
Shouts and laughter swarm the stuffy school bus. Balls of paper soar across heads, some landing in seats, others crashing into the floor. Candy wrappers litter the rocking bus, sloshing like water. Shimi bobs up and down next to me, her hand reaching out, opening and closing as the paper flies past her.

"She must look fantastic! She looks like a pig yesterday," Kristy laughs as she scrolls through hundreds of photos and videos, each of the little squares covered with a picture of Ruby and a heart.

"She looks a little bloated."

Kristy stares at Shimi, "Well...it could be because of the chocolate."

They lurch forward; the bus halts in front of Kristy's house. Feet smushing the paper balls, she skips down stairs, landing on the concrete. Wheels squeal behind her as the school bus drives away, brushing Kristy's mailbox. In the distance, another vehicle grumbles.

Kristy tiptoes inside her house, yanking off her shoes, tossing her backpack aside, scrambling to the laundry room, slipping and sliding on the cold floor. Gripping the wall, she stops; the fibers in her socks catch on the cracks between the wood. She blinks. An empty plastic box lingers in front of the washing machine. No bedding. No water bottles. No Ruby. No smiling around the table. No lifeless furniture peering back at Kristy. When she whimpers, her fingers clench, gasping like she's lying on the floor. She looks at the clock. It says 1:00. She looks at the door. It's open. She looks at the floor. It's clean. She looks at the ceiling. It's white. She looks at the walls. They're yellow. She looks at the windows. They're dirty. She looks at the door. It's open. She looks at the floor. It's clean. She looks at the ceiling. It's white. She looks at the walls. They're yellow. She looks at the windows. They're dirty.