

Best Friend's Journey - Chapter 1

SLAM!

Ramona closed the laptop in front of her for the last time. Hannah brushed the medium length red hair from in front of her face and peered over at her black friend, put her index finger in front of her lips and said, "Shhhhh!"

"Oh...I know Hannah." Ramona replied, "I'm just frustrated. Here I am on the last day of high school, in the last period of our last class, and while it's just you and me in this damn school library, everyone else is having fun and enjoying their last class with dozens of people."

"Um. Well, I'm fine with it Ramona. You're really my only good friend and I'd rather spend my time with you than anyone else in this stupid school anyway."

"I'm sorry Hannah. I didn't mean it like that." Ramona answered her friend back. "I just thought high school would be better. I thought I'd have a big social group and be going out with guys...maybe even have a boyfriend."

"It's ok Ramona. I met you and you're the best friend I've ever had. I knew college will be better. Guys will be older and more mature. I've seen online that some guys actually like nerdy, book worm type girls and that we'll find someone special there for sure." Hannah tried to comfort her friend.

"You're probably right Hannah. Forget these dumb high school guys. Let's just promise each other that we'll make college a lot more fun and meet a lot more people. Maybe we could even get in a little better shape, like we've always talked about doing but never done." Ramona said earnestly.

"I'm with you Ramona. We always talked about getting in better shape, but I never wanted to go to the school gym again after we got chastised by all the popular kids because we weren't in ridiculous shape already. They were always condescending and rude. I'm ready to make a fresh start if you are." Hannah replied.

"Cool!" Ramona answered back. "Pinky promise?"

"Pinky promise." Hannah answered back and held out her hand so they could shake pinky fingers.

They picked up their bags, walked to the bike rack and hopped on their pedal bikes to make their way back to their neighborhood. They didn't have the cool E-bikes like all the other kids, so they actually had to endure the ridicule of having transportation that wasn't powered. It was just another arrow in their quiver of dorkiness.

As they rode off campus, they couldn't help but notice Derek, another senior from school. He was pushing over a boy from their grade who also was riding a normal bike. Derek was a school jock and a bit of a bully. The girls had obviously had never seen him visit their library, but had seen him around school, trying to be the popular guy by constantly putting down those that weren't as strong or athletic as him.

"So glad we don't have to deal with idiots like that." Ramona mentioned as they rode by the scene of the bullying.

"Ya, I hope that kid eventually gets big enough to defend himself against jerks like Derek." Hannah replied.

The girls weren't invited to any post last-day parties, so Ramona peeled off to her house when they reached their neighborhood a couple miles from school. Hannah lived just two blocks further away and made it to her house for an un-eventful night at home as well.

Bzzzz Bzzzz Bzzz, Hannah's phone rang and she saw that it was Ramona calling her, just a couple of hours since they just saw each other.

"What's up Ramona?" Hannah asked.

"I just got it." She answered quickly.

"Just got what?" Hannah responded equally as quick.

"Well, we pinky promised. So, I went online, have been researching for hours and finally found something to order. It'll be here tomorrow since I paid for overnight shipping, and we can try it out." Ramona let her friend know.

"What are you talking about?" Hannah had to ask again.

"We promised to get a fresh start and get in a little better shape for college. We gotta start now if we're going to be looking better by the time we show up for freshman year H." Ramona insisted.

"Oh shit Ray...so like, you want to start already?"

"Yep!" Ramona answered emphatically. "Supplements I ordered are supposed to be here by noon. So make sure you sign up for the free trial membership at Blasters gym tonight. Meet me here at 1pm, then we'll head over to the gym."

Hannah agreed to it, but she was not excited. She was 5'5" tall and a bit plump. She figured maybe they'd diet for a bit, do some walking or jogging...maybe some hiking and lose some weight that way. Going to the gym was not in her comfort zone at all. But Ramona was equally out of shape, so at least there'd be the two of them to just kind of hang with each other and keep to themselves and stay out of the way of the hard core gym goers.

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Hannah shows up at Ramona's the next day at 1pm as scheduled. The nerdy-ness in her also contributed to her OCD and she was always exactly on time. Wearing baggy sweat pants and a large t-shirt, Hannah walked into meet Ramona who was in the garage grabbing her bike. Ramona was wearing loose fitting shorts and a large t-shirt as well. Neither girl wanted to ever wear any tight fitting clothing that would show off their extra pounds.

"Here, take this." Ramona told her friend as she handed her a yellow pill.

"What is it?" Hannah had to ask.

"It's what I ordered from the internet last night. The results of the before and after pictures were incredible and we should be much more attractive by next semester for sure. Beautiful skin, beautiful hair and tighter bodies." Ramona bragged.

"I don't know Ramona, none of this internet stuff ever works I've read." Hannah protested.

"Just trust me H...please..."

With a little reluctance, Hannah threw the pill in her mouth and flushed it down with a swig from her water bottle.

With that part out of the way, they both got back on their bikes and rode over to Blasters Gym. It was two miles away and both girls were already a bit winded by the time they got there. But they locked up the bikes...(not that anyone would steal them...they weren't E-bikes and most kids would be embarrassed to be seen on them)...and walked in the gym.

Clanks and bangs and the tinging noise echoed through the facility. It was immediately intimidating to the girls and both of their hearts started racing in nervousness. They had scheduled a quick sign up meeting with a staff member and he was one of those overly positive, gym people who seem super excited to work there for some reason.

He showed them the cardio area first. Hannah figured they'd be spending most of their time there, so she took interest in the bikes and treadmills and rowing machines they had lined up. There was a diverse group of shapes and sizes of people on the cardio stuff, so Hannah did feel like she could get comfortable working out there. They passed through that and next, he showed them the machine area. It looked cool and there was a circuit you could do where you started at one machine and went from machine to machine in a circle and by the time you reached the end, your workout was over.

Next he walked them to the functional fitness area which was basically a big area of fake grass that had sleds and different colored and weighted kettlebells and balls all over the place. Hannah kind of liked that area and thought it looked fun. After that, Steve walked them to the free-weight area which was populated by exactly who Ramona had expected to see in the gym.

Big guys pumping heavy weights a few really fit girls who looked like they were dressed for an Instagram shoot.

The girls didn't really think they'd be spending much time in the free-weight area, but knew they'd be spending even less time in the next area Steve showed them. It was a section with six Olympic lifting platforms and the dudes in that area were huge. It was equipped with barbells full of plates of weights and was beyond anything they pictured themselves doing. Squats and deadlifts seemed like exercises for powerlifters only and they quickly walked through that area without paying too much attention.

Finally, he let them do a self-tour of the locker room. It was big and actually pretty nice. There was a small seating area, a winding room with lockers in it, a sauna, a restroom area, a shower area and a door that led to a pool. They poked their head out there and saw a long thin pool, with four swimming lanes in it. To be honest, the place was pretty damn impressive, and whether you were a recreational, once in a while gym attendee, or a diehard daily workout nut, this place seemed to be good for all.

The girls finished the sign up process and Steve wished them a good workout and went back to the front office. They definitely looked out of place in their baggy clothes and confused manner in which they walked around the facility. But Hannah knew she had to lose weight so insisted they do that first. Ramona was more interested in the machine circuit they had been introduced to, but agreed to hit the treadmill for 15 to 20 minutes first and then hit the machines.

As you can imagine, they were on speed profile 2 out of 20 and at a zero incline. They got a nice 15 minute walk in and then Ramona led them over to the machine circuit. They actually were already sweaty, just from the walk. As they sat on their first machine, which was a shoulder press unit, they probably looked kind of funny as they had to actually look at the little picture description of how it even worked.

Luckily they had a sense of humor and were able to laugh at each other as they struggled at each station. It took them 45 more minutes and to be honest, they didn't get much of a workout in. They spent the bulk of their time trying to figure out how each unit worked and what the hell muscle group they were supposedly training. But at least they had each other to lean on and as they tried not to make eye contact with any of the real fitness studs in the gym.

As they walked into the ladies room following their first official workout, Ramona decided they needed to be able to track and measure their progress. Hannah was definitely hesitant to step on the scale. She knew she was overweight...and was not excited to see just how fat she had become.

"I don't want to Ramona. Why don't we wait a couple weeks, then do our first measurement?" Hannah begged.

“Absolutely not H.” Ramona replied, “Today is Day 1...we have to get the measurements now, so we’ll know exactly how well our workouts are doing!”

“Uggg.” Hannah replied as she then slowly slipped off her shoes and put her two feet on the scale.

Ramona reached in and adjusted the weights on the scale bar, the bar went down, then up, then eventually, Ramona got the weight just right and it settled in the middle of the rectangular shaped opening. 161 was the indicated weight. Hannah turned red with embarrassment. The last time she was at the doctor a year before, she had only weight 138. Over twenty pounds of fat in a year was a lot and she was not at all happy about it.

Flabby around the middle, saggy boobs and flabby legs and ass. Hannah should not have been surprised. She read books, ate crappy snack food and didn’t exercise a lick.

Now it was Ramona’s turn. She was an inch taller at 5’6” tall but equally out of shape. As Hannah operate the scale bar for her, and Ramona tried to stay still, she got an equally disheartening result. 167 pounds of out of shape-ness.

“Wow!” Ramona said as she stared at the reading on the scale, “We’ve got a lot of work to do this summer if we’re going to hit our goal weight by fall.”

Hannah agreed, and felt slightly better that Ramona was equally as out of shape as her and maybe, more so. She did weigh 6 pounds more and wasn’t much taller. They consoled each other and at least they knew it was a group effort. If Hannah didn’t want to go to the gym one day, Ramona would make her go. Conversely, if Ramona didn’t want to go to the gym one day, Hannah would make her go! They eventually rode home and agreed to meet at 10am the next morning and go back for workout #2.

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Hannah got home and her mother was again in the kitchen baking up some more sweets. She knew her daughter loved her chocolate chip cookies and brownies, and was just finishing up a new batch. “Hi honey, where’ve you been?” Carol asked her daughter.

“Hi mom, just went to the gym with Ramona.” She answered proudly.

“The gym? Wow...That’s great dear. So you and Ramona are going to get into shape this summer I’m guessing.” Carol responded excitedly.

“Yep! That’s the plan mom.” Hannah let her know in a very positive and hopeful tone.

“Great. I hope you have time for some chocolate chip cookies after your workout.” Carol said and held out the plate of cookies.

Hannah was so used to devouring the whole plate of her mother’s baking in a single night. She loved her mom’s baking and considered her the best damn cook around. But this time, she

knew she shouldn't have any since she and Ramona had just made a pact to lose a bunch of weight.

"Mom, I just promised Ramona I'd eat healthy for the summer. But I do love your cookies soooo much!...Ok, maybe just one." She said and she took a single cookie.

Not the result her mother was hoping for...hell, she just baked a whole batch and normally that was a few cookies for her and the rest for Hannah. "Ah, Hannah will probably come down later and finish the rest off." Carol thought to herself as Hannah turned with her one cookie and headed upstairs to her room.

Hannah closed her bedroom door and sat down on the edge of her bed. She wanted to relax and enjoy this one last cookie before she got on a bit of a stricter diet. She took a big bite and began to chew. But for some reason, it just didn't taste that great. "Hmmm." She thought to herself, surprised at the mediocre taste.

She took another bite. The result was the same. Finally, she took a third bite of her mom's world-famous chocolate chip cookie. Unbelievably, she was vastly disappointed, didn't even want another bite and threw the rest of the cookie in the trash. Hannah then showered up, looking at herself and disappointed at what she saw, but hopeful that she might be able to lose a little weight by the end of the summer.

Ramona was at home doing much the same. She seemed to be more excited about learning how to lift weights a bit more than cardio though. It seemed like she was going to have to drag Hannah away from the bikes and treadmills and rowers. As she thought of that, she had completely forgotten to grab a soda and bag of chips. Those were her comfort foods and she had completely passed on the opportunity to grab some as she showered up and got ready to relax for the evening.

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Ramona woke up the next morning with more energy than she could remember having in the past. Normally she liked to sleep in till about 10am on non-school days. But she looked at her phone and saw it was only 7am, yet she was energized and had to get up. She wasn't sure what to do, since she wasn't meeting Hannah till 10am.

As normal, she was hungry upon waking up, but she wasn't in the mood for donuts. She looked around the fridge and saw there was a dozen eggs and some orange juice. For some reason, that seemed more appealing to her today than donuts, so she scrambled up 3 eggs and filled a glass of juice. She devoured the eggs and juice in an instant and secretly wished she had made more. But she and Hannah were trying to lose some weight...so she held herself to three.

Two blocks away, Hannah was also up and energized. She walked into the bathroom just a little sore, and wanted to see if she could notice any results. There were none visible, but she liked the slightly sore feeling and already felt like she was making progress. Just to see, she got on

the floor to see if she could do a push-up. She pushed and strained and kind of even bent her back upwards. But, to her realization...she hadn't gained enough strength after one workout to do one, lol.

But she was eager to get to the gym for some reason. It was eating away at her, so she just had to text Ramona in hopes she was awake and possibly wanting to go too.

Ramona...I'm up and good to go. Any chance you want to head over to the gym now instead of waiting till 10?

Oh my gosh H. So ready right now. Cruise over now and we'll go. Ramona texted back quickly.

So the girls met up on bikes, took another one of the little yellow pills and excitedly rode over to the gym at 8am instead of 10. They locked up the bikes and although Ramona wanted to head immediately over to the machines, Hannah insisted on some quick cardio. So the girls headed over there, said hi to Steve who was working that morning and hit the treadmills.

They set them up at Level 2 with a zero degree incline. It definitely seemed much easier than it had the day before, so they both decided to bump the Level to 4 with a slight bit of incline. They made it all the way through the 15 minute warm-up cycle seemingly easier than yesterday and then headed over to the machine circuit that Ramona was eager to do again.

This time, the girls were a little more familiar with the machines and so spent more time working out and less time reading instructions. Ramona was diligently taking notes the whole time and so would be able to know what setting to put each machine on for their next day's workout. Hannah felt great about the machine circuit today and was less intimidated this time. The level of comfortability helped and she had to admit to Ramona that this was definitely more enjoyable than the cardio stuff.

Hannah didn't feel quite so weak working her arm and leg muscles today either. The first day was frustrating since she couldn't even really flex a muscle...not that she had any muscles to flex. But today, even though she was still soft and flabby, she felt like she was pushing against the handles of the different stations with some oomph.

It was a great hour workout and the girls were excited to hit the locker room and wash up. They had really nice shower facilities, but both Ramona and Hannah were way too modest and would be embarrassed to walk through the locker area without being totally covered up. They instead, just washed up a bit at the sink and then headed back outside for their ride home.

Ramona reached out and held up her hand for a congratulatory high-five for a second straight workout. With a weak swing and a non-existent sound, Hannah returned the high-five. Also proud of going to the gym for a second consecutive day. They peddled their bikes at a much faster and more energized pace than normal and bid farewell for the day as they reached Ramona's house.

"Same time tomorrow Ray?" Hannah asked.

“Absolutely Han.” Ramona replied, “If 8am works for you, let’s do it.”

Hannah got home shortly after and ran upstairs to take a nice, warm, steamy shower. She felt great following the workout, which was two days more working out than she’d ever done in her life. She was barely wet when she was already excited for the next day when she would be back in the gym. Hannah figured she would hate it when Ramona made her commit to joining the gym, but she was already thinking it was a great decision.

As Hannah poured the body wash in her palms and began rubbing it all over her fluffy body she thought she felt more in shape already. It was funny to think that after only two workouts, but she did. It was probably more mental than physical, Hannah figured, but hey...it was something.

At the same time, Ramona was in her bathroom, standing naked, staring at her reflection in the mirror. She knew she didn’t like what she saw physically, but she was dreaming, imagining seeing the reflection of an in-shape, hot black girl that was going to take charge of the rest of her life and become physically attractive to whomever she came across. She hit a double biceps flex. It was not even noticeable. Ya, there was some thickness to her arms, but that was fairly loose girth and not the defined muscle she was dreaming of. She reached over with one hand and felt the other, flexed bicep. Yep, pretty squishy. Still staring at her arm though, Ramona thought to herself, “Be ready little buddy...’cause I’m going to make you a monster.”

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Normally Hannah would spend her free time reading her fantasy Harry Potter type novels or sometimes a romance novel. But today, she could think of nothing more than learning all she could about proper nutrition and supplementation. It was three hours of straight research and by 1pm she had compiled a list of protein powders and supplements and other staple items she needed to start consuming.

Her appetite was as large as it normally would be, but she walked right past the tray of her mom’s chocolate chip cookies several times to look for something more nutritious in the fridge. She was striking out, so she borrowed Carol’s car, headed over to the store and loaded up on chicken, vegetables and eggs. She then drove over to a nutrition store she looked up online. They had all of the different workout powders and all she thought she needed, so she dropped a bunch more of her hard earned dollars on those.

Instead of doing her favorite pastime of reading a murder mystery or watching True Crime TV, Ramona was busy scouring the web for more advanced workout routine knowledge. She knew that the machine circuit she and Hannah were doing was great for starters, but she had already noticed that the truly fit people in the gym were in the free-weight area or platform areas of the gym. Most of the people on the machines were in similar, but maybe just slightly better shape than she and Hannah.

The two were definitely going to be a great team. Hannah would be able to bring a bunch of nutrition information and knowledge to Ramona. At the same time, Ramona would be able to provide the best workout routines for the two.

With her research and shopping done, Hannah started becoming very antsy. She couldn't sit still to read anymore and she didn't know how to rid herself of these nervous vibes. By 6pm Hannah couldn't wait anymore and had to text Ramona. *Hey, just curious...but I feel great and can't sit still! Any chance you want to get another quick workout in?*

Holy shit Hannah...I was literally thinking the exact same thing. Absolutely! Ramona texted back almost immediately.

Hannah rode over quickly and met Ramona for the quick trip over to the gym. Hannah couldn't help but begin spewing all of her recent nutrition knowledge upon her friend. At the same time, Ramona was filling Hannah in on all of the more beneficial workout routines she had researched. The girls definitely seemed hooked. Normally it takes several weeks or more to get the workout bug...these two had it in just two days!

They hit Level 6 on the treadmills at a bit more of an incline. Easily finished that off and then made their way over to the machines for another circuit. Ramona had detailed info from their previous workout that day and made sure they increased the resistance by one peg on each machine. They pushed themselves even harder than they had in the morning and basically set new highs on weight and reps for each station.

Feeling great after completing the round, Ramona insisted that Hannah follow her over to the free-weight area for one quick set of dumbbell curls. It would be a light weight, but it would get them more familiar with the area...and secretly, Ramona knew they needed to be there to gain some real muscle anyway. They started with some 5 pound curls. That wasn't that hard so they worked up to 10's. They actually felt that weight a bit, but then decided to end with some 12's. Ramona finished ten reps pretty well, but Hannah couldn't even finished ten. She flamed out at six reps and called it a workout.

The girls were proud of themselves for coming back for a second workout that day. As they were making their way out of the free-weight area they saw Derek from school coming their way. He wore a cut off tank top to show off his big biceps and really short workout shorts that showed off his quads. They hated that he was such a bully, but Ramona couldn't help herself and said, "Hi Derek." As he passed by.

He barely turned to acknowledge her, kind of looked at her with a bit of a scowl and then turned his head forward without so much as recognizing her existence. Hannah nudged Ramona in the side and asked, "Why would you even say hi to him Ramona, he's just a muscled up, jock, bully?"

"I know he is H. Not sure why...just instinct I guess." Ramona answered, not even sure herself why she'd try to talk to him.

The girls cleaned up again and headed out of the gym. They were already looking forward to coming back tomorrow. Their nerdiness was going to help them in formulating the proper nutrition and exercise plan and they were sure they'd be in shape by fall semester. As they rode home, they peddled comfortably but probably at a faster pace than they had ever ridden before....eager for their next workout.