

The Silent Problem
By Hannah Huang, grade 5

The sun's rays shone brightly on Evelina's eyelids, causing her to squint her eyes. She was looking for Raina, her best friend. They had been close friends since birth, but Evelina is convinced Raina is up to something. "She just hasn't been herself lately," Raina exclaimed, trying to explain to her mom the night before. Evelina spotted Raina in the middle of the bustling 6th grade crowd chatting contentedly with their other friends. However, as soon as Evelina came close to the group of girls, Raina claimed she had forgotten something in her homeroom and ran back into the cream coloured building of High Valley Elementary. It had been like this for a few days now. Evelina had tried to talk to Raina, which was impossible since every time she even got close to her friend, Raina would decide she had something else to tend to. It was as if Raina was trying to avoid her. Only her.

Evelina sat alone the third time this week on her bus ride home. She missed having a friend beside her. Having someone to chat about her day to. Raina was the type of person who could listen for hours

and not fall asleep. She did not share much of her own thoughts to the people around her, but just having her by your side, was like having another shoulder to cry on when you need it. One that would not mind the wet tears dripping onto her shirt. Evelina had known Raina for so long and she knew she could pour out her feelings to her anytime she felt like it. The two girls had chatted about other friend problems before, but this just felt different. It would not be another friend they were chatting about, it would be about their own friendship.

That night, Evelina gently placed her head onto her soft pillow, staring at the glow-in-the-dark star stickers her dad had stuck up for her when she was 3 years old. She had recently listened to “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and had whined about not getting stars to look at when she fell asleep humming the song. Her dad soon gave in and bought some stars for her room. But when Evelina stared at the stars on her ceiling now, she did not think about the childhood song she used to adore. Her mind was packed with different reasons why Raina was avoiding her. Reasons from her not wanting to be friends anymore, to family problems or even Evelina being too talkative and

not sensitive about Raina's feelings. She decided to try talking to Raina again at school the next day or perhaps one of Raina's other friends.

The next morning, Evelina woke up to the loud ringing of her alarm clock (which turned out had been ringing for quite some time). She had overslept!

Evelina grabbed a quick breakfast to munch down on the bus. But when she walked out to the bus stop, there was no bus to eat on. She had missed her only ride to school and another chance to talk to her other friends. She ran back to her house and caught her dad before he left for work. Luckily, High Valley Elementary was on the same route as her father's office building. She was 12 minutes late, meaning period 1 had already started and she was late for homeroom.

After a long lesson from homeroom teacher Mr.Kingsley, the bell rang for class to be over. When Evelina was packing up her books, she caught sight of Raina on the other side of the room. However, the Raina she saw looked nothing like the Raina she knew. Her usual

neat midnight coloured hair was in a very messy bun and there were large dark eyebags under her twinkling hazel eyes. Raina looked like she could have slept for days if she had fallen asleep on her desk. Evelina carefully approached her old friend, when suddenly Hazel, another friend, convinced Evelina to walk with her to the Science Lab. But before she left homeroom, Evelina took a peek behind her back to spot Raina, only she was not there.

In the Science Lab, there was a new table arrangement, which also meant a new seating arrangement. They were singular partner desks. The science teacher, Ms.Emily had always let her students choose their own spots. Hazel had already asked to be lab partners with Kasey. Soon enough, every student had a partner, except for Evelina. Ms.Emily told her that if anyone else popped in late, they would be her partner. Almost on que, Raina came in wearing an exhausted face and took the only seat left in the whole room, beside Evelina. All class, the two best friends talked like strangers forced to work together on an experiment. They never made eye contact or talked about the things they used to talk about, until Evelina could not

take it anymore. "Why are you ignoring and avoiding me?" exclaimed Evelina. Suddenly, all eyes in the room were on her. She had not noticed how loud she had been. "Is everything alright, Ms. Sterling (that is Evelina's last name)?" asked Ms. Emily. "Yes, sorry Ms. Emily," replied now red-faced Evelina. Everyone soon went back to work and people started their lively chatters once more.

"You know, I never wanted you to feel like I was avoiding you," said a gentle but tired voice. It was Raina. "Huh?" was all Evelina managed to choke out. "When I was well, 'avoiding' you, I was just trying to not let my problem turn into yours. I was afraid that if I started talking to you, I would start spilling all my problems and asking you to help me fix them. With you talking about them everyday, I did not want to add to your own pile of problems. I guess it felt like I was ignoring you. I am really sorry, Eve," explained Raina. "Eve," it was the nickname that only Raina ever called Evelina. It was also a friendship symbol, they were friends again! "Thanks for letting me know. You know that you could always tell me your problems. I probably would not be able to fix it, but I will help all I can," said Evelina reassuringly.

A few days later, the two girls were more friends than they had been before. Evelina was over at Raina's house. She had been up for days studying for an entrance exam to a middle school she had dreamed of attending ever since she was a kid. Her parents were always at work, so she was all on her own. The reason Raina arrived late for science was because she had to visit the nurse with all that anxiety and exhaustion on studying for her big exam. Evelina knew she was not going to attend this middle school with her best friend. As much as she wanted to go to Grade 7 with Raina, she knew how much this meant to her friend. "Thanks, Eve." said Raina with a sad smile. She too was upset about not seeing Evelina at her new school. "We'll still see each other," said Evelina as she pulls her friend into a big hug.

"You really are the best friend a girl could ask for," Raina said with a smile.

The End