The Cluster of Queens By Kara

When I was twelve years old, my desire for popularity was fierce. More than anything, I wanted to be friends with Maddy, Annie, Jessi, and Erica. They were so cool, and so stylish, and so beautiful. They always had perfectly straightened hair, neatly polished nails, and impeccable lip gloss. They were allowed to hang out at the basketball courts WITHOUT their parents after school. They talked on their phones - obviously, their parents didn't stick to the "cell phones are for emergencies only" rule! - for hours each night. They hung out at each other's houses on the weekends, sharing clothes and giving each other mani/pedis. They were the best of friends, walking around the school yard and sitting in the cafeteria in a tight cluster, whispering and giggling. And, more than anything in the world, I wanted in that cluster!

Now, some might wonder, "Well, why not just go on up and talk to them? Just be their friend?" Oh, if only it were that simple! You see, Maddy, Annie, Jessi, and Erica were the queens of our school, the most popular girls in the history of EVER! But, they were also mean to the core! They had no problem calling others "ugly," "fat," or "stupid." They threw around the word "loser" like quarterbacks throw footballs. One day they would convince you to divulge your secret crush, swearing "not to tell a soul," and then the next day they'd go blabbing to everyone on the playground the name you shared. They'd point out when people's teeth were crooked, their hair was greasy, or when someone was sporting a big zit on their chin. Truly, these girls were pure evil. Everyone hated them. Everyone was terrified of them. And EVERYONE wanted more than ANYTHING to be their friend!

Until 6th grade, my best friend in the world was Addison Halsbruck. We had been inseparable since were five years old. We went from playing with our dolls, to playing Barbies, to playing Justin Bieber as loud as we could in my bedroom after school. We were the best of friends, "sisters" even, as we liked to say. And we were always going to be, as we often planned to be in each other's weddings. Yes, we were inseparable, always together, always the best of friends. And then, one day, we weren't and I am afraid to say that it was all my fault.

It started out innocently enough. Maddy and I were in line next to each other in the cafeteria. She made a casual remark about liking my new watch. I said I loved her new sneakers. She said she thought she failed the math test. I made a funny comment about our math teacher's buck teeth. Maddy laughed. Before I even knew what was happening, I found myself having an actual conversation with one of the queens! And that's when it happened. One minute we were talking sneakers and math tests, and then the next minute, I was spilling my guts about how Addison was secretly crushing on Erica's boyfriend, Joe. The Cluster of Queens (cont.) By Kara

"Are you serious?!?" she said to me angrily. "You have to come with me," she demanded as she dragged me over to her fellow queens. "Girls! Listen to this!" Maddy yelled as we approached the table. "Tell them!" she barked to me.

And so, for the next 20 minutes, I sold out my best friend, telling my new "friends" how she doodles "Addison + Joe 4ever!" on the inside cover of her vocabulary notebook, and how she has to use a special dandruff shampoo from a doctor, and how she still likes to play Barbies sometimes when no one else was around. It was pure word vomit coming out of my mouth. "What are you doing?" a voice questioned inside my head. "Shut up! This is our ticket to popularity!"

A short time later, I watched with Jessi and Erica from across the school yard as Maddy and Annie when over to confront Addison. I watched them twist up their faces and point their fingers at her. I watched Addison's look of confusion turn to embarrassment and then fear, as she realized every secret she had ever told me was now being broadcasted on the playground for everyone to hear. I watched her shoulders heave and tears stream down her red face. I watched as she ran to the teacher on duty and ask to go inside to the nurse. I watched as my best friend realized that her best friend had just tossed away seven years of friendship for lunch with a bunch of mean girls.

Throughout middle school, I have made and lost a hundred friends. I have made girls cry and I have been brought to tears more times than I'd like to remember by a slew of mean girls. I have spread rumors and have had gossip spread like wildfire about me. I have done awful things for popularity's sake and have been the sacrificial lamb in someone else's quest for being queen. I have done it all and have had it all done to me ten-fold in return. And as a result, I have learned that while popularity feels amazing at the time, it's not dependable. It comes and goes, waxes and wanes like the stages of the moon. But good friends, the friends who will visit you in the hospital when your appendix ruptures and you need surgery. The friends who will listen as you cry about your parents' divorce. The friends who will come and hold your hand at your grandpa's funeral because they know how devastated you are. The friends you can count on to keep your secrets. THOSE friends, those dependable friends, are few and far between, and if you are lucky enough to find one, nothing is worth trading them for, not even lunch with a cluster of queens.



The Cluster of Queens (cont.) By Kara

"Are you serious?!?" she said to me angrily. "You have to come with me," she demanded as she dragged me over to her fellow queens. "Girls! Listen to this!" Maddy yelled as we approached the table. "Tell them!" she barked to me. And so, for the next 20 minutes, I sold out my best friend, telling my new "friends" how she doodles "Addison + Joe 4ever!" on the inside cover of her vocabulary notebook, and how she has to use a special dandruff shampoo from a doctor, and how she still likes to play Barbies sometimes when no one else was around. It was pure word vomit coming out of my mouth. "What are you doing?" a voice questioned inside my head. "Shut up! This is our ticket to popularity!"

A short time later, I watched with Jessi and Erica from across the school yard as Maddy and Annie when over to confront Addison. I watched them twist up their faces and point their fingers at her. I watched Addison's look of confusion turn to embarrassment and then fear, as she realized every secret she had ever told me was now being broadcasted on the playground for everyone to hear. I watched her shoulders heave and tears stream down her red face. I watched as she ran to the teacher on duty and ask to go inside to the nurse. I watched as my best friend realized that her best friend had just tossed away seven years of friendship for lunch with a bunch of mean girls.

Throughout middle school, I have made and lost a hundred friends. I have made girls cry and I have been brought to tears more times than I'd like to remember by a slew of mean girls. I have spread rumors and have had gossip spread like wildfire about me. I have done awful things for popularity's sake and have been the sacrificial lamb in someone else's quest for being queen. I have done it all and have had it all done to me ten-fold in return. And as a result, I have learned that while popularity feels amazing at the time, it's not dependable. It comes and goes, waxes and wanes like the stages of the moon. But good friends, the friends who will visit you in the hospital when your appendix ruptures and you need surgery. The friends who will listen as you cry about your parents' divorce. The friends who will come and hold your hand at your grandpa's funeral because they know how devastated you are. The friends you can count on to keep your secrets. THOSE friends, those dependable friends, are few and far between, and if you are lucky enough to find one, nothing is worth trading them for, not even lunch with a cluster of queens.

www.musingsfromthemiddleschool.blogspot.com

Jenna Smith 2015



The Cluster of Queens By Kara

When I was twelve years old, my desire for popularity was fierce. More than anything, I wanted to be friends with Maddy, Annie, Jessi, and Erica. They were so cool, and so stylish, and so beautiful. They always had perfectly straightened hair, neatly polished nails, and impeccable lip gloss. They were allowed to hang out at the basketball courts WITHOUT their parents after school. They talked on the phones – obviously, their parents didn't stick to the "cell phones are for emergencies only" rule! – for hours each night. They hung out at each other's houses on the weekends, sharing clothes and giving each other mani/pedis. They were the best of friends, walking around the school yard and sitting in the cafeteria in a tight cluster, whispering and giggling. And, more than anything in the world, I wanted in that cluster!

Now, some might wonder, "Well, why not just go on up and talk to them? Just be their friend?" Oh, if only it were that simple! You see, Maddy, Annie, Jessi, and Erica were the queens of our school, the most popular girls in the history of EVER! But, they were also mean to the core! They had no problem calling others "ugly," "fat," or "stupid." They threw around the word "loser" like quarterbacks throw footballs. One day they would convince you to divulge your secret crush, swearing "not to tell a soul," and then the next day they'd go blabbing to everyone on the playground the name you shared. They'd point out when people's teeth were crooked, their hair was greasy, or when someone was sporting a big zit on their chin. Truly, these girls were pure evil. Everyone hated fhem. Everyone was terrified of them. And EVERYONE wanted more than ANYTHING to be their friend!

Until 6th grade, my best friend in the world was Addison Halsbruck. We had been inseparable since were five years old. We went from playing with our dolls, to playing Barbies, to playing Justin Bieber as loud as we could in my bedroom after school. We were the best of friends, "sisters" even, as we liked to say. And we were always going to be, as we often planned to be in each other's weddings. Yes, we were inseparable, always together, always the best of friends. And then, one day, we weren't and I am afraid to say that it was all my fault.

It started out innocently enough. Maddy and I were in line next to each other in the cafeteria. She made a casual remark about liking my new watch. I said I loved her new sneakers. She said she thought she failed the math test. I made a funny comment about our math teacher's buck teeth. Maddy laughed. Before I even knew what was happening, I found myself having an actual conversation with one of the queens! And that's when it happened. One minute we were talking sneakers and math tests, and then the next minute, I was spilling my guts about how Addison was secretly crushing on Erica's boyfriend, Joe.

© Jenna Smith 2015

www.musingsfromthemiddleschool.blogspot.com

The Cluster of Queens (cont.) By Kara

"Are you serious?!?" she said to me angrily. "You have to come with me," she demanded as she dragged me over to her fellow queens. "Girls! Listen to this!" Maddy yelled as we approached the table. "Tell them!" she barked to me.

And so, for the next 20 minutes, I sold out my best friend, telling my new "friends" how she doodles "Addison + Joe 4ever!" on the inside cover of her vocabulary notebook, and how she has to use a special dandruff shampoo from a doctor, and how she still likes to play Barbies sometimes when no one else was around. It was pure word vomit coming out of my mouth. "What are you doing?" a voice questioned inside my head. "Shut up! This is our ticket to popularity!" another voice roared back.

A short time later, I watched with Jessi and Erica from across the school yard as Maddy and Annie when over to confront Addison. I watched them twist up their faces and point their fingers at her. I watched Addison's look of confusion turn to embarrassment and then fear, as she realized every secret she had ever told me was now being broadcasted on the playground for everyone to hear. I watched her shoulders heave and tears stream down her red face. I watched as she ran to the teacher on duty and ask to go inside to the nurse. I watched as my best friend realized that her best friend had just tossed away seven years of friendship for lunch with a bunch of mean girls.

Throughout middle school, I have made and lost a hundred friends. I have made girls cry and I have been brought to tears more times than I'd like to remember by a slew of mean girls. I have spread rumors and have had gossip spread like wildfire about me. I have done awful things for popularity's sake and have been the sacrificial lamb in someone else's quest for being queen. I have done it all and have had it all done to me ten-fold in return. And as a result, I have learned that while popularity feels amazing at the time, it's not dependable. It comes and goes, waxes and wanes like the stages of the moon. But good friends, the friends who will visit you in the hospital when your appendix ruptures and you need surgery. The friends who will listen as you cry about your parents' divorce. The friends who will come and hold your hand at your grandpa's funeral because they know how devastated you are. The friends you can count on to keep your secrets. THOSE friends, those dependable friends, are few and far between, and if you are lucky enough to find one, nothing is worth trading them for, not even lunch with a cluster of queens.

© Jenna Smith 2015

www.musingsfromthemiddleschool.blogspot.com



