". Emile is crazy for quizzes. We can spend whole evenings answering them.

As we exit the dep, he says proudly:

— Look at this!

He points to a quiz headline: "Will your move make you cray-cray or crazy happy?"

— Wow! It's like this quiz was written for me.

— I know! That's why I bought the magazine.

— Ok, go ahead and ask me the questions.

Wait ...

I rummage in my bag.

— Here, use my pencil.

While we walk, Emile asks me questions and circles my answers one by one. Some aren't that easy. I would choose two options at once, but I can't.

*Will your move
make you cray-cray
or crazy happy?*

1. Did you agree to this move?

- a. Yes.
- b. I was neither for nor against it.
- c. No.
- d. I didn't even know I was moving until the moving truck pulled up.

2. For you, moving is an opportunity to:

- a. Make new friends.
- b. Makeover your bedroom.
- c. Clean out your drawers.
- d. Be depressed for a good reason.

3. What's the first thing you plan on doing in your new home?

- a. Explore the neighbourhood.
- b. Set up my bedroom just the way I like it.
- c. Take photos to share with my friends.
- d. Text my friends in tears.

4. Where are you moving?

- a. To another neighbourhood.
- b. To another city or region.
- c. To another country.
- d. To another planet.

5. Do you have ideas on how to decorate your room?

- a. Tons! You never stop thinking about it.
- b. Yes, some, but it'll be easier to imagine once I'm there.
- c. Yes, you'll set it up exactly as it is now.
- d. No, you're just not in that headspace.

6. When you think about your move, how do you feel?

- a. Excited.
- b. Nervous.
- c. Stressed out.
- d. Depressed.

7. What do you know about where you're moving?

- a. It's the perfect place with lots of things to do.
- b. It's nice, safe, and fun.
- c. I don't know, I haven't taken the time to find out.
- d. It's too far away.

8. Will you be able to see your friends again?

- a. Yes, on every vacation.
- b. Sometimes.
- c. Rarely.
- d. NO! I'm never coming back!!!!!!



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After trying my best to give an honest answer to each question, I watch Emile tally my answers.

1. C: No.
2. A: Make new friends.
3. C: Take photos to share with my friends.
4. B: To another city or region.
5. D: No, you're just not in that headspace.
6. B: Nervous.
7. D: It's too far away.
8. A: Yes, on every vacation.

— Oh no! That's annoying!!!

I tear the magazine from Emile's hands.

— What? Don't tell me I won't survive my move!

Emile takes back the magazine.

— No, it's worse than that ... You've got an equal number of each letter!

— WHAT??? Are you kidding me?

— No!! I'm telling you, you have two answers in each category.

— That's SO annoying!

— I know!!! That's what I said.

I take back the magazine and look over all the

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possible options. I no longer know what to think ...
I read each result out loud.



You answered mostly A

It's a fact, this move will make you crazy happy, because it's the best thing that could happen to you. It's clear this will be nothing but a positive experience! Don't forget to pack your breakables carefully and enjoy your move!

You answered mostly B

Moving is stressful so it's normal to be nervous. Fear not, your positive outlook will help you adapt to this change and no matter what happens, you won't go cray cray.

You answered mostly C

You might feel like you're losing your mind at first. Your move will not be an easy time for you, but after several days (or several weeks perhaps), you'll finally feel at home. Don't hesitate to discuss your fears with someone you trust. That could help ease your mind.

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You answered mostly D

The instant you arrive in your new home, seek out the number of your nearest therapist.

You're going to need it. Also make plans to buy a big hat, because you could be the next Madhatter in Alice in Wonderland. Good luck!



— So what ... Should I be looking for a therapist or not?

Emile shrugs. I slap the magazine against his belly.

— Your quiz didn't help me at all. Just the opposite!

Emile bursts out laughing.

— It's not my fault!! It's a quiz. "Will you be friends for life?" We can do that one if you like. Personally, I don't mind if my best friend's a little cray cray.

Emile cracks up.

We've reached my dad's and the aroma of BBQ calls me in.

— Ha! Ha! Very funny! Another time maybe. I have


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to think about how I'm going to tell my parents about my decision.

— Do you think your mom will feel bad?

— I hope so!!!

Emile and I part, still laughing. Humour has always been my way of dealing with challenges.



*My name is
Charlie Paradis-Mendez
and I love playing
the drums.*

I say play, but for me, it's much more than a game: it's my passion. My dream has always been to play in a band. This summer, when I decided to move to the Magdalen Islands with my father, I was not expecting an opportunity to finally present itself.

As soon as I got there, I learned that The Rogues, a band from a neighbouring village, was looking for a new drummer. But there is just a small catch. The group only accepts boys for an audition. Sexist much? Whatever! I'm going to pose as one of the boys during the tryout. Only after they see what I'm capable of and accept me into the band will I tell them the truth.