

How do you say Goodbye

By : [jhanery](#)

Starting tonight, starting right now. Saying those words to myself over and over again, I had felt a red flush rise up from my neck and spread out over my face, I didnât know whether Iâd be able to look at Duncan after he said that, but I made myself look up, and suddenly his eyes found mine. For once, his gray, sad eyes were smiling.



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The day after my friend's party, I slept straight through the morning into the afternoon. It was the longest, maybe the best sleep of my life. My dreams must have been happy because I could feel a smile on my face even before I opened my eyes. I just lay there with my hands clasped behind my head, my eyes still closed, smiling.

But on the morning- or should I say the afternoon- after the party, once I was wide awake, I didn't wanna think about anything anymore; I wanted to think about the party, just the party, not the things that happened beforehand. And it's not every day that Duncan Whesley, the cutest and most popular boy in the entire school, says, "I'm really glad I came by, now I have the chance to get to know you better."



I wanted to relive that whole night, run through it moment by moment, but Mom wouldn't let me stay in bed a minute longer. She walked right into my room without even knocking, although I'd told her a hundred times I wanted her to knock before entering, just like I did before entering her bedroom. But she walked without so much as a tap on the door and said, "OK, sleepyhead, the party's over. Time to get up, in fact it's more than time. It's disgustingly late."

Mom is from the South, but not everything you may have heard about the slow and sleepy South and its beautiful belles applies in my mother's case. Tiny, more pert than pretty, she's a petite powerhouse of energy. Up at the crack of dawn every morning, she expects everyone else in the house to be up then, too. Over the

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years she's managed to convince Dad to face the dawn with her, and together they clomp down the stairs and noisily begin to fix breakfast in the dark.

Even Elizabeth, my kid sister, goes along with them. Of course she does. Now that she's ten years old she's become Miss Goody-Two-Shoes, always doing they ask of her. Naturally, that makes me look bad, I'm a night person. As you probably know, you can wake up a night person early in the morning, but a night person doesn't really wake up until mid-afternoon. It has something to do with biorhythmic cycles or something.

In any case, I'm definitely spinning in a different cycle from the rest of my family, and I just wish this could become a two-cycle house. But no, that's not the case, and that would never be the case. My mother insisted I dress and come down to the dining room.

"For lunch," she added on her way out. "You missed breakfast hours ago."

No one in my house understands me, but I can't blame them completely, I've changed a lot this year, both inside and out, and even *I* can hardly keep up with myself.

For one thing, I'm kind of taller than I used to be. Well, not kind of. Much, much taller. Next to my mother I look like a giant. Which is why I never want to stand next to her. And which is just one the many reasons I like standing next to Duncan Whesley. Duncan is six feet tall. Next to him, I feel like a shrimp at five-feet-ten.

I feel lots of other things when I stand next to him, too. Mostly wonderful, dreamy things. When I catch him staring at me across the room, I feel warm and tingly on the inside and cool and beautiful on the outside.

At the dance floor, when we were enjoying the fine slow music, lots of emotions ran through me when he whispered, "I'm really glad I came by, now I have the chance to get to know you better. Maybe you're not sure if I mean it because we've never hone out and you don't know me very well, but I hope all that will change-starting tonight, starting right now,"

Starting tonight, starting right now. Saying those words to myself over and over again, I had felt a red flush rise up from my neck and spread out over my face, I didn't know whether I'd be able to look at Duncan after he said that, but I made myself look up, and suddenly his eyes found mine. For once, his gray, sad eyes were smiling.

For the first time in my life, I liked a boy- the cutest and most popular boy in the world- who actually liked me. Always before, if I liked a boy he was just somehow not available. Either he was already going steady with someone, or he was moving far away, or he just wasn't interested. So what if it took me almost a whole year? At last Duncan liked me. It took my breath away.

But I was telling you how I've changed, so I guess I should tell you about my hair, I've got to tell you about Sam Pinto. Sam Pinto is my idol.

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It's still hard for me to believe that I, who never used to look at a newspaper and celebrity magazines except to read the comics, idolize a well-known celebrity, but I do. Maybe because she handles so many interesting traits in her. Anyway, it all began in September, when the new school term began. One night before dinner, when Dad was watching, he called out. "Hey, Emily, come into the den. I want you to see something."

"See what?" I asked, sitting down beside him in front of the TV.

And there, in a tight close-up on the screen, was a face that could have been mine, except that it was older- and much more beautiful. It was like seeing my older sister would look like- if I had one.

"See what I mean? She looks like you, doesn't she?" Dad said and picked up his newspaper on top of the table, it was just a commercial and everything went so fast, but that face, though I only kind of like saw it for three seconds, surely stuck to my mind.

I nodded. Sam Pinto, this girl surely changed my life.

To tell you the truth, before I discovered Sam Pinto, I thought showbiz was the sickest thing in the world. But suddenly, I began reading newspapers every morning when she's in it. And every night, as soon as that reality show went on air, I sat glued to the TC set. Afterward, I'd turn it off and just stare at the black screen... and dream. At last, I knew what I wanted to look like, not what I wanted to be because I still didn't like how showbiz was all about.

And that's how I got my hair. You see, Sam Pinto has brown hair, just like mine. But instead of having it wavy and short, like what I used to have, she wears it really long and gorgeously straight.

The trouble was that my hair hadn't been good at all. It was so used to being blow-dried and curled, so it got a lot of frizz and split ends.

But when I saw Sam Pinto on TV, her straightness got to me. They were soft and kind of feminine. Nevertheless, it took me many months to get my hair long again. Then one week before the party, I finally went to the salon and straightened it.

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"Emily Knight, what in the world did you do to yourself?" Mom gasped when I came home from the beauty parlor. (I hadn't told a soul beforehand for fear I'd be talked out of it.)

"Yeah Emily, what'd you do?" my sister Erica said.

Then my father came home, kissed me on the cheek, and opened his newspaper.

"Jack, do you see what your daughter did to herself?" my mother said to my father.

"Yeah, Dad, take a look at those look-like-wire hair Emily has!" Erica said, trailing behind my mother.

"Well, I just decided to get my hair straight again," I told them, waiting for my father to look up. "And I realized that it's time to let my natural straight hair be straight again, that's all."

Dad looked up at me and smiled, "She's just letting her natural straight hair be straight again, that's all." He repeated, as if I'd issued the official statement on the subject, and went back to his paper.

"Well?" Mom persisted, folding her arms across her chest.

"Yeah, Dad, well?" my idiot sister seconded and not only fold her arms across her chest but tapped her foot impatiently. She shot me a snotty look as if to say, "Ha, ha, I'll bet you a hundred dollars that *he* doesn't like it."

Dad looked at each of us, bewildered.

"They want to know what you think," I told him, translating their folded arms. I don't know when I became Dad's official translator, but more and more he had begun turning to me when the mysterious world of females baffled him.

"Oh," he said and nodded in gratitude. Then he really looked at me, "Turn around. Let's see the back.

"Nice," he said and returned to his paper for what he thought was the last time.

"That's not the point," Mom said and sniffed. "Of course it's a nice hair Emily has, she never looked better." She was staring at me, and I could see she was noticing how the new hairdo somehow made my cheekbones stand out more and my eyes look wider and brighter. Even my nose, which isn't really exactly my best feature, looked smaller and more in proportion to my face. Or so the hairdresser told me. But the point was that Mom didn't approve of the hair treatment because I hadn't asked her permission to get it, and I confronted her with just that.

"There was no reason to ask you first. I used my own money that Granny Ella sent me three weeks early," I argued, "and I think I put it to good use."

Mom sniffed again. "Well, you still should have discussed it with me first. You're not *that* grown-up yet."

"Yeah, Emily, you think you're so grown-up," Erica echoed.

To my surprise, before I could wring my sister's neck, Mom turned to her and said the most baffling thing: "Well, hmmm... I don't know. Maybe your sister is right, after all. Maybe we haven't noticed, but she is becoming quite grown-up, anyway."

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For a moment I just stared happily at my mother and thought, *And maybe this family isn't so bad after all. Maybe they're beginning to understand me at last.*

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