



Sample Pages from The Truth or Dare Sisterhood

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THE TRUTH OR DARE SISTERHOOD

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Jeffrey Harr



The Truth or Dare Sisterhood

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Cast

4W+1M

SERENA: 13-year-old, smart, sensitive, friendly.

BRITNEY: 13-year-old, Serena's friend, a happy idiot.

AGATHA: 13-year-old, Serena's friend, a bit of a Debbie Downer.

RAVEN: 13-year-old, Serena's friend, a self-described badass.

MANDY: 18-year-old, Serena's big sister.

MONARCH: 13-year-old, a boy who is gender questioning.

All the 13-year-olds are in slumber party jammies.

Lights up on SERENA about to welcome her first slumber party guest. She's sitting, a pillow, a blanket, and some cute stuffed animal next to her.

A doorbell rings. SERENA gets up and lets BRITNEY in. BRITNEY enters, a stuffed animal lion and pillow in her hands. They hug.

SERENA: (*enthusiastically*) Hey, Britney! Thanks for comin'. We're gonna have a rockin' slumber party, girl! There'll be pizza, there'll be music, there'll be the kind of hijinx you could only expect from a crazy bunch of best friends hopped up on soda and no bedtime.

BRITNEY: (*totally stoked*) You know it! Hey, this is kinda funny. When you said you were having a slumber party, I thought you said LUMBER party. So I was like, What's a LUMBER party? Is this some kind of lumberjack thing? Are we gonna be climbin' trees and throwin' axes? And then, it hit me like a redwood falling in the woods that someone may or may not hear depending on whether or not they were in the woods when it happened: You said SLUMBER party. And then I was like, Girl, you gotta get your ears washed out. Not that I have a problem with throwin' axes. Sounds kinda fun. Anyway, (*holds up her stuffed animal*) I brought Mr. Fluffykins. He's my loyal and trusted companion ever since the REAL Mr. Fluffykins went to sleep one night on the loveseat and never woke up. We didn't notice until a few days later; we just thought he was watchin' TV. That cat looooooved TV.

SERENA: (*takes a good look at Mr. Fluffykins*) Um... Britney... you know that's a lion, right?

BRITNEY: Oh, I know. Mr. Fluffykins always saw himself as more of a lion. He suffered from a rare condition called SCS.

SERENA: SCS?

BRITNEY: Small Cat Syndrome.

SERENA: Oh. Is that the one where they get worms?

BRITNEY: Nah. It's the one where they're mad at god for makin' 'em small, so they're a jerk to everyone. Mr. Fluffykins was a biter.

SERENA: Beats worms.

BRITNEY: Yeah. That's what my mom said: Could be worse, Britney—at least he doesn't have worms. But, he's dead now, so I guess he's sleepin' with the worms.

SERENA: (*laughs*) Wow, Brit. Harsh, but probably not wrong.

The doorbell rings. SERENA walks away to let in her second guest. In walks AGATHA, a stuffed animal mouse and a pillow in her hands.

SERENA attempts to hug her; AGATHA just stands there.

SERENA: (*enthusiastically*) Hey, Agatha! Thanks for comin'. This slumber party's gonna rock. There'll be movies, there'll be junk food, there'll be the kind of shenanigans you could only expect from a crazy bunch of besties broken loose from the chains of middle school.

AGATHA: (*subdued to the point of appearing to suffer from some sort of mood disorder that reads like Eeyore*) Hey, Serena. Hey, Britney.

BRITNEY: Hey, Agatha. What's up, yo?

AGATHA: Oh, you know. Glad to be here. It's not like I was going to do anything else tonight but sit on the couch with my grandmother and watch Hoarders. That show really gets to me sometimes. Old ladies covered up to their eyeballs in garbage living under the weight of memories of a better life that has somehow gone astray. You know the story: Her husband dies of some terrifying disease, the adult kids move away, and bam. Before you know it, she's garage-sale-ing her way through the pain and every mouse within a hundred yards is packing his bags to move in with her.

SERENA: Wow, Agatha. That's some dark stuff.

AGATHA: Tell me about it. And it gets worse when they come to CLEAN the house. You think they're going to relocate those mice to a nice, cozy sanctuary somewhere in an old farmhouse? No way, bub. Those unlucky rodents are going to a lab somewhere. I give 'em two years before they all have diabetes, sickle cell anemia, or Legionnaires' disease. (*holds up her stuffed animal*) Which is why I brought Charles the Second. I named him after my real pet mouse, Charles the First. I rescued Charles the First from a life of enslavement at PetSmart where his corporate masters gave him a fancy cage, a wheel, and kept telling him he was living the dream. What they DIDN'T tell him is that he could run on that wheel for years and years and never GET anywhere. It's tragic.

SERENA: Oh. I didn't know you had a pet mouse.

AGATHA: I don't. Actually, Charles the First's time with me was short. I set him free the second we got home. Mom was piiiiissed.

BRITNEY: (*laughs*) Moms, right?! MY mom puts sour cream and onion chips in my lunch every day. EVERY DANG DAY. She's crazy. I mean, who under the age of 60 actually LIKES sour cream and onion potato chips? Every day, I walk up to Mrs. Johnson and go, "Here you go, Mrs. Johnson" and, every day, Mrs. Johnson goes (*in a teacher voice*), "Britney, I'm so glad you want to share your chips with me, but if I keep eating these I'm gonna weigh a thousand pounds."

AGATHA: Fun fact about potato chips—if the saturated fat doesn't clog your arteries, the salt will raise your blood pressure to the point where your heart might burst out of your chest.

SERENA: Keepin' it real, Agatha. That's why I dig you. (*to BRITNEY*) You know, Brit, you could just tell your mom you don't like them.

BRITNEY: MY mom? You know my mom, Serena. She'd be sooo hurt. She'd go (*in a weepy mom voice*), "Really, Britney? I've been putting those in your lunches for years and you... you don't even like them? I've failed as a mother!"

AGATHA: MY mom would tell me it's the chips or nothing, so I should just deal with it.

SERENA: Moms: Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

The doorbell rings and SERENA walks off to get her third guest. RAVEN enters, a stuffed animal blackbird and pillow in her hands.

SERENA gives her a hearty high-five.

SERENA: (*enthusiastically*) Hey, Raven. Thanks for comin'! This slumber party's gonna SLAY. There'll be fun, there'll be frolic, there'll be the kind of insanity you could only expect from a crazy bunch of lunatics in a madhouse where the only adult supervision is my sister and PG-13 movies on Netflix.

RAVEN: Sounds like my kind of party.

BRITNEY: Hey, Raven.

AGATHA: Raven.

RAVEN: Hello there, ladies. Been lookin' forward to this for a while, now. There are only so many hours I can stand hanging around the house with Cindy while she binge-watches true crime shows and drinks diet soda like it's about to be rationed by the government.

SERENA: I still can't believe she lets you call her Cindy. If I called my mom by her first name she'd kill me.

The other girls are in total agreement.

RAVEN: Yeah. It was after she went to the doctor and came home with a new prescription. (*acts it out*) She plops the bottle down on the counter, kneels to look me in the eyes like she always does when it's something serious, and says, "Raven, I'm going to tell you something most moms won't tell their children: the truth. God is cruel. Sadistic. Spiteful. Apparently, He no longer wants me to eat ice cream. Or French fries. Or fried chicken. Apparently, he wants me to sit down after a crappy day at work and, when I'm really craving something that actually tastes good, stuff a red pepper down my throat. So, since all the joy of eating has been taken away from me, I thought we should just go ahead and get real. From now on, feel free to call me Cindy." And then she opens that bottle, shakes out a few capsules, and washes them down with a diet soda. Drank the whole can in one shot. The woman's a mess.

AGATHA: MY mom caught me watching one of those shows, once. She comes in the room and this guy's stabbing some middle-aged housewife half to death. Now, the only thing she'll let me watch is the Disney Channel. Like that's any better. Mufasa. Gaston. Ursula the sea witch. Murder after murder after murder. Oh, but true crime is too much for me.

RAVEN: Hey, at least in Disney movies there's a little mystery. In true crime, it's always the husband.

AGATHA: Got that right. Evidence or not, the husband should always be the first suspect.

BRITNEY: MY mom suspected my dad of something, once, but it turned out he was just working late every night because the man loves his job more than life itself. (*pause*) And his secretary loves her job, too.

The others just stare at her for a few seconds.

RAVEN: Your parents are separated, right, Brit?

BRITNEY: Yeah. Like you said, Raven, it's always the husband.

More staring.

SERENA: Right. Thanks, Brit. (*changing the subject*) So, Raven, I see you brought a stuffed raven. Cooool.

RAVEN: (*serious as a heart attack*) What do you mean, stuffed? This is Poe, my pet raven. You may not know this, but ravens are among the smartest birds in the animal kingdom. I taught this one to say, "Nevermore."

SERENA: (*stares, not sure what to do with this*) Oh. Sure. Of course. It's all good.

RAVEN: (*lets out a loud, monosyllabic chuckle*) HA! You crack me up, Serena. Of course it's stuffed. I'm not crazy. (*suddenly serious*) But I do need him to sleep. He whispers to me until the sweet necromancer, Hypnos, closes my eyes for the night.

SERENA: (*plays along this time*) HA! That's funny. You're a riot, Raven. We are gonna have SO MUCH fun tonight.

RAVEN: (*dead serious*) No. That part was serious. It's a long story, but let's just say I've had a pretty severe sleep disorder for quite a few years and my therapist suggested an object of comfort. I chose this black bird. (*pause*) For obvious reasons.

Everyone stares.

SERENA: Well, aren't WE quite the crew! This is gonna be a night none of us will ever forget. Raven, did you read your Tarot cards for tonight?

RAVEN: Of course. Slumber party tradition. They foretold of a familiar stranger who would enter our midst in need of help, which is pretty insane, and then there was something about clowns.

AGATHA: Clowns? Did you say CLOWNS? I still have nightmares from my fifth birthday party when my mom got that creepy clown with the monkey puppet who kept trying to get me to smile.

SERENA: Oh, yeah. He was mad because you kept interrupting him with facts about how inappropriate it is for humans to own monkeys.

AGATHA: Honestly, people: Wild animals are not meant to be pets.

RAVEN: Actually, Agatha, I think you really started getting to him when you asked if he would be selling his monkey for scientific experimentation after he'd gotten his use out of him.

BRITNEY: (*laughs*) THAT was sooo funny! (*changes course*) I'm still trying to figure out how that quarter got in my nose.

SERENA: There wasn't a quarter in your nose, Brit. It's a magic trick.

BRITNEY: Sorry, Serena. I was there. He straight up pulled it out of my nose. (*pauses, considering it*) I was both terrified and really surprised.

SERENA: Right. Um... me, too, Brit.

AGATHA: Anyway, hated clowns ever since.

RAVEN: Ah. Coulrophobia. I, myself, don't suffer from a fear of clowns, but I get it. The big shoes. The overripe lips. The rainbow afro. If I wasn't such a badass, they'd probably disturb me, too.

MANDY enters. Everyone says hi.

MANDY: Hi, girls. I heard BADASS and thought I better get in here and make sure things weren't out of hand already.

SERENA: Nope. Not yet, Sis.

MANDY: Ha ha. Very funny. I don't want a repeat of last year's taco party incident.

More giggles.

MANDY: Yeah. Laugh it up. You're not the ones who had to scrub guacamole off the ceiling. You have no idea how close you came to being thrown out on the streets that night.

BRITNEY: Oh, yeah! It all started when—

MANDY: (*interrupts*) Eh, eh, eh! No, no, no! We are never to talk about it again.

RAVEN: That WAS pretty fun.

MANDY: No, Raven, it was NOT fun. It smelled like Taco Bell exploded in here. Our mom didn't find it all that funny. In fact, she said no more slumber parties after that and it's only because I'm the coolest big sister, ever, that you little psychos are even in this house right now. (*pauses a sec, gets a little serious, to herself*) Not that she's here enough to know, but still.

The girls hit her with a spattering of, "Thank you, Mandy"s.

MANDY: Yeah, yeah. You're welcome. Now, last but not least, I'll be up in my room if you need me. Have fun, but don't get me in trouble, right? (*after no one responds*) I wanna hear you say it—what won't we do?

ALL: (*chants*) We won't get Mandy in trouble.

MANDY: Alright. Good. The pizza will be here in a bit, so I'm out of here.

SERENA: Wait a sec, Mandy. Aren't you forgetting something?

MANDY: (*pauses, just wants to get out of there*) Like?

BRITNEY: Sisterhood?

MANDY: Oh my god. No. The Sisterhood is YOUR thing—I think I'm too old.

RAVEN: You're never too old for Sisterhood, Mandy. Besides, the Sisterhood is about strong young women supporting one another in the bonds of friendship and common purpose. You're Serena's big sis. That means you're in the club. Now, I must insist—bring it in.

The girls put their hands in like a basketball team breaking a time-out huddle.

MANDY pauses with a look on her face that says, You've got to be kidding me, but the girls are not taking no for an answer.

MANDY: (*gives in, puts her hand in with the others*) Fine, fine.

AGATHA: (*to MANDY*) What do we say?

MANDY: You're killing me, here.

SERENA: C'mon, Mandy—the sooner you do it, the sooner you're out of here.

MANDY: (*reluctantly*) To the Sisterhood.

RAVEN: Laaaaame.

MANDY: Oh my god. Fine. TO THE SISTERHOOD!

GIRLS: TO THE SISTERHOOD!

Upon shouting, they thrust their hands into the air.

MANDY: Okay, NOW, I'm leaving. (*pauses, looks the girls over*) Wait a second. Serena. Aren't we missing one? Didn't you say FOUR kids?

SERENA: (*looks a little uncomfortable*) Oh. Right. Yes. They'll be here in a minute.

The rest of the group is concerned.

MANDY: Cool. Okay. Have fun, girls. (exits)

BRITNEY: Hey! I thought we had a rule about inviting new people!

AGATHA: She's right, Serena.

RAVEN: We all know you're the nicest person in the world, but please tell me it's not Jenna. I HAAAATE Jenna.

SERENA: Relax, it's not Jenna.

BRITNEY: Then who is it?

The doorbell rings. SERENA walks off to get her final guest. MONARCH enters, a clown doll and pillow in their hands. They look extremely uncomfortable.

The other girls are stunned into silence.

SERENA: (enthusiastically) Hey, Monarch! Thanks for comin'. This slumber party's gonna be fire. There'll be games, there'll be snacks, there'll be the late-night hooliganism that can only ensue when a bunch of wild, wild, west weirdos get together for an all-night rodeo, baby.

MONARCH: Um... okay. Sounds good.

SERENA: Now, hit me up top.

SERENA raises her hand for a high-five; MONARCH apprehensively hits it.

MONARCH: Thanks for inviting me, Serena. I hope I don't ruin everyone's night.

SERENA: (smiles) You're not gonna ruin anything. (to the others) Hey, Monarch's here!

The group's still in shock.

MONARCH: Hi, everyone. Serena told me to bring a stuffed animal, so I brought my clown.

RAVEN: (total deadpan) You brought a clown.

AGATHA's about having a heart attack.

RAVEN: How 'bout that, Agatha. Monarch brought a clown.

AGATHA: (moves behind SERENA) I see that.

MONARCH: His name is Chuckles.

RAVEN: Chuckles the clown. *(to herself)* Well, THAT'S not creepy as hell.

MONARCH: Hey, Serena. Where's the bathroom?

SERENA: *(points offstage)* Oh, it's just down the hall there.

MONARCH: Thanks. Be right back.

MONARCH exits.

BRITNEY: Um... Serena... I don't know if you noticed this or not, but Monarch's a boy. We don't have boys at our slumber parties.

AGATHA: Yeah, Serena. I can't believe you did this. It's like the time my mom invited my uncle Bob to my birthday party. I hate Uncle Bob. You know what he got me? A blender. He got a fifth grader a blender, Serena. Why? What in the hell would I be blending?!

RAVEN: As disturbing as THAT is, Brit's right. No boys allowed. That's a rule.

BRITNEY: Yeah, Serena. And he's super weird, too.

AGATHA: Yeah, Serena. SUPER weird.

SERENA: Okay, well, first of all, Monarch's pronouns are THEY, not HE, and second of all, YOU calling anyone super weird is super funny.

AGATHA: I think I'm offended.

SERENA: You shouldn't be. You're weird as hell. It's one of the reasons we all like you so much.

AGATHA: *(about to be all indignant, but realizes it was a compliment)* Oh. Well, then. Thank you.

SERENA: You're welcome. Now, Monarch's a little different, but we're different, too. That's why we're friends. And I'm telling you, they need friends.

BRITNEY: Wait a minute. They who? I thought we were talking about Monarch.

SERENA: I am.

BRITNEY's still confused.

RAVEN: THEY, Britney. Monarch doesn't gender conform.

BRITNEY: But he's a boy. I am so confused.

RAVEN: You know, Brit, sometimes I wonder what planet you're on.

BRITNEY: (*laughs*) Yeah, my mom says I live on Planet Britney, and it never rains there.

AGATHA: Actually, Brit, not everyone feels at home in their birth gender.

BRITNEY: Well, duh. We're at Serena's house. Of course he doesn't feel at home.

SERENA: Look, it's too late. THEY'RE here, and THEY'RE staying. So can we just try to have a good time?

AGATHA: Fine. But the clown's gotta go under a pillow or something. That thing's freakin' me out.

BRITNEY: (*chuckles*) Chuckles. That's a good one.

Everyone stares at BRITNEY again as MONARCH returns. MONARCH just stands there for a few seconds. It's awkward.

RAVEN: (*breaks the tension*) Uh... yeah... we were just saying how much we like your clown. Well, everyone but Agatha.

MONARCH: Oh. I'm sorry, Agatha. I didn't know.

AGATHA: Don't you worry about me. I'm just fine. (*stares at SERENA*) WEIRD AS HELL, but juuuuust fine.

RAVEN: Honestly, I kind of thought you'd have a butterfly.

MONARCH: Oh. Yeah. That would make sense.

BRITNEY: A butterfly? I'm not following.

RAVEN: A monarch is a kind of butterfly, Brit.

AGATHA: Or a sovereign head of state, like a king or queen or emperor.

BRITNEY: Oh, I get it. Like the Burger King. He's a monarch. (*thinks about it, pauses*) Of burgers.

There's a pause before everyone busts out laughing.

RAVEN: (*to MONARCH*) You'll have to forgive Britney. She just loves her fast food.

AGATHA: Fun fact about fast food, the amount of saturated fat in a—

SERENA: Well! I think it's time for a game. Who's up for a little Truth or Dare before the pizza comes?

Everyone agrees. They sit in a semicircle.

SERENA: Okay. Who wants to start? Monarch? You're new to the group. Why don't you go first?

MONARCH: (*hesitantly*) Um... okay. Serena: Truth or Dare?

SERENA: How about Truth?

MONARCH: Okay. (*thinks about what to ask*) Um... where's your mom tonight?

Everyone suddenly becomes uncomfortable.

MONARCH: (*sensing the tension*) Oh my god. I'm sorry. Stupid question. I've never played this game before and I couldn't think of anything and I noticed your mom's not home and... let me try again.

SERENA: No. It's cool. That's the game. My mom... she disappears a lot. She has some... mental health issues that make it hard for her to deal with... everything. Mandy mostly takes care of me.

MONARCH: I'm so sorry. I never would have asked if—

SERENA: Totally cool. Besides, I'm lucky. Mandy's the best. Not everyone has a big sister like her.

BRITNEY: Mandy IS the best.

RAVEN: Truth.

SERENA: We don't talk about it much, 'cause everyone here already knows and they don't want to upset me.

BRITNEY: You're right. I sometimes feel bad for complaining about my mom. I mean, the woman loves me so much it's a bit smoldering.

RAVEN: I think you're looking for SMOTHERING.

BRITNEY: No thanks. I got enough trouble with my asthma.

Everyone pauses, looks at BRITNEY.

RAVEN: You know, Brit, there are times when I think you're just messing with us.

BRITNEY: (*in earnest*) Whaddya mean?

RAVEN: Yup. And there it is.

AGATHA: I agree with Britney. Not about being smothered, 'cause sometimes I'd like to do it to her, myself.

BRITNEY shoots her a look.

AGATHA: But about the mom thing. My mom's depressed, sure, but she's always there for me. And Raven's mom—

RAVEN: Whoa. Hold it right there. We're not talking about my mother tonight. I don't want to scare the hell out of poor Monarch, here.

SERENA: The point is, everyone here gets it. Right, girls?

GIRLS: Right.

They hold hands in solidarity for a few seconds.

SERENA: Okay. Back to the game. I believe it's my turn. How about something a bit less intense. This IS a party, after all. There's no crying at a slumber party. Agatha: Truth or Dare?

AGATHA: Gotta go Dare. The truth is too scary.

SERENA: Your Dare is... to hug Chuckles. Provided you're okay with it, Monarch.

MONARCH: *(grabs Chuckles and offers him up like a sacrifice)* Absolutely. Here you go, Agatha.

AGATHA: *(clearly uncomfortable, just starts humming)*
Mmmmmmmmm...

RAVEN: Way to go, Serena—you broke Agatha.

BRITNEY: C'mon, Agatha. You got this. It's just a stuffed clown.

AGATHA: Just a clown? JUST a CLOWN? That... THING... is a representation of all my fears—a Volkswagen Beetle pulling up to the curb and, like, a thousand of those face-painted devils crawling out in endless hordes one after another after another.

SERENA: It might be a good thing, Agatha—think of all the times we couldn't go to McDonalds 'cause even passing one in the car makes your stomach turn.

BRITNEY: That's true. They have the best fries but... *(pouts)* I can't get them with my best buddy.

AGATHA: Not working, Brit.

RAVEN: I don't get it. The McDonald's clown is never even there. Sure, there might be a picture of the dude in there, but the chances of him showing up while you're eating has got to be infinitesimal.

SERENA: (*smiles, 'cause she knows what RAVEN's doing*) What's his name?

RAVEN: (*plays along*) Whose name, Serena?

SERENA: The McDonald's clown. It's... Rodney. Rodney something.

BRITNEY: Rodney something? That's a stupid name for a clown.

AGATHA: Stop it! All of you. You know what his name is.

BRITNEY: Actually, I don't think I do.

AGATHA: Stop playing stupid, Brit, we all know it's— (*puts her hand to her mouth, stops herself*) Oh my god. You almost got me to say it.

SERENA: (*still smiling*) Say it, Agatha. Be free! Say it!

Everyone but MONARCH starts chanting, Say it! Say it! Say it!, and even though they're not sure what the hell is happening, MONARCH quietly joins in.

AGATHA: Alright! Alright! Fine! It's RONALD MAC-DONALD! He lures you into his golden arches to eat his Big Macs so you'll get heart disease and die. Happy now?! I will NEVER be able to sleep AGAIN and it's ALL YOUR FAULT!

Everyone cheers.

SERENA: That was fun. Now, you gotta hug Chuckles.

AGATHA: What?! After all that? I don't think so. You must be out of your damn mind.

RAVEN: That was the dare, Agatha. You know the rules.

BRITNEY: Yeah. The Sisterhood demands that you hug Chuckles.

Everyone starts chanting, Hug the clown! Hug the clown! Hug the clown! Suddenly, MANDY enters, concerned.

MANDY: What is going on down here! Is this some kind of pagan ritual or something? Hug the clown? My god. I can hear you all the way upstairs.

AGATHA: (*stands, cowers behind MANDY*) Save me, Mandy! They want me to hug the clown.

MANDY: Thanks, Agatha. That part I got. Didn't I say everyone gets along? I come down here and you're all chanting like a bunch of lunatics. You're scaring the hell out of Agatha.

BRITNEY: But the Sisterhood demands it.

MANDY: That's exactly what I'm talking about. You sound like a cult.

SERENA: Not to change the subject, Sis, but the cult is hungry.
Where's the pizza?

RAVEN: Yeah. We're starving. Monarch, here, was just saying that they're hypoglycemic and if they don't get carbs soon, they might pass out. Right, Monarch?

MONARCH: (*surprised, but goes with it*) That's... that's true.

AGATHA: Fun fact about hypoglycemia—

MANDY: Enough, Agatha. Look, the pizza will get here when it gets here. In the meantime, Monarch, don't pass out—

MONARCH: Check.

MANDY: And Agatha—

MANDY tries turning around to talk to her face to face, but AGATHA keeps moving to keep behind her. Eventually, MANDY corrals her.

MANDY: Why don't you just hug the damn clown already? It's a stuffed animal for god's sake.

BRITNEY: That's what WE'VE been saying.

MANDY: (*faces AGATHA*) You can do this. Trust me—you'll feel better once you get it over with. (*to the group*) Now. I'm going back upstairs. Do you think you can hold it together for a few minutes until the stupid pizza gets here?

Everyone nods in mild agreement.

MANDY: Good.

MANDY starts walking away when MONARCH speaks, surprising everyone.

MONARCH: Mandy?

MANDY: (*stops, turns*) Yeah?

MONARCH: (*with the utmost sincerity*) Just before the um... chanting... we were just saying what a cool big sister you are. I wish I had a big sister like you. (*pause*) Just sayin'.

MANDY: (*a little taken aback at the kindness*) Oh. Well, thank you, Monarch. That's sweet. Doesn't mean I won't come back down here and kick some butt if—

SERENA: Yeah, yeah. You just keep working that pizza, Chief.

MANDY's mad for a second, but starts laughing. They all start laughing as she exits.

RAVEN: Hey, Monarch. That was a really cool thing to say.

MONARCH: Kindness is never wasted. My mom told me that once. And by the way, thanks for always using my preferred pronouns. It means a lot.

RAVEN: (*like it's no big deal to her*) Of course. Why wouldn't I?

MONARCH: Let's just say, not everyone thinks it should be MY choice.

RAVEN: Well, that's not how we roll here. Right, girls?

Everyone agrees.

BRITNEY: So, Agatha, are you hugging the clown or not?

AGATHA starts moaning again.

MONARCH: Would it help if I told you why Chuckles is so important to me?

Everyone looks at MONARCH, surprised. Even AGATHA.

MONARCH: It's quite a story.

AGATHA: Um... okay.

MONARCH: (*entirely seriously*) Pretty recently, we were about to go out to dinner and I was in my room, trying on a dress. I was late, as usual, and my stepfather, who has no respect for me or my personal space, throws open the door and pops into the room to tell me to get my ass in gear. He's very fond of telling me to get my ass in gear. But once he saw me in the dress, that's not what he said.

There's silence until BRITNEY breaks it.

BRITNEY: (*totally absorbed in the story*) What'd he say?

RAVEN punches BRITNEY on the arm and looks at her like, What's wrong with you?

BRITNEY: *(gives RAVEN a why'd-you-have-to-do-that? look)* Ow!

RAVEN: Sorry, Monarch. You were saying?

MONARCH: He stopped dead in his tracks and stared into my eyes for a few seconds. Then, he took a few steps toward me, pushed his outstretched finger into my chest, and said, "You take that off right now. If I ever see you doing that again, it'll be the last time. You understand me?" *(pauses, you can hear a pin drop)* I took off the dress. Put my pants on. I was too upset to cry, so I didn't. But there was no way I was going out without Chuckles. It's stupid, but the clown makes me feel better. It's one of the few things I still have from when my real father was still alive. He's the one that named it. He told me that naming something is powerful. If the clown is creepy, name it Chuckles, he said. Then, you won't be afraid, 'cause no one could be afraid of Chuckles the clown.

More silence, jaws dropping. Slowly, AGATHA reaches out and takes hold of the clown and, moaning a little, hugs it.

AGATHA: *(gently hands it back to MONARCH)* Thanks. That actually helped.

MONARCH: Any time.

RAVEN: Quite a story, alright.

MONARCH: I like to tell stories. My mom says I'm too creative for my own good. Gets me into trouble.

SERENA: Wait a minute—are you saying it's not true? You just made that up?

BRITNEY: It HAS to be true—Chuckles DOES make it impossible to be afraid. Unless you're Agatha.

AGATHA hits BRITNEY on the arm.

BRITNEY: Ow! Why is everyone hitting me tonight?

MONARCH: Yeah, I made it up. Y'know—to make Agatha feel better.

BRITNEY bought it, but the others are too polite to say otherwise.

BRITNEY: Aw! That's nice. *(to the others)* I like this girl! *(checks herself)* Oh... I mean, them. *(another check)* Oh... *(to MONARCH)* I mean YOU. YOU's okay, right?

RAVEN: YOU's okay? What is wrong with YOU, Brit?

BRITNEY cowers a bit, afraid RAVEN will hit her again; RAVEN shakes her head.

MONARCH: *(chuckles)* YOU is just fine. And I like you, too. You're funny as hell.

BRITNEY: Ha! See? I'm funny as hell. Now stop hitting me, everyone!

AGATHA: Okay, okay! My turn. And payback's a bench, Raven.

RAVEN: A BENCH? Are you saying payback's the thing you sit on in the park? Sounds terrible. And sort of relaxing. I think the word you're looking for is—

AGATHA: I know what it is, but I don't want Mandy running down here again. You know she gets hella pissed when we swear.

RAVEN: Do you hear yourself?

AGATHA: Stop trying to put off the inevitable! Truth... or Dare?

RAVEN: I'm surprised you ask—you know I'm gonna go Dare.

AGATHA: Oh, I was counting on it.

AGATHA reaches into her pillowcase and pulls out a small bag of jelly beans. Once SERENA and BRITNEY see it, they speak simultaneously.

BRITNEY: Not again!

SERENA: Seriously, Agatha—give it up!

AGATHA: *(with the dramatic flair of the greatest actor who's ever lived)* I dare YOU to eat every single stinking one of these... *(pauses for dramatic emphasis)* CHILI MANGO jelly beans.

SERENA: *(to MONARCH)* For some reason, Agatha believes that one of these days, she'll force Raven to eat something that'll make her spew. Hasn't happened yet.

MONARCH: Gotta appreciate her persistence, though, right?

SERENA: Absolutely.



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