

Bella's Journey

"It's not really a topic up for debate. We're moving this weekend, and you all start school on Monday. Don't worry about us, we both have jobs and we've already put a down payment on a house in the middle of town." My mom had a way of speaking that made me nauseous. So condescending, so horrible. I looked around the room to my two siblings. Jordan, my older brother gave me a look before standing up to walk to his bedroom across from mine. My sister Cori did the same, so I decided to follow them and started packing my things for the second time that year. I packed all I could pack before eventually passing out for the last time in this room. The next morning I woke up around nine a.m. to finish packing and to load everything into the truck my dad rented. The rest of the day was a sweaty, hot blur. We drove for almost two hours before finally pulling up to a two story house with brick detailing and a nice looking yard. I looked around the house before I picked a room, and began bringing all my belongings to my new bedroom. The living room was big and open, with lots of windows and natural light. The kitchen had a big island in the middle with granite countertops. There were five bedrooms upstairs, along with three bathrooms. I chose the room across the hall from Cori. The room had white walls with a big walk in closet. By the time I was done putting everything away, I decided to sleep for the first time in my new room. The next day I slept in, but when I woke up I got ready for school the next day by showering and getting organized.

The next morning I woke up to my alarm and sun in my eyes. I got ready for school within an hour, and got a ride with Cori and Jordan. Cori's the senior, Jordan's the junior and I'm the sophomore. We parked and got out of the car, receiving every sort of look you could imagine. Cori is gorgeous and drives an amazing car, Jordan has always had girls swooning over him, and I was always the awkward younger sibling. Maybe this school would be different.

We walked into the school, glancing at everyone around us. We went to the office to get our schedules and went ahead to our classes. When I found mine, I walked in and immediately saw the empty desk where I would inevitably sit. Next to the desk was a pretty girl with brown hair, a big sweater and boots on. The teacher, Mrs. Trogon was an older lady with a raspy smoker's voice. She told me to go sit at the empty desk next to Lauren, who I figured was the pretty brunette girl. I sat down and put my things on the desk in front of me, and looked over to find the girl looking back at me. "Hey, what's your name?" she asked me with her eyebrows raised. "Um, I'm Bella. You're Lauren?" "Yep! That's me. Made any friends here yet?" "Well no. You're actually the first person who's talked to me today besides staff." I looked down at my desk, trying to avoid her gaze. "Well hang out with me over lunch!" I looked back up at her, trying to think of something to say. "Okay. Sure." "Great! Here's my number and my Snapchat so you can hit me up when lunch comes. We can meet in the back parking lot!" She wrote down her information, talking and smiling the whole time. The rest of the class was silent while we learned about shapes, or lines, or something. I had three more periods before getting to lunch, but nobody was as decent as Lauren. As the lunch bell rang I dashed out of the classroom and made my way to the back parking lot. When I finally reached the door, I saw Lauren sitting outside on a bench talking to another girl with blonde hair and all black clothes. I slowly walked up to the two girls, and was greeted obnoxiously by Lauren. "Hey Bella! Come here! This is my friend Alana. We're waiting for my boyfriend and her brother to come pick us up!" I stood there looking at them, thinking of something cool to say for my first impression. "Okay, hey. What are we gonna do?" I asked, worried. "We're just gonna drive around," Alana finally spoke up. At that moment, a grey Chevy car pulled up next to us, complete with a tire squeal. Lauren popped the backdoor open and climbed in, and Alana followed. I hesitated before following the two girls and sitting on the passenger side of the car. There was a boy with long brown hair and glasses

sitting in the passenger seat, with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. The boy driving had a buzzcut and also had a cigarette hanging from his mouth. "Bella, this is my boyfriend, Matt driving. That's Alana's brother, Tommy. Do you want a cigarette?" I didn't want to seem lame to my new acquaintances, so I took a cigarette and pressed it up against my lips and lit it within a few seconds. I focused on what I was doing, how to breathe and how to inhale. I forgot to pay attention to the people surrounding me. After a few minutes of driving we were on a gravel road. I looked out the window and zoned the other conversations out. Soon, the cigarette was snatched out of my hand by Lauren, and I suddenly remembered where I was. I felt light headed and nauseous and I didn't know why. Everyone was looking at me with their eyebrows raised, like they were waiting for me to say something. "Um, what's up?" I asked sheepishly. "We asked if you care if we smoke," Alana rolled her eyes at me. "Smoke...what?" I asked. Everyone laughed, and they all yelled their answer of weed. I wasn't sure what to say or do so I just said the first sentence I could form. "Oh, no. I don't mind." I turned my head back towards the window. "Well, you don't want to smoke with us?" Lauren was giving me a horrible look, in my mind she was saying, *'Come on! Don't be so lame!'* "I never have before. And I gotta get back to school soon." Everyone else in the car laughed and groaned at me. I just looked right back out the window and ignored them. Soon enough we were back to school, and nobody bothered to say anything to me for the rest of the car ride. Lauren and Alana got out of the car and walked right past me without saying a word. The rest of the day was an anxious blur. I was so happy to finally see my brother and sister in the parking lot after the final bell rang. I jogged over to the car, got in, and made Cori get out of there. We finally made it home. I immediately went to my room, hoped for a better day tomorrow and fell asleep.

The next few days at school ran together. I got dirty looks from Lauren and her friends, nobody talked to me, and I ate lunch alone. One day, I decided enough was enough and I

messed Lauren in class. Looking at her just made me want to be friends with her. She looked at her phone, looked back at me and put her phone away. I was discouraged but accepted it. Again, the next couple of days ran together. I was doing well in school, but having no friends was seriously taking its toll on me. One random Tuesday, I walked into my first period class and sat down as usual. The first half hour or so was normal and quiet until I felt my phone vibrate in my back pocket. I grabbed it and saw that I had a message from Lauren. I looked up at her to find her looking back. The message read, "I'm sorry, I'm ready to be friends with you. Hang after school?" I sent her back a simple reply, "Sure." The rest of the day dragged on while I waited anxiously to see what Lauren had in store for us. At the end of the day I found her in the hallway and we started walking towards the back parking lot. I figured we would wait for her boyfriend to pick us up, but we kept walking down the street. She was mostly silent besides asking me if I had ever been to the town's skate park, to which I replied no. I finally saw the skate park in view, and we stopped when we reached the stairs leading up to the ramps. She sat down and started digging around in her backpack for a few seconds, and pulled out a bag and papers and started rolling something into a paper, which I assumed was weed. My parents always preached to us that, *'If you ever want to try a drug, try marijuana. No further.'* I figured what I was about to do wasn't what I wanted to do but not necessarily wrong. She finished rolling it and lit it in her mouth and passed it to me, and that was that. More people began showing up, all saying hi to Lauren, asking her who I was, asking if they could 'hit the joint', which I assumed was what she was smoking. I was really clueless to this type of thing. Time started going by slower and slower, but before I knew it, I was already at home in bed on the verge of passing out for a wonderful night of sleep. Before I inevitably fell asleep, I said to myself, *'I can't make this a habit.'*

The next few weeks I hung out with Lauren and her friends more and more at the skate park. She introduced me to so many people that names began to melt together in my brain, or

maybe that was from the activities I found myself sucked into. Everyone in her group had a drug problem of some sort. One was addicted to pain pills, another addicted to cocaine, another addicted to both and then some, and even more people were experimenting. I was one of those people who were 'experimenting'. When I say experimenting, I mean having drugs forced upon me. At this point I thought having toxic friends with bad habits would be better than being lonely, so I did whatever I could to hang out with them. I saw more drugs in two weeks than I had ever seen in my life. There was this guilty voice in the back of my head asking me what my parents would do if they found out I was getting so strung out with these people they had always warned me about, but I kept going in fear of being alone or made fun of again. I agreed to anything and everything. I got in trouble with teachers and peers. I was becoming something I didn't wish on my worst enemy. One morning I woke up on Lauren's bedroom floor with Alana and Lauren next to me, and an empty bed. I looked at the clock and it was nine a.m. on a Wednesday. I shook both of them to wake them up so we could make it to school. They convinced me not to worry. They skip all the time, and we could head to the skate park soon to hang out with Jaden and Matt, two guys I've learned to hate in the last few weeks. I protested that idea and headed home instead of school. I walked all three miles in the horrible wind but I didn't care. I was tired of how I was living and who I was hanging out with. I had fallen behind in school and was rarely ever home. I reached my house and noticed Cori's car in the driveway, so I ran inside and to her room as fast I could. I walked right into her room and found her sitting up on her bed reading a book. She asked me three things; What are you doing? Why are you here? Why do you look so horrible? I finally broke down and told her everything. I told her about Lauren and Alana, I told her about the skate park, I told her about the drugs, I told her about the trouble I've been getting into and I told her about how I was falling behind in school. She was speechless. All she could say was, "We have to tell mom and dad." I hated that idea with a passion, but it's what needed

to happen. Cori and I stayed in her bed all day. She helped me when I felt sick, and for the first time I had experienced withdrawals. Finally after hours we heard the front door open and two people walk in. Cori marched downstairs and brought mom back with her to see how horrible I looked, and I had to tell her everything. She ordered me to get in the car and she took me to the hospital, because she thought it would help me detox.

I ended up staying at the hospital for almost a month. I had detoxed quickly, but my parents wanted me on suicide watch. I had no reason to kill myself and I definitely didn't want to, so I didn't understand why they wanted someone to watch me. However, I'm glad they did it for one reason. I would've went back to school, and kept doing exactly what I was doing. They put me in online school, and gave me the choice to keep doing that after being discharged or go back to the high school. I decided to just keep going on my path with online school, free of drugs, bad influences, and distractions.