

Friendship story

By Sophie Evans, 13

A year ago today mum died. I remember waking up in the middle of the night hearing my mum breathing heavily. I went to mum and dad's room and there was mum lying on the bed looking like a ghost, with two doctors surrounding her and as dad looked at me I knew that it was time. Mum had been battling with cancer for five years and now it was her time to go.

After mum's funeral I remember dad crying so much and not leaving his room at all that Grandma Jo had to come look after us and I think that made things worse, because even the dog wouldn't eat Grandma's famous shepherd's pie - and he likes to chew on Harry's used nappies.

I was surprised when I got up today to find dad making blueberry pancakes and listening to Thriller blaring out of the old stereo. Dad handed me a plate full of pancakes all covered in maple syrup with a face made out of strawberries, I didn't tell dad I hated blueberries.

Today when I got to school everything was the same, nobody came up to me and said hi and when I walked past the boys football game they all yelled the usual rude remarks and as I always did I ignored them and tripped up and fell into a brown dirty puddle, soaking the front of my green blazer. But when I walked into the classroom I immediately noticed the girl standing at the front of the room.

She was a tall skinny girl with shiny brown hair that hung in loose ringlets around her shoulders pinned back by a small purple butterfly clip. Two large hooped butterfly earrings hung from her small earlobes and as she blinked you could just see the sparkling pink eye shadow and the small tiny diamonds that surrounded her large blue eyes. I walked over to my seat and even then I could still see the bright shiny red lipstick on her lips.

"Good morning class, I would like you all to welcome Felicity Wood who has come all the way from America. I expect you all to treat her well and make her feel welcome. Oh and Felicity because it's your first day I won't punish you but makeup is not allowed at school," Mrs Graham, our sixty year old form teacher said.

"Yeah you're right Mrs Graham sorry, oh and everyone Felicity is such a boring name so you can call me Star."

Felicity or Star said in her strong American accent walked over to her assigned seat next to me and left Mrs Graham standing on the spot staring at her disapprovingly.

“Hey you what’s your name? You sure do have a pretty smile” Star said as she looked me.

“Oh thank you. Um my names Georgia and I like your bracelet,” I said in my quiet voice.

“Oh this old thing, thanks but you can have it if you want.”

Star handed me the bracelet and before I could protest it was already around my wrist.

At break I made my way to my usual spot by the library, where I sit by myself and stare at my watch waiting for the bell to ring so I can escape the mean glares and nasty remarks by the people who walk by. I am not pretty; I have lanky blonde hair that is always in a ponytail, an overlarge nose that takes up my face and horrible braces that stick to my teeth and not to mention I am a fat pig with a huge backside so I don’t blame anyone for not wanting to be my friend. When mum was alive she would braid my hair and tell me how beautiful I was, I knew she was lying but I didn’t care. Wow, I miss mum.

As I was eating my natural nut muesli bar, to my astonishment Star came and sat down beside me. I looked at her as if she was crazy.

“Hey Georgia, you don’t mind if I call you Georgie do you? Can I sit with you?”

Star looked at me with her dark blue eyes and smiled showing her perfect white teeth.

“Um of course not but why would you want to sit with a loser like me?” I asked quietly as I fiddled with my muesli bar wrapper.

“What are you talking about you are not a loser! Nobody is a loser, everyone is unique in their own special way, well that’s what my dad used to say anyway!” Star chuckled.

“I wouldn’t care if you were the biggest loser in the world I would still want to sit with you right now, and I mean why else would I give you my necklace? It means it’s the start of something new and great.”

Star reached into her schoolbag and offered me a potato chip, I took it graciously.

“Thanks that’s really nice. Nobody ever says nice things about me” I said shyly.

“Well why not!”

Star looked appalled, her eyebrows rose.

“You deserve to be spoken nicely about and if anyone says anything mean about you, they will have me to answer to!” she laughed and then pulled me off my seat and to our next class.

I walked home with Star after school. She told me about America and all the really nice food there like golden crispy fries, huge mouth watering cheesecakes, pork ribs covered in a thick bbq sauce, walnut brownies with a gooey chocolate centre and an ice-cream sundae about the size of my head covered in caramel sauce and chocolate sprinkles.

I felt my mouth water as I listened to Star describe these wonderful mouth watering foods. I told Star about my mum and how much I missed her and about my little baby brother Harry and about my dad and how I sometimes hear him cry at night.

“Your dad will be okay, it will take time but the pain will stop. My mum...”

Star stopped as she felt a stone hit her arm.

“OI! Mind it!” Star shouted across the street at the group of boys.

“Sorry babe, we were aiming for the ugly fat loser behind you,” one of the boys named Derek shouted back across the street, a large smirk across his face.

I stared down at my shoes, this wasn't anything new it happened almost everyday. “Please Star can we go?” I asked Star desperately but she had already started to march across the street towards the boys, her hands screwed up into tight fists.

“Do you know how mean and rude it is to throw stones at someone and call them fat and ugly losers?!” Star shouted at them, I swear her face was almost the colour of a red tomato.

“Hey we are sorry missy; you don't have to go all psycho on us you know! Why don't you ditch her though and come and hang with us, we are going down to the beach if you want to come and hang out.” Derek winked at Star.

“No sorry I don't hang out with dorks like you, now if you excuse me im going to walk home now with my best friend and if I see you throwing stones at my friend again then be warned!”

Star grabbed my chubby hand and pulled me away.

I was shocked; nobody had ever stuck up for me.

“Thanks Star!” I smiled up at my new friend and she smiled back.

By the time we reached Star's house I was beaming from head to toe and I felt like I would burst from happiness. I finally had a friend!

“I um would invite you in but my dad's at work and my mum's out shopping and she doesn't like me having friends over when she's not home.”

Star explained to me as she walked up her garden path.

“Oh that's ok; I'll see you tomorrow then.” I said as I started to walk down the street with a slight spring in my step but as I turned the corner I remembered I was still holding her mini pink iPod nano in my hands so I quickly ran back to her house and when I finally reached her front door I was gasping for breath.

I rang her door bell and waited patiently, clutching the stitch in my side but nobody answered so I tried again, peering through the misty window but nobody came. I tried the handle and the door opened. I stepped into the house and gagged as an awful putrid smell filled my nose. I turned back quickly towards the door but stopped when I noticed my surroundings. I was shocked to see the floor covered with old beer cans and broken glass. I stared at the patterned walls and was horrified to see what looked like sick and blood strewn across the flowery wallpaper.

“Hey what are you doing here?” Star exclaimed in horror as she came through the door holding a cloth in her hands that smelled awful.

“I um...I'm sorry, I wanted to give you this.” I handed Star the iPod and turned towards the door.

“Wait!” Star shouted at me making me jump, “I need to tell you something.”

She ran into the kitchen and washed her hands then took me outside to sit on the porch step.

“I know you must be pretty disgusted by what my house is like, because I am.” Star said quietly as she fiddled with her blazer buttons. I didn’t say anything but looked straight ahead at a tabby cat in a tree across the road.

“You are my friend so I trust you so you can’t tell anyone and you have to promise.” Star stared at me her blue eyes boring into my green ones.

“I swear, I won’t tell.” I told Star.

“Well when I was five my dad walked out on me and my mum. I guess he was sick of her going of with other men so he left. He sent a few birthday and Christmas cards but after a year they stopped and I haven’t heard from him since.” A tiny tear trickled down Star’s cheek. “My mum said we didn’t need him anyway. We were fine on our own and I believed her for a while, but then she started to go out every night and when she returned she smelt of alcohol and men. She was constantly drunk, but she’s my mum and I love her so I would lie awake at night waiting for her to come home so I could look after her but sometimes she wouldn’t return and I would wait all night waiting for her but she never came. As a result at I couldn’t concentrate at school and I began to fail which made mum angry.”

Star stopped and stared down at the ground her face in her hands.

“Star, its okay you don’t need to tell me if you don’t want to. I understand.” I rested my hand on her skinny shoulder.

“No I want to tell you. If we are going to be friends I need you to know about me. My mum had a number of boyfriends, more that I can count.” She smiled a little. “One of her boyfriends hit her and shouted at her, I tried to stop him but he would start hitting me to and my mum would just sit there in the corner huddled in a ball like a small child. After he left, that’s when my mum decided to move here and have a fresh start. I had wondered where she had got the money from but I never dared to ask. I honestly thought things would be different here but she misses home and her friends so she drinks more and once again I’m left to pick up the pieces. She is inside now sleeping because she was out all night so I thought I would tidy up the house for when she woke up so she would be happy and maybe stay with me tonight.” Star looked up at me.

“I need your help though. I need to do well in class or else my mum gets upset and angry and ... and well...” Star put her face in her hands again.

“Star of course I will help you, although on one condition.”

“What, anything?” Star looked up at me with pleading eyes.

“You help me improve my looks.”

Star smiled.

As the weeks went by I helped Star with her school work. I hadn’t realised how far behind she was but we are getting there. In return Star helped me to have a better fashion sense. One day she curled my greasy blonde hair before school and lent me a pair of pale green diamond earrings to match my eyes and when I looked in my small bedroom mirror

I was shocked to see me. I almost looked beautiful. When dad saw me he told me I looked like mum, making me cry but Star told me off saying the mascara would run. People still call me names but I ignore them because I know I have Star to protect me.

One day Star decided we should go swimming and I agreed, immediately regretting it. I look like a huge gigantic blue whale in my blue Speedo swimming togs. My huge rolls of fat show through my togs more than ever and when I walk my big thunder thighs wobble like jelly.

When I arrived at the swimming pool Star was already waiting for me, dressed in a bright pink singlet and tight skinny jeans with her hair tied neatly into a long plait. I looked down at my own old tattered Asics track pants and my Billabong hoodie.

“I am so excited! I love swimming! The feel of the water around you is just amazing!”

Star ran to the changing rooms and I followed slowly behind.

As I pulled on my hideous togs I noticed a large purple bruise on Star’s back but I didn’t say anything. I walked with Star to the pool’s edge looking like the ugly duckling standing next to a beautiful swan.

“Don’t cover yourself up!” Star removed my arms from around my waist.

“You need to accept the fact that you are beautiful!”

“Me beautiful I...” I began to protest.

“Ah yes you are.” Star said as she did a graceful dive into the pool.

I watched her swim to the other end and call for me to come in. I stared at the dark blue water below me and my heart began to pound in my chest, the last time I had been swimming was with mum.

“Come on Georgie!” Star called.

I took a deep breath and dived into the pool, well belly flopped but as soon as the cold water surrounded me I forgot how ugly and fat I was but swam to Star, a wide grin spread across my face.

Star stayed for a sleepover that night, my first ever sleepover. We ate pepperoni pizza and had a huge bowl of chocolate ice cream for pudding followed by popcorn and Moro bars and for once I didn’t care how much I had eaten.

“Star will we always be friends?” I asked as I lied in my bed staring up at my ceiling covered in glow in the dark stars.

“Of course Georgie. Best friends for ever and ever.”

Star wasn’t at school on Monday or the next day, she didn’t turn up for the whole week.

On Friday I walked over to her house but nobody was there, I began to get worried.

On the following Monday she still wasn’t there but at lunch I saw her by her locker dressed in grey track pants and a black baggy t-shirt emptying her locker.

“Star what are you doing?” I asked. Star turned and looked at me, her eyes were red and puffy like she had been crying and her perfect brown hair was tied roughly back into a ponytail.

“I’m going back to America. The stupid family services found out how mum is and she is now being put into a hospital or something so that means I have to go and live with my Aunt Harriet.” Star explained to me, her voice shaky.

“But no you can’t go! You said we would be friends for ever but you lied!” I started to cry, feeling like a baby as the huge tears rolled down my cheeks.

“Georgie, we will always be friends. I promise I will write and I will never ever forget you.” Star handed me the butterfly necklace she wore on her first day here.

“Take it. It’s a token of our friendship and how much we mean to each other.” Star hugged me and I felt her tears seep through my school blouse.

“You have been the best friend ever.” I said through my own tears, my voice cracking.

“You too. We will see each other again someday, I promise and we will stay friends for ever even when we are old and grey with our teeth falling out” We both laughed still clinging tightly to each other, never wanting to let go.

It’s been almost two months since Star left and it’s getting easier but I still wear her necklace around my neck ever day.

When Star left people began to bully me again including Derek who went back to throwing stones at me and even though I tried to put up with it, it one day became too much.

“How would you feel if I kept throwing stones at you!” I cried as I approached Derek after school.

“Yeah I might be fat and ugly and stupid but im a darn sight better than you and your little friends here. You prance about school choosing people to pick on and that’s not right. You are just a sad pathetic little boy who only bullies people because you are too scared that your friends will leave you if you are nice, well what sort of friends are they then?” I marched away fuming leaving Derek standing by the gates speechless. I haven’t had a stone thrown at me since.

I have joined the local swimming club and finally have a pair of new swimming togs even though my bum still sticks out at weird angles but Star taught me how to appreciate who I am and how beautiful I can be.

Today at school we had a new girl, she was short and thin with big round glasses and skinny knobby knees.

As I walked into the class I put my hand around the butterfly necklace and walked over to the girl standing shyly by the teacher’s desk.

“Hi, I’m Georgia, what’s your name?”