

Every kid goes through some kind of phase. The phases can last days, weeks, or maybe even years. The worst phase I went through as a kid was my "Mean Girl" phase. One day I went from being picked on by the popular girl, to being chosen as her new pet. I remember that she found a joke of mine funny, and suddenly I was deemed worthy to be her friend. It's really embarrassing to talk about that time because I became so shallow. I jumped at the first opportunity to become popular, and in doing so, I left behind a really great friend. I went from being bullied to being the bully.

Being popular wasn't all it was cracked up to be. I soon discovered that I couldn't just be myself anymore; I had to learn what was "socially acceptable". I had to filter my comments, go along with what everyone else said, and I had to keep up the jokes. It was like I was constantly being judged on a stage. One false move and the "leader" of the populars would instruct the other girls not to talk to me for the rest of the day, or maybe even the rest of the week.

It was such a dreadful experience. Even when I was the bully I was being bullied. I felt like I had to make fun of others just to keep the rest of them off my back. One day it became too much and I decided I was done. I didn't want to make fun of people, I didn't want to gossip, and I most certainly didn't want to be someone who I wasn't. I was tired and I just couldn't do it anymore. There was a lot of backlash from the main group of girls, and it was hard for me to find friends because I had been so terrible to people for such a long time.

I hated being that person, but I wouldn't change a thing. The situation made me realize that being "popular" is a fantasy better left to the movies. I don't want to become a certain person just to be well-liked. I want to be myself, and if that means I get made fun of from time

to time then so be it. Basically, what I got out of the experience is this: Being popular means nothing if you become someone you hate.

Dear Diary,

Everyone is always telling me what I should do or what I need to do, but what if I don't want to do any of that stuff? What if I want to do what makes me happy? Too bad I don't even know what makes me happy anymore. I honestly just feel like I am being crushed by the weight of everybody's expectations. "Go to college Annie." "No Annie, don't just go to college, go to Harvard." What if Harvard isn't where I want to go? It doesn't matter anymore. I feel like a doll my parents play with. I have no control anymore and I don't know who I am or what I want. I don't know what I've become.

- Annie

Voices

Into the room I walk.

Up the stairs

Onto the roof.

Over the ledge I stare.

Straight to the ground

Onto the street.

Busy people walk about.

Bustling corners spring to life.

I hear a voice calling my name.

I take a step back, and climb through the window.

Into the bathroom

Over to the sink.

I look in the mirror

And see no face.

No longer an identity

Nowhere to turn.

I'm on my own

Without a voice.

Still, someone is calling me.

Who?

I just don't know.

Maybe if I follow

It will lead me back

To where I belong.

Down the steps

Into the kitchen

There I fall

Into indecision.

Another voice starts screaming

Calling me back to the mirror.

Shrouding my face

Saying, "Why does it matter?"

The first voice is foreign

The second is appalling.

The first is inviting

The second enthralling.

Dear Diary,

Mom and Dad say that I am "slacking in my responsibilities." How would they even know? They are never home, and when they are, it's just a formality. I'm just waiting for the day they yell "progress report Annie, go." I practically live alone except for the maid. I want to sit in a family room with an actual family.

- Annie

Fallen From Grace

Falling. I was falling upward. Not into an abyss, but into a light. The light was blinding and it was more of a shove than a fall. Everything was white and perfect and...“Annie! Wake up for goodness sakes.”

“What?” my eyes felt heavy and my mouth was dry from drooling.

“The bell rang, like, ten seconds ago. I want to go home.” Jamie was standing above me looking severely annoyed. She had her phone out, no doubt texting half the boys in school.

“Oh, sorry.” I was tired all the time lately. College essays were piling high like mountains on my desk at home and just the prospect of writing them all made me want to throw up. They had to be *perfect*.

I picked up my books and followed Jamie to the lockers. I got five hellos in the length of four strides, but I didn't feel social so I just grinned. “What's wrong with you today?”

“Nothing. I'm perfectly fine. How was chem? Did I miss anything important?”
Distracting Jamie was the easiest thing in the world.

“Well, sleeping beauty, we talked about decomposing bodies or something totally stupid, and there is a quiz on Tuesday...or maybe Friday, not sure.”

“Do you by chance mean decomposition?”

“Oh, maybe. Who cares?” I did. I needed an A+ on the quiz to keep my A+ in the class. Harvard accepted nothing less and neither did my parents. It was always “Listen here Annie, you have to live up to the standards we have set or you will bring shame to the family name.”

Who even talked like that anymore? Every week, without fail, we had a conference to discuss my successes and failures of the week. The meetings usually focused on my failures and how I could “become a better Findlay.”

Derrick and Antalya must have walked up while I was lost in thought, and everyone was talking about going to the mall. “Annie, I’m assuming you’re coming too?” Antalya always just “assumed” stuff and it was annoying.

“Actually I have to go home. I have some stuff to do.”

“God Annie, do you even care about us anymore? All you ever do is go home. What happened to riding around and having fun?” Typical Derrick. I couldn’t tell them the truth. They would just say I was stressing over nothing and tell me to go with them. Luckily, I didn’t have to respond because they were all momentarily distracted by Connor, the class screw up. They liked to poke fun at him because it was easy, but I never saw the sport in it. I slipped away as they began asking him about his deadbeat dad. I felt a little guilty for using his misery to escape my own, but it was every man for himself in high school.

I made it to my car and drove home before checking my phone. Eight missed calls from Mom, three texts from Jamie, four calls from Derrick, and fifteen college emails. I just turned my phone off and went to my room. It wasn’t even ten minutes before Christine, the maid, knocked on the door. “Miss, your mother wants me to tell you to get to work on those essays.”

“Why doesn’t she tell me herself?” I felt bad for snapping at Christine, but I was so sick of being told what to do through a messenger owl.

“You know how work is for her, she won’t be home tonight.”

“And dad?”

“The same I’m afraid. I’ll have supper ready at six.”

“Okay.” She shut the door and I could hear her tiny footsteps padding down the staircase. I let the silence envelope me. My computer gave a loud beep that snapped me out of my fantasies and I got up to check my e-mail. Another message from Harvard admissions telling me I needed to expand my resume. Sometimes I just wanted college, parents, and everything else to go away. I wanted to be able to sit in the silence without the world chastising me for trying to breathe. Maybe if I just stopped breathing, the air wouldn’t be so suffocating.

Dear Diary,

Harvard got in touch. Apparently I need even more extra curriculars to even be considered. I deleted the email. I can't risk mom or Dad finding out. I just have to work harder, that's all. I'm starting to feel so tired. I just don't want to talk to anyone anymore. I actually want them to leave me alone for like, ten seconds. I need more air.

- Annie

Messages Kaitlyn Contact Messages Jenna Contact

iMessage Today 3:26 PM

Text Message Today 12:39 PM

Did you forget? We were supposed to go shopping.

Nice job skipping school loser. *cough cough*

Messages Seth Contact Messages Liz Contact

Text Message Today 12:41 PM

Text Message Today 12:38 PM

Missed you at school. I had no one in French.

We are at the mall, you should come!

Messages Nathan Contact Messages (1) Ryanna Contact

Text Message Today 12:37 PM

Text Message Today 12:38 PM

Wanna hang out [tonight](#)?

You totally missed that Connor kid having a break down. Why didn't you come to school?

Messages Dad Contact Messages Mom Contact

Text Message Today 6:04 PM

Text Message Today 6:06 PM

I can't believe you played hooky from school. Your mother is furious. We will discuss this further at dinner.

The school called. You are in so much trouble.

Dear Everyone,

I haven't taken a breath for four years. Every move I make feels calculated and I am sick of it. Do you want to know what I see when I look in the mirror? I see a pathetic little girl with pockets full of money and an empty chest. I disgust myself. I am not even human anymore, I don't know what I am, but it's not myself. Keep living your lives, but stop living a lie.

To my parents:

I'm sorry I couldn't be the perfect daughter. I'm not good enough to be your daughter and I sure as hell couldn't live up to your expectations so why keep living? All I ever wanted was your love.

To Connor,

I'm sorry I never stood up for you. Don't change because of us. There is nothing wrong with you. Kids are cruel and you were easy pickings. You are a better person than I will ever be.

This is the one thing I get to control in my life. Don't glamorize my death. Suicide is not something to put on a pedestal. Don't pity me. Don't even think about me. Let me die. Let me breathe a gain.

- Annie