

If there were a few things I wish I had known before entering high school, I would start with the cold hard truth about never getting a second chance at first impressions. Whether you go to a big school or a small school, you have a great chance at receiving the same teacher multiple times, so I advise you to skip less than often if you plan on being on your teacher's good side. How about high school gossip? Everyone knows it is easier said than done to walk through a hall of your peers with your name in everyone's mouth about what happened between you and that boy last weekend. To pretend that gossip is not real, would be the most under stated judgement you would ever make; it is more than real. The lies that are told and spread around the school become so graphic and intense that you almost believe it yourself; as if the rumours had been tattooed onto your innocent growing body where everyone could read them aloud. Speaking of boys, we roll onto number three on my list. I wish I had someone to tell me that boys most definitely were not worth being my first priority in school. Actually- let me reword that..nothing is worth being your first priority in school, girl or boy. Before you judge me as a hypocrite, let me just tell you that I learnt that one the hard way. While I will save you the sob story of me falling in love with a stupid

boy, I will happen to let you know that my grades dropped immensely and I nearly skipped one class, at the least, each day for the last three months before summer break.. I almost had to retake math 10. Number four will begin with me by saying, your friends might not always stick around and wait up for you. Sorry to be the one to tell you that but it is just another factor of going to high school and it is completely inevitable. NOTE TO SELF: STEREOTYPES DO NOT EXIST.

Please, please, please do not judge someone before you know them and their story, just because they wear Lulu Lemon leggings and Kat Von D makeup, does not mean they are the snotty rich girls who are going to run the school in a so called 'popular' clique. One of my bestfriends now just so happened to be that girl everyone judged ahead of time and let me tell you this, you can bet your sweet bottom she had quite the issue trying to make new friends because of that. Okay now this one is my favourite.. "It is only a bad day, not a bad life." To be completely honest there were days I truly debated dropping out of high school; the days where everyone said you were supposed to have the best time of your life and make the most out it, taking every opportunity you were offered. Yeah, those ones. I never had too many days in a row where I was

randomly in the best mood and always laughing, it took a lot to get me to crack a smile back then. I warn you about this one and treasure it because I find that many people in high school in this generation are suffering from suicidal thoughts, depression, severe anxiety, eating disorders, and so the list goes on. School is tough enough as it is and mixing it with drugs, disorders, and alcohol definitely does not make it any easier to get by in. My advice towards anyone who is suffering with any of this or anything at all, is to seek help from a favourite teacher, a parent, a friend, or even a school counsellor can do you a great amount of healing. You might not believe me now when I say it helps but I can guarantee you will five years from now. Now last, but certainly not least, BALANCE. BALANCE. BALANCE. The second you hit high school you are forced to grow up a little and deal with the following obligations ahead of you with very little help. Learning how to balance your social life, cheque book, grades, boys, family, and even friends, becomes a lot more difficult than you had ever imagined before. Personally, I do not think you'll ever truly figure it out because it is just that hard; but you do find out how to cope a little more with the

small, simple configurations. If there is anything I could go back and warn myself about in grade

eight, it would most definitely be these.

## To See Without Eyes

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They say that the eyes are the window to the soul; as if by looking into someone else's eyes, you might see an entire world and be able to get lost in its beauty. So for the longest time, I simply went along with the idea that the only way to see true beauty, was to physically see it itself. For the longest time, I allowed myself to accept this as fact. Until the world that I loved to see suddenly smudged and creased and twisted itself into darkness, until the world I thought I loved pushed me away and slammed the door. From then on I was no longer allowed inside their world, from then on I could no longer see what I used to hold dear to me. I had been abandoned, left all alone in a cold and brittle cage as I helplessly watched the darkness take over my eyes. My world. My soul.

See what they don't tell you is that the eye is a delicate structure, it's powerful yet weak, and it can easily be infected with love, and lust, and heartbreak. When it becomes infected with these diseases, it's sight will become blurred, its vision simply left swirling in a never ending daze. When the eye is touched by an emotion, its view tends to change so that it can no longer tell the difference between right and wrong. But when we lose our sight, when out of nowhere a horrendous accident occurs and we find ourselves blind, what are we to do? What am I to do? How am I to see beauty when my eyes have been stolen from me? My soul is still beautiful, isn't it?

They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, they say that to truly understand the world you have to open your eyes, and for the longest time I believed it

was the only way. Now I face the world with an open heart; for sight is what your eyes produce, and vision is what your heart creates. I've accepted my fate of no longer being able to physically see this world, but I've also allowed myself to accept the fact that there is more to beauty than meets the eye; there is more to me than I'll ever see. I have my ears which can still hear a child's laughter, and they can still hear the birds soft song swirling through the air as it greets the morning sun. My tongue can still taste the most divine creations cooked with love, and I can feel the rough surface of a painting I'll never see. But most of all my heart still lives within me, and without the judgement of my eyes I can see more than I have ever seen before. Without my eyes, I can see and understand the true beauty that exists in everything, the beauty of two strangers saying hello to one another as they pass by; the beauty that is created when two souls not only see, but hear and feel the beauty of the other. Without my eyes, I finally feel at one with the world.

Live without judgement, and see beauty without fear, and when life hazes itself over into confusion, simply close your eyes, and see.

The Earth was shaking. People kept screaming that the mountains were moving. All over the world, the story was the same. The Giants have been awoken.

My mother used to tell my brother and I stories when we were little just like any other mother would. The only difference was that the stories she told were true, I just didn't realize it at the time. She would tell me stories about how Giants used to roam the Earth and how there never used to be mountains or hills back then. How the land was flat and you could see and hear for miles.

Humans and Giants lived similar lives and used to live in harmony until one dreadful day that everyone but the people in my family line remembers. A powerful caster had come to one of the villages of the humans and told them stories about how the Giants were plotting to get rid of them, and that they needed to find a way to fight back and get rid of them instead. A woman named Octavia had seen right through his lies and tried to convince her village that the caster was wrong. Nothing helped. Soon a war broke out and the humans were quickly dwindling. The Giants were no match for them for some were as tall as skyscrapers.

Octavia was one of the last few people in her village and her people were making rash decisions. The villagers summoned the caster and pleaded for him to do something about the Giants. The caster had told them that if he intervened,

The mountains were alive. People were screaming. Gunshots and explosions filled the once peaceful town we lived in. It was all over the news. Not just here but all over the world and I was going to fix it. I grabbed my brother's hand and turned the pendant over. I began saying the words engraved on the back and the stone glowed. I pulled my brother close just as I finish saying the spell. Light flashed around us and the Earth once again became silent.

I looked up at my brother and whispered that we did it, and he smiled in return. The mountains and hills were once again just simply mountains and hills. No one but us would remember today, the spell made sure of it. I held my brother and the stone close knowing that we had just saved the world but no one would ever know.

Until the next time the spell wears off. You will be safe because my family will be ready.



## My Second Home

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I saunter through the bumpy L shaped paved parking lot filled with grey, white and black minivans all patiently sitting in their parking spaces waiting for the long drive home after dance class. I make my way up to the large royal blue door which has a small white sign and in big black letters that reads “ Shalni Prowse School of Highland Dance.” I open the heavy, hollow metal door and now face the mauve carpet stairs leading to the second floor. The cream walls are bare with the exception of the wooden railing loosely screwed to the wall. As I climb the creaky steps approaching the wooden studio door. I hear the faint sound of bagpipes flow through the cracks of the door. Opening the door now, I come face to face with the usual cluttered hallway.

I step over the piles of tartan practice skirts and companionless shoes that are strewn across the narrow hallway floor. I walk over to the small area of hooks where winter coats, sweaters and dance bags all hang overlapping on the total eight hooks that are strongly nailed to the wall. Empty water bottles stand on the shelf just waiting to be refilled. I can taste the Cliff bars and smell the minty muscle relaxant that wafts through the air. I proceed down the small hallway approaching the small sitting area that hosts an old grey loveseat occupied by a little boy sitting and reading a children's book that he has taken from the pile in the corner. Two mothers sit meekly on the black fold up chairs discussing how they are making a new dish for dinner

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tonight. The walls are covered in small doodles, drawings and pictures of dancers from different competitions throughout the years. I place my red tartan bag on the floor beside the lost and found where it won't be trampled on, then enter the studio.

The bagpipes are flowing throughout the small energetic room. The light brown laminate floors bounce and squeak as the lone dancer gracefully springs around her sword. I walk past the small little collection of kilts and hornpipe outfits for sale hanging on the bar in the back of the room. Small pictures of dance shoes and motivational quotes are tastefully adorned on the back wall. This peach and burgundy room is illuminated by the bright lights that are spread out on the ceiling. I walk over to the display of swords on the left side of the room. They are propped on a small little hanging organizer that is surrounded by small drawings and crafts created for my dance teacher. The windows are covered by bamboo blinds that are blocking the view of the pink and orange sunset that is filling the sky. I carefully place my sword in front of the large glossy mirror that covers the front of the studio. My teacher gives me a large smile and a quick nod of acknowledgement as she starts the tune. I begin to dance in my second home.