

SISTERZ I

LATOYA'S SECRET

By Fiona Snyckers • *Published* 2010
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STORY TEASER

Latoya Rampele has lived on the wrong side of Grayston bridge her whole life. Amanda McBurney lives in luxury on the right side. Then the recession bites and the two girls find themselves in school together. There's a dark secret between Latoya and Amanda, and Jayden Depaul, the coolest guy in school, won't rest until he's made peace between the two girls. But will the girl's feelings for Jayden get in the way of his good intentions?

CHARACTERS

These are the main characters in Sisterz:

Latoya Rampele, 16 Latoya is the only child of a single mother. She's never met her father or his other family, and the way things are going it looks like she probably never will. Latoya has had a huge crush on Jayden Depaul forever, but just as she begins to think she may have a teensy bit of a chance with him, a new girl arrives at school.

Amanda McBurney, 16 Growing up in a house of secrets isn't easy. And leaving your exclusive private college for a big government school is tricky. But when Amanda finds herself in a situation that she believes threatens to destroy her family, her world really falls apart.

Jayden Depaul Super-cool and mysterious, Jayden Depaul is the most popular guy at school. For Jayden, family and good friends are everything. He can't understand how two great girls like Latoya and Amanda can hate each other. Especially since he's in love with one of them.

CHAPTER 1

Oh no, I don't believe this. Is that an Xbox? I adjust the focus on my binoculars.

It is. It is! It's the new-model Xbox. They only came out six months ago. I suppose he was one of the first to get one. There's the trademark green X and the new concave design. This child is so spoiled, it's not even funny. He's only 12 for goodness' sake. Plus, he's already got a brand new Compaq with high-speed broadband.

When I compare his computer to my mom's ancient hand-me-down Macbook and wonky 3G connection, I want to scream and start throwing things. Breathing heavily through my nose, I swivel my binoculars sideways until I can see through the frilly pink curtains of his sister's room. But here my envy reflex doesn't kick in quite so badly. To be honest, it doesn't look all that different to my room. It's much bigger, of course, and way frillier. But she's got the exact same Ke\$ha poster that I have, not to mention a couple of Rihanna and Flo'Rida posters that would look right at home on my wall.

The shushing sound of a car gliding past startles me so badly I almost drop my binoculars. I flatten myself against the pillar and wait for my heart to stop thundering in my chest. I'm getting careless, I realise. This is the fourth time I've been up here and I've never been caught. Which just means that my luck is due to run out.

But then I hear the sound I've been waiting for. It's a diesel engine - a Volvo, of course - growling up the hill. I squish myself against the pillar and lift the binoculars to my eyes with a painful bump against my nose. It's them. The picture-perfect family returning home. There's the blonde teenage daughter and the cute, carrot-top son. And there's the slim, manicured mom. And there - finally - is the dad. I wonder what he's doing home in the middle of the afternoon. He seems to be wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, although it's not easy to tell at this distance. I watch the electric gate close smoothly behind them. The daughter turns to say something to her dad. To *my* dad. I'm just fiddling with the focus, when a hand touches my shoulder and a voice says, "What are you doing?"

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I find the st0ry quite interesting alth0ugh it has n0t reached its climax, I can see that it will be very gripping!#en0ugh said

Spying is a crime 2 me,u wudnt lyk being watched in evry move u do.so dnt do da same 2 oda ppl coz it nt ryt nd u wastin ur time lukin at ppls live wen u cud b focusin on yourz.

Gomolemo

Oh da suspense cnt wait 4 da next chaptor my imagination is running away wif me.

Liqolicious

What do you think?

Do you think it is ever right to spy on people? Our readers recommend this: *Yes, if I really want to know what they're up to*: 21%, *Only sometimes*: 34%, *No, never*: 44%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 2

I scream so loudly all the dogs in the neighbourhood start barking.

“Hey, hey! Don’t get such a fright. I didn’t mean to startle you.”

I’m ready to take off like a rocket, but now I hesitate, gaping up at him. It’s Jayden Depaul - the guy every girl in Grade 10 has a crush on. Including me. Frankly, I’d almost rather he was a mugger.

“Were you following me?” I demand, my voice sharpened by fright. “Why were you following me?”

“You left this on the bus.” He pulls my netball kit out of his rucksack. “I saw you get off at my stop, so I followed you to give it back.”

Oh ... right ... thanks.”

I can feel my face getting hot as I take my kit from him and stuff it into my bag. This is already the longest conversation we’ve ever had. We were at a party once and he said he liked my jeans. I’d customised them myself with a tub of purple dye and some faded floral patches.

“Latoya ...” He sounds a bit embarrassed. “What were you doing just now? Because it kind of looked like you were spying on those people.”

I open my mouth to deny it, but it’s like aliens have taken over my brain. Without at all meaning to, I find myself telling him the truth.

“That guy is my dad,” I explain. “My biological father. My mom had a... a fling with him 17 years ago. She was a data-capturer in his office. But he was already married, and his wife was expecting a baby. When he found out my mom was pregnant, he made her promise to keep it a secret – he said it would destroy his marriage. And she was so angry with him, she was happy to have nothing to do with him. He pays for my schooling, but only on condition that I keep out of his life. I’ve never ... I’ve never even met him.”

To my horror, my voice turns wobbly and I can feel tears welling up. I risk a glance at Jayden, and find him smiling kindly down at me.

“Let’s get you back to Grayston Drive. I’ll find a taxi to take you home. This isn’t the answer, you know, spying on people.”

As we step out of the leafy coolness of Strathavon into the bustle of Grayston Drive, there's already a taxi waiting, pointing towards Wynberg. Jayden pays my fare and pulls the door open for me. As I turn to thank him, he suddenly leans down towards me.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Yeah.id like tō get closer to my brother.hes so distant and disconnected from every 1 in our fam.breaks my heart just thinkin about it

Yes, i'd give anythin 2 meet my father, i hv neva seen him in all my life yet i knw almost everything abt him. He has a new family now and i jst pray dat he is givin them all the love he cudnt giv me n my sister. **EI Nino**

Guess it's really fine for Latoya to try find out more about her dad because she have the right though she might never be a able to meet him,guess in this investigation she might find something that might calm her down. **Shaz**

What do you think?

Is there anyone in your family that you wish you could get to know better or be closer to?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 3

For a dizzy moment, I think Jayden Depaul is going to kiss me. But instead he reaches out a hand and curls my hair behind my ear.

“Stay strong, Latoya Rampele,” he says with his twisted grin. “This’ll all work out in the end – you’ll see.”

Then he shrugs his bag onto his shoulder, and sets off down the road with his loose, easy stride. I climb up into the taxi on trembling legs.

The next morning at school, I can't concentrate at all. All I can think about is the smoothness of Jayden's fingers against my cheek, and the clean, piney smell of him. At break, I casually make my way over to the Thambo Fountain where he usually hangs out. No one asks me what I'm up to. My best friend Devorah emigrated to Australia at the end of last term. I haven't really made any close friends since then.

My heart stutters in my chest as I catch sight of him. He's talking to a tall blonde girl. A very pretty girl with a stunning figure, I can't help noticing.

“Hi Jayden!” My voice comes out all cracked and squeaky. The girl swings around and eyes me narrowly for a moment.

“This is a private conversation,” she snaps. “I don’t remember anyone asking you to join it.”

I smile nervously. “Oh, sorry. I didn’t mean to butt in. I was just saying hi to Jayden.”

“Oh, you were, were you? Well if that’s the kind of manners I can expect from Innesfree High, I can see I’m going to hate it here even more than I thought. Now, if you would kindly push off, we can get back to our conversation.”

She rests her hand possessively against Jayden’s chest. I try to catch his eye, but he’s avoiding my gaze.

“Well?” she barks, flicking her blonde ponytail over her shoulder. “What are you waiting for? Get out of here!”

I scuttle away as fast as my legs can carry me. What on earth is her problem? Why is she being so mean to me? I’d swear I’ve never met her before in my life. It’s like she just took one look at me and hated me on sight.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I thnk its best 2walk away. **BLUE+ICES**

I can advice Latoya to focuss on her schoolings first before going out with boys."Latoya,EDUCATION is a key to success.Finish your studies first,get a job after all this u can choose the man of heart". **Alpheus**

WOW blonde chick has an attitude!!!handled it well Latoya choose ur battles correctly and Amanda is just not worth it.....bickering for a boy is sooo lame,let her drool over him,u cn get jayden by being urself nd nt throwing urself at him. **FILIMIZZY**

What do you think?

Someone is being mean to you for no reason, what is the best way to handle it? Our readers recommend this: *Be mean right back – give as good as you get:* 32%, *Turn the other cheek:* 40%, *Get some advice – discuss the situation with a teacher or parent:* 27%:

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 4

A week later, I’m sitting at home with my mom’s laptop on my knees.

Look, I know it’s not right to snoop. I get that. I really do. But what else can you do when the adults in your life insist on keeping secrets from you? Big important secrets that are all about you? If you’re me, you hack into your mom’s email account to find out what’s really going on.

My mom has always told me that she has no contact with my dad. That he pays the school fees straight to the school and that's it. Yup. Turns out that was a complete lie. Turns out they actually email each other quite frequently – usually to fight about money. Like today, there's a long whiny letter from him about how he's late with this month's fees because times are tough and there's a recession on, blah blah blah. My mom hit back at this with a reply that could peel paint off walls. How dare he go on about hard times? What does he know about financial insecurity? There he is in his four-bedroom house in Strathavon with both kids in private schools while we live on the wrong side of Grayston Bridge, less than a kilometre from Alex. She's worked her way up from data-capturer to accounts clerk with no qualifications at all... You get the picture?

I think he replied, but my mother deleted it. It drives me nuts when she does this. I know there are lots of letters I haven't seen because my mom randomly deletes them. It's so frustrating – like trying to build a puzzle with half the pieces missing.

It's weird, but when I read my dad's letter, I get all mad at him for finding excuses not to pay. Then when I read my mom's reply, I start feeling sorry for him again. I want to jump in there and defend him. I start thinking about how tired and defeated he looked the other day, and I just kind of want to hug him and tell him it's all going to be okay.

Okay, here come the tears again. I really need to get a grip. I'm on an emotional roller-coaster these days. My cellphone rings, making me jump. It's a private number. Still staring at the laptop screen, I answer it absently, "Hi ... this is Latoya speaking."

"Latoya, this is Mrs Reece-Smith from the Music Department. Are you aware that you missed your audition for the Pop Idols competition this afternoon? You know the rules, Miss Rampele. I'm afraid you've now been disqualified."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Yeah i think its an obligation 4 both parents to take care of the kids even if they split it doesnt change the fact tht he is the father there4 he shud provide 4 his child! **King**

Well, what i can say is let our parents support us/their children. The knw hw to handle the financial problms especially our mother's they would do whatever it takes to get their children to skwl. I hope u wont seek on ur mom 's pocket hey folks respect ur parent if u wnt to live long. **Briam Harrison**

Its the least they can do.it doesn't come close to havin a relationship wit them but if there's no other way but to be away from him.he's gotta help mom somehow,its called RESPONSIBILITY. **Lady CHAPEL**

What do you think?

Do you agree that fathers have an obligation to keep supporting their children? Why do you think so?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 5

It was her. The new blonde girl. Amanda Whatever-Her-Name-Is. She gave me the wrong call time for my audition. I know she did. Mrs Reece-Smith gave her the times to hand out to all the students, and I KNOW mine said 4pm today. Today! Not yesterday.

The trouble is, I can't prove it. I punched the time into my cellphone diary and threw away the slip. Why would I keep it, right?

So now Mrs Reece-Smith has disqualified me from the concert. Pop Idols is all about commitment, apparently. We were supposed to prove that we were serious about it by turning up for our auditions on time. And if we messed up, we were out. No second chances. Trust me – our music teacher is not someone you want to mess with.

So if you thought I was a tearful wimp yesterday, you should see me today. Pop Idols has been my dream, ever since I started at Innesfree High. It's only open to kids in Grade 10 and up. It's called Pop Idols after the TV show, but it's really just a talent competition that ends in a big concert for the school and the parents. I've been practising Beyonce's "If I Were A Boy" since the beginning of the year. I used to practise with Devorah before she moved to Oz.

If ever I needed a best friend, and a shoulder to cry on, it's now. Ever since Devorah left, I've felt like I don't fit in anymore. Maybe I never did. She was the only Jewish kid in school, and I was the only mixed-race kid. I think we kind of bonded over that.

I just don't understand why Amanda would do this to me. You'd think the new girl at school wouldn't go looking to make enemies, right? Okay, so she wants to be in the concert too. That's fine, I get it. But there's enough room for both of us.

The lists go up on the notice board the next morning. I join the scrum of kids searching for their names, even though I know mine won't be there.

And it isn't.

Amanda's is, of course. Naturally, she made it. When you're that gorgeous and perfect-looking, there's nothing you can't do. Then I look at her name again, and something hits me in the face like a baseball bat.

Amanda McBurney. Her surname is McBurney. My breath catches in my throat. I don't believe this. My worst enemy is also my sister.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I wouldnt change anytng ppl must accept me 4 who i am nt 4 wat thy want m 2 b. **Mis unexpected**

We must learn 2 accept dat we wont change, some people may seem 2 have it all then u find dat they r nt happy. **LADYLUV**

I would change my race to b wyt so that i could go to mre advanced skwls. **UNPREDICTABL KAY**

What do you think?

If you could change something about yourself to fit in better at school, what would it be? Or should people accept you the way you are?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 6

Okay, let's not overreact here. McBurney is not such an uncommon surname, is it? It's not my surname. I've only ever used my mom's name – Rampele. But there must be plenty of McBurneys in Joburg. There's no reason to think this one is even related to me, never mind my actual sister.

And, yes, the girl I've seen on my snooping expeditions is also blonde ... and tall ... and slim ... and ... I swallow hard. I think I need to talk to my mom.

I barely make it through the rest of the day. My mind is going round in circles, trying to trace a resemblance between the blonde daughter whose face I've never seen properly and the Evil Amanda who's out to destroy me.

As netball practice ends, I speed-walk up Grayston Drive to catch a taxi home. I can't help glancing back at the lush quietness of Strathavon, to where another girl is living my life ... with my father.

It's always a slight adjustment to walk into our little home on the border of Wynberg and Alex after the big, rolling grounds of school. It's a 15-year-old RDP house. There's a room for me, a room for my mom, and a kitchen where I watch TV and do my homework.

The moment my mom gets back from work, I pounce on her, demanding to know whether Amanda McBurney might be my sister. I can see the shock in her face. It's been years since we spoke openly about my father. But I also see I'm right – and that she's been expecting this question.

"It's the recession," Mom explains, pulling pots out of the cupboard. "Apparently, he lost his job three months ago and has only just managed to find another one, at a much lower salary. He couldn't afford to keep his kids in private school so he moved them to Innesfree.

"Why Innesfree?" I wail. "Why my school?"

"They're zoned for it. They live there in Strathavon, like I told you years ago. It's really close to your school."

“But Mom, you can’t believe how mean Amanda is being to me! Do you think she might know? About me, I mean?”

“It’s possible,” Mom admits. “I ran into his wife in Checkers once. The way she looked at me made me think she knew something. And if she knows, her daughter might know. But of course your father still thinks it’s a deep, dark secret.”

I sit down at the table, trying to process all this. An SMS beeps on my cell. It’s from Jayden Depaul. I memorised his number ages ago, even though he’s never actually called me before.

Do u still want 2 b in pop idols concert? Jydn

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Shez jelaz of hr nd jayden nd mayb sins she myt knw da truth she myt also b scard dat latoya cn steal hr place. **Li**

wel latoya is such a gud gal and itz so nyc to see dat she has a caring m0m who has time to answer any questions 4rm her daughter. latoya must just keep her head up, chin up gal, never mind dis amanda gal

Now things are seemingly complicated. Latoya is now faced with new issues that could put her into a new perspective. Amanda on the other hand does seem quite mean, though I see it as a sort of defence tactic due to changes in her school career and families financial disposition, which for her could be quite, so to say traumatic, hence the attitude. She may be trying to find someone she can trust. Can that person be Latoya? Only time will tell...**Xecutiv**

What do you think?

Why do you think Amanda is being so mean to Latoya? Our readers recommend this:
She knows that they are sisters and feels threatened by her: 29%, He likes Jayden and is jealous that he and Latoya are getting closer: 47%, She is just a naturally horrible person, 23%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 7

The next morning I practically ambush Jayden when I see him at break.

“What do you mean, what do you mean, what do you mean?” I demand, clutching at his arm and jumping up and down. “How could I be in the Pop Idols concert? I told you I was disqualified, remember?”

He smiles his crooked smile. “There’s a loophole.”

I hold my breath waiting for him to continue. I promised myself I wouldn't get my hopes up and act all uncool in front of him. Yeah... that didn't exactly work out as planned. I just don't see what he could have up his sleeve. Even though the teachers really respect Jayden, and treat him more like an adult than a kid, he's not a miracle worker. Mrs Reece-Smith won't relax her rules for anyone. Deep down, I know there's no hope.

"You know I'm playing my guitar in the concert, right?" he says.

"Sure," I nod. Like that little fact would have passed me by.

"Well, guess what? Yesterday, Mrs Reece-Smith told us that if we're singing, we could choose someone to accompany us. And if we're playing an instrument..."

"You could choose someone to sing with you?" I suggest, almost in a whisper.

He grins and nods.

"And... and..." I don't want to jump to any conclusions here. "You want... someone to sing with you?"

He shakes his head. "Not someone, Latoya. I want you. I want you to sing with me."

I scream so loudly that he winces. Then I fling my arms around him and give him a huge hug. And then I launch into my happy dance.

The best part about the whole thing, I decide later... the very best part... is imagining how furious Amanda will be when she finds out that I'm going to be in the concert after all. With Jayden Depaul, of all people. And that I'll be spending practically every afternoon rehearsing with him. Oh, she is going to HATE that part.

I'm practically rubbing my hands together with glee as I step into the girls' bathrooms after school. What I find there wipes the smile off my face faster than Handy Andy. It's Amanda. She's sitting in a crumpled heap on one of the benches in the change-room. She hasn't even heard me come in. And she's crying like her heart is about to break.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Yes, i'd comfort thm. When someone's in a crisis, they need a shoulder. It's good humanity.

Grim

Im a gud persn bt wen sumwan goes owt of dy way to belittle u my heart wil neva alw me to cmfort her im sorry. **Irresistable**

I would comfort because the more I do nice things for my enemmy the more she gets confussed and will not find a reason to hate me. Even people will appreciate me more and will always be in favour of me. As for Latoya in this situation should consider that Amanda is her sister so she has every reason to help he because the scandal is between their parents not them and they came from the same blood and nothing will ever change that.

Shaz

What do you think?

Would you comfort someone who is crying, even though she has been mean to you – or would you leave her alone?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 8

What the heck am I supposed to do now? I'm feeling completely torn. Part of me wants to tiptoe silently away. But another part – a very strong part – wants to put my arm around Amanda and comfort her. She looks heartbroken, like everything in her world has gone wrong and it's all falling apart around her. She cries quietly into a tissue. Her shoulders hardly shake at all. She just keeps wiping and wiping at her eyes. There's something familiar about this. Something about the way she's sitting with her legs drawn up against her body and her head drooping...

And then I get it. It's me. She reminds me of me. That's exactly how I sit when I'm upset. And the tears just pour out of my eyes, like they're pouring out of hers right now. Like we're trying to wash our troubles away. I hesitate in the doorway. If I reach out to her now, this could be our one chance to bond. But she's been so horrible to me, she'll probably just turn away. She might even hate me for catching her in a weak moment. No, I'm going to walk away now. This is NOT a good idea. I'm turning to go when a soft sound makes me hesitate. It's not quite a sob, more of a tiny intake of breath. Whatever it is, it's the saddest thing I've ever heard. I can't walk away now. I just can't.

I clear my throat so I don't give her a huge fright. Then I step forward and put my hand on her shoulder. "Amanda..."

Her eyes fly up to meet mine. When she sees who it is, she gives a kind of gasp. For a second, we stay as we are – her shoulder warm under my hand, our eyes locked together. Hers are as blue as the sea, I can't help noticing. Does our father have those same eyes? I've never been close enough to notice. Then the shutters come down and her face hardens. She pulls away from me and jumps to her feet.

"Haven't you done enough?" she demands in a vicious whisper. "Haven't you done enough to ruin my life?"

"Me?" I gasp. "What did I do?"

She gives a short laugh, before spitting the words out like poison.

"You were born!"

Then she turns and runs out of the change-room.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Yes latoya is hurting nd is confused in ths point in tym nd yes none of this is her fault, i think latoya shuld sympathize wth amanda nd wait 4 her to mke the frst step... Amanda is also hurting nd just like latoya, she also is nt at fault.. They both hav been wronged by their father. **MiSs OpPoRtUnIsT**

Amanda is just trying to hide her feelings i think deep down she wants to connect with her but angry at her dad.

Now im in this very situation its sad,complicated and causes alot of frustration.but all i could do was be the bigger person and by being the bigger person doesnt mean you have to try and resolve what happened between your parents it means to show your parents no matter what you and your long lost sibling will be the best of friends and maybe just maybe that will make the situation a whole lot livable as it is at the moment. **THE+ONE**

What do you think?

Should Latoya keep trying to get through to Amanda? Our readers recommend this:

Yes, everyone deserves a second chance: 51%, No, the next move should come from Amanda: 42%, No, she should never speak to her again: 6%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 9

“You don’t really want to play that,” I say, squirming with embarrassment. “It’s much too girly for you. Let’s just go with whatever you were originally going to play.”

Jayden’s face is warm with laughter.

“But I’m a huge Beyonce fan,” he insists. “You’ve got to let me channel my inner diva here.”

He breaks into the chorus of “All The Single Ladies,” complete with dance moves. By the time I finish laughing, I’ve forgotten to be embarrassed.

“Seriously, though,” I say. “You’re the Idol here. I’m just the backup. You choose the song.”

“Look!” He hands me some papers. “I went online last night and found this brilliant arrangement for acoustic guitar. It’s got a solo after the second chorus and everything. It’s perfect.”

I look at the title and see that it’s “If I Were A Boy” – the song I originally chose for my audition. My eyes fly up to meet Jayden’s and my breath catches in my throat. His eyes are so dark and intense they seem to be staring into my soul. For a second I let my gaze slide down to his mouth – his beautiful firm-lipped mouth – before blinking and looking away. Focus, Latoya. We’re here to rehearse.

We’re in the Music Department, which is my favourite place in the whole school. It was donated by UbuntuGold. There are four practise rooms, a music library, lots of instruments, and

SISTERZ: LATOYA'S SECRET

IT facilities. Jayden starts strumming the first few bars of the song, and I hum along to get used to the pace.

“I saw Amanda this afternoon,” Jayden says off-handedly, as we take a water break later. “Must be weird meeting your long-lost sister after all this time.”

By the time I’ve finished coughing and spluttering, I’ve figured out how he knows.

“I told you the surname that day in Grayston Drive, didn’t I?” I say accusingly. “I told you my father’s name was McBurney.”

“You did,” he admits. “But I only remembered that part later. It was seeing you two together that tipped me off. You’re so alike.”

“Me and Amanda?” I gasp. “No, we’re not! You must be crazy. We’re completely different. She’s tall and blonde, and I’m small and dark, and ...”

“Ja, but it’s not that. It’s something about your faces and the way you talk. I noticed it immediately. You look like sisters.”

“You wouldn’t say that if you knew her,” I say bitterly.

“Well, I’ll know her better after this weekend, won’t I?”

There’s a sudden silence.

“Why do you say that?” My voice sounds a little higher than normal.

“Oh, didn’t I mention it?” he says casually. “We’re going out together on Saturday night.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I have had a crush on someone who is in a relationship and i ended up winning that person.

Thimna

I did have a crush on a guy who loved my best friend. Well at first it was very devastating but then i decided to let go. Its no use hanging on to something that's not there.

falling for someone who is in a relationship is the hardest thing every girl will go through atleast once in their lives. i once fell in love with this guy who was seeing a childhood friend , i knew it was wrong but one never choose who they fall in love with. a friend adviced me to tell him how i felt and i did well he told me that he liked me as a friend. i was devastated but i respected him for his honesty until i realised that he is actually a jerk, whenever he had problems with his girlfriend he would make me believe he was starting to fall for me and when they've sorted things he would push me away. this continued until i told myself im just too beautiful and amazing to be used by this guy so i deleted his number, deleted his smses, deleted him from mxit, removed him from facebook and stopped greeting him when we bumped into each other. TODAY I THANK

HIM BECAUSE IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM I WOULDN'T HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE MYSELF THE WAY I DO NOW. **Ice+maiden**

What do you think?

Latoya can't bear the thought that Jayden and Amanda are dating. Have you ever had a crush on a guy who was in a relationship with someone else? How did you deal with it?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 10

Okay, look, I'm not a total idiot. It's not like I thought I really had a chance with Jayden. I mean, think about it. Jayden Depaul and Latoya Rampele? Yeah, right. Most. Unlikely. Hook-Up. Ever. It's just that he's been so kind to me lately, and we've been getting on really well, and sometimes... the way he looks at me... I thought...

Well, anyway. Apparently not. To be honest, Jayden Depaul and Amanda McBurney makes a lot more sense. She's just a natural match for him.

I spend the whole of Saturday trying not to think about it. But I can't help myself. I know exactly where they're going. I got it all out of Jayden at rehearsals. They're catching a movie at The Zone in Rosebank and then getting something to eat afterwards.

I know I should just stay home and not even think about it. Maybe do some World of Warcraft before my avatar dies of neglect. But my snooping habit is too strong. I need to know what they're up to. I need to see it with my own eyes.

By 8pm, I'm back in 007 mode. I'm dressed all in black with rubber-soled shoes and a pair of binoculars. And yes, possibly a balaclava tucked into my rucksack too, just for authenticity. I may have got a little carried away here. I get my mom to drop me off in Rosebank, telling her I'm meeting friends at McDonalds. Then I double back towards The Zone and practically run up the escalator so I don't miss them in the ticket queue.

I spot them straightaway. My heart squeezes as I see what a well-matched couple they are, both of them so tall and good-looking. I guess I was really hoping to find them with a whole group of friends, because that would mean it wasn't a real date. But no, it's just the two of them.

They're keeping their distance from each other, thank goodness. There's no touching at all, not even during the movie. Afterwards, they wander up and down Craddock Street, past all the open-air eating-places, before deciding on Kauai. Trust Amanda to choose the fresh and healthy option. I bet she's thinking about her figure. Kauai is pretty full, being a Saturday night, but Jayden manages to snag them a table in the corner.

I wait until they're concentrating on their wraps before slipping in and hiding behind a big pot plant. Oh, yes, this is perfect. I can hear every word they're saying. I lean forward with my ears flapping.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I dnt thkn the spyin thng ws a gud thng if dey fnd her she might lose her frndship wit jayden.

Thuli

no no no letoya. u knw jayden doesnt approve of spying n yet u folow hm n amanda 2 their date? what is wrong with u! what if he finds out? if u thnk u dnt hv a chnce wit hm nw jst u wait. u goin to lose hm as a potential bf n as a friend. is that what u want? **Thobza!**

iv been there myself i know how it feels knowing that hes dating another girl especialy the one who happens to be your very own sister its very disturbing. **Charlotte**

What do you think?

Is Latoya doing the right thing by spying on Jayden and Amanda? Our readers recommend this: *Yes, how else will she find out what's going on:* 7%, *No, it will all end in tears:* 32%, *No, if she gets caught she will die of embarrassment:* 60%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 11

Don't they say that eavesdroppers never hear anything good about themselves? Well, if they don't, they should. Because it's true. I thought Jayden and Amanda would be getting all lovey-dovey over their smoothies and wraps on the other side of that pot plant in Kauai. But, no. They're talking about me. And it's nothing good.

"She's ruining my life," Amanda says in a low, angry voice. "My mom is a nervous wreck. My dad's being all distant and cut off. Even my little brother is feeling it. And it's all her fault – Latoya's. I wish she'd never been born."

"I don't understand," Jayden says carefully. "I thought the whole point of the secret was that your mom wasn't supposed to know."

Amanda gives an impatient shrug. "I don't know how she found out. Who cares? I think it maybe had something to do with the money he pays for Latoya's school fees every month. That's how I found out. The statements were just lying there in a drawer. Dad doesn't know that Mom knows. Or maybe he does. I don't know. It's just something we never talk about. It's like this huge big forbidden secret."

"That can't be easy." Jayden shakes his head. They're talking even more softly now. I'm leaning so far into the pot plant I'm afraid I'll pop out the other side. A tiny spider crawls across my hand, but I don't dare brush it away.

"It's not easy. And the longer it goes on the worse it gets. Mom and Dad can hardly stand to talk to each other these days. He looks like he's being torn up on the inside, and she's all bitter and

angry. She keeps going on about money that goes missing every month just when we really need it. They act ... they act like they hate each other.”

Her voice drops lower. I lean even further into the pot plant. Until suddenly – to my total and utter horror – I find myself toppling over. The whole pot plant is tipping forward, with me tangled up inside it.

I shoot out a desperate hand to save myself, but the only thing I connect with is Jayden's smoothie, which explodes in my face like a bomb. I land on the floor in a tangle of chairs, plant, and yoghurt goo.

Jayden and Amanda are staring at me in shock. Then, as Amanda takes in my smoothie-covered face and body, with an extra topping of brown soil, she suddenly bursts into a fit of uncontrollable giggles.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

The most embarrassing moment in my life was when i triped infront of my huge crush...yesess dat was totaly embarrassing!!lol **Marcia Deyeketsi**

Kissing my boyfriend n afterwards his gf arivd i ddnt knw we r 2. **Gotcha+gal**

Well, this is a very interesting story indeed and it reminds me of myself a lot my most embarrassing moments, keeping secrets, a friend leaving you alone to deal with your horrifying moments, having a crush on a handsome guy around but don't see the two of you dating. But all that is in the past now. I love Latoya's approach to her problems or should I say challenges confronting her mother, going for her crush (hahaha) and trying to comfort her 'sister'. Thats me I don't take challenges lying down, no no. **Zandi**

What do you think?

This definitely qualifies as Latoya's most embarrassing moment. What is your most embarrassing moment?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 12

You know those times in your life that you remember at two o'clock in the morning, sweating with embarrassment? Well, my Kauai moment has just overtaken every other embarrassing thing that has ever happened to me. I can feel myself cringe every time I think of it. My stalking days are officially over. Yes, you heard it here first. All my snooping and spying have earned me is heartache. Not to mention the most embarrassing moment of my life. From now on, if I want to know something, I'll ask someone.

SISTERZ: LATOYA'S SECRET

The next time I see Amanda is in the school hall at the first official rehearsal for the Pop Idols concert. We've all been practising on our own, but now all twelve acts have to rehearse together in the big, draughty hall. The final concert is only a couple of weeks away now.

Jayden and I have already run through our act. We were okay, I think, considering I could hardly look him in the eye. I kept remembering how kind he was to me on Saturday night after my fall. Helping me to my feet, wiping me down with napkins, asking me if I wanted to join them for supper.

Jam, as if. All I could think about was getting out of there as quickly as possible. It almost made it worse that he was being sweet to me.

Now it's Amanda's turn on stage and things are not going well for her. She keeps forgetting her words, or going off key, or coming in at the wrong time. She looks a bit of a mess too. Her normally sleek blonde hair is all greasy and lank, and she's covered in spots. Mrs Reece-Smith is not the most patient teacher at Innesfree. I can see she's about to snap.

So why aren't I enjoying seeing her being humiliated? I'm the person Amanda has had the vendetta against. So why can I not bear seeing her up there on the stage struggling with her microphone and getting all red in the face?

Okay, I can't stand this anymore. I hop quietly up onto the stage and go over to where Amanda is standing. I show her that the cord of her mic has got tangled up with someone's drum kit and help her to release it. Then I whisper the words of the verse she's struggling with into her ear, and sing her the note she's meant to come in on. Then I leave as quietly as I came. Amanda takes a deep breath and tries again.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Oh wow, latoya is sent from heaven, shes such an angel. Shes someone i wish to be close to. Amanda must at least try to appreciate her. Latoya is a girl full of life, and well raised. Big up to he

Once again Latoya proved that she has a generous heart by reaching out 2 her sister,nobody-s perfect Latoya did things that embarassed her because of the love she have for Jayden,but she didnt let that get in the way of her being there 4 her sister. She has weaknesses 2,yet she is always arnd 2 help Amanda whenever she can,she is torn between sisterly love and her love 4 Jayden bt she couldnt let it be an enjoyment 2 see her sister hurt and struggling,she always put others first. Keep up de wonderful work!

RIHANNAH

This story is awesome. I mean, poor amanda and all her troubles. I like the way latoya thinks though. She's funny. The whole potplant thing would probably happen 2 me 2, only worse! Amanda seems tough but deep down its just a shell that she made around her heart that is slowly breaking into tiny pieces. And if she doesnt gt friends 2 help her through something worse than the singing thing is gona happen. Shes gona start screaming and trashing things bcuz shes botling up all her anger and saddness. And if

her parents dont watch out shes gona bcome psychotic and maybe even kill sumbody. She really needs help bru. **C.C.**

What do you think?

Is Latoya making a mistake getting close to Amanda? Our readers recommend this: *No, they're sisters – they have to learn to get along: 53%, Yes, Amanda will just turn against her again: 6%, Undecided – I need to see where this is going first: 40%.*

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 13

“You’re not going out like that, are you?” Mom asks as she holds the front door open for me.

“Sure I am,” I shrug. “Why not?”

“Those old jeans with the paint stains all over them? And that brown shirt. *Hau.*” She clicks her tongue and shakes her head.

“Ag, it’s just a group of friends – nothing special.”

I don’t tell my mother how I thought it WAS something special. How I thought that Jayden was asking me out, just the two of us. And how stupid I felt when one of his friends walked past and said, ‘See you on Saturday’, and I realised we were going out as a group.

So now I’m deliberately wearing my grungiest outfit, with a scowl to match. Mom drops me off at the Vida E Caffè in Parkview and I slouch against the wall with my arms crossed.

I straighten up when I see Jayden coming towards me. He’s wearing a pair of new black jeans and a leather jacket. His hair looks cool and he’s carrying flowers. And he’s on his own.

“Hi, Latoya,” he says, leaning down to kiss my cheek. “These are for you. You’re looking very, um, pretty today.”

This is obviously a complete lie. I look like I’ve just been painting my room. For a moment, I just gape at him, speechless. In my defence, the sight of Jayden Depaul in a leather jacket would take any girl’s breath away. Think Taylor Lautner on a good day.

“Thanks! So ... uh ...” I hesitate. “When are the others coming?”

“Others? There aren’t any others. It’s just the two of us.” He gives a little laugh. “I don’t normally invite anyone else along on a date.”

A date? I’m not sure whether I’m thrilled or completely taken aback. Isn’t he supposed to be dating Amanda? What were they doing together last weekend? And what about that friend of

his who said he'd see him on Saturday? Oh, okay, maybe he meant Saturday morning. Duh, Latoya. Queen of jumping to conclusions.

"I thought we'd have dinner here," he says, pointing towards a restaurant next to the coffee shop. It looks quite slick, like the kind of place that might have a dress code.

"I can't go in there!" I say in horror. "Look what I'm wearing. I thought we were just going to hang out."

"Okay..." He thinks for a minute. Then he brightens up. "Hey, I've got an idea. Let's go to the zoo!"

The zoo? I'm dubious at first, but we have the most brilliant time. We eat ice creams and candy floss, and buy each other little plastic windmills on sticks. We spend ages wandering around looking at the animals. And when it gets dark we take a Night Safari, where a guide takes us out on a tractor to see the nocturnal animals. By the end of the evening, my tummy is sore from laughing so much.

"Right," Jayden says as we step out alongside the busy double-lane traffic of Jan Smuts Avenue. "Now let's go and see Amanda."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

I'll prefer a home-made meal just de 2 of us candle lyts yep. **Lee 4 nw**

My perfect date would absolutely be in a restaurant where we order food and drinks. With a candle light dinner and sweet and romantic music playing at the back :). It could even be at home where we could be all alone talking, laughing eating our home made dinner and a few drinks, with music playing at the back! That's so romantic!!!

My perfect date would have to be: Being any were with that special someone. Could be eating,takng a walk or dancing i dont care as long as i get him al to myself. The most important thing for me is spending qurlity time together. **Sister+girl!**

What do you think?

Latoya's perfect date happens at the Zoo, much to her surprise. What's your idea of a perfect date?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 14

I dig my heels in immediately. "Go and see, Amanda?" I repeat, my voice sounding a bit squeaky. "What do you mean?"

“She’s got some music of mine. I need to get it back from her.”

“Uh huh. And I guess she won’t mind at all that we’ve just been out together, right?”

“Um, no.” He gives me a strange look. “Why should she? She’s not my girlfriend.”

I’m still digesting this as we head back to the Vida E Caffé where Amanda is waiting at a table in the glossy red, white and black interior of the coffee bar. She looks even more shocked to see me than I am to see her.

“Order me a cappuccino, won’t you, guys?” Jayden says breezily, not even bothering to sit down. “I’ll be back in a sec.” Then he leaves us alone together.

“He totally set us up!” Amanda says crossly. “He’s been trying to get us to talk for weeks and now he’s tricked us into it.”

She looks so indignant that I can’t help giggling.

“What?” she demands.

“Nothing, sorry.” I wipe the smile off my face.

She looks down, frowning at her hands. But I’m not fooled. I saw the grin tugging at her lips.

“Well... listen... since we’re here,” I say after a long silence. “There are a couple of things I’ve been wanting to say.”

She shrugs, but I can tell she’s interested. I clear my throat awkwardly.

“Okay, first of all, I obviously want to say sorry for last weekend. At Kauai. I did a very stupid thing, and I’ll never do it again. My spying days are over. But I also wanted to say that I had no idea what a hard time you were having at home. I thought I was the one everyone should feel sorry for, because I’ve never known my dad. I didn’t think what it must be like for you.”

Her eyes are bright with tears, but she swallows and nods. “Yeah. It ... it isn’t easy.”

“And I know it must have been tough leaving your old school and coming to Innesfree. I wish ... I wish there was something I could do to help.”

Amanda looks at me thoughtfully. “Maybe there is.”

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Jayden is great and he came up with a good idea to get Amanda and Latoya together so they could talk. The truth had set Latoya free from pain as she said what was always on her mind, it was good that she and Amanda finally spoke about how they really felt and they understood one another regarding the situation they are both facing... **Her+name+is+Neo**

im so happy about what amanda has just done. Atleast shes standing for her responsibility standing for her actions and knows whats right and wrong its brave of her to do that im happy they getting 2 know each other. **Cutie**

Its high time sisterz kissed nd made up, 2b 4gvn u mus be able 2 4gv 1st! **Miles**

What do you think?

Do you think Jayden is doing the right thing by forcing Latoya and Amanda to talk to each other? Our readers recommend this: *Yes, they're not making any progress without him:* 76%, *No, you should never interfere in other people's business:* 6%, *He's taking a chance – this could all blow up in his face:* 16%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 15

Back at school the next week, Amanda is having a hard time.

“Hey, Amanda! Tripped off any stages lately?”
“Is that you, Amanda? I thought it was Avril Lavigne.”
“Hey, Amanda! Avril called. She wants her song back.”

The jokes go on and on. Some are just mild teasing, but others are borderline nasty. It's the relentlessness that's wearing her down.

The trouble is, when Amanda first arrived at Innesfree High, she was just a bit too cool and too gorgeous. She radiated this attitude that said, ‘I don't belong here. I should be in a fancy private school.’

Now that things aren't going so well for her, the other kids are showing no mercy. She looks exhausted and depressed the whole time. She actually did fall off the stage once in rehearsal the other day. And now Mrs Reece-Smith has said she can't do the Avril Lavigne song she was practising because she's not hitting the high notes right.

“Hey, Amanda, you can see that zit from space!”

Something inside me snaps. I turn on the girl and say angrily, “Will you just leave her alone? What's she ever done to you? Don't tell me you've never had a zit before in your life. Stop teasing her or I'll tell Jayden you've got ‘Mrs Depaul’ written all over your diary.”

The girl stares at me in shocked silence. I'm not normally the screamy type, so I've taken everyone by surprise.

“What does it matter to you?” she mutters at last. “I thought you couldn't stand her. Why do you care what we say to her?”

“She’s my ...” I swallow hard. “She’s my friend, okay? Now just leave us alone.”

I grab Amanda’s arm and practically frogmarch her away from there. It’s the end of the school day. I’m heading for the taxi to take me east on Grayston Drive to the industrial wasteland of Wynberg. Amanda will wait for her mom to pick her up and take her west to the shady peace of Strathavon. But somehow I can’t bring myself to feel as indignant about this as I usually do.

“Thanks for that,” Amanda says in a small voice. “And thanks for all the rehearsing you’ve been doing with me.”

“Sure.” This was the favour she asked me last week, to help her with her song practice.

We walk in comfortable silence. I realise how much I’ve missed having a best friend since Devorah emigrated to Perth.

“You know what?” Amanda says after a moment. “I want you to meet someone.”

But when I see who it is, I literally can’t believe my eyes.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Truth hurts a lot..when there are people bullying someone i usually tell them the honest about themselves,just to make them realise that no one is perfect.Lotoya is good person she is always willing to help even those whom give them bad time,that will make think twice next time.

Normally children who are bullies are not happy at home, its either they live in an abusive household or they are poor at home, so telling a teacher would put a stop to bullies,because the teacher would ask the kid if somethng is bothering the kid and why cant he live nd play well with other kids. **Heavy**

Wow! What a thrilling story. Each scene kept me longing 4 more, I cn't wait 2 read d next episode. **Gen MAXI**

What do you think?

Have you ever tried to put a stop to a bullying situation? How did you handle it?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 16

“Latoya,” Amanda says hesitantly. “I want you to meet my brother, Nick.”

My eyes fly up to meet hers. Her expression seems to be saying – he’s your brother too. We’re standing outside the primary school, which is just around the corner from the high school. I

stare blankly at the kid in front of me, but I can see from the look in his eyes that he knows exactly who I am and is totally fine with it. I've only just got used to the idea of having a sister and now I'm supposed to accept a brother too? I can hardly get my head around this.

He's about twelve years old and looks a lot like Amanda. But there's something else that's familiar about him. I almost feel as though I've met him before. What do you say to your long-lost brother when you meet him for the very first time? If you're me, you say the first thing that comes into your head.

"Do you play World of Warcraft?"

He nods eagerly.

"What's your avatar called?"

I could kick myself for these lame questions, but the kid is grinning from ear to ear.

"I'm Nicksticks3668," he says eagerly. "I'm a mage. Let's go Player versus Player. I'll kick your butt all around the realm."

I can't help grinning back. "I don't usually have enough bandwidth for Player versus Player, Nick, but I'll try and find you next time I log on."

"Come and play at our house! We've got uncapped ADSL. My mom won't mind at all."

My eyes meet Amanda's over the top of his head and I see her lips twitch. I can feel my mouth twisting into a smile too.

"What?" Nick demands, seeing our faces.

"Latoya is Dad's secret child, remember?" Amanda says a little tensely. "We're not even supposed to know she exists. I think Mom might just possibly mind if we suddenly turned up with her at home one day. And remember, if you say one single word about Latoya to Mom, I'll wait until you're out and delete all your saved computer games."

"That's so unfair. Mom is always saying we must accept people as they are. It's not fair to introduce me to my new sister and then say I'm not allowed to hang out with her. I've never had anyone to talk about gaming with. And anyway, why are you allowed to be friends with her and I'm not?"

This time I resist the urge to glance at Amanda. Are we friends? I guess we're getting there, slowly. Amanda's phone rings and she turns away to take it. When she turns back again, her face has changed.

"That was Jayden," she says. "He's got some bad news."

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

why cant life be as simple as a 12year old pictures it? even though he didnt know latoya, he still didnt blame her for their fathers mistake. i dont think of latoya as a mistake but instead a beautiful child that deserves love and affection as all of us do. she has an amazing personality and that should shine through for people. so next time you see a person, dont judge a book by its cover... **Tinkerbelle**

I think that the story is awesome hey, and these things really do happen. I just wish i could read the whole thing once-off but i guess YOZA wants to keep us comming =)

It is gud dat the sisters r trying 2 get along. When we are brothers and sistas we shud all get along and our parents cant fight anymore wen they c us happy. Children bring peace in da world. U go sistas show da parents how is done.

Aaaarrrrghhhh im totally hooked where r the rest of the chapters i need them its on of the best iv read ever plz plz plz i need more. **Gummybear**

What do you think?

Latoya's little half-brother Nick sees everything in simple terms. Do you think? Our readers recommend this: *He is naive and doesn't understand the issues*: 3%, *He is right and the adults are wrong – life doesn't have to be so complicated*: 33%, *He is right about some things, although he doesn't fully understand*: 63%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 17

“How on earth did Jayden manage to catch chicken pox at his age?” I mutter, crossly.

“Chicken pox?” says Amanda. “I heard it was measles.”

“No, he definitely said chicken pox when I spoke to him last night. At least... I think he did.”

“Well, whatever. His timing couldn't have been worse.”

This is true. The Pop Idols concert is two days away and Jayden has had to be scrapped from the programme. Mrs Reece-Smith has said that Amanda and I must do a duet together in his place. I'm pretty sure Jayden put her up to it. Another one of his crazy plots to get us to talk, probably.

It's been a total crisis around here. We decided to stick with 'If I Were A Boy' because at least one of us knows it. And luckily Amanda can strum a bit on the guitar, so she can accompany us with some chords. The only good part of the whole thing is that none of our parents will be there. My mom is working that night. She's angling for a promotion so she's putting in a lot of overtime. And Amanda has persuaded her mom and dad that the concert is for learners only – no parents allowed. Thank goodness.

“So, you and Jayden are pretty close, huh?” Amanda says as we run through the opening for the millionth time.

“What do you mean?” I ask, warily.

“I don't know. I just thought there was something going on between you guys.”

“You mean... you wouldn't mind?”

“Mind?” She looks completely astonished. “Me? Why would I mind?”

“I thought you liked him yourself. I mean, you went on a date with him and everything.”

“That wasn't a date!” she laughs. “He was feeling sorry for me, that's all. We spent the whole night talking about you. Okay, I admit I pretended to flirt with him when I first got here, but that was just to make you jealous. I could see that you liked him.”

“You're evil, you know that?”

She laughs again. “I know. And anyhow, you haven't denied it, have you? You do like him.”

I can feel my face getting hot. “Okay, so I like him a bit. But let's face it – a guy like that is never going to get serious with a girl like me. Talk about Planet Never-Gonna-Happen.”

But Amanda just shakes her head and grins.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Well Im in kind of the same predicament....lv liked this guy for 8 months now and at firts I liked him because I thought he was handsom,popular and all that,bt then I started gettn to know him n that made me like him even more to the extent where he even accompanied me to My Matric Dance a month ago and it was a night to remember indeed total bliss. The only problem right now is the distance between us because we live in two diff towns so thats an obsticle. But the point here is when you allow yourself to be who u realli are and get to know the person u like as well as guve them the opperunity to get to know u n who u r,then I reckon from there will be infinite possibilities.The key is to believe in urself and believe that any guy wud be lucky to have a special gal such as urself and if the guy u like doesnt see that then it is merely his loss. And One Last thing a girl should always carry herself with confidence because guys respect that instead of putting yourself down.

Blair

As a woman, u shuld neva sell urslf short. Hav goals dat u set 4 urslf. I blv i cn hav any guy i want bt luks arent evrythn. If da guy doesnt lyk u, its hs loss. Blv in urslf!!!!

If it was me i would get my self closely 2 hm and stop imagining thngs that i thought they are, and love doesn't matter weather u are rich or poor.if i like someone family matter will nt stop me from loving him/her.latoya must stop her stupid thought and see what jayden will do.

What do you think?

Have you ever liked a guy that you thought was totally out of your league? What would you do to get to know him better?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 18

It's the night of the Pop Idols concert. Amanda and I are on stage. The hall is packed with people.

"Cause I know how it hurts," Amanda sings. "When you lose the one you wanted..."

She turns to me, and I continue, "Cause he's taking you for granted... and everything you had got destroyed."

Then we turn back to the audience and sing together, "If I were a boy..."

It feels like we've been singing together all our lives. We're so in sync, it's like we've become one person. I know exactly which way she's going to turn and where she wants me to stand. And she seems to know the same about me.

The audience is lapping it up. I can hardly see their faces with the spotlight shining in my eyes, but isn't that... isn't that...?

I almost stop singing from the shock. It's pure reflex that keeps me going. Amanda follows my gaze and stiffens as she sees who I've spotted.

It's her mother and father sitting in the audience staring up at the stage. And there's her brother too. And my mother... sitting a few rows back. What are they all doing here? None of them were supposed to come tonight. We were supposed to be safe.

Amanda's mother is tugging at her husband's sleeve and whispering something in his ear, but his eyes are riveted on us – on his two daughters singing side by side on the stage. Something inside me panics. I want to run out of the hall and hide away from everyone. But Amanda catches my eye and reaches for my hand. As her fingers curl around mine, I feel myself starting to relax.

It's not what we practised, but we sing the rest of the song hand in hand, drawing strength from each other. I keep glancing over at our families sitting in the audience. My mom looks like she's been carved from stone, while Amanda's mom is agitated and upset. It's just our father who's completely unreadable. What is he thinking? What's going on in his head? There's no way of knowing.

All I know is that he can't take his eyes off us. Then the song ends and the audience break into loud applause. The lighting has changed, and suddenly I can't see anyone anymore.

My eyes blinded by tears, I follow Amanda off the stage, as we get ready to face our families.

Reader comments

Here are some comments left by readers at www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

wow.Dis hs brought a tear 2 my eye.I think all da ladiez shud always stick 2gether.And nt try 2 bring each other down. **Ozee**

Wow it jst shows hw naturally we have a bond wit our family nd we sumtyms nid 2 work nd luk ril hard 4 it. Da gals shud stand 2geda nd face their families bcz they arent responsible 4 da prblms nd adults shuld solve it on their own nd nt expect thm 2 b part of the feud. **Zikhona**

Wow,wat a great story..th mre i read th mre i wana cOntinue readng.hpefuli Letoya nd Amanda's family wl unite nd bcome one family.

What do you think?

Latoya has to face a difficult situation now. Should she...Our readers recommend this:
Leave by a side entrance and only face everyone once they've calmed down: 5%, *Stay with Amanda and face their families together:* 83%, *Split up and face their families separately:* 11%.

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 19

The first person I see as I get backstage is Jayden Depaul.

“Latoya!” he calls. “Amanda! That was fantastic. You two were great. Anyone would think you’d been singing together your whole lives.”

He gives Amanda a quick peck on the cheek before turning to me and taking me in his arms. He’s so tall that I hardly come up to his shoulder.

“I’ve never heard you sing like that before,” he says, smiling down into my eyes. “I had goose-bumps the whole time.”

My heart is hammering in my chest as he holds me warmly against him, as though we’re the last two people left on earth. It’s finally happening, I realise dizzily. Jayden Depaul is finally going to kiss me.

And he does. But just for a moment. I barely have time to register the firm press of his lips against mine and the barely-there smell of pine forests, when he pulls away again. And as I open my eyes, I suddenly realise something.

There’s not a spot on him. No measles, no chicken pox, nothing. He made the whole thing up to force Amanda and me on stage together.

As I see my mother’s set, angry face appear behind him, I suddenly turn on Jayden.

“You tricked me again!” I snap. “You always think you know what’s best for me, but you don’t. When are you going to stop interfering in things that are none of your business?”

I can see the hurt in his eyes, but I’m too upset to care.

“I just wanted you all to talk to each other,” he says, gesturing to my mom and to Amanda’s parents who have now also arrived.

The expression in my mom’s eyes as she comes face to face with my father chills me to the bone. He’s looking from me to her, and back to me again, like he can’t bear to take his eyes off me. He clears his throat as though he’s about to speak, but no words come out.

We stare at each other in silence until help comes from an unexpected quarter. Amanda’s mother turns her tired, tear-streaked face to her husband and says, “Richard... don’t you think it’s time you talked to your daughter?”

Reader comments

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Latoya must forgive him because somehow he managed to help the two sisters to have some bonding hence making it easy for the father to loosen up a bit. **Missy**

I think she should thank him because she finally got the chance to see her father n sort things out between the two families. **Marcia Deyeketsi**

All Jayden wants is to see Latoya happy and she should understand that it was out off love and nothing else. **Slim shady**

What do you think?

Latoya is angry with Jayden because he interfered. Can you think of a good reason why she should forgive him?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

CHAPTER 20

My mother makes a low, angry noise in her throat, but Amanda’s mom puts a hand on her arm.

“It’s for the best,” she says gently. “He made a mistake a long time ago, and you and I have never let him put it right. You didn’t want him in your daughter’s life, and I tried to pretend that it had never happened. And believe me, he’s suffered for it. It’s tearing him up inside to be this close to Latoya and not allowed to see her. It’s ripping my whole family apart. Secrets like this only have power when they stay hidden. It’s time to let this one out into the open.”

My mother turns to give me a sharp look, but all I can do is nod in agreement. I’m tired too. Tired of all the secrets and lies. My mother nods back, her eyes shining with tears.

But still my father hesitates, his eyes roaming over my face as though he's trying to commit it to memory. I touch his sleeve with my hand.

"Come," I say, simply. And he does.

We walk across the school to where the rugby fields run down to Grayston Drive. To the left is my world – the industrial dustbowl of Wynberg. To the right is his world – the lush suburbia of Strathavon. It's hard to imagine the two ever mixing.

My father is still tongue-tied, but that's okay. That's exactly how I get when I'm upset, so I know just what to say to put him at ease. I chatter away about the concert and about Amanda and Nick, until he finally finds his voice.

"That boy you were with tonight," he says at last.

"Jayden?" I feel my irritation surging back.

"Don't be too hard on him. His methods may have been odd, but his heart was in the right place. He got us all to come here tonight, you know. Haven't you ever done anything you regretted? Don't you think you could forgive him?"

I think of my days of creeping around and spying. Yes. I know exactly how it feels to make a mistake... and to need forgiveness.

I nod my head, and grin. "I'll think about it."

"Good girl."

He rests his hand lightly on my shoulder as we walk around the field.

"I gave you the name Latoya, you know," he says casually.

"You did?" This is totally news to me.

"Oh, yes. I was a huge Jackson fan back then. I even saw her in concert once."

"Really?"

"Sure. She was great... just like you were tonight..."

We pace the field together – our feet perfectly in step. My life will be very different from now on, I realise. But it's not going to be easy. The Rampeles and the McBurneys come from such different worlds. What kind of future will we build together? I can't wait to find out.

Reader comments

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Great story evr n i wud lyk hvng sum1 lyk jayden around he dd da perfect job of combining da 2 family. *Liprecious*

SISTERZ: LATOYA'S SECRET

What a brilliant ending... All thankz goes to Jayden for his brave character... In life we make mistakes and we expect to be forgiven, so we have to let it go. **Sweet Dove**

Wow gr8 story i loved it,cudnt kp my eyes off it,thnx yoza we,ve learnt a lot 4rm dis story.
Lebo

What do you think?

Is this the happy ending Latoya has been waiting for? What troubles can you see waiting for her in the future?

To answer this question, or to leave your own comment, go to www.yoza.mobi/stories/11/

Your words

Imagine that you are Latoya invited to dinner at her father's house for the very first time. The dinner takes place exactly a week after the story ends. Write from Latoya's point of view and try to capture all the tension and humour that might come out of this situation.