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I've learned a lot in the past thirteen years. Not just like...  $1 + 1 = 2$  stuff, but like the important stuff. I've learned that you never trust your brother's best friend with your favourite pair of earrings. I've learned that your mom is like a built-in best friend, except when it's your day to do the dishes. I've learned that you'll make a bunch of new friends when you get a new scooter, but they'll only last until it breaks. I've learnt that sometimes a hug cures more than Tylenol 3 ever could.

Some lessons have been easy to learn, like even though sweet potatoes aren't potatoes, they call them sweet POTATOES for a reason. I've learned I can't tell what colors clash with each other, and that making someone happy makes you feel amazing. I've learned that iPods and water don't mix, and neither do all-nighters and babysitting at 8 am.

Other lessons have been harder. Like it's fun looking at open houses, pretending which room would be yours; until you're moving out and have to actually pick which room you want. I've learned it doesn't matter if you're seven or seventeen, you will still cry when your hamster dies. I've learned that when you find out your best friends are moving, it doesn't matter where they move, it will still seem like a million miles away.

I've learned that love exists. The Disney movies have it right. You have to slay a dragon or two and push a couple evil witches off the cliff first, but Prince Charming is out there. And he's worth it.

I've learned that some haircuts will look good on every single person in the world, except me. I've learned that you can't please everyone, no matter how hard you try. I've learned that the only way I could put eye-liner on and look acceptable, is if I was dressing up as a raccoon.

I've learned that it's easy to let everyone walk all over you, but the second you stand up for yourself is the same second the fight begins. I've learned that those stories you hear about bullying on the internet actually happens. And it hurts as much as they say.

I've learned that sometimes the people you think are your best friends don't know you at all. I've learned that most of the people who gossip to you, also gossip about you. I've learned that when boys are involved, some girls have no shame. I've learned sometimes girls break your heart just as well as any boy could. Even better. Because your girls are the ones you think will love you through everything. You think all those little quotes about growing old and racing each other in nursing home wheelchairs are gonna apply to you, because whenever you're together, you laugh until you cry and you stay awake all night talking to each other. You're always there when they need a friend, and you've given them everything. But sometimes you can't be standing strong all the time, sometimes you have to fall. Hard. That's when you find out who your real friends are, because some would drop everything to catch you... others will look away and pretend not to notice you ever fell. And then I guarantee a boy will come along. He might be there for a couple days, or for the rest of your life. He might not even know that he's there, but you talk about him constantly so he's just as much a part of you as the air you breathe. But you might not find the friends who will like that you have found someone who you can't pass a minute without talking about. Where every waking moment he's on your mind, and the first time you ever wake up crying is when you dreamed they got hurt. Sure some say you should put your friends first, but a real friend would never make you choose.

I've learned that people change. The people you first thought were crazy can end up being your best friends. The people you thought were your best friends will end up not even looking at you in the hallway. The boy you thought would never like you ends up falling in love with you. The girl who you thought would never change, changed. The person who you couldn't stand becomes the only girl you trust. The shy girl who asked to sit beside you on the first day of high school will become the one you have a thousand message thread on Facebook with. The person you barely talked to because you were both too shy becomes the one screaming your name on graduation day. The one you thought was your best friend finds better friends. The friends that live a million miles away are girls closest to your heart. I've learned that best friends can become strangers.

But most of all, I learned that life is what you make it. You have to keep your head held high, but not too high or you won't see the pile of shit you're about to step in. It doesn't matter if you get 60%, 90% or even 22% on a math quiz, in the long run none of that matters. What matters is that you had enough character to smile and be proud of yourself. Or vow to try better next time. People don't want friends because they got 96% on the Biology 11 final, they want friends who would be willing to come over and study together. And then end up watching TV and eating ice cream. True friends don't judge you by your report card, your paycheque, or how many Lululemon sweatshirts you have. They judge you on your character. They judge you on the size of your heart. When I'm old and decrepit, I don't want to be racing wheelchairs in the nursing home with someone who I wasn't good enough for in high school, or someone who hung out with me because they had nothing better to do. I want to be with the person who told me that they loved me for me. All my faults. All my flaws. All my crazy 11 hours of doing nothing but playing Sims and eating Cheerios. Sometimes the hardest person to be is yourself, but someday someone will fall in love with that version of you. Anyone can be somebody, but only you can be you. And it's up to you to make that person extraordinary.