



**MONOCLES &
SOPHISTICATION**

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{ *an excerpt from* }

SLEEP DEPRIVED

By *Madeleine Felder*

My life is like a broken record. A cliché, I know. But my day repeats over and over and over again. Today is Monday. Waking up at five-thirty in the morning is killer but my body's used to it. I climb out of my warm bed, my feet slipping on the cool wood. It's late fall in California so it's pretty cold. I walk from my room and into the kitchen to fix myself a breakfast of granola, my stomach growls for more like it always does. But like always I ignore it. I make my lunch, which contains a PB and J sandwich that's going to be squished to a pulp before lunch like always, carrot sticks, a brown banana and a water bottle. I stuff it in my bag along with my binders and text books, grab my wallet, keys and phone and stuff them in there as well. I get dressed in a pink cotton sweater jeans and boots. I grab a matching pink beanie for warmth and apply mascara and lip-gloss. I grab all my stuff and start to head out the door. My mom is in the living room curled up on the couch with curlers in her hair watching soap operas before her part time job

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at the Safeway down the road. "Bye Mom," I say, bending down to place a kiss on her cheek. As I head towards the door again I notice a package out of the corner of my eye but I put in the back of my head for later. I have my own car but school is only a few miles away so I can walk and get in the cardio I need for extracurricular activities. I trudge towards school arriving at seven. School starts at seven-thirty and ends at two-thirty. My school is boring, painted a dull rusty red color and about two stories high (although very wide and long) it's the town's public high school. This town is small enough that everybody goes to the same school. It's been that way since kindergarten. Everybody went to the same elementary school; everyone went to the same junior high and the same high school. As seniors we're finally separating, although most people will go to college in Fresno (since we're only a few miles outside of it): friends for life. Most girls are mean and catty to each other, starting rumors about who they've dated, their sexual preference and even their shoes or backpacks. I'm sure the girls at my school would do the same, but mainly for the sake of having someone to sit with at lunch we don't have the nastiness of other schools. It's a relief but also a disappointment since high school is supposed to be that time that you love to hate.

Since I have a half an hour to kill before class I head up to the library to get some homework done. The library is pathetic. Half the books have been stolen including the textbooks and no one's bothered to replace them. The other half are so dilapidated that they look like they've been through a bunch of natural disasters. I don't really like to read that much so I sit gingerly down on a threadbare green couch. I take out my Spanish notes and start studying for a quiz I have fifth period. To my parents good grades mean everything. They are perfectly happy with their lives, as they tell me over and over again. But they would like me to have a better life than theirs: to not get pregnant right out of high school to leave this teeny tiny town, to actually go to a college. And to make something of my life and not being stuck either working part time at a Safeway or as an accountant.

Before I know it, it's time for class. I re-pack up all my stuff and

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run down the garbage-strewn flight of stairs into my English class. I try to pay attention and take lots of notes, but I'm sitting right by a heater. Heat is my downfall. I will fall asleep in a matter of minutes, and having a five-thirty wake up call doesn't help either. I soon fall into a light doze. And then the teacher wakes me up. "Miss Pepper? I'm sorry to wake you from your nap, but the answer to number three please?" I flush a bright red, embarrassed and quickly answer while the rest of the class stares at me. After class the teacher, Ms. Amber pulls me aside. "Cadee, are you okay?" she asks me, putting a comforting hand on my shoulder. "Do you have too much stuff on your plate?" I smile at her and say, "no. I'm really sorry I fell asleep. I don't know what came over me. I think it was just because I was by the heater, heat puts me to sleep like that!" I snap my fingers and give her another smile. "Bye Ms. Amber!" I say, leaving the classroom, ignoring the worried frown on her face.

The rest of the day passes in a haze. One of my close friends, Lizzi, a girl with curly brown hair and pink cheeks meets me after school and we head over to ballet. "So Cadee. Falling asleep in English, that's not like you," Lizzi says grinning. I know my name sounds weird but my parents wanted to name me Kaity, like almost every other girl in the world, but they wanted to make me different so they spelled it Cadee. To Lizzi's question I just smile and shrug while she laughs. We arrive at the dance studio early enough to get changed into our pink tights and black leotards and ballet slippers. Our ballet studio is nothing special. The bars are rotting and moldy and flu infested. The room is mirrored although it's coated in dirty handprints and the janitor has never heard of air freshener, but it's my second home. I came to this dance studio when I was younger with my mama. She used to do a little secretary work for them before she couldn't. I was little, so she would take me, and I was put in a dance class because there was nothing else for me to do. Our teacher, Miss Laura, struts into the hall smoking a cigarette. She's pretty short at about 5 feet tall, with bleached blonde hair and blue eyes. She doesn't look a day over thirty. She's a tough ballet teacher though.

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"Hey y'all. Take your spots at the bar." She extinguishes her cigarette on a snake-shaped ash tray by the CD player and drops her leopard print coat. Underneath she's wearing a fuchsia leotard and a lime green tutu. All of us rush up to the bar, setting our hands gingerly on it. "Pliés from first, gals." Miss Laura says. Miss Laura is from Texas and ran away when she was fifteen cause she thought she got pregnant and her daddy was a minister and he would have murdered her. Turns out she wasn't pregnant but she was already in California and made a life for herself. After we do pliés we run, then we practice our splits. The class is long but I want to be a professional ballerina one day so I don't complain.

Once the class is over Lizzi gives me a ride home and I get home at six thirty. My mama picks up dinner from Safeway everyday, the kind you can warm up in the microwave or oven, already precooked. Dinner tonight is chicken, biscuits, mashed potatoes and spinach. Or for me, chicken with the skin off, a spoonful of mashed potatoes, half a biscuit with no butter and lots of uncooked spinach. Dinner's on the table when I get home and my mama's watching a soap opera. My daddy's still at work and he said we should all eat dinner as a family, so we always end up eating at seven. I go to my room to do my homework until I remember the package downstairs. I run into the kitchen, scooping it up. It's got a letter from my great Aunt who lives in England. She's a million years old and kind of crazy. I open the note first. It says:

My Dearest Kathryn

I sent you this package because I just discovered this marvelous thing. It's your great grandmother. It's her journal, and she was murdered, or so it seems. So scandalous! I hope you adore it!

Love,

Belle

My name isn't Kathryn but my aunt always seems to forget. I frown at the letter, and then rip open the red with yellow bears wrap-

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ping paper. Inside is a small black journal. It looks very worn out and kind of moldy. I take it gingerly back to my room and don't really pay attention to it as I do my homework. I finish it quickly and we eat dinner as a family. My parents make pleasant inquiries about each other's day and mine. When dinner is over we watch Jeopardy and then I take a shower before bed. I load up all my books tonight instead of tomorrow since I need to get up a little earlier than usual to get some extra studying in.

The next morning in math class the teacher tells us to take out our notebooks. I reach for mine and realize that it's the journal from Aunt Belle. Oops. But I don't worry too much; I can always copy Lizzi's notes later. While the rest of the class is copying what's on the blackboard, I get bored and open the journal and begin to read.

I TURN BEET RED as I realize the teacher, Mr. Johnson has been calling on me for about five minutes. "Oops, sorry, um the answer is $2x=5$. I mean 6," I say. I slam the journal closed and shove it in my bag towards the bottom. I don't want to get in trouble again but I'm dying to read what happens. I know that if my parents find out that I've gotten in trouble in class two days in a row I'll be dead, so I keep my mind firmly concentrated on each class.

That concentration slips in ballet. Laura asks me to demonstrate a move to a new girl viewing the class but I'm not paying attention. I'm thinking of the journal. "Ah-hem!" Laura says. I still don't pay attention. "Miss PEPPER!" she shouts. I whirl around gracefully (if I wasn't graceful she would have another thing she could yell at me for) to look at her. My eyes are wide and my cheeks are as red as her leotard. "Miss Pepper, please come here." Laura's voice is deadly quiet. It's much better when she's shouting; when she gets quiet you know you're in for it. I'm going to fall down I'm shaking so badly. This has never happened to me before. I've seen it happen to other girls who never came back. I'm always the teachers pet, which might not be the best position, but it is better than having Laura angry with you. Everybody's staring at me and I quickly walk up to the front. The

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front of the room is mirrored so I can see my fever red face and the girls who are trying to hide their smiles behind their hands. We're all friends in name but I know that since I'm the best ballet dancer (Laura's words, not mine) they all want me to fail. When I reach the front I see Laura's face. She's not angry but concerned, her forehead puckered. "Cadee, are you feelin ok?" She asks; her accent intensified by her worry. "Yes, Miss Laura, I'm sorry, I just have a lot on my mind." I say, tilting my head down. The floor is dirty as I stare at my feet and I wait for her to punish me. She taps her foot, the midnight blue ballet slipper in my line of vision like an exotic bug. "Well," she says and I look up at her. "Cadee, I think that y'all need to go home and get some shut eye gal. See ya here tomorrow honey." She smiles at me and then waves me towards the door. I grab my bag and walk out into the crisp wind, in total shock. That's never happened to anybody and the girls in the class are going to hate me more than ever. Laura's usual form of punishment is making girls run around in the freezing air until they can't feel their legs. Or stay after class and make them clean the entire room. She has never sent anybody home before. I pull on my jeans, my sweatshirt and sneakers and trudge home. My parents are going to ask my why I'm home so early and I'm probably going to get into a bunch of trouble. A big fight is not something I'm looking forward to on top of all my homework. When I get home my mama is in the shower. She comes out and combs her hair and puts on makeup before she notices me. "Cadee? Why are you home so early?" she asks, standing there wrapped in a towel before going into her room and shutting the door.

"It's nothing, Miss Laura let us go early, saying we should have some rest," I say glancing at my sneakers caked with dirt.

"That was nice of her." my mamas voice is muffled by the door. She comes out a moment later in a red wrap dress and high heels. Her hair has been blow-dried so it fluffs around her face. She runs in the bathroom to apply a coat of lipstick and then goes into the kitchen to take the food out of the oven. It sits on the stove staying warm until we eat. Mama goes back into the living room to read a magazine until

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my daddy comes home. I wonder for a second why she's so dressed up and then remember what daddy said at dinner yesterday. He said that he thought mama was beautiful but that it disappointed him that she never wore pretty things anymore. That she just sat around in sweat pants and a ratty bathrobe and watched TV. So when daddy comes home tonight hopefully he'll be pleased with mama. I sigh, knowing he probably never will be. I put my parents' marital conflicts in the back of my head and walk to my room. My room is the favorite room in the house, mostly because it's mine and because I got to design it. My room is cozy (which is a nicer word for tiny) painted a warm orange-red color that reminds me of fall. You can barely see the walls though because they are completely coated in posters of ballet dancers. My bed is wedged in one corner, usually a messy heap of blankets, but occasionally my mom comes and straightens it out. My desk is wedged in another corner, stacked with schoolbooks and a two hundred year old PC that I use only to write essays since the Internet access makes you want to tear out your hair in frustration. A chest of drawers holds my small wardrobe. I'd like to say everything is tucked in neatly all the time, but sometimes there are a few clothes hanging out. On top of it sits my makeup and perfume as well as some framed pictures of my family. I plop down at my desk and take out my notebooks to start on my homework when I catch sight of the journal my aunt sent me. I set it behind some books for later, so I can resist the temptation of reading it and finish my homework. The second I'm done with it I whip open the journal.

"CADEE! IT'S TIME for dinner honey," my mom calls from the kitchen. I shut the journal and open my desk drawer and set the journal carefully in there. Dinner is mostly silent, and thankfully my mom doesn't bring up the subject of coming home early from ballet class. My dad doesn't talk at all, he just eats his microwaveable steak. As soon as he's finished he goes to the office. I see my mom's face but I pretend I don't see the sadness and tiredness on her face. It wasn't her fault she married such an idiot like my dad, it was mine. My family's

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part of the hick stereotype. My parents were dating for a little while and I think my mom wanted to dump my dad. He was handsome and smooth talker. The way mom described him to me made him sound like a used car dealer. No wonder she wanted to dump him. I won't give you all the gory details, but a few months later she was married to him and a few months later she had me. So it's my fault my mom's stuck with an accountant who thinks he's a hotshot when really he's fat and balding. I take my mom into the living room and we watch soap operas until my dad shouts from the other room that he's, "trying to get some goddamn sleep for once!" I watch as my mom retreats into her bedroom and I go to mine.

The next day I take my car. California has weird weather; one day it will be sunny and warm and the next day rainy and cold. Today is the day it's hailing and pouring buckets outside. Usually I don't like to drive in the rain but today I have to make an exception. Lizzi called and said she was sick so she couldn't pick me up this morning or give me a ride to school. I wear rain boots with thick soles and throw my bags in the back seat. I wipe my hands on my jeans and buckle my seat belt tighter than usual. I pull my hair back into a loose ponytail so it stays off my face. Then slowly and carefully I back out of my parking space. I drive the quiet streets to my school slowly and carefully. It's early so not many cars are out and I don't get honked at for driving way under the speed limit. I drive so slowly I only have a few minutes to spare to run into my first period English class. I plunk the homework down on my test and rummage through my bag for something invisible. There are a few other students that are here early as well and most of them blink sleepily at me. Our teacher is not even here yet, so instead of studying for a test I take out the journal. It's a few days after the last entry.

"TIME FOR class!" Ms. Amber singsongs. I immediately snap the journal shut and turn all of my attention to the board. I take down notes and pay attention for the rest of the day. It's mostly stopped raining at the end of the day making the drive over to the ballet studio

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much easier. Laura smiles at me and I'm half embarrassed. I try my hardest today, to make up for last time. Laura notices and has me demonstrate in front of the class for everybody. I can sense the glares from the other girls but I ignore them and I do it perfectly.

When I get home there is a voicemail message from my Aunt Belle. Like I said, she's super eccentric and lives in London, but she's always traveling. She sends me interesting gifts for all my birthdays and Christmases and some, like the journal, that just show up. I listen to the voicemail message. "Hi darlings," she drawls into the phone. "How is everyone? Now I'm actually calling to talk to your lovely daughter Kathryn not that I do not adore talking to you but I am dying to know how she's liking the journal. Call me back whenever love. Too-daloo!" I finish listening to it and hit save. I know my mother loves hearing from her aunt. She makes my mom laugh, which is rare these days in our household. My dad has seen to that. Sometimes I just want to shout at him and tell him to be nice to his wife.