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A Pejorative Label

Alexa's eyes opened slowly and began to take in her surroundings in the dimness of the early morning light. Everything looked so familiar—the desk littered with stacks of magazines, the old rocking chair strewn with clothes, the threadbare¹ rug, and the Avril Lavigne poster tacked to the wall, its edges badly frayed.

Reaching up to the window above her bed, Alexa raised the shade and yawned widely as the bright rays of sunshine flooded her room. But instead of getting up, she nestled her head back in her pillow and lay there languidly² as she thought about the fact that she was home again, after her summer adventure in the Caribbean was abruptly curtailed³. As much as she loved her family and cherished her home in Ithaca, New York, she couldn't help but feel ambivalent⁴ about being back. When she closed her eyes, she saw a white sandy beach, a spectacular expanse of clear blue water with dolphins cavorting⁵ playfully on the surface, and of course, she saw José.

¹ **Threadbare:** frayed, worn, or shabby

² **Languid:** sluggish; lacking energy

³ **Curtail:** to cut short; reduce

⁴ **Ambivalent:** having a mixture of opposite feelings

⁵ **Cavort:** to bound or prance about in a playful, boisterous, or sprightly manner

They had met earlier that summer at a Marine Biology station off the coast of Central America and immediately became fast friends, despite their disparate⁶ backgrounds. He was really the first boy in her life who she could actually call a boyfriend. Of course there was Justin, her date for the junior prom. But he wasn't really a boyfriend. They didn't decide to go to the prom together out of romance. It was more of a pragmatic⁷ decision—they both needed dates for the prom, so they decided to go together. Through a deal brokered by their friends, they jumped through the hoops of the junior prom—flowers, pictures, and a limousine rented with a group of friends. Alexa cringed whenever she thought about the awkward way that prom night had ended. They didn't kiss. Instead, they sort of bumbled through a weird, awkward handshake on her front porch. The whole episode was so painfully embarrassing that Alexa was left wishing that she had gone to the prom with a group of girlfriends instead.

José was different. They had met on the beach and their special friendship developed so naturally and so quickly. Alexa couldn't believe that for the first time, someone she liked actually liked her, too. He was cute and smart and interesting. It was like a dream come true. But everything came screeching to a halt when Alexa returned home in the middle of the summer and José stayed on his native island in the Caribbean Sea. Now they were separated by over a thousand miles. Somehow, the distance did nothing to abate⁸ her feelings. The knowledge that she might not see him again didn't cause her affection for him to wane⁹. It simply made her heart heavy as she climbed out of bed and got ready to go downstairs for breakfast.

⁶ **Disparate:** fundamentally different or dissimilar

⁷ **Pragmatic:** practical, matter-of-fact

⁸ **Abate:** to reduce; lessen

⁹ **Wane:** to gradually decrease

“Good morning,” Alexa’s mom Helen chirped. “How did you sleep? I bet it felt good to be back in your own bed.”

“Uh, yeah, I guess so,” Alexa replied unenthusiastically, grabbing a banana from the fruit bowl. In her mind, she remembered the banana trees of the tropical island, and how José had once shimmed up the tree to fetch her a perfectly ripe, perfectly yellow banana. Alexa looked at the banana in her hand and decisively removed the shiny blue supermarket sticker. She peeled the skin and took a bite, but somehow it just didn’t taste right. It wasn’t quite the same as the banana plucked right off the tree.

Helen looked up from her newspaper. “You know, since you have some time on your hands, you might want to think about cracking open some of those SAT study guides I bought for you,” she suggested cautiously.

Alexa set the banana on the counter and avoided her mother’s probing gaze. Unconsciously, she pressed her lips together tightly, an expression that reflected the angst that she felt every time her mother brought up the SATs. She didn’t even want to dignify her mother’s suggestion with a response. She was so sick of all that trite advice about planning for the future. Alexa didn’t need to be reminded of the fact that she had scored poorly on the SATs. That disappointing number was lurking everywhere—every time she closed her eyes she saw it and felt it. It was like a pejorative¹⁰ label that she didn’t want to own or acknowledge. Of course, Alexa knew that she had to take the test over in the fall. But she certainly didn’t want to think about that now. It was summertime.

“Your father wants you to stop by his office this morning,” Helen remarked casually. “I think that he has an idea to propose to you—something interesting for you to do with the rest of your summer.”

¹⁰ **Pejorative:** disparaging; belittling

“Really?” Alexa asked, brightening up at the shift in the conversation. “But there’s only six weeks left of the summer until school starts.”

“Six weeks is a long time to laze around the house, wallowing¹¹ in misery,” Helen cautioned. “You’ve been acting despondent¹² ever since we got back, and I’m starting to get concerned. I know that you miss your friend José, but you’ll feel better when you get back to work and try to accomplish something meaningful...trust me. That’s why I was suggesting that you take the time now to study for the SATs. It makes all the sense in the world for you to use some of the time that you have now to study, before school starts up again and things get busy.” Helen sighed, exasperated at this ongoing conversation that went nowhere. “But since you don’t seem too eager to follow my advice, I think that you might want to hear what your father has in mind for you to occupy your time. It’s not so onerous¹³...I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised.”

“What is it? What’s Dad’s plan?” Alexa asked eagerly.

“He wanted to tell you himself. Why don’t you go see him after breakfast?”

“I’m going right now,” Alexa declared, turning to grab her backpack out of the hall closet.

“Alexa!” Helen called out.

“What?” she replied, poking her head back into the kitchen.

“That’s a meager¹⁴ breakfast,” Helen remarked, pointing to the half-eaten banana on the countertop. “I just made these healthy muffins—why don’t you eat one? You’re going to become emaciated¹⁵ if you don’t eat! You’ve hardly eaten anything the last few days—ever since we arrived back home.”

¹¹ **Wallow:** indolent or clumsy rolling around, as if in water, snow, or mud: *pigs wallowing in the mud*

¹² **Despondent:** extreme discouragement, dejection, or depression

¹³ **Onerous:** oppressive or troublesome; burdensome

¹⁴ **Meager:** deficient in quantity or amount; scanty

¹⁵ **Emaciate:** to become extremely thin, especially as a result of starvation

“Don’t worry,” Alexa replied, attempting to allay¹⁶ her mother’s concerns. “I’m going to stop at the Big Squeeze to get a smoothie on my way to Dad’s office. It’s filled with vitamins.”

Her mother gave her a reproving¹⁷ glance.

“OK, I’ll take one with me,” she said, taking a muffin in an effort to appease¹⁸ her mother. In reality, she wasn’t very hungry. Somehow, nothing looked palatable¹⁹. Maybe it had something to do with her heavy heart, she thought silently as she wrapped the warm brown muffin in a paper towel and popped it into her backpack.

“Don’t forget to eat it,” Helen warned.

“I won’t,” Alexa replied, giving her mother a reassuring smile. “Bye, Mom!” she called out, slinging the backpack over her shoulder.

Alexa ventured out the door and into the bright morning sunshine for the short walk to the Cornell University campus, where her father worked as a professor of molecular biology. She couldn’t stop thinking about what kind of plan he had to propose. Alexa quickened her pace as her curiosity began to grow.

Passing by the Big Squeeze, Alexa scanned the crowd. The popular smoothie bar was a big hangout for high school students, especially during the hot summer months when the cool, frosty drinks held an irresistible allure. Alexa and her best friend Laurie liked to go there every day. But today the crowd was sparse, and when Alexa perused²⁰ the occupied tables and the short line at the counter, she didn’t see Laurie anywhere. Even though Alexa hated to hang out at the Big Squeeze alone, she decided to go ahead and order a strawberry smoothie. Her throat felt really parched²¹.

¹⁶ **Allay:** reduce in intensity or severity; alleviate, relieve

¹⁷ **Reprove:** to convey disapproval of

¹⁸ **Appease:** to bring peace or quiet to; soothe

¹⁹ **Palatable:** acceptable or agreeable to eat

²⁰ **Peruse:** to examine with attention and in detail

²¹ **Parched:** dry; thirsty

Alexa popped a straw into the icy drink, eager to assuage²² her thirst. Tugging at the thick, cold smoothie that was so reluctant to climb up the straw, she made her way out into the courtyard to find a seat.

“Hey, Alexa!” a male voice called out.

Alexa turned abruptly, her smooth brown hair swinging over her shoulder, searching the crowd for the source of the voice. When she realized who it was, she was absolutely flabbergasted²³. It was Doug, the popular star of the varsity lacrosse team. The same Doug who rode in her carpool every day and yet still managed to pretend that she didn’t exist. The same Doug who always acted indifferent²⁴ whenever their paths crossed in the hallways of Ithaca High School. Alexa stood there, motionless, too shocked to speak.

“Hey, how’s your summer going? I haven’t seen you around lately,” he remarked casually, walking right up to her as if it were the most normal thing in the world. In his hand was the ever-present lacrosse stick, which he adroitly²⁵ maneuvered as he talked, bouncing the ball off of the pavement and catching it in the net with quick, skillful flicks of his wrist.

“Uh, yeah, I was away for the beginning of the summer,” Alexa managed, still stupefied²⁶ by the fact that Doug had initiated a conversation. After years of acting aloof²⁷, why was he being so amicable²⁸ all of a sudden?

²² **Assuage:** to put an end to by satisfying; quench, appease

²³ **Flabbergast:** to overwhelm with shock or astonishment; dumbfound

²⁴ **Indifferent:** having no marked feeling, interest, or concern

²⁵ **Adroit:** quick, skillful, or adept in action or thought; dexterous

²⁶ **Stupefy:** to amaze; astonish

²⁷ **Aloof:** emotionally distant, reserved, or remote

²⁸ **Amicable:** friendly

“Where did you go? You look so tanned,” he remarked approvingly.

“Uh...down south...uh, an island in the Caribbean off the coast of Central America,” she replied.

“Wow, that sounds really cool,” he enthused.

“Yeah, it was,” Alexa replied. She wished that she could think of something clever to say...something funny or irreverent²⁹. But instead she felt utterly inarticulate³⁰, unable to put together a coherent³¹ sentence.

Doug bounced the ball several times in rapid succession, then caught it and twirled the stick in an adept³² display of virtuoso³³ lacrosse skills. “Do you want to get something to drink?” he asked nonchalantly³⁴, without taking his eyes off the ball.

“I have something to drink,” Alexa replied, holding up her smoothie.

“Oh, yeah,” he chuckled, flashing the winsome³⁵ grin that got him voted “nicest smile” in the school yearbook two years in a row. “But that’s just fruit juice. What you really need is some wheatgrass juice,” he asserted³⁶. “It’s really good for you—it’s loaded with vitamins and antioxidants. Don’t go anywhere,” he commanded. “I’ll be right back.” Without giving her the opportunity to say no, Doug raced to the counter to procure³⁷ two portions of wheatgrass juice. With a triumphant grin, he returned with two small white paper cups and handed one to her.

Alexa eyed the opaque green liquid suspiciously. It looked like what it was...liquid grass. The thought of drinking the repulsive³⁸ juice

²⁹ **Irreverent:** critical of what is generally accepted or respected; satirical: *irreverent humor*

³⁰ **Inarticulate:** unable to speak clearly

³¹ **Coherent:** marked by an orderly and logical relation of parts: *a coherent argument*

³² **Adept:** very skilled

³³ **Virtuoso:** exhibiting the fine skill, masterful technique, and ability similar to that of a master musician

³⁴ **Nonchalant:** seeming to be coolly indifferent or unconcerned

³⁵ **Winsome:** charming, often in a childlike or naive way

³⁶ **Assert:** to state positively; affirm

³⁷ **Procure:** to get by special effort; obtain

³⁸ **Repulsive:** causing aversion or repugnance; disgusting

was horrifying. It looked and smelled utterly repugnant³⁹. But how could she say no?

In a swift motion, Doug tossed his head back and swallowed the juice in one enthusiastic gulp. “Mmm...” he hummed, as if he had just enjoyed a savory⁴⁰ treat.

Alexa took another look at the viscous⁴¹ green soup. She didn’t relish⁴² the thought of drinking it.

“C’mon, try it! It’s good,” he cajoled⁴³, smiling persuasively.

Bravely, she put the cup to her lips and took a big sip. As soon as the pungent⁴⁴ juice hit her tongue, she felt her stomach turn. Quickly, she swallowed it, in a desperate attempt to get the vile liquid off of her tongue. Once it went down her throat and into her empty stomach, she shuddered with revulsion. Immediately, she took a sip of her strawberry smoothie in an attempt to get the acrid⁴⁵ taste of wheatgrass out of her mouth.

Doug was laughing uncontrollably. “It’s not that bad!” he chuckled. “I drink this all the time, especially when I’m training.”

“Maybe it’s an acquired taste,” Alexa remarked. “One that I haven’t acquired yet.” She studied his expression, trying to figure out if he was laughing *with* her or *at* her. Did he buy her this drink to make fun of her? Her face flushed with embarrassment.

“Well, if it’s an acquired taste, then I’ll buy you another one tomorrow, so that you can acquire it,” he said, his eyes twinkling.

“OK,” Alexa agreed, feeling a little bit better. His offer seemed genuine. All of a sudden Doug seemed sincerely interested in fostering⁴⁶ a

³⁹ **Repugnant:** causing disgust or aversion; offensive

⁴⁰ **Savory:** appetizing to the taste or smell

⁴¹ **Viscous:** having a high resistance to flow; thick and sticky, syrupy

⁴² **Relish:** to take keen pleasure in

⁴³ **Cajole:** to repeatedly urge with gentle appeals, teasing, or flattery; wheedle

⁴⁴ **Pungent:** affecting the organs of taste or smell with a sharp, acrid, or irritating sensation

⁴⁵ **Acrid:** unpleasantly sharp or bitter to the taste or smell

⁴⁶ **Foster:** to promote the growth and development of; nurture, cultivate

friendship, although she couldn't fathom⁴⁷ why he had had this precipitous change of heart. He had managed to ignore her completely for an entire year, and now he was acting so affable⁴⁸ and congenial⁴⁹.

"OK, then, same time, same place, tomorrow," he declared, tossing the ball to one of his buddies, who were huddled in a group on the sidewalk. "See ya," he called out to her as he ran to join his friends.

Alexa waved goodbye and started to head outside, still astounded and a bit suspicious of Doug's atypical⁵⁰ behavior. But despite her lingering doubts and a little voice in the back of her mind telling her to be more circumspect⁵¹ about Doug's sudden interest, she decided she would go by the Big Squeeze again tomorrow morning.

Alexa scanned the crowd one last time for Laurie, but she was nowhere to be found. She couldn't wait to pick up the phone and call her friend. They had a lot to talk about now.

Giving up on Laurie, Alexa walked briskly over the bridge that led to the Cornell campus and then slowed her pace when she reached the sun-drenched quad, a rectangular grassy area circumscribed⁵² by a ring of academic buildings. Dozens of summer students were scattered on the grass, lounging, reading, or talking with friends while they basked in the sunshine. A few dogs also dotted the scene, enjoying the good weather and spectacular scenery along with their owners.

Alexa chuckled at the sight of the dogs frolicking on the quad. Despite the rules about keeping dogs properly restrained on campus, the canine species seemed to enjoy a special status at the university that was attributed to an old tale about a generous benefactor⁵³ with a penchant⁵⁴

⁴⁷ **Fathom:** to understand the meaning or nature of; comprehend

⁴⁸ **Affable:** pleasant and easy to talk to

⁴⁹ **Congenial:** friendly and sociable; having a pleasant disposition

⁵⁰ **Atypical:** not conforming to type; unusual or irregular

⁵¹ **Circumspect:** careful to consider all possible consequences; prudent, cautious

⁵² **Circumscribe:** to draw a line around or surround by a boundary

⁵³ **Benefactor:** one who gives aid, especially financial aid

⁵⁴ **Penchant:** a strong liking or inclination

for dogs. According to the story, the wealthy philanthropist⁵⁵ made his sizable donation to the university contingent on a curious mandate⁵⁶: that dogs would be allowed to run free on campus. Every time Alexa heard this story, she couldn't figure out if it was really true or if it was an apocryphal⁵⁷ legend. But it didn't seem to matter, because for many years the dogs did have an exalted⁵⁸ status and free rein on campus, until finally the university imposed a leash law, requiring owners to properly restrain their pets at all times.

Whether they were abiding⁵⁹ by the rules or not, Alexa loved seeing the dogs happily romping in the grass. Somehow it added to the carefree ambiance on the quad that was so inviting. It was a teasing glimpse of college life that Alexa couldn't wait to be a part of. Some students were sitting in groups, talking and laughing, while others were sitting by themselves, studying in the sunshine. Surveying the scene, Alexa was tempted to sit down on the grass, crack open a book, and join them. But her insatiable⁶⁰ curiosity compelled her to continue on to her father's office. What could he possibly have planned for her?

Alexa quickly made her way up to the third floor of the tall brick building that housed the molecular biology laboratories. The sign on the closed door said "Professor McCurry." She knocked softly.

"Come in," a gruff voice answered.

Alexa opened the door and poked her head in. "Hi, Dad."

"Good morning," he replied cheerfully, his face breaking into a warm smile. "C'mon in," he beckoned, pushing his chair back from the computer screen. Alexa's father was an esteemed⁶¹ professor of molecular

⁵⁵ **Philanthropist:** a person who makes charitable donations with the intent of increasing the well-being of humankind

⁵⁶ **Mandate:** an authoritative command or instruction

⁵⁷ **Apocryphal:** of doubtful authenticity

⁵⁸ **Exalt:** to raise in rank, power; elevate

⁵⁹ **Abide:** to conform to; comply with

⁶⁰ **Insatiable:** incapable of being satisfied

⁶¹ **Esteem:** to regard with respect

biology, highly respected by his colleagues for his astute⁶² observations. His students were consistently amazed with his prescient⁶³ ability to predict the outcome of their experiments before they completed them. Among his friends, Professor McCurry was also renowned⁶⁴ for his collection of antique gadgets. His predilection⁶⁵ for old devices was evident to anyone who visited his office—the shelves were filled with a plethora⁶⁶ of vacuum tubes, Tesla coils, Crooke’s tubes, transformers, and Van de Graff generators. If anyone asked a question about the antiquated⁶⁷ devices, Professor McCurry was thrilled to give them a demonstration and tell all about them. He was an erudite⁶⁸ scholar of the history of science, able to recall the inventor of even the most arcane⁶⁹ devices.

On the highest shelf of the bookcase in his office, Professor McCurry kept a collection of antediluvian⁷⁰ computers, all of which he had used at some point in the past. But as time went on and he continually upgraded his computer system, he was loath to toss out the outdated hardware. “There are files on there that I might need some day,” he would say. But the ancient computers were never touched and the thick layer of dust that coated them was never disturbed. When people saw his office, they often commented that Professor McCurry was an archetypal⁷¹ scientist.

But to Alexa, he was just Dad.

“I have a special surprise for you,” he teased. “Did your mother tell you what it was?” he asked.

“No, she said that you were going to tell me. What is it?” Alexa asked. “Is it some job here on campus?”

⁶² **Astute:** having shrewdness and discernment

⁶³ **Prescient:** foreknowledge of events

⁶⁴ **Renown:** a state of being widely acclaimed and highly honored; famous

⁶⁵ **Predilection:** a partiality or disposition in favor of something; a preference

⁶⁶ **Plethora:** an overabundance or excess

⁶⁷ **Antiquated:** too old to be useful or fashionable; outdated

⁶⁸ **Erudite:** having or displaying deep, extensive knowledge

⁶⁹ **Arcane:** known or understood by only a few: *arcane economic theories*

⁷⁰ **Antediluvian:** extremely old and antiquated

⁷¹ **Archetypal:** an ideal example of a type

Her father shook his head, his eyes twinkling with merriment, as if he was about to bestow a great prize upon her.

“What is it?” Alexa pleaded.

“When you got back from Central America a few days ago, didn’t you say something about how you weren’t quite ready to come home yet and you really wanted to go back?”

“Yeah,” Alexa agreed cautiously.

“And you know that Nadine is an archeologist, right?”

“Uh, yeah,” Alexa answered reluctantly. She really didn’t like talking about Nadine. She preferred to pretend that she didn’t exist. Right after her parents’ divorce was finalized, her father had introduced her to Nadine, his new girlfriend. Despite the fact that Nadine seemed eager to foster a friendship with her, Alexa coolly kept her distance.

“Well, Nadine is working on the excavation⁷² of a Mayan ruin. You’re familiar with the ancient Maya, aren’t you?”

Alexa shook her head. “It sounds vaguely familiar, but I can’t remember anything specific.”

“They were a great civilization who inhabited Central America long before the arrival of the Europeans. You did learn about them in school, didn’t you?”

“Not that I remember.”

Professor McCurry clucked his tongue, showing his disappointment at this gross omission in her education. “There are some amazing ruins of ancient Mayan temples and cities scattered throughout the jungles of Central America. Some of these sites have been razed⁷³ and

⁷² **Excavation:** the act of exposing or uncovering by digging

⁷³ **Raze:** to demolish or tear down to the ground

pillaged⁷⁴ by greedy treasure seekers, but others have been left untouched for more than a thousand years. They are yet to be explored!” He shook his head in wonder. “It’s an archeologist’s paradise.”

Alexa’s jaw dropped. “Did you say *Central America*?” she managed to ask. Her heart started to race with hope and anticipation. José lived in Central America!

“Yes, it’s in Central America. Isn’t that where you said you wanted to go? The site that they’re working on is in Guatemala. Now I know that you just came back from that part of the world, but I can assure you that this would be a completely different experience. This is an actual archeological excavation site in the middle of the jungle.”

Alexa felt a tingle of excitement shoot down her spine. She had expected her father to propose some tedious⁷⁵ job here on campus like filing papers or some such banal⁷⁶ task. But he had surprised her. Excavating an ancient Mayan ruin in Central America sounded incredibly interesting. And the thought that she would be in the same vicinity as José was like icing on the cake. Maybe they could see each other! Mentally, Alexa tried to calculate how far away he would be. “Can you show me on the map? Would you be going too?” Questions tumbled out of her mouth.

He chuckled at her enthusiasm. “Yes, but only for a day or two. I can travel there with you, but I can’t stay there the whole time. I’ve got a collaboration set up at the university in Belize City, so I will be staying in Belize while you’re at the dig in Guatemala—it’s not too far away. So, if you want to take this opportunity, you would be on your own for several weeks at the dig. There would be plenty of adults there to watch over

⁷⁴ **Pillage:** to rob of goods by force or take as spoils; plunder

⁷⁵ **Tedious:** tiresome by reason of dullness, length, or slowness; boring

⁷⁶ **Banal:** lacking originality, freshness, or novelty

you—Nadine will be there, but we still need to have a serious discussion about whether you are ready for this level of independence.” Professor McCurry looked at her questioningly, as if he were gauging her response.

“I’m ready!” Alexa exclaimed. “I’m seventeen now, and I’m going off to college in a year anyway.”

He smiled when he saw the eager enthusiasm in her eyes. “You know, this is really an amazing opportunity for someone your age. Usually these digs are staffed by graduate students and a few very lucky undergraduates. Apparently, two of the students had to go home in the middle of the summer for personal reasons, and that opened up two spots.” He stood up from his chair and reached up to the bookshelf above his computer to pull down a thick paperback volume entitled *The Ancient Maya: Treasures From a Lost Civilization*. “Here, you can get started with this. There’s a map right in there.”

Alexa took the book from his outstretched hand. The cover had a picture of a Mayan temple, a tall pyramid rising high above the jungle thicket.

Alexa’s father glanced at his watch. “You know, I’ve got a faculty meeting at ten-thirty, but it shouldn’t take longer than an hour. Why don’t we have an early lunch together and I can tell you more about this trip. You can take that book down to the quad and read for a little while. I’ll come find you when I’m done, and we can head over to the Big Red Barn for a sandwich.”

“Sounds good,” Alexa smiled, accepting his offer with alacrity⁷⁷. She couldn’t wait to dive into the book.

⁷⁷ **Alacrity:** promptness in response; cheerful readiness

Deciding that the elevator was a waste of precious time, she raced down three flights of stairs and out onto quad. Alexa picked out a shady spot under an oak tree and sat down, resting her back against the trunk. Eagerly, she thumbed through the pages looking for a map. There! Guatemala and Belize...it was only a few hundred miles from the tiny island off the coast of Nicaragua that José called home. Alexa's heart raced at the possibility of seeing José again. It was all so exciting.

Curiously, she began flipping through the pages of the book, looking at the fascinating photos. Who were these people and why did their civilization end, leaving the jungle adorned⁷⁸ with their seductive temples? Alexa was captivated⁷⁹ with the beckoning images of ancient stone pyramids and the aura of mystery that enveloped them. She was utterly enthralled⁸⁰ by the stunning photographs of huge stone monuments rising up above the jungle thicket. Without a doubt, she felt that her life was about to take an interesting turn.

Alexa reached for her backpack and rummaged around inside. Her hand grasped the object she was seeking. Triumphant, she pulled out the brown muffin, chock-full of grated carrots, dried fruit, and whole-wheat flour, lovingly baked by her mom. All of a sudden, she was ravenous⁸¹.

⁷⁸ **Adorn:** to lend beauty to, enhance or decorate

⁷⁹ **Captivate:** to attract and hold by beauty, charm or excellence

⁸⁰ **Enthral:** to hold spellbound; captivate

⁸¹ **Ravenous:** extremely hungry

