

## Reunion

The windowpane was cold against my cheek. It was late December and the scenery outside was coated in snow. Like a gingerbread house with powdered sugar sprinkled on top. That comparison made my stomach Rumble and I turned away for my winter wonderland to face the rest of the train car that housed my family. "Do we have any more cookies?" I asked Little girl sitting Beside me. August swung her legs kicking the heels of her boots against the back of her seat. She grinned an impish gap-tooth grin back at me. "We did but then I got hungry," She said looking all innocent and angelic. She didn't fool me for a second. "You can have food when we get to Ama's house. She always makes the best Mashed potatoes" Said my mother who was sitting across from me. "Also August, you shouldn't eat so much sugar before dinner you'll be jumping off the walls when we get there." August smiled and continued swinging her legs like 'you bet!' My mom, my two little siblings, and I were on a 4-Hour train to Irvington New York to visit my grandma [ Ama ] for the holidays. Since my iPad I died a long time ago I've been spending the last hour watching the view speed past outside my window and listening to August who is 7 and Griffin who is 8, bicker about everything from shoes, to who gets which bed in Ama's blue guest room. They were driving me insane with their high-pitched whiny voices. "Hey! Where is Moose?" Said August standing up. Moose is August's stuffed giraffe that she carries everywhere. Why she decided to name the giraffe moose, I have no clue. She turned her big blue eyes that were filling with tears to me. " Julia? Did you t-take moose?" She whimpers " No no! Of course not. I'm sure it's around here somewhere..." I trail off. Oh no. I found moose. He's resting under

Griffin, who is sleeping's head. I tried to avert my eyes before August noticed but she caught it. "GRIFFIN! YOU TOOK MOOSE??!!" She howls. Then she yanked moose out from griffins head so hard, Griffin wakes up and konks his head on the hard wooden bench. He starts to cry. Then Mom reaches over to comfort him and I lunge to grab August who's raising moose above her head to whack Griffin. The whole train car erupts into pandemonium. Story of My Life.

When we get off the train, we see Uncle Mark Waiting by his car for us. He smiles and waves. I look at Mom for an explanation. We're supposed to be the only ones visiting. She smiled sheepishly and said "Oh right! I forgot to tell you. Your aunt Cam's mom, who they were planning on visiting for Christmas, had to go to the hospital and couldn't house them. They decided to visit Ama instead! Isn't that wonderful?" I groan. I haven't seen Uncle Mark, Aunt Cam, and my cousin's Clementine, Haley, Turner, and Zoe for almost four years now but I remember the last time I saw them like it was yesterday.

That year there was an unfortunate accident that involved a blowtorch, some hair, and a smoke detector. I still haven't gotten over the trauma. We approached Uncle Mark and Mom gave him a hug. " Selene! It's been too long!" says Uncle Mark and his low musical voice. "I agree! This will be a nice family reunion, I think" agrees mom. I peered through the tinted windows of the car as stealthily as I can. Phew, there didn't seem to be anyone inside. Uncle Mark Herded us through the car doors and then got in himself. He hit the gas and soon enough we were speeding along. The snow really did make everything look picturesque. The rows and rows of the identical houses looked exactly like Ama's house. Wait a minute! "Mom? There are only three guest rooms in Ama's tiny house. where will we all sleep? " Uncle Mark and mom shared a look. THE look.

The look that meant something bad was going to happen. "Well sweetheart," started mom. Uh oh. She's breaking out the "sweetheart". I'm in serious trouble." Your uncle and I thought that maybe since you haven't seen your cousins since you were, what? 10? You might want to, well I don't know, room with them? "said Mom looking straight ahead through the windshield. "what?! Share a room with all four of them? " "No no Julia. Just the two girls and Auggie of course" she said, still not meeting my eyes.

"Haley, Turner, and Griffin will sleep in a different guest room while Mark and Cam will sleep in the remaining one. I'll sleep on the couch in the living room. It'll be fun! You'll see." I did not see. Haley and Turner were 16 and 17 years old which meant there was a huge age gap between them and Griffin. Zoe and Clementine were around my age (13 and 14) but I remember us not getting along at all before. And August? Ugh.

We pulled up to Ama's small gray house just as a Sprinkle of snow began to fall. As I open the car door Ama herself came out of her house being pushed in her wheelchair by aunt Cam who was beaming that movie star smile I remembered from the last time I saw her. Ama wore her black hair cropped short and I could see strands of gray scattered around. She wore her usual turtleneck and black pants and had a shawl wrapped around her shoulders. She spread her arms out for a hug and Auggie and Griffin sprung over to embrace her. "my loves! I've missed you so much ! " she said. I stayed back to give the little kids their time. Then I rushed over after they were done.

"My Julia!" exclaimed Ama as she wrapped her arms around me. "My girl! You've grown since the last time I saw you!" I grinned and said, "I missed you so much Ama!" I moved back to let Mom have her time to greet Ama. I rushed back to grab my suitcase, but someone had beaten to the job. " Hey, cuz!" said Haley tugging my suitcase out of the

trunk. "Long time no see." Haley is my oldest cousin on both sides at 17. He skipped a grade so he's already enrolled at Harvard University. I gave him an awkward half-hug. The kind that cousins who haven't seen each other in a million years and weren't very close, to begin with, do. I took my camo patterned suitcase from him and started rolling it to the house. Then something wet and hard hit me in the back. I slowly turned around. It came at me like lightning. Boom! Slushie snowball to the face. I shrieked and stumbled back, wiping stinging snow out of my eyes. I heard laughing to my left and whirled to face my attacker. Three kids were bent over laughing their heads off. Turner, Zoe, and Clementine. I furiously scooped up some snow from a nearby bush and hurled it in their Direction. The ball hit Clementine Square in the chest and she looked up. "Hey!" she yelled. But I almost didn't hear her. I was laughing too hard. The time after that was a blur. Almost the entire family got involved in the snowball fight. Everyone except Ama, of course, who cheered us on and Booed at us when we played dirty. Auggy Tackled Turner and violently smushed snowballs down his shirt. Mom hid behind the car and popped out to sock passerby with her stacked snow. I was determined to hit Haley since he was the only one not wet, and ended up chasing him around for half an hour before I caught him in the back of the head. The first time the Kane family had been together in 4 years and this is how we started it. Soon the sky got dark and we, sopping wet and exhausted, trooped inside Ama's house. I was walking with my new roommate Clementine. "Hey," She said "I'm sorry about hitting you in the face earlier. I was aiming for your shoulder I swear. I smiled and said "likewise, but it's okay. if you didn't, this never would have happened". I gestured to the room we were standing in, the living room. Everyone was laughing, joking, and recounting especially funny attacks.

You can tell we're related by looking at us because we have the same deep olive skin and Raven hair (though Auggie and Griffin's is a bit lighter because of their age].

Clementine and I looked especially alike. We could have passed as sisters. I suspected this was because my mom and her dad we're identical twins. I pulled off my jacket. "Oh, want help with your suitcase?" asked Zoe popping up in front of me. Her cheeks were rosy red due to one-to-many snowballs in the face. "yeah, that would be great" I replied.

"OMG Julia. You need to see the room we're sharing. Ama had it redone last summer and it's so cool " said Clementine, grabbing my elbow. "Cool, I can't wait," I said. And I meant it. As I follow my cousin's up the narrow creaky staircase one thought entered my mind. Huh, maybe this family reunion won't be so bad after all. I didn't notice the Two Sisters wink at each other as they guided me up the stairs.