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English 9
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I never should have trusted her, Kim thought as she walked warily down the bustling street, back to the apartment they shared. *Shared. Past tense.* Kim felt sure there would be no more sloshing walks to the museum on rainy days. No more giggling over the paintings and no more late night debates about which actor's eyes held more animal magnetism. No more crazy babble about the secret life of the single man in apartment 27B and endless discussions about classes and good books. Kim felt sure that she would miss the talks that went on into the morning hours and left them both nodding and drowsy, too worn out to function at work and school.

*Sweet
Sopony*

On this spring day, when all of Boston came alive, Kim found herself feeling heavy, like she did after a loaf of Gretchen's "lead bread." Springtime in Boston had been Kim's favorite time of year. Longer days filled with the promise of a vacation from the pressures of school and two dull and monotonous part time jobs. On this warm day, when the sun flashed through the branches of the tall trees like flash bulbs going off in the sky, Kim felt dark and alone. As Kim rounded the corner to the old brick building, she prayed Gretchen would not be home. Kim fumbled with the key and dropped it twice before making the door of 26A creak open slowly. Gretchen's tall, spindly frame sat at the purple table surrounded by ~~heaps~~ of books, papers, and old Domino Pizza boxes. Gretchen's soulful blue eyes looked up through blond hair that she self consciously brushed out of the way with a flick of her pen. "Hey. Kim? "

"I gotta get some clothes. I'm meeting...." Kim's sad, dark eyes met the floor.

"Listen, Kim. I really didn't want it to happen like that. At all, I mean. We were, well, I wanted to make him feel better about losing that job at Prudential. He was so upset and I felt so bad and you were at work and there was all this crazy nonsense going on with you and..."

"Gretchen, don't." Kim turned, grabbed a half empty bottle of Poland Springs from the counter and walked toward the hall closet, mindlessly grabbing clothes from hangers with her free hand and throwing them into an old beat up field hockey bag. Gretchen got up and followed her to the closet.

"I want to explain it, Kimmy, please. Recently.." Kim hated it when Gretchen called her Kimmy and she hated it more when Gretchen used the word recently. *Why does everything happen recently with that girl? Recently, I've had it!*

"There's no need to explain and there's no use trying. I've had it with your moods and I've had it with all this pressure that you can't seem to deal with. I'm tired and stressed too but I don't go around stealing your boyfriends because of it. I thought you were different, Gretchen, but I guess I

was wrong. I never should have let you into my life and that was my first mistake!"

"You're not being fair! You're being stupid and immature, which is the way you've been recently... most of the time. Get over it, Kim. Evan can't take your attitude either and that's why he was hanging out with me when you saw us at Starbuck's yesterday. He knows that you're too absorbed in your own problems to care that he didn't get that job. Evan knew that I would listen to him so he didn't even try to find you at the store yesterday."

"Shut up, Gretchen. I've had enough. I'll come back for the rest of my things tomorrow night when you're at work. I'm going to stay with Allison in the dorms. I'll figure out everything else when I've had more time to think."

X Gretchen threw up her hands, started to speak again, but thought better of it and turned away. Kim dragged the oddly shaped, sport bag to the door and lifted it up and over her shoulder, swinging the weight of it to her back so it slammed the table and sent the tower of pizza boxes tumbling to the floor and quietly, she shut the door behind her. Kim couldn't remember a time when she felt so confused. In her stomach, a thick soup of anger and resentment boiled over with rage and yet there was some reservation, some glimmer of hope, that bubbled to the surface. *Maybe I am being stupid and immature. Self-absorbed. Maybe I really ought to try to save this friendship. Evan is probably not worth all of this...* First she would get to Allison's and sort it all out later. ✓

At five o'clock, when Kim knew that Gretchen would be at the cafe, she headed back to the apartment with only her oversized shoulder bag and one suitcase in case she changed her mind and decided to stay. On the familiar purple table there was an unfamiliar neatness. Gone were the pizza boxes, papers, and books. In their place was a small, card sized envelope with Kim's name on it, written in Gretchen's sloppy, half print, half cursive handwriting. In the center of the table there was a loaf sized package wrapped in shiny tin foil and tied with a sneaker's shoelace. Kim scooped them both up and threw them into her shoulder bag. She grabbed more clothes, some books, and her alarm clock and without thinking any more, walked down the stairs and out into the tree lined street. At the corner, Kim stopped, reached into her bag and felt for the card. It was a photograph of the Picasso they had giggled at in the museum. Later, Gretchen had said the dark eyes looked like Kim's. Kim read the note and it accidentally slipped out of her hand and flew to the ground. She didn't pick it up and she continued to walk quickly to the next corner. Kim stopped at the trash barrel and knowing that there was lead bread in the foil package, she lifted it carefully out of her bag, stared at it a moment, and threw it in. ✓

A+

outstanding
- a model of controlled
but vivid descriptions,
dialogue, reflection and
seamless prose