

# EGG SALAD SANDWICH

by Ava Obafemi

## CHAPTER ONE

"Come on, you know you can only take one sandwich," my mom says as a man with dreadlocks and no teeth tries to sneak two egg salad sandwiches onto his plate. It's Saturday, and mom and I are at the homeless shelter, which is not where I want to be. My mom always says it's nice to help people who are in need, so when I'm with her on the weekend, we come here to feed the homeless for a bit. I know I probably sound selfish, petty and so inconsiderate, but I always feel awkward coming here. Most people who volunteer here are in their mid-forties and I'm only fifteen and having to watch people who have not showered in forever eat like they will never see food again is not necessarily my idea of a good time.

Regardless, the day is going okay, but all of that changes when I see what appears to be a hundred year old man come in and ask another volunteer for a sandwich instead of simply joining the line and just taking one. I don't know if he knows what he is supposed to do, so I grab a sandwich plate and attempt to take it to him. Apparently, the lady standing next to me in the food line spilled some water on the floor. I don't see the mess and make a complete fool of myself when I slip in the pool of water, fall flat on my back and the egg salad sandwich plate lands with a splat on my head. I instantly hear everyone laughing, even the man I was trying to help. To make matters worse, I notice the whole embarrassing moment is being recorded on multiple cellphones. I am so humiliated. I run outside and I have no intentions of going back inside for the rest of the time Mom is in there. Later, Mom and I drive home to her apartment in complete silence. She knows I am so upset.

Mom's place is small, but at least I have my own room. I sit and cry on my bed until I heard my phone ping like crazy. I look on my phone and there is seventy-three messages and alerts from my friends. Looks like the video of my fall has made it to FaceSpace and I am now the butt of everyone's jokes. I am mortified. Needless to say, I am NOT going back to that darn homeless shelter for a long, long time. Shoot, it may just be me and my beloved books in this room FOREVER.

## CHAPTER TWO

Thankfully, Sunday at mom's house is better. We don't have to go to the homeless shelter, so Mom let me sleep in and I got to laze around and read before lunch. After lunch, she says I can go hang out with my friends, which is a nice surprise. Mom usually keeps me close since I only see her on the weekends. See, even she clearly feels sorry for me after what happened yesterday.

After I finish the last bit of my homework, I make plans to meet up with my friends at the mall. Mom drops me off and tells me she'll be back to get me in a couple of hours. On my way into the new phone store where my friends and I are supposed to meet, I hear "Coley" yelled very loudly and it seems like everyone in the vicinity turns and looks at me. My friend Heather, who's here before me, as usual, runs up and hugs me.

"OMG! What happened yesterday? You got like a million views!"

I look at her with a look that says "Don't ask!" then say, "Where's Vanessa?"

Heather points and says "Over there", which I take to mean she's at the food court.

"Beware she's kind of in a mood. She said there's no point in waiting for you because you're always late" says Heather and follows it up with an eye roll.

I shrug my shoulders and say, "we can just do our shopping and meet up with her after then'. We lock arms and her long blond braid swings and hits me as we kind of skip off toward the next store.

As we approach the food court about forty five minutes later, I see Vanessa. She sees me and smiles.

"Oh, you're finally here," she says with a hint of sassiness.

"Actually, I've been here for a bit, but Heather and I went to do some shopping before coming over here".

Her makeup, which is done perfectly and must have taken hours to do, cannot cover up the look of frustration on her face. She shoots Heather a look and Heather quickly turns red in embarrassment and tries to change the subject.

"We should all go to Never 45. Heard their having an awesome sale!"

As we start to walk to the store Vanessa says," Girl, what's up with your hair?"

"Uhh, I was in a hurry". My hair is down and as curly as it wants to be. I thought I looked cute, until now. We stop in a few more stores and find ourselves back in the food court. Vanessa quickly walks over and sits down with a bunch of boys from school. Heather looks at me, shrugs her shoulders and points to our favorite taco spot. When we get in line, a little girl keeps peering up at us clearly listening to our conversation. Eventually she says, "Are you Egg Salad Sandwich Girl?"

Heather snorts through her nose, trying not to laugh, but the people behind do not contain their laughter. I'm blushing under my freckles and tears are building up in my dark brown eyes. I push through the humiliation and say "Actually, yeah. Wasn't that hilarious?"

Everyone starts laughing harder. I lose my cool, push through the crowd of people and run to the nearest bathroom.

"Nicole!" yells Heather, running behind me.

It's impossible to hold back my tears when I get to the bathroom. If Vanessa thought I looked bad before, she should see me now. The little bit of mascara I'm wearing is now running down my face and onto my white paisley top. I try to stop when Heather comes in and hugs me.

"I'm sorry I laughed at you Coley. Are you okay?"

Then I hear "She's gonna be just fine."

Vanessa suddenly appears and sits on the restroom counter next to me and continues by saying, "I saw the whole thing. Sorry you are having to deal with all of this, but you know I think that little girl may have been a real fan. We all laugh a little. Vanessa may be hard to figure out, moody and sassy at times, but its times like this that I'm reminded why we're friends."

### CHAPTER THREE

Suddenly, I get a bunch of texts from my mom.

*Where are you*

*Your dad is going to be at the house soon*

*Be where I dropped you in five*

When Mom and I pull up in front of the apartment building, I see Dad's car in front.

"Great," Mom says with a sigh. "Go pack quickly. I'll stay down here."

I take the elevator up, run inside and pack quickly as Mom suggested. I grab my makeup bag, and a few of the cute tees I just bought and toss them into the Louis Vuitton bag Dad bought me last Christmas.

As soon as the elevator door opens, I can tell Mom is upset and has been crying. Sunday. "Switch Day". My least favorite day of the week.

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"So, what's up" Dad says, turning at the stop sign.

"Umm...nothing" I respond.

"Except this," Sam, my step brother says, showing me his phone from the front passenger seat. It's the video of me slipping and falling in the pool of water at the homeless shelter. Sam laughs.

"You're an overnight celeb, Cole," he says.

I bury my head in my hands. Sam is one of the only good parts about spending the school week at Dad's house. He's a year older than me and is pretty cool. We get along really well and I'm typically pretty grateful for him, although I'm not so sure right now.

Soon we pull up to the front of dad's house. It's a big difference from Mom's place. Dad's house is not really a house, it's a mansion. With a huge front yard, four stories, eight bedrooms, six bathrooms, a screening room, a pool, a basketball court in the backyard and a 4 car garage, it was really different from Mom's place. Dad inherited the bank my grandfather started right after my mom and he divorced. Great timing, right? Dad turns and pulls into the private driveway. His Lamborghini sits in the garage. Sam immediately asks if dad can drive him to school in it this week and like always, Dad says no.

Sam picks up a basketball off the shelf after he hops out of Dad's SUV and starts to walk to the backyard to play, then turns and asks, "Feel like getting your butt kicked?"

I stick out my tongue, shew him off and walk into the house. I am greeted at the door by Mimi, my step-siblings Maltipoo. Mimi is another thing that makes me happy when I come to Dad's house. She is so darn cute and a great snuggler. The only bad thing about Mimi is that she can bark, sometimes uncontrollably.

"Quiet Mimi, quite" I whisper. She keeps barking.

"She only listens to *her family*" my step-sister and Sam's twin sister, Victoria, says in her usual catty voice.

"Quiet" Victoria snaps and Mimi stops.

"I haven't even been here for five minutes and you're already picking a fight with me Vic. I hate you, you know that?" I say with loads of frustration in my voice.

"Young lady, who do you think you're talking to?" Just then my step mom, Taylor, comes out from around the corner.

"Mom, I was just asking Nicole if she needed any help and she just started being so mean," Victoria looks at her mom, with fake tears in her eyes.

"What!" I say, "That is not true. Vic started in on me as soon as I walked in. She's always picking on me!" I reply, my voice trembling a bit.

"Seems to me like Vicky is the one being picked on here." Taylor says, putting her arm around Vic's shoulder. I roll my eyes and brush past them as I continue into the house. As picturesque as my Dad's house may be on the outside, it's not all sunshine and lollipops in here, trust me.

## CHAPTER FOUR

I essentially spent the rest of the evening in my bedroom, reading. It was a quiet dinner too. After such an awful start to the weekend, I'm just not up for the anymore confrontation. Not to mention, my phone is still pinging and the video is still getting lots of likes on FaceSpace.

I begged Dad to not make me go to school this morning at breakfast. I know I am going to be the laughing stock of the school, but the begging got me

nowhere. I got ready for school and got on this bus. People, even the bus driver, are snickering and laughing. It's going to be a long week.

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It's definitely been a rough week. I've been pointed at, laughed at and made fun of. I'm hoping by next week, people will forget that they were calling me "Mayo Head" and "Eggo". I am just so grateful that it's Friday and that Mom is here, at school, to pick me up. We go to the store, like we do every Friday after school, pick out a flavor of ice cream to share and pick up a pizza on the way home. I know Mom will be able to make me feel better. Friday night movie night always does.

## CHAPTER FIVE

So, as predicted, Friday night was pretty great, but this morning is not off to a great start. Mom has me up early and seems to think that going back to the homeless shelter will make me feel better. I'm not convinced, but I know we only have a short time together, so I'm here, reluctantly.

I can feel eyes on me and can hear giggles as I walk into the shelter with my head down. I make my way to the serving station and put on my gloves. I look up and see the man who basically caused the whole situation walk into the homeless shelter. I turn my head, but he stumbles over toward me.

"Hello," he says.

"Hi", I say, not wanting to talk to him.

"I want to apologize for last week," He looks down and continues.

"When I was younger, I was made fun of because I couldn't read. I am dyslexic and still don't know how to read, but I've always wanted to learn." I want to ignore him. I want to tell him to keep moving, but instead I show sympathy. After

my shift, I talk to him more while Mom helps clean the kitchen. His name is Michael and he's a really nice man. Listening to him has made me forget about the sandwich incident and it has given me time to think about something else. Something other than myself.

On the ride back to Mom's place that afternoon, I told her that I want to start a Book Club at the shelter. I told her I want to read to people like Michael. I want to help them escape the challenges of their lives by going on adventures through books. Mom absolutely loves the idea. As soon as I get home, I make a flyer to post at the shelter and in the nearby community.

I can't wait. Our first book will be *Moby Dick* because Michael mentioned that he has always wanted to read that book. I think he's going to love this.

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Our first Book Club meeting was amazing. It was so much fun and I was right, Michael loved it. I'm so happy he's happy. Everyone really seems to enjoy the story and they are looking forward to next week's meeting.

After the meeting, I met up with my friends at the mall and they told me that someone recorded video of the Book Club and it's getting a bunch of likes on FaceSpace.

Later that afternoon, as we walked through the mall, we ran into the same little girl from the taco line. She smiled at me from a distance and said, "I wanna be just like you".

I think this is the beginning of something beautiful.