

About 1600 words

Homebound Hearts

By Nicole Davis

Fall break had finally arrived, and I was on my way back home to Ember Mungus. It had been two long months since I left for Hoover university, and the anticipation of returning home was palpable. The transition to college was nothing like what is portrayed on Disney Movies. Adjusting to a new environment, new schedule, new teachers, new friends, was tougher than I anticipated, and I was overjoyed to be heading back to Ember Mungus where nothing ever changes. You can always count on Ms. Sarah singing at St John Baptist church on Sunday, you can always count on the Chick'n Stop serving the two for 1 Chicken special on Sunday afternoon and you can always count Ditch Day. It was a beloved tradition in our small town, a day when the whole community came together to celebrate the arrival of autumn by ditching our shoes. Ditch Day involved games, a big parade, and, of course, a huge festival with folk music. I had participated in Ditch Day every year since I was a child, and this year was no exception. This year would be extra special because it will be the first time, I would be reunited with my besties Ronnie and Jess since we went off to sperate colleges after high school graduation.

As the bus pulled into the bus station my mind was a whirlwind of excitement, but there was also a pressing question that had me on edge: What would I wear for Ditch Day? I had been so preoccupied with college life that I had completely forgotten to plan my outfit in advance. Panic set in as I realized that I had only a couple of hours to put something together. My

hair appointment was in three hours and afterwards I would only have enough time to change my clothes before the festivities begin. Mental note to self: Never Travel the day of Ditch Day.

It was long before I arrived at my childhood home. A charming two-story house nestled on tree-line neighborhood. Everything about it felt like a hug, from the warm inviting shade of pale yellow on the exterior on the house to the cobblestone pathway that led from the pavement and stopped right in front of the boldly embroidered earthy brown welcome mat. Before the nostalgia of being home could sink in, I remembered my current dilemma. I needed an outfit. I briefly greeted my parents and ran up the carpeted stairs to my bedroom. My childhood bedroom was a haven of pastel colors, filled with stuffed animals and plastered posters of my favorite anime character Sailor Moon. It was exactly how I left it. Something else that I can count on never changing. I get right to work trying to find the perfect outfit to wear tonight.

I stood in front of the full-length mirror, my closet doors thrown wide open, clothes scattered on the bed and floor. Panic was setting in. Tonight's party was the big Ditch Day Festival the whole town would be there, and I had nothing to wear. I needed help. I needed my best friend, the fashionista of our little friend group Ronnie. The only issue is that Ronnie haven't got back in town yet.

Thinking swiftly, I grabbed my phone and dialed, Veronica's number. After a couple of rings, her face popped up on the screen, and she looked at me with a raised eyebrow.

"Hey, what's up?" she asked.

"Ronnie, I need your fashion expertise, and I need it now," I said waving my phone toward the chaotic piles of clothes covering my bedroom floor.

She laughed, always up for a fashion emergency. "Sure thing, I always have time for a fashion emergency. Let me get to a quiet room"

As I waited for her to return, I couldn't help but smile. Ronnie was the queen of chic, and she had saved me from numerous style disasters in the past. I guess some things never change.

"Okay, I'm back," she said. "Show me what you're working with."

I proceeded to model a few outfits, turning, and twirling in front of the camera. Ronnie offered her critiques and suggestions each one met with a disappointed shake of her head. She was ruthless but honest, and that's why I valued her opinion so much.

"Too casual, too flashy, too boring," she critiqued as I held up various tops and skirts.

Finally I held up a sleek yellow jumpsuit that had been hiding in the back of my closet.

"Perfect," she declared, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Not yet. Its missing something." I said.

"A STATEMENT NECKLACE" we said in unison. We are still in sync even being over 50 miles apart. I pull out the diamond necklace my mom have given to me on the day I left for college.

" Now, Its perfect," I said

" Yes, I can't wait to see you tonight it's going to be just like old times," Ronnie said.

That's just what I need, a night just like old times. With my outfit all planned out I was confident that it would be a great night. I began to undo the massive pile of clothes I created while looking for an outfit to pastime until it was time to go to my hair appointment. I have been awaiting this hair appointment for weeks. Unfortunately, before I left for Hoover University, I did not listen to my mom who strongly suggested getting a protective style and now my hair is dire need of TLC from all the mistreatment it endured. I have chosen some goddess locs, that would last until I come back home for winter break, and I know my stylist Janet could deliver. Janet has been doing my hair since I was 13 years old, and I always had no problem fitting me in when I called. I was almost out the door when I saw Janet number pop on my phone screen.

"Hey GF!! I was just headed your way now," I said unable to contain my excitement.

"Scarlett, I'm really sorry to do this, but I have to cancel your appointment," Janet said "An emergency came up."

"Seriously, not today. The Ditch Day festival is today!!"

"I know, I know. I wouldn't cancel if it wasn't an emergency and I'll make it up to you. I'll do your goddess locs before you go back to campus, and I'll give you a discount." Janet said.

"Ok thanks Janet!! I hope everything is ok, talk to you soon," I said trying to mask the disappointment in my voice. I hung and glanced at my hair in the mirror. The first Ditch Day activity starts in less than four hours and here I was with the same messy bun I have been sporting for three weeks. Just went hope and despair began to make me feel hopeless I got an idea. Back on Campus, I learned via YouTube a couple hairstyles to

help me look presentable for important events maybe I could try to do something with the nest on my head myself.

I pulled out pulled out my phone and opened the YouTube App and typed in “quick braid styles”. I find a style that required me to transform my curly hair into four stitch braids that ended in two buns. A hairstyle I never done before but it was something about watching 10 YouTube videos that make you overdose on confidence. I quickly gathered the necessary tools and sat in front of vanity to begin the process. Seconds turned into minutes; those minutes turned into hours as I meticulously mimicked the YouTube creator. When I finally finished, I looked in the mirror, amazed by the result. It not perfect but it was a pretty good imitation. I felt a new burst of energy and confidence as I squeezed into the yellow dress that me and Ronnie picked out hours before.

I grabbed my phone and sent a text to Ronnie, and Jess.

“ My Curlfriends!! I’m all dressed up and ready for Ditch Day. Where are you meeting?!”

I couldn’t hide my excitement as I headed towards the ditch with my yellow clogs in hand. The streets were alive with color and energy. People of all ages roamed around bare feet dressed in colorful outfits as the aroma of delicious food flooded the air. I was ready to start partaking in the activities but there was one problem I couldn’t find my friends. I scanned the crowd, and my friends were nowhere in sight. Ronnie and Jess didn’t text me back yet and I was beginning to worry that they have already begun exploring without me. As I continued to wander through the crowd calling my friends name trying to locate them. Just as I was about to give up hope and head home a memory stuck.

“Okay Ladies, Let’s make a pact to always meet in front of the Dirt Museum every year for Ditch Day no matter what!!”

The Dirt Museum is the place where we all became friends when we were kids. With renewed determination, I made my way to Dirt Museum and my heart leaped with joy when I recognized Ronnie’s red fro. Everyone in Ember Mungus could recognize Ronnie by her curly fro.

“Scarlett, you look amazing!!” Ronnie exclaimed.

“Yellow is your color,” Jess added!!

“ Thanks to you, Ronnie,” I said. “ Lets go to have fun”.

We spent the day playing games and enjoying the Ditch Day Festivities. It was just like old times. Even though we all knew that we must return to our separate colleges soon in our new environment with our new schedules, new teachers and new friends it was nice to know at least for tonight everything was just like old times.