

“The girl who has everything”...I snorted to myself “As if”. But still, for some reason the words stung. “The girl who has everything”. Too tired to pretend not to care, I sat down and began to cry. Maybe it was time to let go of the pretense that everything was just fine and simply let reality come crashing through my crumbling barricade. Nine years together, being the follower, the one who did whatever she said. Nine years of being frightened to go meet anyone else for fear of the scorn you’d receive from her. From the day her family had moved in next door, my entire life had changed. Goodbye paper dolls and tea parties, hello life of wild games and troublesome scrapes, days full of adventure and dare. This in itself would be fine with me, had it not been accompanied with goodbye to old friends and hello to days or unreadable diary entries, entire sections blotted with tears.

It all started one Saturday at the breakfast table. The baby of three, ten years old, and by far the most awkward and gawky of the family, my morning breakfast routine usually consisted on my hiding behind my wild red frizz in silence contemplating the mounds of scrambled eggs my mother enjoyed piling on my plate and reading whatever fairytale novels I could get my hands on. But that morning, my mother had other plans.

“Julie, Shayla,” she said, looking in turn at me and my elder sister. “Have either of you two gone to welcome the new family that moved in the other day?” She looked at both of us in turn, giving us each a piercing stare. When we replied negatively, she forged ahead. “Well I did.” I looked at her, implying she should go on, and Julie, less patient, really just wanting to get back to the discussion she was having with Jamie about what she should wear that day sighed. “Aaand...?” She stretched out the word, making it sound like a question. My mother took this as permission to go ahead and proceeded exuberantly, filling us in on the details. The parents were recently divorced—apparently some kind of hectic split filled with lawsuits and drama, the two boys staying with heir father in California while the girl lived with her mother here in Springfield, Virginia. How my mother found this all out in just a single visit, I never knew, but that was mom: making sure everyone felt welcome, but never allowing secrets to come between anybody; if anything made my mother happy, it was to be able to “unburden some poor soul” (her words, not mine) and then let us know all about it. She went on about the messy affair for some time before finally, just as I was really wondering how any of this concerned the two of us, she got to her point. Pausing, she took a sip of orange juice, and looked at us. “There’s a daughter, ten or eleven,” she said. I looked up, suddenly interested. Though the girls at my

school were nice enough, there was nothing better than having a best friend who lives thirty seconds away. Hopeful for a new friend, I stopped puching the eggs on my plate into mounds, instead motioning with my fork that she should continue. “Therese.” She said. “A bit odd, a silent girl, but I’m sure she’s nice. You two will go over and visit today.” Eighteen, and safe from having to bear the awkward introductions, Jamie snickered. Julie, fifteen, but pretty enough to be older, with stunning green eyes and blonde, cascading hair that reached her waist, groaned and began to protest, nothing new these days.

“Mooooomm,” she groaned, “It’s no fair! Jamie doesn’t have to go, and I’m only a little younger! She’s just a little girl! Let Shay go,,they’re the same age anyways.” She paused, giving mom her legendary puppy dog eyes, outlined in what I considered to be too much makeup. “Pleeaase?” Mom, not wanting to argue, soon agreed, and after a brief discussion she turned to me. “That leaves you, sweetie,” she said. “Go be a good girl...make her feel welcome”

Thirty minutes later, I awkwardly made my way to the house next door, and, knocking on the glass window pane, opened the door. A girl my age, maybe a little older, bounced up, her hair in long blonde pigtails, flip-flops on her feet, and a Band-Aid on her knee. My very first thought when I saw her was “...She can run in flip-flops! I thought only I could run in flip-flops!”

Before I could articulate this into a sentence, or worse, blurt out something awkward about her parent’s recent split, she leaned in and whispered in my ear. “Come on,” she said, taking my hand in hers. “We’re off on an adventure.” Too shocked to protest, I went along, and soon found myself having the time of my life. From that day on our adventures began, climbing through the backyards, over fences, under trees. I don’t like to think how many rules we broke, and can’t even describe the amount of fun we had. That was the summer our friendship began, changing my life forever. All went well, as long as I was contented to do as she said, playing her faithful (albeit boring) servant, as she rode around on her imaginary steed rescuing damsels in distress, covering for her whenever she disobeyed her parents. But if I ever dared to play with someone else, and old friend, or timidly ask why *I* couldn’t be the hero, I would receive a harsh word, a look of utter disdain, or worse, a look that portrayed any feeling of hurt she might feel at my “deserting her”. That was the worst. I would retreat into my shell for days to come, and then spend weeks trying to get her to talk to me. And so it went, day after day, year after year. Slowly, other friends drifted away, and I became solely dependent on her, never even thinking there could be a life without Therese, or, as she preferred to be called, “Reece”. Nine years,

pretending it didn't hurt me to see others drifting away, joining clubs, making new friends and moving on.

But this year was going to be different. Reece and I had just moved to The Big Apple, sharing an apartment; her to pursue her modeling career, myself starting at NYU to try for the theatrical arts. I had been originally accepted last year, but since Reece had taken an extra year to finish high school, I had stuck around for a year. We shared an apartment for about six months, the drama slowly brewing up; she wasn't making enough money modeling, leaving me with the big end of the rent, but if I ever dared mention it, she'd give me one of those looks and make me feel like the most evil person on the face of the Earth. And so it went, me creeping around the matter, her reigning as queen over our small SoHo apartment. It finally got to the point where I either confronted her, or turned to my parents for money, something I was determined not to do.

"So um...Reece?" I began hesitantly. No, that wasn't any good, I had to be strong. "Reece" I repeated, this time with a little more force.

"Mmm?" she replied, simultaneously talking to me, texting, and flipping through an old copy of *Seventeen*.

"Reece!" I shouted this time, not meaning to, and she looked up in surprise.

"What?" She looked at me again and then sighed. "It's not about that rent thingy again, is it? I told you I didn't want to talk about it."

Pathetically, I quailed, and mumbled something about asking my parents to help out.

For some reason this got to her, and she began to rant, her voice angry "That's right, ask your parents. Go to your little family that loves you so much, that'll give you want you want, help you if you need. You, their little NYU prodigy child, so smart, so genius, so gifted...though I can't see anyone hiring you," she added this last part with a little sneer. "How would you know about losing your job because..." here she spoke in a high pitched mimicking voice "dahling...you're cheekbones are lovely, but it's your attitude I can live without." Suddenly she stopped, and a cold glint crept into her eye "No, that's right, you wouldn't. No, not you, *the girl who has everything*." With this she had turned on her heel and stormed away, leaving me to repent over my ways.

~At a coffee shop 2 weeks later~

“Look Shay, I’m sorry. I got carried away and lost it, ‘kay? I was stressed out. Now come on and help me with this crap”—here she gestured to the modeling agent applications scattered on our table—“come back.” She silently looked at me, her piercing blue eyes ringed in a smoky shadow and heavy mascara, silently daring me to disagree. I silently stared back, considering my options. I could move back into the apartment, let life go on as it had for the past nine years, her dominating nature overpowering my less exuberant one...or...or this could be my chance—break free from the reins that had held me tight for so long, and do something worthwhile with my life. But what if I left and realized that she was right, no one wanted me, and it turned out I was worthless? Then what? I’d just end up coming crawling back...why not spare her the trouble, and myself the embarrassment. But just as I was about to speak, something happened. Compelled to look up, I met Reece’s eyes and saw a familiar look, one that I knew well. Reece knew she had won and was already gloating over her victory. Something inside me snapped then, that desire to be free, to get away from this self-absorbed, controlling girl who had posed as my friend for the past nine years. Reece seemed to know what was going on in my mind somehow, and she looked turned from one of malicious glee to one of shock, then anger.

“You’ll never make it!” she shouted, startling the man next to us eating a croissant.

“You’ll ever amount to anything you backstabbing, conniving little---”

I walked away before she could finish the sentence, leaving her standing in the middle of Fanelli's on Prince St.

And what if I did stumble on my newly chosen path, or experience moments regret along the way? Well, Reece was right about one thing, I *did* have a family who loved me, who would be there for me when I needed them. Whether the problem was a minor one, a moment of self-doubt, or something bigger, like missing the girl who had been my world, supporting or no, for the past nine years of my life. So no, I wasn’t the girl who had everything, but I was a girl who had something. Something great.

