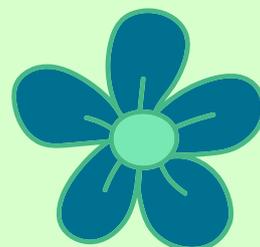


Wildflower Post

Newsletter



TODAY'S WRITER

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Reese Dankanich is a high-school student from Downingtown, Pennsylvania. Reese has played travel volleyball for four years and is on the JV team for Downingtown East. When she isn't baking cookies or using up her mom's Starbucks gift cards, you can find Reese watching Penn State, the Eagles, and the Phillies.

**WARNING: MENTIONS OF
DEATH AND ABUSE**

Say You Promise

REESE DANKANICH

I remember my heart dropping to my stomach. My feet losing touch of the ground. My eyes going black.

Everything was lost.

When I woke up, I was in a hospital bed, so many wires stuck to me. It felt just like waking up from a long nap. I heard a yell. “She’s awake!”

I ripped off the endless maze of cords and ran out of the room, my pounding head telling me to do otherwise. I screamed at my mother, “Why do you care about me? Lyn’s the one you should be wasting your time on. What’s a little panic attack compared to a dead daughter?” My knees buckled from the pressure of my own weight, sending me crashing to the floor.

My mother looked down at me with sad eyes. “Hollie, you were in a coma for eleven days. You’re lucky to be alive. I thought I had lost both you and Linnie.”

Lyn had always hated when Mom called her Linnie because she thought it was too babyish. Now there’s no one to stop her.

“How is that even possible? I feel fine,” I lied as my breath quickened.

“When you found out about Linnie you passed out and hit your head on the china case at home. You’ve been at the hospital ever since.” Oh no. Not the china case. Mom loved the china case with her entire heart. And so did Lyn.

“Did I break it, Mom?” I looked up at her with teary eyes.

She hesitates. “Yes honey.”

Mommy, can we get the pink one? It’s my turn to pick!” I cried.

“No way,” said Lyn. “We’re getting the blue one because I’m the oldest!”

I stomped my little eight-year-old feet. “That’s not fair! You’re only older by two minutes.”

“That still makes me older!”

“Girls, we only have enough right now for one set, so you’re going to have to figure this out yourselves,” Mom sighed.

“Pink!”

“Blue!”

“Pink!”

“Hollie, do you really want the pink one?” Lyn asked.

I jumped up and down. “Yeah I really really do!”

“Well...I guess this time we can get the pink one, but when we come back, we’re getting the blue china,” Lyn sighed.

“Thank you Linnie! I promise we’ll get the blue one next time.”

We never came back to the little boutique filled with china after that.

Me and Mom left the hospital after checking out at the front desk. We took Mom’s old Honda back to the house, the one with the vanity plate with HOL-LYN on it. Lyn was always mad that my name came first.

When we got back to the old house with the red front door, it felt like the first time I’d been home in ages. My mom tucked me in, just like when me and Lyn were kids. I miss talking through the thin walls to each other and Mom yelling to go to bed. We talked about so much. We talked about everything.

“Hollie?”

“Linnie?”

“I told you to stop calling me Linnie, it’s too babyish.”

“Eighth grade isn’t that old, you know.”

Silence.

“Is this about Peyton?”

Silence again.

“Look I know you were best friends, but that doesn’t mean she can do that to you. No one should do that to anyone.”

“Hollie, you don’t get it.”

“I don’t need to get it, she embarrassed you in front of everyone. Tomorrow she’ll be sorry.”

“Hollie.”

“Lyn.”

I never did do anything to stupid Peyton Jones. Stupid Peyton, Lyn’s best friend for six years, told everyone how she was getting bullied by Lyn. She claimed there were death threats, violent texts, all of it. Everyone believed Peyton. That was back when Lyn was one of the most looked-up-to girls in the school. Everyone admired her. Everyone wanted to be her. Then everything changed. Lyn became quieter. Smarter.

Maybe it was for the better. Lyn went away to a private school for all her high school years. Longview High would have slowed her down, anyway.

“Honey, can you come down here?” Mom called up. I rolled over in my bed and stared at the clock. It read 2:09 PM.

I trudged down the stairs, not bothering to brush my hair or put on fresh clothes. “Are you hungry?” She asked, holding a plate of her famous pancakes.

“Not really.” That was a lie. I’d barely eaten since Lyn died.

“Not even any fruit? I bought some strawberries from Jones’s Farms.” Strawberries from Jones’s were Lyn’s favorite. Up until the Peyton thing.

“Really Mom, I’m good.”

She hesitated. “I’ve also got some other news.” Mom sighed. *This cannot be good.* “You’re supposed to inherit all of Linnie’s old stuff because, well, she didn’t have a will because she was only twenty. So, everything in Linnie’s room belongs to you now.” I didn’t really want a reminder of Lyn’s death, I just wanted to get my memory erased and never think about it again. Never think about any memories of Lyn ever again. “And one last thing,” Mom said hesitantly. “Your father is coming back for your twenty-first birthday tomorrow.”

“Say cheese!” Mom exclaimed.

It was our thirteenth birthday. The day when we were supposed to finally feel older, more mature than before. June 9 was always one of my favorite days because me and Lyn got to spend all day together. Right after school lets out for the summer. It’s perfect.

Lyn’s face crumpled. “Mom, where’s Dad?”

“Oh, he’s just picking up something extra special for your birthday, but he’ll be back in a jiffy.”

Me and Lyn thought nothing of it. After all, it was our birthday, and Dad liked to pick up a cake every year from MJ Cakes. I hoped it was a vanilla cake this year.

About an hour later, Mom started to panic. Dad still wasn’t home and wasn’t answering his phone.

“What if he got in a car accident? What if he got lost?” I panicked. Which made no sense, because every occasion that required a special dessert, Dad went to MJ Cakes.

Lyn's head shot up from where it was laying face down in her arms. "Mom, use the tracker app on your phone!" Mom had made Dad install a tracker app on his phone so in case he ever got lost (which was quite frequently), Mom could know where he was to pick him up.

"Great idea, Linnie!" Mom opened the app on her phone. She frowned.

"Is he still at MJ Cakes?" I asked.

"No...he's at a house. Two hours from here." Mom closed her eyes. "Girls, I need to be alone for a minute." She went upstairs to her room.

I exploded in a rush of questions. "So does this mean he went to a different cake shop? Or maybe he went to Grandma and Grandpa's? Do you think he'll be back soon?"

Lyn looked at me with teary eyes. "No, Hollie. Dad's not coming back."

Lyn was right. Dad never did come back. We never heard from him again after that, other than an occasional birthday card a month or so late. Sometimes I forgot about him. And sometimes I didn't.

"Is this a joke?" I looked at my mother with wide eyes.

"I'm afraid not."

"Why?" On your twenty-first birthday, you're supposed to have a shot, buy a lottery ticket, and celebrate with the people you love most. Not with your father who left for another woman.

"He just really wanted to be there with you." Mom half smiled.

"Well then maybe he should have been here the last eight years." I started to cry, and ran upstairs because I had to be strong for Mom. She's strong all the time, so I can be brave just this once.

Instead of going to my room, I went to Lyn's. I took in her green-gray walls and the white desk with flowers doodled on it in blue pen. I walked over to her closet, where she thought would be a good hiding spot for her secret box full of treasured stuff. I've gone through her closet once before. Only once.

"Lyn! I know you stole my Barbie!" I shrieked through the entire house.

"Hollie, what's with all the yelling? Linnie isn't even here." My dad emerged from his office, where he spent every day, six days a week.

"Linnie stole my Barbie!"

He frowned. "Well that wasn't very nice." His breath stank of alcohol. "Maybe you should get a little revenge on her."

"Well, I think she took it. I might have just lost it at school," I whimpered.

"No, no, a little sibling payback is always fun." He smirked. "Okay, let's go into her room and see what we can find." As we both went upstairs to Lyn's room, I started to tremble. This wasn't right. Lyn would never do something like this to me. Dad checked under her bed while I pretended to look in her closet. In reality, I was standing there, lost in thought. I noticed a small brown box with a gold lock on it. I didn't realize, but my dad was looming over me, waiting for me to say something about the box. "Well, aren't you going to open it?" he boomed.

"It's locked. It needs a key."

"Well we'll just have to find it then." He stumbled across the perfectly clean room, as clean as a seven year old's room could be. A couple toys and books littered the floor, but the bed was made and the desk was organized. Dad opened the drawer to her nightstand, and there it was, a golden key. "This has got to be it." He started to fiddle with the key and the box.

"Dad, maybe we shouldn't go through Linnie's things. I think I actually left my Barbie at school," I murmured with fear.

He put the box down and glared at me. "What is wrong with you?" he yelled. I flinched. "You won't do anything yourself and when I help you, you chicken out."

“I just don’t want to be mean to Lyn, that’s all,” I cried.

He struck me across the face. “Well sometimes you need to hurt people to get your way.” Dad stormed out of the room while I sobbed to myself.

After Lyn came home that day, Dad told her that I was going through her room. I promised her he was lying, but she didn’t believe me. Mom took away all of my Barbies for a week.

Now that I knew where the key was, I could open Lyn’s box. I opened the drawer to her nightstand, and sure enough, there was the gold key. I meandered through the silent room, taking it all in before I found out everything she’s ever hid from me in one tiny wooden box. I took the box out of the closet and sat down on her white bed. Carefully working the key into the hole that matched it perfectly, I opened the box.

Everything was in here. Her college letters, diaries, SAT scores. Everything Lyn treasured. I rifled through the box, careful not to fold the corners of any papers. Choosing her Yale letter first, I smiled as I read it. That was the happiest Lyn had ever been.

“Just open it already!” I whined. The unopened envelope sat on the table, Lyn too afraid to touch it.

“But what if I don’t get in? Yale has been my dream since I was a kid,” Lyn cried.

“If you don’t open it, I will, Lyn,” Mom threatened.

Lyn considered. *“Fine, fine, fine, I’m opening it.” She carefully opened the letter, being careful not to crease a paper that could decide her future.*

“Oh my gosh, Lyn, hurry this up,” I complained again.

“I’m getting there.” Lyn finally pulled the paper out of its envelope. She quickly scanned over it. Her eyes went wide. “I. Got. In.”

Mom screamed. “We must have a party!”

“Congrats Lyn!” I hugged her tight, knowing this may be one of the best moments before we were both living separate lives once again.

Now our lives were more separate than I could have ever imagined. Digging deeper in the box, I found her diary with the purple stars on the front. Lyn would have killed me if she found out I looked in her diary. She was always journaling, escaping life. I flipped to the most recent entry. It only read, “success.” I flipped back some more, wondering what was successful. As I got to what I was looking for, I dropped the diary. My head suddenly hurt.

Lyn cheated. She cheated on everything. It was all there.

The hacking club she was a part of to hack into the system to boost her SAT.

The name of the person whose Yale acceptance was switched with Lyn’s.

Everyone was so sad that Lyn died, not even because they knew her well, but because she had such a bright future. Lyn lied a bit, but so did everyone else. She was never a liar.

Mom called, “Lynnie, get down here!” She knew what she did. I knew what she did.

I was sitting in the kitchen, waiting in anticipation for Lyn to get yelled at. Lyn walked down the stairs. “Yes, Mom?”

“Lynnie, I know you cheated on your test. Your first test of elementary school too! It couldn’t have been that hard, just circle which one’s the carrot and which is the tree.”

“I’m sorry, Mom.” She really did look sorry.

“Now Lyn, you have to promise me that you’ll never cheat ever again, okay?”

“Okay, Mom,” Lyn said with tears in her eyes.

“Say you promise.”

“I promise.”