

VALENTINE

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One day I woke up early in the morning and there was a dot on my face. Now don't get me wrong, Dots are my most favorite candy of all time. Just not when they're on my face. It was underneath my left eye.

I ran to my mom's room and told her right away, because what if it was dangerous?

"It's just a dot, honey, everyone gets them. You can hardly even notice it," she said as she fell right back asleep. I sighed in frustration and left.

She was lying; I knew it. Everyone knows that moms are supposed to tell you what you want to hear. The truth is, that dot makes me look like a witch.

I hope Richie doesn't notice it tomorrow.

Richie is a boy with golden-brown hair and big blue eyes. I think I am in love with him. Once I said that to my sister Carol and she got mad and said that love doesn't exist. She's only saying

that because she hasn't looked into his eyes yet. They are bluer than the sea I think. Carol is 19 and "painfully single". I'm not really sure what that means, but I saw her write it on her Facebook so it must be true.

Tomorrow's our first day back since Winter Break. I'm not scared, though, because I'm not scared of anything. Except for maybe crabs. They're ugly.

My teacher, Ms. Shingle, made all of us third-graders do a questionnaire today. They make us do one every year.

What's your favorite book?
Celebrity? Color? "Because Of Winn-Dixie", the Tooth Fairy, mint green." Easy peasy.

I wonder if the teachers gather our answers and compare them during lunch. "Ah, yes, Jimmy's preference of 'The Power Rangers' definitely shows that he will not be a good student this year," they'd say as they sipped their coffee. Maybe I should have chosen a different movie.

I finally saw my two best friends Jannie and Nancy today at lunch after a whole three weeks apart. We did our secret handshake and huddled in a circle to talk.

"Do you think Chad P. Jr. got any taller over the break?" asked Nancy. She's completely obsessed with Chad P. Jr., but is always scared that he will be shorter than her when she wears heels on their wedding.

Looking into the distance, Jannie said, "If it's love, nothing else matters." Jannie considers herself to be a love doctor. Everyone goes to her for advice because she is so wise. I think she just reads a lot of magazines, though.

"What about you, Holly? How are things with Richie?"

"Richie is still... beautiful," I sighed.

Jannie's eyes lit up. "Guys, let's vow to all have Valentines this year. I have Howard, but you two need to find someone. After all, it's in a month!"

Howard and Jannie have been dating for three whole weeks. I really

look up to them. We all agreed and the bell rang. Everyone filed back into class.

When I got home I dumped all my stuff on the ground and ran to the kitchen. My mom had made me a sandwich before she left for work. She owns a bakery called 'Bake It Till You Make It'. She thinks it's a really clever name. I think agreeing with her is the best choice for all of us.

I inhaled the food like a vacuum cleaner and remembered that I had to bring a Sharpie pen for art class the next day. My sister Carol had a zine-making phase when she was 16, and had a lot of Sharpies left over in her old room.

Her room was a tornado of old papers and garbage. She was supposed to clean it out before she left to university last year, but she said she was "18 and too important" for things like that now. After digging like an ostrich for a really long time, I finally found three Sharpies.

I was going to leave when something caught my eye. It was one of Carol's old zines! The cover said, 'Three Tips On Getting Mr. Right'. It was a gift

sent from the heavens. Richie's last name wasn't Right, but I think it would work for him, anyway. I took it with me to my room with a new sense of hope.

The next morning, I woke up extra early to get my outfit ready. I usually don't have to care about clothes because I have a fabulous collection of t-shirts that work out really well for me. But, the first tip in Carol's zine talked about the importance of getting a new look. It said it would "clear the dust in his eyes" and "make him realize that you do, indeed, exist".

I pulled out my old pink tutu that I wore when I took ballet when I was 6. I combined that with a striped shirt and red tights.

Richie was the first person in the room when I got to school. I sighed and gazed at him. It was like we were meant to be. He gave me a really long look when he saw me, turned red and looked away. I adjusted my tutu and sat down gracefully.

We had to write a paragraph on what we wanted to be when we grew up.

I'm very interested in becoming the Tooth Fairy. I've been meaning to talk to her about it, but I haven't lost a tooth in a while. My dad says if I work hard, I can become anything. I really believe in that.

I was finishing up a sentence when Frankie, one of Richie's dumb friends, suddenly let out a loud guffaw.

"Holly, what are you wearing?" he yelled, snorting from laughter.

I gave him my meanest look and said, "It's called style, Frankie. Look it up."

All of his friends started laughing and high-fiving him. I gave them all evil eyes.

"No, he's right, Holly... what were you thinking?" blurted out Richie. Then he started laughing too!

I felt myself turn red as a tomato and asked to go to the washroom. I could hear Ms. Shingle trying to calm the class down. My stupid pink tutu itched more with every step I took towards the washroom.

When I finally got there I sat on the cool ground and sulked. I hated Frankie. I was a little mad at Richie, too.

But he had definitely noticed me, all right. Maybe there was still hope, after all. I just had to get a different new look.

That night, I phoned Jannie. I needed some expert advice for the next tip.

"Aw, Holly, don't worry about today. The boys were just being stupid. Maybe the tutu was a little bit out there, but it was kind of cool!"

"Let's not talk about today. I need help. The second tip says to 'flirt with him'. What does that mean?"

"Hmm... I'm not sure, but everyone in the movies blinks their eyes really quickly and twirls their hair around their fingers. And they all talk kind of slowly. Try something like that!"

Jannie is one of the best friends I could ever ask for, I think.

For the next few weeks I practiced my blinking and hair twirling every time I talked with Richie. Sometimes I'd hear snickering, but it didn't matter. I was probably about

sixteen steps closer to getting Richie as my Valentine.

Finally, it was a week before Valentine's Day. I woke up determined. I wore a plaid skirt with a blue frilly top and Carol's old pink boots. The sun was shining bright and so was I because today was the day Richie would realize his undying love for me.

Richie sat in front of me, which is what destiny is I think. After school was when I finally got my chance. I sauntered up to him gracefully, with my new outfit on full display.

"Hey Richie... what's... up...?" I blinked really quickly and spoke slowly, just like I had been doing the past few weeks.

"Uh... nothing much, just packing up," he said as he looked at me strangely.

"Oh... that's great... really great..." I let my voice trail off as I looked deep into his ocean-blue eyes and twirled my hair.

"Holly, what's wrong with you?"

What did he mean? Was it the blinking?

"What are you talking about?"

"Why have you been like this lately? You've been wearing the weirdest clothes, twirling your hair like a maniac and talking really strangely... and if there's something in your eye you should really get that checked out."

I was stunned. For the first time in my life I was totally speechless. I opened my mouth to say something until he added; "I liked you better before, you were pretty fun to talk to. I was thinking about asking you to be my Valentine, but I think I'm going to ask Joy now instead."

Joy was a nice girl in our class with pretty brown eyes. I hated her so much.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said coldly as tears formed in my eyes.

"Shut up, Holly," Frankie called out. I really hate that boy. Not wanting him to see me cry, I ran out the door.

I arrived home with swollen eyes and a torn up heart. The big hot tears that kept welling up in my eyes blocked my vision until I couldn't even see where I was going.

Everything was a mess. I couldn't believe Richie liked me better before! I was so mad at Carol and her stupid zine.

Speaking of Carol, I could hear her moving around in her room. Of course she would choose today to visit home. I tried to run to my room quietly, because I didn't want her to see me crying. She would probably laugh and call me a big baby.

"Holly, is that you?"

I scampered to my room and hid myself under the covers. Maybe if I closed my eyes shut for long enough this nightmare would be over.

Carol walked into my room.

"We haven't seen each other in weeks and this is how you greet—hey, what's wrong? Why are you hiding?"

"Go away!" A hiccup escaped from my mouth like a bandit.

She pulled the blankets off of me and saw my ugly red puffy face. Her expression softened, surprisingly, and she sat me up.

"Did something happen at school today?"

After a little bit of sniffing, I told her everything. To my horror, she started laughing! I was going to bury myself back into the covers when she stopped me.

"You don't know how much trouble that zine got me into. It's the reason I'm still alone to this day! I'm sorry, Holly, really. But you did see the last tip, right?" I hadn't. "It says to always be yourself. Those tips were meant to emphasize your personality, not totally change it! Richie's right. You're a great person. You just have to realize it yourself."

TWO WEEKS LATER

Howard and Jannie broke up the day before Valentine's Day. She told me that he realized soccer was his true passion. "It's alright, I need to work on

my career anyways," she said. Carol wants to become a carrot farmer.

Nancy actually asked Chad P. Jr. to be her Valentine, but took it back when she realized Carol and I didn't have one. We had a sleepover and ate cookies, which I think is better anyway.

That encounter with Carol was probably one of the cheesiest things to happen to me, ever. We both felt a little awkward about it after and didn't speak for a few hours. But it helped me realize something: I'm over boys. In other news, I lost a tooth today, so I guess the Tooth Fairy and I have a meeting tonight. We sure have a lot to talk about.