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Reality Bytes

I peed myself and now there’s a puddle on the floor. Oddly enough, its blue. As if I just spilled Gatorade in a condensed circle. Everyone saw me and is pointing and laughing. I can see that they’re all Thinking about me. My Happiness is going down. Drastically. Great, now I’m going to be Embarrassed for two days and won’t be able to ‘Chat It Up With the Boss’ well enough to get that promotion. I’ve even been going on Work Expeditions outside of my hours for it too.

 “Courtney-Lauren!” My father’s harsh voice jumps me back into reality. I turn my head from the computer screen and see him looking at me with a scowl. His arms are crossed as he stands in the doorway. “It’s one o’clock in the morning and you have school, what are you doing?”

“I’m sorry, I lost track of time. I was playing Sims. Michael just got a new job so I was trying to make him befriend everybody.” I say. I know he doesn’t understand what I mean, but maybe it’s better. Maybe he’ll think that the characters I play are actual people. Real people from around the world and not my own little minions to control.

“Go to sleep.” He says turning his back to me and walking away. I guess I should power down; I have been playing for about seven hours. I just don’t see the point in waking up early and going to school, really. Six classes in one day. Always sitting in the front. Sitting at lunch with kids who make fun of me because that’s better than sitting alone. They said the transition from elementary to middle school would be hard, but they never said it would get worse. What did they know anyways? Did they, whoever they are, go to a completely different school than all their friends? Did they have an older brother who refused to be seen with them? I hope not. It’s not a fun life.

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As I sit in reading class I keep my head low. I feel the wind as papers fly above my head. The prepubescent smell of tweens is prominent as everyone runs around the room ignoring the instructions on the whiteboard. A crumpled paper lands on my desk and I regret opening it immediately. ‘POODLE!’ is written out in bold sharpie. I crumble it back up and throw it I the trashcan next to me. The teacher says something from behind her desk, made into a fortress by the piles of papers, but no hears. Or cares. She’s a big woman with little hair. She always wears the same brown vest that looks like someone puked on it. Someone probably did. I avoid eye contact with her. I know if she sees me looking at her she’ll call my name and that’s when the class will get quiet. “Alright class now flip to page 339 and check your answers. Then we’ll go around the room and say what we got” announces Ms. Smoller. She looks over at me as she finishes her words and smiles. I quickly look down. I don’t need the other kids seeing me act like the ‘teachers pet.’

The class settles as kids start calling out different numbers. I can feel my face start to burn and my palms start to sweat. I’m not nervous because I did poorly, I’m nervous because I did well. Really well. 100% well. But no one else has, or ever does for that matter. They’re all too busy talking to each other to be highlighting important sentences. Too busy joking around to do any kind of work. I look over at the clock sitting above a bulletin board of ‘Important Reading Tips!’ If only time moved as quickly here as it did in The Sims. Minutes were seconds, Hours were minutes, and I could pause time whenever I wanted. I was in complete control. The last kid in my row speaks, I’m soon to follow. “10 10 10 10 10” I repeat quietly to myself, preparing my voice to speak some of its first words of the day. The kid behind me laughs out his low score and it’s my turn. I got this. “10.” I say with a croak. An orchestra of groans follows. Mutters of ‘cheater’, ‘nerd’, and the like escape from the lips of my lovely classmates. *Kabuna.* I may be a ‘nerd’, but at least I can express myself better than the trite language they use at me.

The bell rings and it jolts everyone out of their current state as they grab their folders and run for the door, shoving desks in the process. I pick up my notebook and binder covered with doodles and head towards the door. “Good work today Courtney.” Ms. Smoller walks over towards me and puts her hand on my shoulder looking down at me. “Don’t worry about what the other kids say. Soon you’ll be the boss and they’ll be bowing at your feet.” She smiles an attempted warm smile and I smile back not saying anything and walk out the door. In Sunset Valley, I already am the boss.

I hunch over as I walk down the halls, avoiding everyone in my path. Or rather, everyone is avoiding me. I walk into the locker rooms and turn the dial on my lock and open it up to pull out my gym clothes. My favourite class of the day because honestly who wouldn’t love being forced to play a sport you don’t enjoy in weather that wanderers of the desert die in, right? I’m just thankful that the coach’s office is in the locker room. Oh how those sweet sweet windows of hers keep me safe as she can see everything that’s going on. She comes out in her usual ‘Panthers Sports’ grey hoodie, grey sweatpants and yes, grey shoes and blows on her whistle. “Outside now!” The slew of girls run out the door and down the hallway. They open the exit doors to the outside world and I feel the hot air hit me. Hard. This was going to be awesome.

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The cool breeze of the AC feels foreign on my skin after the hour of child torture outside. “POOOOODLE!” I hear a kid shout from down the hallway. I hear laughter erupt from his lackeys and I don’t dare turn around. I don’t know what his problem is, he looks like a *gerbit* anyways. I go into the handicap stall in the locker room and look in the mirror. Of course. My hair looks like it has been to Frankenstein’s wedding and then some. It juts out from all angles and the curls, or what looks like it’s trying to be, are what give rise to the name. I don’t know what kind of poodle looks like this, but they do have the minds of eleven-year-old boys. Not very bright. Whatever. It was almost time to go back to the characters who cared anyways.

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As I unlock my front door, my brother shoves me out of the way, running to the computer room and throwing his backpack on the blue chair in the living room. “Hello?” I call out. No answer. I walk over to my sister’s room and knock on the closed door. No answer. I knock again.

“What do you want?” she screams at me. I try to turn the knob, but it’s locked.

“Do you know where dad is?” I shout through the door.

“No leave me alone.” Music starts to pour through her walls. I don’t bother knocking again, I wouldn’t even get a response the second time around. I look at my watch, 2:46PM. My mom won’t be home for about another three hours. Who knows when my dad will be home. I walk into the kitchen to get something to munch on while I finish what I have left of my homework. I open the fridge and see the basics. Milk, bread, apples, some pickles. *Right click, gourmet, ‘Ratatouille’.* I sigh to myself. If only.

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The smell of B.O and farts become more prominent with every step I take to the computer room. I see my brother hunched over, intimately staring into his screen as I step into the room and plop on my dad’s torn up black chair. I move the mouse and the screen lights up. I enter my password and the familiar mountain background welcomes me. I hear a groan from behind me as my brother shoves himself back and storms out of the room. His computer is off. I don’t know why he refuses to be in the room with me. It’s not like I’m taking the computer away from him, there are two. I guess he just can’t stand the smell of clean.

I’m nervous as I click ‘The Sims 3’ icon in my taskbar. I decided to try a test last night. Instead of saving where I left off, I decided to keep the game going. Instead of exiting, I turned ‘Free Will’ on, minimized it and left the computer running, only turning off the screen. I thought I’d let them take control of their own lives for once instead of it always being me. When the screen adjusts to the game’s resolution, my mouth matches my heart as they drop. I only see Michael. That’s it. Not Judy, Blake, Logan or Aviary. They’re all gone. All their Wishes, their Wants, and Needs, just gone. I look at Michael’s Moodlet and see five days of Mourning and seven days of Heartbreak. I pause the game and move my mouse to the top of the screen, scrolling to my backyard where I see four tombstones. They died. They actually died purely because I wasn’t there to protect them. I wasn’t there to tell them right from wrong. I am their creator and I failed them. I press the three dots in the bottom left and click exit. A box pops up ‘Would you like to save before exiting?’ I click no.

I need to go back to what it was like before. Where Michael was an up and coming Musician and Judy was a Police Chief. Where the kids were making the Honor Roll at School and having Slumber Parties together. Where at night Judy would call the family together and I’d see their speech bubbles pop over their heads as they ate at the dinner table. I want it to be how a real family is, not a broken home. I couldn’t do that to Michael. I’d never wish that upon anybody.