

adapted from THE ADOLESCENT FUGUE  
by Ruth Jacobson

Characters

Becky Jo Turner: Pamela Westmore's best friend  
Jim James: twelve years old and into mischief  
Sharon James: Jim's older sister. In love with Chris Douglas  
Chris Douglas: Pamela Westmore's boyfriend  
Vanessa Rice: worried about popularity, wants to make friends with Sharon

BECKY: Hi. My name is Becky Jo Turner, and I'm a student at Ferndale. I've been class president two years in a row, and I'm also on the honour roll. I guess that's about enough for now.

SHARON: If I had to say what the worst thing on earth was, it would have to be brothers. My older one always thinks he knows everything and my younger one gets away with murder and pins it on me. Little brat.

JIM: Hi, my name is Jim, uh, James. Pretty stupid name eh? Jim James? Get it? Well, I'm sorry I seem so spaced, but last night me and some of my older friends.....well, we got into my dad's liquor cabinet, and .....well, I got so drunk! I mean, I don't even remember it all. It was real neat though, I can tell you that.

VANESSA: I hate being fat. Fat is so ugly, you know. People hate fat, they laugh at fat, fat makes them sick. Fat makes me sick. It's like I always feel that people think I'm just the ugliest, fattest thing. That's what I really hate about being so fat. I don't even like to run in gym class in case everybody starts thinking, "Look at Vanessa run, she jiggles all over, isn't it gross?" I always make sure to wear really loose clothes, too, just so people can't see my fat body. I've never been popular. In my whole life, I've had maybe two real friends.

JIM: Me and my friend, Ken, we're going to get drunk again on the weekend.

BECKY: I'm sorry I look like such a mess. I didn't get a chance to wash my hair last night, I was too busy talking on the phone. And I hate these clothes, too. I mean, they've got to be almost two years old. My parents are just such tightwads.

CHRIS: I guess you could say I'm popular. I always have a girlfriend. I know any girl would probably want to go out with me. I mean, let's face it. I'm good looking, good at sports. But popularity isn't always so great, either.

JIM: It's going to be a blast. We'll steal some beer out of his garage, and then we'll get loaded. Last night, we were yelling and stuff, and it was real fun. We had some cassettes of my older sister's and we played them real loud, and it was great. We were going to call up some girls from our class, but then we didn't feel like it, so we didn't. They probably would've thought we were cool, though.

SHARON: I hate my brothers so much! For one thing, they always make fun of my zits. Can I help it if I have acne? Do they always have to remind me? Why did God have to make zits anyway? He could just have never invented them, and then everyone would be just fine. I tell myself not to eat junk food and chocolate. I know that just makes things worse, but I like chocolate so much that I end up eating it anyway, and then I hate myself for eating it. Same as with my braces. I hate them too. They make me look even uglier, and I'm not supposed to eat any candy or chew any gum, but sometimes I just get so mad, and then I go out and chew a whole pack of gum. Do you know how boring life would be if I only did what I'm supposed to all the time? I don't want to talk about this any more, it makes me depressed.

VANESSA: Can you believe how fat I am? Look at me.

BECKY: I've told my mother a million times that I need new clothes, or I'll just die.

VANESSA: I know I'm going to go through my whole life as an object of ridicule.

BECKY: Can't she understand that people notice what I wear?

VANESSA: People like Becky, for instance, they always know exactly how to act, they always look so great. If I looked like that, I'd be confident, too. But people look at me, and I know they think, "How could anyone let herself get so fat? How could anyone do this to herself?"

BECKY: I told my parents last night, "Nobody wears clothes as old as mine, not unless it's their grandmother or something."

CHRIS: Now, take my new girlfriend, Pamela, for instance. She's really great-looking, and she wears great clothes, and she's really popular. But she's a real vacuum head. All she wants to do is gossip with her friends. Sometimes I think she just wants me around because she wants a boyfriend. But I guess I'm probably the best one she could have got.

SHARON: I know who I'd rather talk about.....Chris Douglas. He's the coolest guy in the whole school. Just the way he walks around, like he owns the place. I don't know what I'd say if he talked to me, but it would sure be great. Sometimes I just stare at him when I know he isn't looking, and I imagine what it would be like to have someone like that call me on the phone.

VANESSA: I know how things go. Girls like me, who aren't too pretty to begin with, you get your feelings hurt, and the first thing you want to do is go and eat something to make you feel better. You eat and eat, and then you realize how fat you're getting. Well, that's not the way it's going to be with me. I refuse to let food control my body, even though I really think about it a lot.

BECKY: I saw this cute blouse at Pembley's, but it cost sixty dollars, so my mom said I couldn't have it. I begged her all the way home to take me back to the store, but would she? No, she's just too selfish. She always manages to have clothes to wear, and I hardly get any. I could probably wear some of hers, but who wants to be caught dead in your mother's sweater or something. I mean, what if somebody found out? Like, if someone said, "I really like your sweater, where'd you get it?" I would just die if I had to say, "It's my mother's."

JIM: I know this girl that really likes me, by the way. She's real tall, taller than me, and boy, is she good-looking. She always writes people notes in class, and I always try to steal them, and she pretends to get mad, but I know she really isn't. I always think she's going to be writing about me, but I guess she doesn't because she's afraid I'll see the note. Next time I'm drunk, I'm going to call her up. That'll get her!

SHARON: Of course, Chris doesn't even know I exist. Right now, he's with this real snob, Pamela. I've never seen anybody so stuck up in my life. I bet she's just using him.

BECKY: And my dad isn't any better than my mother. I asked him for a raise in my allowance, but would he give it to me? No. He said five dollars a week is enough. I don't think a mouse could get by on an allowance of five dollars a week. My parents!! I don't know where they came from. A dinosaur egg, probably.

VANESSA: Then you get fatter, and you look in the mirror, and it makes you sick. You dread getting dressed up, going shopping, putting on a bathing suit. My mother wanted to take me out last weekend to buy some new clothes, but I told her to forget it. She started to get on my case, saying that I don't look healthy any more, but I told her to leave me alone. I'm never going to have any friends. There's a girl in my class who sits near me, and I try to get her to talk and stuff, but she kind of ignores me.

JIM: Oh yeah, I meant to tell you. Just because I'm kind of little and stuff, don't think I'm not tough. I could beat up anybody I want to. Seriously. Last week, I got this kid at recess, gave him a black eye and a bloody nose, and he ran into the school to tell the principal. What a baby. I'm not scared of anything.

CHRIS: Pam's really just like all the other girls I know. All the good-looking ones are real spacey, and they all just want to hang out with their stupid friends. All the ones with any brains are real dogs. Some of them are ugly and stupid. There's this one girl in class who's always staring at me, gives me the creeps. Like, I feel like saying to her, "What are you looking at?", but then I think it's better to just ignore her. She just makes me feel like maybe I've got my shirt on inside out or something, you know? Weird. Girls are definitely weird.

SHARON: If I just had one real good friend to talk to, you know. That I could be honest with. I'm going to tell you the truth. I don't think any boys have ever liked me. I'm most likely the only girl in the class who's never had a boy phone her, or write her a note, or try to sit near her on the bus. I just want to scream sometimes. Why don't people notice me? Take Pamela, for instance. Everyone notices her. But why? She wears the dumbest clothes, and she got a stupid perm that makes her hair look like a poodle or something, and she's got this ugly mole on the side of her face that I think is positively disgusting. It's probably got hair growing out of it or something too. I'm sure Chris can't like her all that much. Maybe if I keep looking at him in class, he'll get the message and start wondering about me. But get real, what guy's going to look at me, with this face full of zits and braces?

BECKY: We have to do a dumb project in English for tomorrow. I hope I do OK on it. Usually I get A in English, but this stuff is so boring. I skipped some parts of the book, but I don't care. As long as I get an A. Mr. Cooper better give me one.

JIM: One time in class, we had to say what we want to be when we grow up. I said I wanted to be a forest ranger, because I like animals and birds, and trees and stuff. Anyway, when I said I thought birds were cute, some of the guys laughed. So I don't talk about that any more. And anyway, I beat one of them up the next week for some other reason. He won't laugh at me again, I bet. Everybody thinks I'm cool, even though I am the youngest kid in the class.

BECKY: Pamela is my best friend. She's everything a girl should be. She's got this really cute perm, and she's really pretty. She's got brown eyes and blonde hair, and she wears make-up, and she's got this really neat mole on her cheek. Makes her look older. Her mom's going to let her take modelling lessons this summer. Her aunt was a model, and she was in catalogues and everything. But my dumb parents won't let me go. They say there's better ways to spend their hard-earned money. They say I shouldn't be so concerned about my looks all the time. They say I'm smart and I should try to concentrate on my schoolwork a bit more. But honestly, what's really important? For girls, I mean. Looks or brains?

VANESSA: I suppose you think I should feel sorry for myself. You're right, I do. But look at me, Vanessa the friendless fat lady. Do you blame me for feeling sorry for myself?

JIM: OK, here's the real truth. My name isn't really Jim, it's Walter. What a joke, right? How could my parents have given me that name? And they wonder why I get in trouble all the time. What did they expect, calling me Walter. It's embarrassing. In school, supply teachers always read it right out loud, and then everybody laughs. That's why I gave that kid the black eye last week.....it wasn't really black, but I didn't get a good shot at it. It should have been a black eye. But, well, I did hit him. And his nose was bleeding. And I'm still going to call at least two girls from our class this weekend. After I talk Ken into stealing beer from his dad's garage.

CHRIS: You should see some of the losers around school. It's almost a joke. Tall, short, fat, skinny. Man, there's this one girl, she's so skinny, she looks like a rainstorm would blow her away or something. And this other one, she's still staring at me. She probably thinks I'm gorgeous, but it gets on my nerves. All I have to say is this--thank God there's some intelligent guys around to talk to. Girls just drive me up the wall.