Name:

Period:

**Figurative Language**

***Popular: Vintage Wisdom for a Modern Geek* by Maya Van Wagenen**

**Excerpt from p. 223-227**

Tuesday, May 15

Twenty-seven invitations are hidden in my backpack.  I’m no longer feeling down.  Instead, I’ve decided to just enjoy everything.  Kenzie doesn’t ride the bus this morning, but that’s okay.  I’m on top of the world!  I’m also looking forward to getting my braces off during my orthodontist appointment today.  Everything’s finally happening!  I’m feeling invincible!

I see Catalina from choir leaning against a wall in the hallway before school starts.

“Hey there, Catalina,” I say.  “How are you doing?”

“Good, I guess.”

“Awesome.  So, I’m hosting a party this weekend and would love for you to be there.”  I give her an invitation.

She opens the envelope and reads.

“It sounds like a lot of fun,” she says.  “I’d love to come to your farewell party, Maya, but I can’t.”

“Why?” I ask.  This definitely catches me off guard.

“Allison, you know the one in our choir?  She’s having her birthday party that same night.”  She places it back into my hands.  “I can’t come to yours.  Sorry.”

My heart begins to sink, as I force the next question. “Who else is going?”

“Everybody,” she says.  Quickly she realizes her oversight.  The fact that I wasn’t invited.  “I mean, everybody except… some people.”

“It’s okay, Catalina,” I whisper.  She makes an excuse and runs off.  I shuffle through the stack of invitations in my hand, the majority of which are choir girls, all of whom will go to Allison’s party.  On the top envelope, written in big hopeful letters, is Allison.

I look away, trying not to cry.

I trudge through the hallway, struggling to stay optimistic.  I’m not even sure if the party is going to happen, so I think about the prom.  Out of the corner of my eye, I see Nicolas.  My heart leaps into my throat.  He’s talking with a pretty Band Geek.  He’s laughing as he drapes his sweatshirt around her tiny shoulders.  She smiles and bats her eyelashes.  They hug and walk off to class together.  Their hands hang at their sides, almost touching.

I shove the envelopes angrily in my mesh backpack, the quilting spilling out the sides, like the guts from a wounded animal.

My heart aches.  I thought things were going to be different.  I guess I’ve been fooling myself all along.

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After poking various instruments in my mouth, my orthodontist determines that I will be keeping my braces on for another five weeks.  I won’t get them off before school ends.

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The choir concert is tonight.

I hug my knees and imagine that I’m somewhere else, someone else.  I now wish I’d never auditioned for the stupid solo.  Who am I kidding?  With my luck I’ll probably fall off the stage.

Song after song is performed until it’s our turn to sing our finale “It’s a Beautiful Day.”  If this isn’t irony, what is?  I remember most of my choreography, but when it’s my turn to sing, my feet are like lead.  Somehow I manage to walk to the microphone.  I hear the CD play my introduction.  I start to sing.

I try to appear happy and interested in what I’m saying, but my tongue is dry leather.

I look out into the audience.  There’s Dad filming the concert, Natalia with her ears covered, Brodie with a vacant expression on his face, and Mom looking hopeful.

I close my eyes and try to focus on the lyrics, but I stumble and miss a phrase.  It feels as if a brick has hit my chest and it’s impossible to breathe.  I manage to recover enough to finish, but for me, the damage is done.

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When the concert is over one of my choir friends tugs my arm.  “You did super good.”  She snorts.  “Well, at least until you messed up.  The look on your face was so dumb.  You messed up, like, a lot!”

“Thanks, Claire…” I say, looking down.  A few seats away I can hear girls mocking me, singing my solo, and pretending to choke.

All of their names are written on the envelopes in my backpack.

I hold myself together until we get into the cars.

“Oh, honey,” Mom says.  “It wasn’t that bad!”

I cradle my head in my hands as hot tears run down my face.

It’s not just Claire’s comment that hurts.  When I was in fourth grade I was an iris in the school play, *Alice in Wonderland*.  I had a handful of lines.  I pretended it was real, and I got into the character.  People would laugh when they saw me, but I assumed it was because I was good.

On the day before the performance, I came in late to rehearsal.  All the other flowers were sitting in a circle talking about something.

“And then she says her lines so stupidly!  If only Maya realized that she looks like an idiot every time she opens her mouth,” said the Daisy.  “She’s so bad at acting…”  Then she looked up and saw me standing in the doorway.  She sneered and said my lines, exactly like I’d say them.  All the other flowers laughed.

I hid in the bathroom, crying all over my sweatpants.

And now, when I look at my life, all I can see is the joke it has become.  The Daisy’s laughter still echoes through my head.

Is this all that my experiment has amounted to - people pretending to be my friends then being cruel when I need them most?  Why did I believe I was anything but an inside joke?  Carlos Sanchez was right.  Kenzie was right.  I’m not special, I’m just a crazy girl in Grandma shoes.  I don’t have balls at all.

I’m sorry, Betty Cornell.  I tried.

Popularity isn’t real.

I’m done.