

RUBY

by

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Fiction

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**INT. Funeral Home** - Lobby just outside the Parlour. A few chairs are arranged around a coffee table for the over flow of guests to sit and chat,so as to not disturb anyone in the parlour. Tissue sits on the table, along with a small coffee machine resting on a side table behind the chairs, pressed neatly up against the wall. Some classical music plays in the background.

*Three teens sit around the table. They all look a bit worse for wear. Coffee cups emptied in front of them. The days events have obviously taken a toll on them. Some more than others.*

*A big jock type of guy appears to be looking around the room for something.*

JERRY

You think they brought out some more of those tiny sandwiches?

*A young lady dressed like she is attending a Harvard law school preparatory interview just glares at him. This is DANI. Highly intellectual, ambitious and not afraid to speak her mind. Even if she doesn't speak at all.*

She glares at Jerry with a stare that could wake the dead.

JERRY

What? When I'm sad, I eat. I'm an emotional eater.

DANI

You ate half the tray.

JERRY

They were delicious. And I'm hungry. I didn't have lunch before I came today. And I have to eat my weight in food everyday. Coach says, if don't gain at least 15 pounds before the end of the season I can say good bye to my free ride.

DANI

You mean free lunch?

JERRY

Sue me.

DANI

Careful Jerry, you might get your wish for.

JERRY

Right. You're going to Harvard. How could I have forgotten. You won't let any of us forget.

*He lights up with an idea.*

Hey, maybe when you graduate you'll be able to negotiate my contracts for me, like my agent or something.

DANI

Normally this is where I would be the one to burst your bubble, but considering where we are today, I'll let the NFL combine do that for you. I'm going into real law Jerry. You know, the kind where lawyers actually try to help society by putting bad people behind bars. Following which, I will become a judge, then chief justice and most likely a seat on the supreme court.

JERRY

Why you always gotta break them for? You know you're not the only one who thinks their special in this room...

DANI

I may be the only who thinks though.

ETHAN

Can you two cut it out.

*They both turn to look at ETHAN. A young man, dressed all in black. He looks like he plays in an 80's mod band. He has a brooding sense about him, as though he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.*

JERRY

He speaks.

ETHAN

Yeah I speak. A girl from our school is dead and all you can think about is your stomach. And you, the prize of Beverly Hills High. We all know you're gonna be...whatever your gonna be, quit reminding us of how special you are. Someone is dead. And she's not coming back. And now we have to deal with it.

DANI

She has a name Ethan.

ETHAN

I know she does.

JERRY

You mean DID? She did, as in past tense, because she's no longer here!

DANI

No you idiot. Does. She does have a name. Just because you pass away doesn't mean you lose your name in the process. God, what do they put in the gatorade at your games? Stupid vitamins?

JERRY

Actually coach says they...

*Dani glare's at Jerry again. The one more word Jerry and I think I will put you in your own coffin type of glare.*

JERRY

Never mind.

DANI

You can't pretend forever Ethan. Everybody knows. You're the only one still pretending.

*Ethan gets up too walk out of the funeral home.*

ETHAN

You know you can be a real bitch sometimes.

*He exits.*

*Bella is bumped by Ethan as he walks out of the funeral home.*

*Speaking of Bitch, enter Bella. The captain of the school cheerleaders. Dressed like she is going to a fashion show not a funeral. She enters as if the doors were held open for an emperor.*

BELLA

(As if she is talking to other people in the lobby.)

Hello everyone! I have arrived. I hope I'm not too late? Did I miss anything?

JERRY

No. Ruby's been lying around waiting for you all day. She can't wait for you to say hi.

BELLA

Perfect . I'll just pop in for a quick second and say hi, be back in a jiff. This outfit is gonna knock dead.

*Bella enters the funeral parlour with all the splendor and pomp of a model entering the runway.*

DANI

*(sotto voce)*  
I'm sure it will.

**FADE TO BLACK:**

*A few days later.*

**SCENE 2. INT. COUNSELLORS OFFICE - BEVERLY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL - GROUP SESSION**

*A school bell rings. Students file in slowly to the Counsellors Office. Their is a somber mood in the air.*

*Bella wearing yoga pants and school varsity Hoodie, walks in.*

*Dani is already seated at a desk in the counsellors office. She is dressed in flattering but conservative blouse. A smattering of pamphlets lay on top of the table in front of her. The pamphlets read, 'How to cope with suicide.' 'The day after their gone.' 'Finding strength in God.'*

BELLA

I don't get it. Why do I have to be here?

DANI

Because Bella, the school mandates that after a crisis, all students that were affected must attend grief counselling.

BELLA

And... where is the crisis. She's dead. She's gone. And it sure as hell didn't happen here, so why should we be made to sit through counselling. What did we do wrong? I'll tell you, nothing. And now we get punished, because Ruby can't drive. That makes sense.

DANI

You know, sometimes I'm not even sure why I bother trying to explain anything to you. Our friend is dead and your worried about a bit of counselling. Some one doesn't seem to have their priorities straight.

BELLA

Oh they're straight. Believe me. I never drive drunk. Tommy always calls his driver to pick us up. So what happened to Ruby on Mulhollad Drive will never happen to me. And what is all this nonsense about suicide counselling for anyway?. She was drunk and went of the road. It was an accident. It could've happened to anyone...well, except me of course, because I have Tommy's driver.

DANI

You know you're a real bitch right?

BELLA

I wouldn't have it any other way.

DANI

I can't believe Ruby was ever friends with you. God you are like, the perfect stereotype of everything that is wrong with Beverly Hills High.

BELLA

Whoah. Having a nasty PMS day are we?

DANI

I'm not... ugh...forget it.

*Ethan walks into the room. He sees the girls already there but doesn't do much to acknowledge them. He notices a few pamphlets on the counsellors desk, picks one up, with a smirk and a shake of his head, he just drops it back on the table. Then proceeds to walk to the furthest corner of the room.*

BELLA

Well someone looks like they woke up on the wrong side of the bed. What's the matter Ethan, you look like your dog died.

Dani glares at her.

BELLA

What? Too soon? Never mind. Look at him, our own little rebel without a cause, its so wanting in Beverly Hills don't you think Ethan? And how ironic, didn't James Dean die in a car accident? Oh wait , you're still here. But you look dead, so their's that.

DANI

What is it with you. Are you so shallow and insecure that you only feel good about yourself when others feel like shit. Ruby is dead. Were all in pain. If you don't have anything helpful to say keep your mouth shut.

Enter Jerry.

JERRY

Causing problems already Bella. It's 8:30 in the morning. Don't vampires normally wake up after the sun goes down.

BELLA

Suck it Jerry.

JERRY

Just say when Bella.

BELLA

On cold day in Hell Jerry.

JERRY

Well, at the rate of global warming, that's practically a yes.

*Jerry picks up one of the pamphlets. And reads.*

JERRY

What is all this shit about suicide? Didn't her car roll over on Mulholland? I'm confused.

DANI

You say that like its the first time.

JERRY

Wow. The welcome party is out in full force today. I think I'm gonna sit away from all this hostility. It's not good for my inner chi.

DANI

Look, we all knew Ruby. And we can pretend that she was happy all the time if it makes us feel better. Tell ourselves that it was just a simple car accident. But you all know what it was like for her.

ETHAN

What's that supposed to mean? What it was like for her?

DANI

Come on Ethan. Don't pretend that you didn't know what she was going through. You might be the only person here other than her parents that knew her better than all of us.



ETHAN

So she was having problems in some of her classes, that's no reason to off yourself.

JERRY

Their was a gun involved. Nobody told me their was gun involved. Why did she have a gun in her car?

BELLA

To protect herself from guys like you.

JERRY

Guys like me. What's that supposed to mean.

DANI

She didn't off herself.

BELLA

You know stupid jocks that don't take NO for an answer.

JERRY

I take NO for an answer.

BELLA

Really. How many times have I said NO I won't go out with you?

*Jerry thinks about the question.*

BELLA

Exactly.

DANI

But it is possible that she was confused. Scared. Felt alone. And after what happened at the party, no one can say for sure that they knew what she was thinking when she got behind the wheel and drove off.

ETHAN

So the school and everyone in it has the right to assume that she killed herself, because it what? Fits into the little drama queen narrative that they want to spin. Poor little rich girl couldn't handle the real world, so she runs her car off Mulholland drive because Mummy and Daddy didn't pay enough attention to her.

JERRY

Ummm...You forget, caught her boyfriend cheating on her with some girl from West Beverly.

BELLA

Tina Scarsdale. That Ho.

DANI

She was under a lot of pressure to get into Berkley. She had just bombed her mid-term. And her parents never made it easy on her. They had completely unrealistic expectations of her.

ETHAN

Like I said. The perfect Hollywood plot.

JERRY

So you think she really did commit suicide. Like for real.

DANI

I don't know. And we won't know for sure until after they finish the investigation.

BELLA

What's the difference whether she did or not? I don't see why everyone is making a federal case out of this. This is California, suicide is a rite of passage here. It's about as common as anorexia and fat burning pills. You think we'd used to it by now. Gawd this feels like some early nineties movie.

*Ethan gets really frustrated.*

ETHAN

She didn't kill herself all right! It's not possible.

BELLA

Anything is possible Ethan. Just because you don't want to believe it, doesn't make it not true.

JERRY

Yeah but, maybe Ethan's right. I mean, how bad would things have to get before you really considered going though with it?

*They all just look at each other. Then at themselves. Each of them is considering this thought. Bella appears the most shook by the question Jerry has just asked.*

JERRY

So what do we do now?

DANI

We wait for the counsellors. Listen to what they have to say. And then try to get on with our day.

ETHAN

That's not what he meant.

DANI

I know. But that's all we can do.

BELLA

So says you. I'm going for a manicure.

*They all just stare at her.*

What? It's a cure for bereavement.

*Bella proceeds to leave the room.*

JERRY

She's right. I'm not sticking around here waiting for some counsellor to talk to me and make me feel bad about myself. See you folks at the funeral.

*And with that, Jerry heads out the door.*

*The school bell rings.*

**FADE OUT.**

**SCENE 3. INT. CAFETERIA - DAY AFTER THE FUNERAL OF RUBY MORGAN.**

*A portrait of Ruby has been erected in the Cafeteria. It has become a place for students to honor her memory. Flowers have been laid all around the photo.*

*Ethan sits alone, in the corner of the cafeteria, just staring into his phone. He is still wearing all black.*

*Bella walks in holding a coffee. She also appears a bit more somber than we have seen her in the past.*

*She sees Ethan in the corner all alone, considers going up to him, instead resists the urge and finds a spot at a table close by.*

*Jerry walks in a bit worse for wear as well. He sees Bella and Ethan off in the corner. He opts to leave Ethan alone as well and sits closer to Bella.*

*Dani walks in behind them. She is carrying her school bag. And is dressed down from her usual polished style. She wears a faded Jean jacket with black leggings. She sits down and proceeds to take out a few books, or a book. She looks at everyone in the room and like the others, chooses to say nothing as well, instead she takes a pen from her bag, opens her notebook and begins to write on the page.*

*They all just sit in silence for a few moments. Then Bella looks up at Jerry. He looks a bit lost, helpless like a child looking for answers.*

BELLA

Why is he just staring at his phone?

JERRY

D'unno. Maybe he's reading something.

BELLA

I've watched people read before, they don't just stare. Do they?

JERRY

Not typically. Maybe he's thinking about something, while reading at the same time.

BELLA

He just looks weird. And look at her. Just going on as if nothing happened yesterday. Back to the same old Dani. Not a care in the world. Just her and her stupid studying. Gawd, doesn't she ever do anything but study?

JERRY

Its her thing. You know, like you and your cheering.

BELLA

I'm a cheerleader, thank you very much. And we don't just cheer. We engage the audience. We bring them out of their seats.

We entertain them, when guys like you can't seem to do anything much on the field except fumble the ball and lose games. If it wasn't for us, our student body wouldn't have to much to cheer about, now would they?

JERRY

I will have you know, that it was raining last game and that ball was extra slippery. Its not as easy as I make it look.

BELLA

Oh you don't make it look easy at all.

JERRY

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Long beat.

BELLA

I miss her.

JERRY

What? Who?

BELLA

Seriously?

JERRY

Oh. Sorry. Yeah. Me too.

BELLA

She always new how to make me smile. And not the fake kind that I do for pretty much everyone else around here. The real kind . The kind that makes you feel warm and safe inside. Like you know a friend is listening to you and really cares about you. (Pause) I didn't think it would be like that.

JERRY

You didn't think what would be like that, having a friend? Well its actually a complicated thing to understand really. Like why are we friends with some people and not others even though...

Bella cuts him off.

BELLA

I meant the funeral. It was beautiful.

JERRY

Oh.

*Jerry looks at her as for the first time. There is something different about Bella today. They share a smile together.*

BELLA

It was, right? It wasn't just me? It was somehow, horrible and sad and even devastating, yet beautiful, at the same time.

DANI

Yeah. It was.

*They both turn to notice Dani looking at them. She is no longer writing in her book.*

*Tears forming in her eyes.*

DANI

She was my best friend. Probably my only real friend. And now she's gone. And all I have to show for it, is some stupid photos and a jacket I borrowed from her 2 years ago that never returned. I kept telling her I was busy. I was prepping for finals. That we would talk when I had some more time, that right now I just had to buckle down and focus. Harvard wasn't gonna wait for anyone. Not even Ruby. She tried to tell me she was having problems. That her parents were really on her. That Jason was always acting like a jerk. And all I heard was blah, blah, blah, same old Ruby. Just looking for attention. I mean what did she have to worry about right? Her parents are rich. I have a scholarship I'm working my ass off to get. There are no free rides for me. Gawd, I am so selfish. I didn't even try to listen. What kind of friend am I?

JERRY`

You can't blame yourself. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't anyone's fault. It was an accident. It happens everyday all over the world. Maybe we all could have been better friends? Maybe we all should be better friends to each other. But how fair is it to blame us for something that she may or may not have been going through. Were not doctors. How could we possibly know what she was going through?

DANI

Because she tried to tell us.

BELLA

And we didn't listen.

DANI

We are probably the most selfish people we know.

*Bella hears this. It finally hits home. She takes a breath.*

BELLA

When I went in for my nose corrective surgery.

JERRY

Shut up!. Wait. Your nose isn't real?

BELLA

My nose is real. (Deflecting) It was more of a nose corrective... (beat) Oh Shit! Who am I kidding. I had a nose job alright. So I wasn't born perfect. Does that make you feel better?

JERRY

I didn't mean...

*Bella suddenly gets very defensive. Years of anxiety finally bubbles to the surface.*

BELLA

You didn't mean what? That you don't stare at me when I walk in the room, like every other guy in school? You think looking like this comes easy. I waste all my time trying to look perfect for everyone. Especially for dumb jocks like you, who just want to use me and throw me away. And its exhausting! Keeping up with trends. Always dressing to impress. I spend more hours shopping, than she probably spends studying. And don't even get me started on my social media life. Its a 24 hr job that demands all my attention.

But Ruby... was...special.

She was the only person I've ever really trusted. She was always there for me. (Pause) When I told her I was going go in to have my nose fixed, she never judged me once, or told me I was crazy. She said, 'Bella, I think your beautiful just the way you are, but if this is what you want to do, I'll come with you.' We went to see the surgeon with my Mom over summer break before Freshman year of High school. I wish I would've let her talk me out of it, because that's the summer everything changed. Bella the Hottie was born. And Ruby and Isabella became a memory. Freshman year, doors opened like I had a magic wand; all the girls wanted to be me, and the all boys lined up just to be close to me. And Ruby just stood by watching me turn into this... Thing! But Like a real friend, she tried to tell me how awful I had become, but who was I going to listen too? Ruby? Or my Social Status? So I pushed her further and further away. When I saw her run out of the party that night, I didn't think twice about it. You're right. I am such horrible person.

My Image has become my life and its killing me. What I would do to be more like him. To not care about anyone or anything.

*She is referring to Ethan. He looks up briefly, but doesn't say anything.*

Maybe if I was a real friend like Ruby was to me... maybe she...

DANI

Bella, this wasn't your fault and I can't believe I'm gonna say this, but she meant a lot to all of us. Even if we never admitted it. She was that type of friend we all need, but never realize it till its too late. She was my best friend and I couldn't see it. Maybe I didn't want to see it. Didn't want to believe it.

*Jerry has an agonizing realization*

JERRY

But what if your both right? Like, if we didn't see it because we were so caught up in our own selfish bull shit that we weren't really listening to our so called friends problems, then were pretty horrible people. But if we didn't want too see it? Or turned a blind eye, doesn't that make us even worse? On the football team my job is to protect the quarterbacks blind side. To see the things he can't see coming. To look out for him when he gets to far away from the safety of the pocket. If he gets blind sided, the coach rips into me, not him, because it was my job to see it coming, not his. Don't we owe it to our friends to have their blind side for them?

ETHAN

Huh. If only.

DANI

Ethan its not your fault. How were you supposed to know she was going to drive her car off a cliff that night? You weren't even at the party.

*We reveal what Ethan has been staring at the whole time. A photo with a picture of Ethan and Ruby together in a photo booth. Big grins and candy apples in hand. Taken a few years earlier when they were in middle school. The caption on the photo reads: "Friends Forever."*

ETHAN

You mean, the party where she got blind sided. That is Jerry's point isn't it?

*They all look at him confused.*



She called me out of the blue that night. Asked me if I could come and pick her up. She said she had been drinking, and was afraid to call her Dad. She didn't want him to catch her drunk. She had promised them that it had stopped.

BELLA

What had stopped?

ETHAN

The drinking. Her family had to put her in rehab for a weeks after the Christmas Holidays. Apparently Jason and Ruby painted the town Christmas red and drove Ruby's car into some tennis courts at the Boulevard Club, where she and her family are members.

DANI

Wait. She said that she was staying in Hawaii for a few extra weeks with her family. An extended holiday vacation she said. I had no idea. She didn't tell me.

JERRY

She obviously didn't want anyone to know.

BELLA

Or maybe she did?

ETHAN

Ruby was arrested for destruction of private property. And she was terrified that she just blew her chances of getting into Berkley University. But her dads a high ranking member of the club, and convinced them not to press charges on the condition that Ruby would get counselling and the family would pay for all repairs. The party was the first time Ruby had been in out in over 3 months and she lied to her parents just to go . She told them that she had to finish a project at a friends house. Her mom dropped her off at Karen's I think, and that was time she saw her.

Ruby and Jason after the accident had started to drift and she was dead set on seeing him that night, hoping to rekindle what she called "the magic." When she caught him kissing Tina at the party I guess she just snapped. I tried to tell her that Jason wasn't worth the tears. That she deserved someone better than him. But she just kept crying. Saying that it was all her fault. That she should have known better. She keep saying "what a dumb little girl she could be". She was hysterical. I said I would come pick her up as soon as I could, but my band was still playing over on Melrose. How was I supposed to know? I calmed her down a bit and she agreed to wait. That was the last time I heard her voice.

*Dani appears even more crushed than before.*

DANI

I thought I was her best friend? I thought she told me everything?

BELLA

Maybe she was afraid to tell you. Afraid of the Dani judgement. Your moral standards can be pretty high and a bit, how do I say this? Condemning.

DANI

But I would've understood. I would have supported her. I would've...

JERRY

Wait. How do you know all this?

DANI

Because he was Ruby's neighbor.

JERRY

You knew?

DANI

Still catching up huh? She was my best friend Jerry. Unlike most of you, I actually hung out with Ruby. And occasionally, I'd see Goth boy over here step out of his lair.

ETHAN

Ruby and me... we've known each other since we were four. As kids we were inseparable. We played all day everyday together. Then...I turned into a boy and...she turned into a girl and things got weird. She started hanging out with her girl friends and I withdrew to my basement and my guitar.

*Bella picks up on something unsaid.*

BELLA

Did you and Ruby ever.

ETHAN

No.

BELLA

But you...

ETHAN

Yes.

BELLA

And...

ETHAN

I never got the chance.

BELLA

Gawd. Boys. When will you learn. Just say the damn words.

JERRY

Are you serious. You. Ruby. Really. Wow. Dude. Shit! You want me to kick Jason's ass for you? It would make me feel way better right now! I mean that jerk did...

DANI

What most boys his age do. He broke up with a girl after they both got drunk and arrested. He was a jerk that's for sure, but he never beat Ruby. He never abused her. He just wasn't the best boyfriend. He's seventeen and self-absorbed just like the rest of us. That's not a crime.

JERRY

So... do you think she did it on purpose?

ETHAN

I don't know. But there's ways of killing yourself without killing yourself.\*

*Everyone goes silent at the thought of what Ethan just said.*

JERRY

What now?

DANI

I don't know. I've never been here before. I don't what comes next.

BELLA

When we see each other tomorrow in halls, do you think will say hi to each other?

*They all just kind of stare at each other not sure how to answer. Something has changed between them. Their not strangers anymore. Maybe its the Ruby effect. A slight smile comes to their faces.*

*Bella gets up and walks over to the portrait of Ruby that was erected in the Cafeteria. The rest of them follow close behind. Ethan is the last to join.*

BELLA

I'm sorry Ruby. I wish I had been a better friend.

DANI

I wish I would have listened more.

JERRY

I wish I could have protected you.

ETHAN

I wish I told you... I love you.

END PLAY.

Need to put some facts about teenage suicide, teen  
alcoholism - #WeNeedToTalk

\*Tony Manero - Saturday Night Fever