

Elizabeth came to me yesterday and sat me down in order to relay the events of the sleepover I had missed. Elizabeth was known for her cheery nature and elasticlike energy but that day it seemed as if her elasticity was stretching into a new, unfamiliar territory. A territory where instead of a peaceful meadow that was wide awake with animal chatter and bright yellow flowers, it was a forest that was flaming with fallen branches and seared stumps. I could tell by the way she oriented herself when she sat down she was fuming. Concerned, I immediately asked her what was wrong. It wasn't too surprising by the timing but still shocking to hear the only other participant of the sleepover's name come out in a hardened and distasteful tone: *Lizzy*.

The following retelling of events painted Lizzy in a light that was uncharacteristic and shallow. That wasn't the Lizzy that I knew of. I wasn't sure what happened at that sleepover but it really couldn't have been how Elizabeth portrayed it. Ever since they had met each other, with mirroring traits like their names and their kindness, they always balanced each other out. Elizabeth was energetic, bubbly, always stretching her face into a beaming smile or a musical laugh. She leaped into situations and treated the world as her harmonic meadow, petting animals and smelling all of the bright and colorful flowers along the way. Lizzy would've pet those animals too had she shared the same enthusiasm. Lizzy wasn't a bitter person by any means but her calm happiness paled in comparison to the tidal wave of joy Elizabeth exhibited. Her smile brightened up her face and her laugh added even more life to her composure. She had a demeanor that could easily sway into excitement and happiness but also calm, cool, collectedness that turned her face into a serious terrain of furrowed brows and pursed lips. It was no secret that she could easily sway into different emotional modes but Lizzy was an empath; it was natural. What Elizabeth was describing was a computer that hadn't yet been programmed to pick up on emotions or visual cues.

It just didn't make sense.

So today, when Lizzy came up to me during recess while Elizabeth was working on a group project inside, I was eager to hear her side of the story. Lizzy sat criss-cross applesauce on the bench and fiddled with her hands as she furrowed her brow and softly spoke about that night. Her story mirrored Elizabeth's but was definitely not the same one. And when she uttered our friend's name, her tone, like Elizabeth's, was hardened, not with anger or distrust, but with frustration and confusion. Lizzy too had conflicting thoughts toward Elizabeth, and though her retelling was needed, it wasn't as relieving as I'd hoped. Neither one of them had the same memory or conclusion of that night. And both of them were hurt by it.

"Kate, what do I do?" Lizzy finished desperately. I thought about this answer for a moment. I sat there quietly while Lizzy waited both patiently

and expectantly for my advice. We each served different roles in this friendship. While Elizabeth was the ball of energy, Lizzy the calm but excited empath, I was the mediator. I brought the energy level down when necessary and eagerly took the lead to bring spirits back up when the two of them were unable. I was the level-headed and down to earth source of input. I could survive in Elizabeth's meadow, I could occasionally ride the waves of emotion that Lizzy nearly always understood, I could handle being alone or with others. I was an adapter, aameleon, a shapeshifter. I could form myself to fit in their environments, all whilst surviving droughts and storms through my own. But being resilient didn't mean I was without faults. I took a while to think. Sometimes too long. I had to think through a myriad of different possibilities before I was finally able to give Lizzy advice I was confident in.

When I zoned back into the light breeze of our recess field, the swaying of the trees, and locked eyes with Lizzy, she sat on the edge of her seat.

"I think it's time we go talk to her. And you hear each other out." Lizzy's face fell and she looked away.

"I told you, I tried. I don't know what I did and I don't know why she was acting so weird..."

"It's been a few days. You've both had time to process and decompress. To really think about what happened. I think you'll be much more apt in clarifying all the night's miscommunications." Lizzy still didn't look too thrilled but was somewhat put at ease by my explanation. We invited Elizabeth to Lizzy's house later that night, where hopefully, we could settle this once and for all. As I expected, Elizabeth agreed and promptly arrived at the house at 6:30. Lizzy was too nervous so I offered to open the front door and lead Elizabeth up to her room.

"I don't know if I like being back here," Elizabeth muttered, glancing around uneasily.

"We've been here plenty of times. It was one night. I'm sure after we talk things through it'll make more sense and you'll feel right at home again," I reasoned.

"I sure hope so."

"Hi Elizabeth," Lizzy waved shyly as I shut the door behind us. "Can we talk about things?"

"That's why I'm here, isn't it?" Elizabeth agreed, settling on the soft beige carpet. "Look, I'm sorry. I don't really understand what happened."

"I feel the same way. Kate said our stories don't match."

To our surprise, Elizabeth smirked.

"Sorry," she chuckled. "That just made me feel a lot better. What did you think happened?" She started. She and Lizzy began a conversation about all the mishaps of the sleepover, settling points of confusion and dispute.