

BROKEN TIES

Written by

Bernadette M. Martinez

3247 S. Parker Rd. Apt 1910
Denver, CO 80014
BernadetteMMartinez@gmail.com
(970) 234-4333

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

MELANIE RODRIGUEZ (18), chubby and plain looking, sits in the corner of her living room couch reading about the University of California at Los Angeles financial aid and housing options in two side-by-side tabs on her laptop. She pops M&M's from a bright yellow king size bag of peanut M&M's in her lap as her eyes scan the pages.

ANNE RODRIGUEZ (17), fit and dressed in the latest trend, is standing in front of a window with her phone out in front of her as she records a video.

ANNE

...I couldn't believe he actually thought I'd settle for a knockoff purse. Like, if you're going to...

Anne turns with her arm extended, still recording, and sees Melanie in the screen behind her.

ANNE (CONT'D)

GOD! Why do you always have to be in the way?

Melanie rolls her eyes and continues looking at her screen and puts two more M&M's in her mouth.

MELANIE

I'm just sitting here, Anne. There is plenty of living room for you to complain in.

Anne turns to her and glares, her eyes going from Melanie's face to the bright yellow bag.

ANNE

You need to leave. No one wants to see such a fatass in my videos.

MELANIE

I can sit in our living room if I want.

Anne flips her hair over her shoulder and scowls at Melanie.

ANNE

Not when I'm here. No one wants to watch you shovel candy into your face.

Melanie grits her teeth as she closes her laptop.

MELANIE

Why don't you worry about getting a real job instead of begging for money on TikTok?

Anne laughs. Melanie unplugs her laptop and winds up the cable. She stows the bag of M&M's in the outer pocket.

ANNE

Aww, are you jelly, sis? You just can't stand the fact that I'm doing something great with my life, huh?

MELANIE

I'm doing plenty with my life.

Anne laughs.

ANNE

Your stupid LA plan with Jeannie? That's not gonna happen.

Melanie puts her laptop and charger in her backpack, ignoring Anne.

ANNE (CONT'D)

You're going to have to get another job to pull all your weight around here.

Melanie looks at Anne and laughs.

MELANIE

The hell I am. I'm going to school. Away from you.

ANNE

No you're not. Mom said so. You're gonna have to deal until I get discovered. Families put each other first, after all.

Melanie picks up her backpack and puts it over her shoulder. She pockets her phone and walks toward the door, past Anne.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Just accept the fact that you're not special like me. You're nothing. You'll never be anything anyone cares about. All you'll ever do is answer phones.

Anne turns to face her as she walks past but doesn't follow.

ANNE (CONT'D)

I'll have the whole world at my feet and no one will even know you exist. Not that that's anything new.

Melanie walks out of the door gritting her teeth.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Early 90's music plays through the outdoor speakers.

Melanie sits at a table.

JEANNIE FIEREO (18), medium build and straight brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, wearing a server uniform, is seated in the chair next to her. Melanie's backpack takes up the chair on her other side and her phone is on the table.

MELANIE

Can you believe this troll expects me to get another job to support her?

JEANNIE

She's insane. They both are. We're going to LA and getting out of this place.

MELANIE

She said I needed to help out more until she gets discovered.

Melanie rolls her eyes as the word discovered comes out of her mouth. She reaches into her backpack and pulls out the bag of M&M's.

Jeannie scoffs and leans back in her chair with her arms crossed over her chest.

JEANNIE

June can't come fast enough. As soon as we get our diplomas, boom! Outta here!

Melanie opens the bag and pops a few M&M's into her mouth. She offers some to Jeannie.

Jeannie extends her hand and takes a few.

MELANIE

I don't know, J. If Mom and Anne need me--

JEANNIE

They will never not need you.

Jeannie rolls her eyes. She puts air quotes around the word 'discovered' as she says it.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

First it was until Anne finished high school. Then she dropped out. Now it's until she gets discovered. It's never-ending.

Melanie returns the bag of M&M's to her backpack pocket and pops the ones in her hand into her mouth.

MELANIE

I know. But they're still my family. Even if they're horrible sometimes, families put each other first.

JEANNIE

When do you get to be put first?

Jeannie's tone softens and she puts her hand on Melanie's arm.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

It's been five years. It's not your job to take care of them. What would your dad say if he saw that?

Melanie shakes her head and takes a deep breath. Her phone BUZZES. She picks it up and swipes the notifications. Her eyes widen.

MELANIE

They want to interview me!

JEANNIE

Who? The copy editing place in LA?

MELANIE

Yea!

An excited expression crosses Jeannie's face. She CLAPS her hands.

JEANNIE

That's perfect! See, it's a sign we're supposed to go!

Melanie looks back at her phone and puts it on the table with a groan.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Melanie! You already got into UCLA.
UCLA! You can't really tell me
you're going to turn that down!

MELANIE

If Mom needs me...and Anne...well,
she can't exactly take care of
herself, can she?

JEANNIE

Can't and won't are two different
things, Mel.

Melanie's phone BUZZES again on the table. She picks it up.

MELANIE

Speaking of Mom. I gotta go.

Jeannie rolls her eyes.

The phone BUZZES again in Melanie's hand. She sighs and rolls
her eyes.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

And apparently Princess is hungry.

Melanie stands and picks up her backpack and turns to Jeannie
to hug her before she leaves. Jeannie looks after her and
shakes her head.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Melanie walks into the living room looking at LA apartment
listings on her phone. She doesn't notice Anne on the couch.

ANNE

Where's the food? It better not be
in that nasty bag of yours.

Melanie looks up from her phone and narrows her eyes at Anne.

MELANIE

If you want something, get it
yourself.

ANNE

Jesus! You really are useless! You
can't even do one thing I tell you
to! It's no wonder you don't have
any friends. Mom!

MELANIE

I'm useless? Why am I the only one who has to do everything? Why don't you do something for yourself for once?

ANNE

I do plenty!

Melanie yells over Anne, gesturing toward the house.

MELANIE

I have to give up everything I want to make sure this place runs so your precious ass doesn't have to lift a finger! How is that fair?

Their MOM (43), thin and graying, comes into the living room.

MOM

What's going on? Why are you yelling like a lunatic, Melanie?

Both girls begin to speak.

ANNE

She didn't get me anything to eat! And then started yelling at me because she was too lazy to do it.

MELANIE

(overlapping)

Whatever. I told her she could get her own food if--

MOM

Jesus, Melanie! Your sister asked you to get something on your way home. What's the problem?

MELANIE

Why do I--

Mom holds up her hands at Melanie and cuts her off.

MOM

I just don't know what to do with you anymore. Ever since your father died you've been nothing but a moody bitch.

Melanie's jaw drops and she looks at her mom with disbelief. Anne smiles from the couch, her arms crossed.

MOM (CONT'D)

Why don't you understand that your little sister is busy working on her...what is it, honey?

ANNE

My social media platform.

MOM

Yea, that. You need to take care of her. Support her. She's the only sister you've got, after all. Stop being so damn selfish. Families put each other first, remember.

Melanie looks open-mouthed from her mother to her sister silently. She blinks a couple times and turns to walk out the door again.

ANNE

Where do you think you're going?

MOM

Don't you walk away from me, young lady!

Melanie leaves and quickly closes the door behind her.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Melanie sits at the same table with her laptop out, picking from a bag of M&M's spilled onto the table. A crumpled yellow bag sits next to the open one. She is on the admissions acceptance page staring at the submit button.

Jeannie sits next to Melanie at the table.

MELANIE

I'm scared. What if they're right? What if I go out there and fail miserably? If I had to come back here--

JEANNIE

They're not. And you won't be alone. I'll be right there with you, just like we planned.

Jeannie sighs and her tone gets more serious.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Mel, listen. I've watched you put up with them for years. They're abusive, plain and simple.

Melanie winces at her statement.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

You don't deserve that garbage. You have a chance to leave, to do something better with your life. Why won't you?

MELANIE

What if something happens to them when I leave? What would my dad say?

JEANNIE

That they're grown and can take care of themselves. And that he's proud of you for going to school.

Melanie nods and pops more M&M's into her mouth.

MELANIE

You're right. I just...hard.

JEANNIE

Look, it's up to you. You know what I think. And you know what you want, even if you won't admit it.

Jeannie puts her hand on Melanie's arm.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

You're my best friend. I'll be here for you even if you don't come with me. But I think you need a change.

Melanie smiles and pulls Jeannie in for a tight hug.

MELANIE

Ok, we're doing this.

Melanie smiles as she clicks the submit button to accept the admissions offer and opens her email.

FADE TO BLACK.