

The Princess

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"Hey, Zoe, I need you to help me with my homework, okay?" she said to me over the phone.

I smiled as I replied, trying to convince myself that she was actually my friend. "Sure, thing, Eve." I could tell my voice was weak.

"You don't mind, do you, Zoe?"

"Yeah, it's okay. I did mine in study hall, so I'll be over in a few minutes with it."

"Cool, thanks a million, Zoe." With that said, she hung up the phone. She barely ever said goodbye anymore. Since pre-school, we've been talking on the phone (though sometimes with the help of our parents), and she always said goodbye. Recently, she had this new habit of hanging up without saying anything. And the only time she called anymore was to ask for my help or homework.

Sighing, I grabbed my bag and headed downstairs and toward the door. "Where ya going, Z?" my older brother called to me. After my parents divorced, my brother moved back home and became my legal guardian. My father moved to Tokyo, and my mother to New York City. Since my brother moved back, I was able to stay in California, in the same house I've lived in all my life.

"I'm going to Eve's. I'll be back later."

He got up and stopped me, his eyes worried. "Zoe, you know she's just gonna copy your homework. You're not helping her. She's using you."

"I know... but if I need her, I know she'll be there for me." I knew that was a lie.

"Whatever you say, Z. You know her better than I do, I guess. But she's no different than her sister, you know." He shook his head and sat back down on the couch. "I'll call ya for dinner, Z."

"Kay, bye." I ran out the door and down the street, knowing Eve would complain because I was late. I ran up to her door just as she opened it. In my mind, I could hear her ask what took me so long, so I planned on what I was going to tell her. I couldn't tell her that my brother was warning me about her. She'd think that'd just be rude!

"What took you so long, Zoe?"

"My brother held me back. Was talking about the game."

"No offense, but your brother is such a loser. So, who's winning?"

I wondered how I was not supposed to take offence to that. "Dallas. Twenty-eight to nothing. Eagles suck this year."

"They must! To be losing to a team like Dallas!" She knew Dallas was my favorite team, too. And it wasn't like she liked the Eagles, either. "C'mon, up to my room." She made me feel like such a little puppy.

She ran up the stairs and into her room as I followed. "So, Zoe, how long was the homework? Wasn't it section two of chapter thirty-one in our history text book?"

"Sections two and three," I corrected her. I knew she'd ask how long the homework was. It was sad how predictable she had become. I sat my bag on her computer chair and got out my homework.

"I owe ya," she said, grabbing the papers. She said that every time, and she's yet to help me. Our friendship was to the point where I didn't even know how or why we were still friends.

As she copied my work, she talked about how her weekend was going to be. "Tomorrow, I'm going to get my hair cut, then spend hours there at all the clothing stores. The mall has really nice ones. You know, I have five hundred dollars saved up for this, and my mother's still gonna give me like five hundred more!"

After babbling on about what clothes she was going to buy, she finally handed me my homework. Thankfully, the phone rang. She picked it up, and after checking the caller ID, she handed the phone to me. I answered it, and after my brother told me dinner was ready, I hung up the phone.

"I've gotta go, dinner's ready. I'll talk to you later, Eve Bye," I said, grabbing my bag. She smiled, gave me a quick hug, and went to the mirror to play with her hair. I ran down the stairs, out the door, and down the street to my house. I paused in front of the door to catch my breath. When I opened the door, I could smell the delicious scent of ham and potatoes.

During dinner, I thought about my time with Eve, but talked with my brother about the football game.

"It was amazing thinking on the quarterback's part. Like three times the Eagles nearly stole the ball, but Romo was just too quick. The game was totally over before it began," he explained, excited.

"Well, Eagles suck, simple as that."

"Nah, it was all due to Dallas's great skills!" He was smiling proudly as he ate. I laughed in agreement.

"So, Zoe, what are you doing tomorrow? You do know that I need to work until nine, right?"

"Yeah. I'll probably need to help Eve with her project at the library after she gets back from shopping at the mall. But until she gets back, I was planning on reading my driver's education book. I've gotta take that test sooner or later."

"Yeah, you've been sixteen for how long now? A month? What's taking you so long?"

"Well, how long did it take you to get your permit?"

"Hey, that doesn't count; we all know you're smarter than me!"

"Yeah, fine, whatever!" I joked, getting up. I took my dishes into the kitchen and placed them into the sink.

After studying the book for a few hours, I retired to bed. I woke up the next morning at ten-thirty, and after showering and getting dressed, I went downstairs for breakfast.

After eating my bagel, I listened to the messages on the answering machine. Eve had called at eight, and told me that she'd be back around one o'clock. Then, she said, we'd have time to hit the library to work on her research paper for Biology that she hadn't done yet. Naturally, since mine was completed a couple days after assigned, she wanted my help to complete hers. I sighed, knowing that it would be a pain to do the work again.

After doing some laundry and cleaning my room some, the phone rang. I looked at the clock, and sure enough, it was one in the afternoon. I answered it, checking the caller ID before picking it up. "Hey, Eve."

"Zoe, let's meet at the library in five minutes. I need to finish up my position paper on cloning for Biology. Okay?"

"Okay, sure thing. I'll be there." I grabbed my paper and list of resources, and headed down to the library. I got there in four and a half minutes or so (I had gotten into a habit of timing myself), and she was, sure enough, there already. She was at a computer, browsing a gossip site maintained by one of our classmates.

"Did you know John and Maria got back together? That's all they do, break up, get back together, then break up again, and of course, make up and go out again. That must be hard for Maria." She scrolled down some on the blog, and smiled. "Oh, Brendan's single again! You know, I think I'm going to ask him out. He's really cute, and really nice. He talks to me a lot, too, so I'm sure he'll say yes. Agree?" Smiling, I nodded. I was bitterly jealous. I remember telling Eve once that I liked Brendan. She was jealous that he actually paid more attention to me than her.

After she was done with the website, I helped her with the research. I should say I did the research while she read over mine, then browsed celebrity gossip websites. I printed out several sheets of information, and highlighted the important things she needed for the paper. After she looked over the sheets and compared them to my paper, she began to write her own. With my help, she managed to finish in about an hour.

"Wow, I'm hungry. What time is it?" she commented, packing up her stuff.

"It's five-thirty."

"C'mon, let's go get some pizza for dinner. I've got a little left from my shopping trip," she said, on her way to the door. "I'll wait for you out here. Libraries make me feel so... claustrophobic. You know, too many books."

"Okay," I said, watching her leave. I turned to shut down the computers we were using as I noticed someone was walking towards me. I looked up to notice Brendan, the one who was reported on the gossip site to have broken up with his girlfriend. "Oh, hi."

"Hey Zoe. I saw Eve just left you. She couldn't wait for you?"

"Nah, it's fine, she's a bit intimidated by libraries. Too much knowledge for her."

"Well, hey, do you wanna go catch a movie?"

Amazed, I wondered if I should accept, or stick with Eve. If I said yes to him, I knew Eve would be angry, and if I declined, I'd regret it somewhere, somehow. I knew he was waiting, so I quickly, and rather foolishly, made up my mind. "I'm sorry, I'm getting pizza with Eve. I've gotta go, she's waiting."

As I ran off, he called to me. "You know the master's chains are removable, Zoe." I felt bad for leaving him, because we both knew that I shouldn't have. As I got outside, I noticed Eve had her arms crossed.

"Took you long enough, Zoe. What'd you do, get lost?" she joked, but I could tell there was a bit of anger in her voice. Suddenly, her cell phone started ringing from inside her pocket. She picked it up. "Hey... Sure thing... I'll be there in a few... Byebye," she said. I was wondering who was on the other side, but I could hear it was definitely a guy.

"Hey, that was my cousin. He needs to talk to me, his parents are going through a divorce, and he's having troubles. I've gotta go, he'll be at my house in a few minutes. See ya later," she said as she walked away.

“Oh, thanks, Eve. I know the only male cousin you have lives in Florida. I would have heard from you if he was here. After I turned down movies with the guy I’ve liked since eighth grade. Thanks a whole lot EVE!” I cried when she was more than far enough away. Though my eyes were dry, I felt so terrible inside.

I knew she was just like her sister. A couple years ago, when my brother and her sister, Summer, were seniors in high school, something very similar happened. My brother would always turn down dates for Summer, and once, he turned down the one girl he actually liked just for her. That same night, she told him that she was going on a date with her boyfriend from college that she’d been seeing all along. So, this incident with Eve wasn’t completely like my brother’s with Summer, but still, it was still the same attitude. My brother tried to warn me, yet I didn’t listen.

I walked home slowly, trying to convince myself that tonight was the final straw. “What would I say to her? I could just tell her the truth... No, I’ve been friends with her for too long to hurt her like that... But, what has she been doing to me? I don’t know!” I cried out, trying to figure out what to do. I was so torn, but I knew what was the right thing. “Most people wouldn’t have problems with this. They’d never have let it gotten this bad. What do I do?!”

After I got home, I went straight up to my room, ignoring my hunger. I slammed myself on my bed, and shut my eyes. Most of Sunday, I just played racing games with my brother on our gaming console, breaking only to eat and do some laundry.

Monday at school, we were given another research paper because someone in our class hadn’t handed theirs in, and it was due tomorrow. After class, Eve ran to me, desperate.

“Zoe, you need to help me! I can’t do this all in one night! That is so unfair that the entire class has to do another paper just ‘cause someone didn’t do one! Oh my gosh!”

“No, Eve. I’ve got my own paper to do,” I said, packing my books into my bag. I looked up to her once I was finished. “Hey, here’s an idea: why don’t you step off your stupid throne, Princess, and do it yourself,” I said in a firm voice. I slid my bag on my shoulder, and left her standing in shock by my desk.