Summer was great. My friends and I were doing what we thought every girl in the world our age was doing. Worry about our looks, worrying about boys -

Bobby Johnson is coming to the party too?

No way, Rachel.

—but also having as much fun as we could have.
IT WAS AUGUST. OUR ANNUAL TRIP TO THE BEACH WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN. WHAT A GREAT WAY TO END THE SUMMER.

LITTLE DID I KNOW THAT MY WONDERFUL, CRAZY, FUN-FILLED LIFE WAS ABOUT TO TURN UGLY.

CAN WE STOP SOMEWHERE? I HAVE TO PEE AGAIN.

WE JUST STOPPED HALF AN HOUR AGO! GAH!

WHEN I THINK BACK TO THAT SUMMER, I REMEMBER BEING DEAD Tired, PEEING A LOT, AND THAT TERRIBLE UNENDING THIRST.

THEN SCHOOL STARTED. THE SECOND WEEK IN SCHOOL WE GOT OUR SPORTS PHYSICALS. I HATED GOING TO THE DOCTOR, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH ME.

SOMETHING WAS UP. MOM WAS ASKED TO COME TO SCHOOL. HOW EMBARRASSING!

AFTER THE SECOND BLOOD TEST, THEY TOLD ME I HAD DIABETES. DIABETES! HOW COULD THAT BE? WHAT WAS GOING ON?
Day 2 of my fabulous new life. We were on our way to a diabetes clinic.

I guess I'm the big deal at the clinic today. The weird new kid with diabetes.

Rachel.

Everything felt like it was moving in slow motion. I was scared.

Everyone was sooooo polite, but I could tell mom was nervous.

I remember thinking, "I want out of here - now."

Rachel Miller.

This is it. Down the worm hole we go.
YES, DOCTOR.

This was not where I wanted to be. And I was not thankful for all this help - at all.

No, doctor.

I understand, doctor.

The 'highlight' of the day was meeting with Dr. Cool and his staff to hear how they were all there to "help" me.

You can eat the same healthy foods with diabetes as people who don’t have diabetes.

Great, just what I wanted to be the rest of my life. A walking vegetable!

Later, along with the food tray came Pat the dietitian. Pat talked, and talked, and talked about food and gave me even more stuff to read.

It was all too much.
Next in the parade of happy helpers was the "Diabetes Educator" with more info about how to take care of myself, the scary stuff that would happen if I didn’t, and lots of big words about... Insulin.

Many people use an insulin pen to take their insulin. Pens are easy to use, but may be expensive.

You know, back in the old days, people with diabetes used to have to check their urine to see if they had high blood sugars.

Other people use a needle and syringe to take insulin. It’s just as good as a pen and costs a lot less.

For now, I’ll show you how to give yourself your first shot.

We’ll use sterile water instead of insulin.

But, what choice did I have? Like it or not, I had to get my nerve up and learn to do this.

I don’t think it hit me until then that I’d have to do what the nurse just did for the rest of my life.

The funny thing was, I remember now that it really wasn’t that big a deal.

I guess finding out I could successfully give myself a shot calmed me down.
I knew this wasn’t going to be easy.
I had a lot to learn - a lot of stuff I didn’t want to learn.

This really sucks. My life is going to be upside down forever. I want my life to be the way it was last summer.

I didn’t know then how easy I had it.

At first I had wanted to get out of the doctor's office as soon as I could, but now I wasn’t so sure.

Now what?

What if my friends acted weird towards me now?

Would they freak out if they saw me checking my blood sugar? Do this, do that. Be careful... no thanks. I wanted some candy - now!

It was a relief to finally be home from all of that diabetes training at the doctor’s office. But it felt like everyone was watching me and trying to act like they weren’t watching me.
Rachel, did you test your blood sugar before you ate those crackers?

And remember to check the number of carbs on the box?

Of course I did, Mom.

...Whatever.

So was this how it was going to be from now on - an interrogation every time I ate something?

Rachel, did you check your blood sugar?

Yes, Mom, I checked. Honest.
DO YOU FEEL OK, RACHEL?
WELL...
...IT WAS 260.

260! THAT'S WAY TOO HIGH! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?
SHOULD I CALL THE DOCTOR?

I KNEW YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE Eaten ALL THOSE CRACKERS.

I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED YOU SOONER.

While everyone else started eating, mom and I figured out how much insulin to take to lower my blood sugar and how much to take for the meal.

LATER THAT NIGHT...

Honey, get up. You have to check your blood sugar.

WHAAR?

I think we got your insulin dose wrong.

...am I having a nightmare? No. This is really happening.
Mom, get out of here! You’re driving me nuts!

But then I saw mom’s face. Somehow, I got it. This was hard for her, too.

Jeez, mom. I wasn’t awake. Okay, okay. I’ll check it.

Mother’s must have a special radar system when it comes to their kids. It’s still the middle of the night and mom’s sitting in the kitchen with me as I eat my peanut butter and jelly sandwich to get my blood sugar up.

I realized that mom was on my side and only trying to help, even if she was driving me crazy. I didn’t say anything, but it sure felt good to know mom was there.

It’s Saturday morning. Mom and I were going over the list of “diabetes-stuff” I need to remember when I go to school on Monday.

It’s Hollie, but I just talked to her!
A DAY OR TWO AGO I WOULD HAVE SAID, "I HATE THIS. I'M MISERABLE. I WANT THINGS THE WAY THEY WERE!" BUT I REALIZED I WAS FEELING OK.

GR8! CUL8R XOXO
Hey Eva.

Rachel, what's going on???? Hollie says you're really sick.

What do you have - mono or something?

Oh, Goddd! I told Hollie not to tell anyone and she's already called Eva.

No... I have diabetes. Great, huh?

That's when you take shots, or else, right?

There's a little more to it, Eva. But, I'm OK.

Really? Isn't that really bad???

You and Hollie are my best friends, so let's talk at school.

OK. But, can... can people catch it?

What?

No, Eva. I'll explain more on Monday.

OK.

And Eva, please don't tell anyone till we talk. OK? People might get weird.

OK, Rachel. Good luck. See you Monday.

Wow, I wonder if everybody is going to react like Eva did?
MONDAY MORNING: IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME. I MET WITH MRS. GREENE, THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, AND MS. LOPEZ, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT NURSE.

IT'S GOING TO TAKE YOU A WHILE TO LEARN HOW TO HANDLE YOUR DIABETES-CARE NEEDS ALONG WITH YOUR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, RACHEL. SO, PLEASE COME TO US WITH ANY QUESTIONS ANY TIME.

THANKS, MRS. GREENE.

YOUR TEACHERS ARE ALSO ALL SET TO HELP, IF IT'S NECESSARY, RACHEL.

YOU CAN CHECK YOUR BLOOD SUGAR AND TAKE INSULIN ANYTIME YOU NEED TO DURING CLASS.

OR, YOU CAN LEAVE THE ROOM.

WE'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU.

OKAY. I GUESS I HAVE TO GET TO CLASS. I'LL PROBABLY CHECK MY BLOOD SUGAR BEFORE OR AFTER CLASS. I THINK I'D FEEL WEIRD DOING IT DURING CLASS.

ALMOST NOON. NO PROBLEMS. YEA.

I CAN SEE EVA IS DYING TO TALK TO ME!
Just before lunch, I went into the bathroom so I could take my pre-meal insulin shot, when...

Oh, no! Somebody already blabbed.

So much for trying to keep this a secret.

The whole school probably knows!

Mrs Greene said we should meet.

I have type 2 diabetes.

Hi Rachel.

I’m Camille.

I was told you have diabetes.

It’s a little different than what you have, but I guess we’re in the same boat.

I never heard of anyone in our school with diabetes.

It’s not like we broadcast we have diabetes over the loudspeaker. But, we’re cool with it — most of the time.

We?

There are other kids like me in school. I’m not alone!

The next couple of days passed without much hassle.

I knew Eva and the gang had lots of questions, but they stayed quiet about “my issue.”
Thursday was a different story. I was in gym class when things got weird.

Suddenly I felt like I was passing through a tunnel. My feet felt heavy, like I was walking through syrup. My hands started shaking. And - weird - my lips went numb.

Rachel, are you okay?

I screwed up.

I think, I think I took too much insulin. And dummy left her glucose tabs at home today!

OHHHHH.

Rachel, are you okay? Do you want some orange juice?

Yeah, please.

I am sooo embarrassed. What a mess!
Lisa, run and get me some OJ in the locker room fridge.

Geez.

I told you she was sick.

There goes the game.

OK, girls. Break it up.

Let's get back to practice. Rachel and I are going to take a break.

You're going to be okay now, Rachel.

Just don't move for a while. And I mean don't move... till you feel a lot better.

Lisa, you stay with Rachel till I get back.

Gee, Rachel.

What happened?

I was stupid.
I... WHAT THE HECK, EVERYONE IS GOING TO KNOW NOW, ANYWAY.

I HAVE DIABETES. I FORGOT TO CHECK MY BLOOD SUGAR BEFORE PRACTICE.

DIABETES? YOUR BLOOD? WHAT...

NEVER MIND NOW. GET MY GYM BAG FOR ME, PLEASE.

LISA’S IN FOR A SURPRISE. BUT WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?

I HAVE TO TEST MY BLOOD TO MAKE SURE I’M OKAY, LISA.

HAS IT BEEN ABOUT 15 MINUTES SINCE I DRANK THE JUICE?

RACHEL’S BLOOD SUGAR WAS STILL LOW, SO SHE FINISHED DRINKING THE JUICE. A FEW MINUTES LATER SHE CHECKED AGAIN AND HER NUMBERS WERE ALMOST NORMAL. SHE WAS FEELING MUCH BETTER.

HOW ARE WE DOIN’, GIRLS?

I THINK SO.

I’M FINE NOW, MRS. MILLER.
Well, let's play it safe, Rachel.

No more gym today.

Go take a break till next class.

Rachel thanked Lisa for her help and went to the cafeteria. She felt much better now, but she was mad at herself too.

Whoa, girl. Get a grip.

It was stupid, but you handled it. Give yourself a break.

Get out your blood sugar diary, make some notes so you remember, and move on.

But then...

Hi, Rachel. I heard you were a real spaz in gym today.

Oh, so much for patting myself on the back.

Here's Ms. Bully herself to ruin my day.

How about some candy, Rachel?

Oh, wait. I forgot. You're not supposed to have any candy ever.

Too bad.

Really, Lucy? It seems to me that you could do without a few candy bars yourself.

So sad.
I didn’t ask to get diabetes, but at least I try to be healthy.

You, on the other hand, have a bigger problem, ’cause you’re ugly.

And you can’t fix ugly.

Too bad, so sad.

Ouch! That was awesome.

She had it coming. I’ve seen her pick on other kids. I guess she was the last straw, too, after what happened today.

Listen.

The D-B’s are meeting up at 7 tonight at the Coffee Bean.

It’d be great if you joined up.

Maybe. I have to check with my mom. Thanks.

The truth was that Lucy was very nervous about the idea of going. But mom thought it was a great idea, so Lucy finally said she would go.
HI, RACHEL.
GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT.

HEY.

THIS IS MARIA, CASEY,
AND JOEY. GUYS,
MEET RACHEL.

HEY.

HI!

EVA MIGHT SHOW UP LATER, BUT
IT'S HARD TO SAY.

SHE HAS LOTS OF
HEALTH ISSUES.

I WAS JUST TALKING
ABOUT HAVING A BAD WEEK,
RACHEL.

MY BLOOD
SUGARS WERE
ALL OVER THE
PLACE...

AND I DON'T
KNOW WHY.

I TRY TO EAT
RIGHT AND ALL THE
REST, BUT I DON'T
THINK THE DOCTOR
BEL IEVES ME.

I'VE HAD THE
SAME THING GOING
ON AND I'VE GOT
TYPE 2. YOU'RE
TYPE 1.

MY DIABETES
CHAT ROOM BUDDY
SAID IT COULD BE MY
HORMONES.

YOU GUYS
SHOULD HAVE
SEEN RACHEL
TODAY.

THIS BULLY AT
SCHOOL WAS MESSING WITH HER
ABOUT HER DIABETES,
BUT RACHEL REALLY
STOOD UP TO HER.

I'VE HEARD
THAT, TOO.

THEY THINK
IT'S BECAUSE
WE'RE GROWING
SO FAST.
She picks on a lot of people about dumb stuff.

Wow! Why would somebody do that?

Weird.

What can I say? She's just mean.

I've got news. My nurse thinks I should talk to my folks about getting an insulin pump.

I've heard the pumps are not bad at all once you get used to them. And you get much better sugar control.

I mean, hello! Do I really want to walk around with that thing stuck to me?

People in my chat room seem to love them—if you can love a pump.

You sure love that chat room!

Well... yeah!
Hey, Joey, what's new with you?

Not much. Just thinking about when I was normal. And wondering why all of you are so positive all the time.

But what's normal, Joey?

My dad's got bad high blood pressure and my mom's always talking about her cholesterol.

Dude, we all have something, right?

Maybe it's about not giving up?

So says Dr. Camille. Ha, maybe normal is just doing the best we can on the good days and on the bad days, too, and that's enough.

I realized as everyone was talking that I was really glad to be here and not to be alone with my diabetes. They understood what I was going through. I was already sure they would help me if I asked and be there to listen (well, maybe not Joey) if I needed to vent.

Things still weren't going to be easy and they'd never be the same again, but this was now my "normal" life so, so be it...

To life!