
"Someone's going to get hurt."

Polly followed Lucy's gaze to where Dean was running back and forth between the Snack Shack and Tabitha's ivory-colored lifeguard tower delivering the perched princess drinks, munchies, and plenty of slobbery smiles. There was no need for him to put her on a pedestal; she was already atop one, eating a cheeseburger and surveying the great unwashed as they cleansed in chlorine.

"Dean? Yeah, probably," Polly agreed. "Can't say I feel bad for him though. He's been a real jerk."

"Screw Dean!" Lucy waved her arms over the crowded pool. "I'm talking about all this."

The turgid water looked like it was filled with oversized Pop Rocks. A gangly teenager with mop-hair nearly cannonballed into a girl and her mother. Children ran across the deck then dove into a school of flesh before they could be admonished. It was chaos.

And summer hadn't even started.

An unseasonable start to June had people rushing for the pool's cool comfort and free eye-candy. They were already at capacity. Maybe even over capacity. Dean didn't seem to care. The only capacity he seemed concerned with was Tabitha's.

With Dean preoccupied with Tabitha and Tabitha preoccupied with herself, the onus for safety fell to Lucy and Polly. Their pleas to Dean for assistance were met with plastic megaphones and metal whistles. Neither did much to pierce the pool's cacophonous din and, after days of bellowing like failed carnival barkers, the girls gave up, choosing to focus for floundering bathers rather than calling out minor infractions.

"Busy day today," Tabitha said as she sashayed past the girls in the locker room at quitting time.

Lucy removed her whistle from around her neck and placed it on a shelf. "Yeah, working through that burger must have been tough."

"And all that pizza," Polly added, slipping from her sandals.

"That's right!" Lucy's face lit up like the neon sign at Burger World. "Careful, dearie. Or Pops may have to lipo love handles away."

Tabitha smirked dismissively as she opened her locker. "You wish."

They did wish. Unfortunately, the way Tabitha's waist neatly funneled into her shorts, their wish was more like a pipedream.

The girls stood transfixed as Tabitha slid her lifeguard shorts down the sleek contours of her thighs as if unveiling a sculpture. Then she bent into her locker as if to demonstrate they were merely well-chiseled plinths for the alabaster orbs resting atop them. Lucy and Polly had learned about the golden ratio in their math class spring semester, but it took Tabitha's divine proportions for them to fully understand it.

After shimmying into a low-cut sundress, Tabitha slammed her locker door, snapping the girls from their trance. "Well, I'm off to dinner with Dean." Tabitha's abrupt pirouette waved her tatas as she waved ta-ta. "Bye, bitches!"

Polly and Lucy watched in awe as Tabitha strutted down the hall like a runway model and exited with a 'hello world' fling of the locker room door, leaving them in stunned silence and still-soggy suits.

"Let's not change with her anymore," Polly finally said.

Lucy nodded, still staring down the hall. "Agreed."

The next few weeks, the girls didn't change immediately after their shift, instead enjoying unfettered laps in the Olympic pool after the facility's close. They didn't take it too seriously, pausing to rest and chat every few laps, but it proved a real boon to their health.

Especially mentally.

Not only was swimming a great release from the stress of guarding twice as much pool as they were supposed to, it limited Tabitha's opportunities to trigger them. They no longer saw her in the locker room, and since Tabitha hardly helped with set-up or clean-up anyway, their direct dealings were reduced to nearly nil.

Of course, they couldn't ignore her completely. It was impossible to ignore the crowds around her platform or the way that derpy Dean fawned over her.

And it wasn't just Dean. A parade of dudes aged 15-50 were eager to offer tribute, presenting everything from smoothies to chili dogs at Tabitha's feet like she was some sort of sun goddess. Occasionally, she would reward their homage by descending from her perch and stretching while she cooled her feet in the kiddie pool, but for the most part she was content to flirt, fan, and feast from her throne, only coming down to relief herself of the copious Cokes and cookies she consumed. A fortuitous visit by Polly to an adjacent stall divulged that Princess Tabitha belched, farted, and groaned at a stubborn number two just like everyone else.

However, it was July 4th weekend that Polly dropped the bombshell that really started fireworks.

"Iyay inkthay abithatay isyay aininggay eightway!"

“What?!?”

Lucy had heard her. She had ocular issues but wasn't deaf. She'd even understood her. The girls had been proud purveyors of Pig Latin since grade school. Back then, they used it to gossip about boys and teachers, but had recently revived it when sharing sensitive information between their lifeguard stations, especially when it pertained to Dean and Tabitha. It was the content of the message that was hard to believe:

“Tabitha is gaining weight.”

Rather than repeat it, Polly puffed her chipmunk cheeks and pointed. Lucy focused on the main attraction in the shallow end's circus. Although she easily spotted Tabitha's pale visage amidst the kaleidoscope of colorful bathing suits and beach towels, she was just a big blur. Was she a bigger blur than before? Maybe. Or maybe her poor vision was just getting worse? Wait a minute--what was that shadowy crease around Tabitha's waist? And had her pool of admirers dried somewhat despite the jam-packed holiday weekend?



Lucy turned in her seat and shot her friend a smile and a thumbs-up, but she wasn't convinced until later that evening when she followed Tabitha into the locker room after the pool had closed. At first, she couldn't find her. She typically kept a locker in the middle of the first aisle where anyone taking a shower, washing their hands, or using a stall was forced to parade past, but today she was nowhere to be found. As Lucy crept towards the last row, she finally heard Tabitha's whispered voice:

“I don’t know. I’m afraid to weigh myself.” There was a long pause followed by a sigh. “I asked. He said he couldn’t do anything until I turn eighteen.” Another pause. “September.” Another sigh. “If I’m not careful, I’ll be too fat for it to make a difference anyway.”

Lucy skulked around the edge of the aisle. Tabitha sat hunched on the bench by the furthest locker, elbows on her knees, holding a phone in one hand and her dejected face in the other. Lucy’s vision was terrible, but even she could see the fleshy folds bubbling over the elastic band of Tabitha’s fire-red shorts.

“I’m glad you think this is funny, Pricilla. The only Rolls you have are in your garage.”

Tabitha may have been losing her figure, but at least she hadn’t lost her sense of humor. Lucy squinted. In addition to some fresh rolls, Tabitha also sported some new bulges, creases, and dimples.

“Well, I used to do Pilates with Consuela, but Dad fired her because I told him she was shrinking my clothes. Why do you keep laughing?!?”

Pricilla wasn’t the only one. Lucy covered her mouth and scurried from the locker room before Tabitha could catch her—though that prospect seemed less likely now.

“Well?” Polly demanded upon her grinning friend’s return.

“Tabitha isn’t just gaining weight,” Lucy huffed, catching her breath. “Tabitha’s getting fat!”

Lucy’s infectious smile spread to Polly. “Let’s go swim some laps.”
