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Middle/High School in One Story

It’s the summer before senior year and my dearest friend, Spence, is throwing a party to kick off our senior year and start it off with a bang. We are at an older house. The houses in this neighborhood are more spread out from each other and have very long, hilly driveways. Trees surround all the houses that you can barely see them from the street.

“I hate my dad because he almost didn’t let me come out tonight. He’s so annoying,” says one of the girls that came outside.

Only minutes ago, I came outside to get fresh air with one of my best friends, Alyssa. My first encounter with Alyssa was sophomore year in Spanish class. We had to be partners for a project.

“Everyone else is taken so would you want to be partners with me?” I say to Alyssa while everyone around us plans out their storyboards for their videos.

“Ummm.. \*slight pause\* Yeah I guess.”

“Okay, great! We can video at my house BUT we can also do yours if you want. Whatever works for me. What do you want to do?” I say nervously.

“We’ll just do it at your house. That’s fine. Just text me what time. \*class bell rings and Alyssa walks out\*”

Then others chime in and say how their dads are so uptight and overprotective, and that rubs me the wrong way. All my life I have been without a dad so I hate when my friends do not appreciate having both of their parents. The girls go back inside where the music is playing extremely loud and I make a comment to Alyssa.

“Why are they so insensitive sometimes?” I say to Alyssa.

“What do you mean?”

“Just how they can sit there and bash on their parents the whole time yet they still have both parents. I understand budding heads with your parents or getting into a fight with them but saying you hate them? I would love for them to try and live without one of them, it is not easy.”

Alyssa then says something to me that I never knew about, “Trust me Kylie I know. My parents are divorced and they absolutely despise each other. They can’t even be in the same room without acting like teenagers. It is so hard and I know how you feel and am always here to talk about it with you because you are the only person who can truly understand.”

I interrupt and say “Where we live everyone is so privileged and there’s not really many separated families. Also, there is not a lot of colored people in Woodstock which affects me the most I would say”

I start to tell Alyssa my experience when I first moved here which was probably one of the hardest times of my life.

“So when I first moved here from Florida in seventh grade it was a huge change. As you know, where I came from there are so many different races and cultures so I felt like everyone else. But, moving here I did not feel that I belonged. I was one of the TWO mixed girls in our middle school, and one of the very few colored people so I got bullied quite a bit.”

 “You know Adam was the main person who picked on me?”

“No way!”

“Yeah, he would call me “bozo the clown” and pull my hair all the time and now he is one of my best friends, how funny.”

I continue on with saying how all of this took a toll on my emotions for a while because the jokes didn’t stop there.

“I would try to keep a smile on my face, but people constantly had things to say about my hair or the way I looked.”

 Up until this point, I had never told anyone the actual reason on why I started straightening my hair. I explain to Alyssa how I had a treatment done to make my hair straighter.

“Yeah, I straightened my hair for three years and it was all because I wanted to look like all of the white girls with the pin straight hair and wanted to rid of my big, curly, and frizzy hair.”

“Kylie I cannot believe this right now. I remember you being in my seventh grade math class and I thought your hair was so cool. I even remember telling you that I liked it.”

“Haha, I remember that too, but I guess one appraisal just want enough for me.”

Alyssa says, “Well, if we were better friends back then, I would’ve been there for you and not have made you feel like you were a lesser person just because of your skin color or your hair.”

“While I looked like every other girl when my hair was straight, I wasn’t being myself. I am so glad I have learned to love the way I look and my HUGE curls, haha. It is so interesting to see how much positive attention I receive for my hair now. Other girls tell me all the time how beautiful my curls are and how they want my hair,” I say to Alyssa.

“I tell you how I am obsessed with your hair everyday Kylie.”

“Yes, I know. I love it now but a couple years ago; not so much.”

I explain to Alyssa how I have learned about self-love and having individuality.

“When I was younger, I saw my appearance as negative. As you can tell from my story, I did not like anything about myself because it made me stand out. Now that I’m older, I understand to embrace my image because I should want to have my own unique look and make a statement for myself.”

 In the moment, Alyssa helped me feel safe and more comfortable in our town. She related with me on not having the best father figure and made me realize that I was not alone. I have great people around me that do truly love me and always want me to be myself. They helped me find my place in our “not-always-accepting” town.