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Writer/s: [Eleanor Limprecht](#)

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I was thirteen. Like that's an excuse, I know. I wish it were.

It was one month into summer and I'd spent most of the school holidays staring at the ceiling, reading *Sweet Valley High* or begging my parents to drive me to the pool. When they were home. When they weren't I'd call them up at work and whine about how bored I was. Lucky them. Part of the problem was my older sister had found a job that summer. I wasn't used to being alone. We fought all the time when she was home, but at least it was something to do. I could only read her diary so many times, or try on mom's high heels and clomp around the house, trying not to twist an ankle. There was nothing good to eat in the house—no potato chips, no soda, no ice cream—and only three channels on TV.

The other part of the problem was that my best friend, Amy, lived on the other side of the city. She wasn't allowed to take the bus, so we didn't see each other much that summer. Amy didn't complain much, she just got on with whatever it was she was doing. Which most of the time was drawing—she was going to be an artist and filled all of her school notebooks with drawings of people. They didn't look like anyone we knew, mostly they were really skinny, beautiful women with gorgeous clothes. Which was kind of weird, because Amy was pretty overweight. She wasn't fat or anything, just carried a little more chub than the rest of the girls in our class.

I guess we were friends partly because we were both a little different. I still looked like I belonged in grade school, flat-chested and short with a mouth full of metal, and Amy was just, well, big. But even though we started hanging out through sheer desperation, we became really close. We made books together—she drew the pictures and I wrote the words—and I'd filled up half of my bookshelf at home with stuff we'd made.

I was starting to drive my parents crazy, and mom worked with a woman whose daughter was in my class, Missy. Missy was driving her mom crazy too. So the two of them plotted to get us together, and one day before work Missy's mom dropped her off. I have to admit, I was a little freaked out. See, Missy was one of the 'cool' girls at school. She always knew just how to curl her hair, she wore a bra and lipstick, had a boyfriend and even skipped class sometimes to smoke cigarettes.

She walked into the house that morning yawning, her lips painted strawberry-red, looking bored already. She plopped down on the couch and started drumming her fingers on the cushion. 'I can't believe our moms won't just take us to the pool.'

'Your mom won't let you go either?'

'No, and it is so wrong. Jenny and Susie have spent, like, every day this summer at the pool.'

At least we had something in common. She said they didn't have any good food in her house either, but she

was pretty excited we had white bread. So we made grilled cheese sandwiches, and she talked about her boyfriend. I actually started to relax a little, and at some point in the afternoon we were in my room and I showed her the books. It was weird, really, because she seemed to like them. She was flipping through them quickly, mostly looking at the pictures.

'I wish I could do stuff like this.'

'You can, it's easy, I can show you how.'

'Really?'

'Yeah, come over tomorrow and we can make one. Can you draw?'

'A little. Can I take these home tonight and look at them?'

I didn't even hesitate saying yes. I just wanted it so badly, for her to like me. That night I lay awake thinking of stuff we could do together, other projects, and I set out all of my pencils and paper and glue really early the next morning.

Her mom called that morning to say she was sorry, but Missy wasn't feeling well. And the next day. And the next. I don't know why I didn't ask about the books straightaway, I was embarrassed, I guess, and then it was too late. Missy never came back.

I'd promised Amy I would bring our books on the first day of school—the deal was I had them over the summer and she would keep them during the year. But when the first day came, I hid in the bathrooms until the bell rang and then ran to homeroom with my head down. Every time I looked up she was looking at me. I stopped looking up.

It wasn't until lunchtime that I learned what happened to the books. They were scattered around the cafeteria, at least one on every table. All the titles had been crossed out and covered with bad words. But the worst part was the insides, because while Missy and her friends hadn't bothered with my silly stories, all of the pictures Amy had drawn were destroyed. All of the slim, fashionable women with doe-eyes and red lips had been turned into grotesque caricatures with chipmunk cheeks and Santa Claus bellies. And above every single one of them, they had written Amy's name.

I arrived at the cafeteria late—just in time to see Amy running out, her face white. As soon as I saw why, I turned around to follow her out, find her, tell her it wasn't me. But a hand grabbed my arm.

It was Missy, and she pulled me to her, a smile on her strawberry lips.

'Hey, I had a great summer in the end. What about you?'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Eleanor Limprecht.*