

## New Girl

By Aneesha Sharma

I walked down the corridor of my new school, trying to find my class. There were hardly any students around, for some reason. I was in sixth grade and had already been to eleven schools so far in my life. I know what you're thinking, "wait, is that a world record?"; and yes, it might be. I should look into that. It's just that, my dad's job is transferable (too transferable I might say) and so I've moved all over the country.

Changing schools isn't too bad; I've been to tons of different schools in Canada and seen lots of cool things. But what's bad is that I've been "the new girl" for every single school year of my life. I've also always been super shy, and I suck at making friends. So, at each new school, I just lay low and focus on my studies. I've only just started wishing I had a friend (other than mum and dad).

Then I found out there was supposed to be a school assembly that day. I rushed and made it into the gym. I was late, so I was stuck in the back, with the older kids. I was trying to find my class was sitting, when I saw this *beautiful* girl with long, wavy brown hair. She was sitting with the other older kids and she looked like one of those models you see in those fashion magazines. She motioned me over with her finger, "You are the new girl, right? The miss award-winner the principals been blabbering about?"

"Um, er, yes I'm Arabella." I stuttered. I guess the principal must've introduced me. Meh, less work for me.

"I'm Molly, btw your shirt is *sooo* cute. You can sit here with me," she pointed to the seat beside her. The girl sitting there got up almost instantly, and I hesitantly sat down. This girl was the boss around here.

At lunch recess, Molly waved to me again. She gave me a tour of the school like I was actually somebody important. I got the best lunch table (I sat with *real* eighth graders!!), the best chrome books and if I'm not wrong, more people actually spoke to me that day than in my entire life time of school... *ever*. Of course, the only reason this was happening was that Molly was super popular and for some reason, she liked me.

Things kept going pretty well but of course I knew after six long years at school that no one is that nice out the real reason she was being so nice. Molly was two grades above me, but she asked me to “help” her with her homework, which really meant I did all her homework for her. She also made me make her resume (Molly was trying to get into some fancy high school), and other things she needed “help” with. We never said a word but we both knew the deal: I did her work and not tell a soul and Molly would let me hang out with the cool kids.

I was tired, cranky and missing sleep. But, for the first time in my life, I felt like I had friends. Molly’s friends were actually nice to me and even though all they talked about was boys, and I didn’t talk at all, I was good. I was good. Life was good.

One day a girl in my robotics class, Athena, came to my desk. “Why are you hanging out with Molly and gang?” she asked me. She didn’t even bother to whisper.

Now, Athena was nothing like her namesake goddess. Not at all. This Athena was short and chubby with long ginger pigtails. She had huge glasses that kept slipping from her freckle-covered nose. I thought she was so adorably cute, but she was one of the dorkiest and silliest kids in school (according to Molly).

I didn’t know what to say, so I didn’t say thing. I mean, wasn’t it obvious? Who wouldn’t want to hang out with Molly?

“You know she’s using you right?” she kept going.

I still didn’t answer.

“Molly isn’t the nice and kind person you think. She is using you.”

“And she’s a bully,” she added when I kept ignoring her.

Well, of course I had to defend Molly. Athena didn’t know anything about Molly, “that’s so not true, Molly is so not a bully.” I said.

Athena scoffed and turned around, “I’ll show you someday,” she mumbled and walked away.

After that, Athena started pointing out how Molly sometimes treated people, especially the smaller kids. Molly was an angel anytime a grownup was around but for some reason she could be mean to

little kids. Two days straight during recess, I saw her “accidentally” shove little kids aside, call them embarrassing names and laugh at them. Other times, she was normal and was nice to everyone, like the Molly I thought I knew.

Then one day during recess, I saw Athena waving at like a madman. She said, “Come with me.” She ran straight to the girls’ washroom. “Go in there and then we’ll see if you don’t believe me,” she said and walked away.

When I went in, nothing seemed wrong at first. The washroom at this school is shaped a bit weird. When you come in, the toilets are right there, but the sinks are kinda separate and you don’t see them at first. When I got to the sinks, I saw Molly, with her friends Janeth and Cora. There was also a little girl there, I think from the third grade. Molly had taken off the girl’s scrunchy and were playing Monkey in the middle with it. The little girl looked like she was going to burst into tears any second.

“Hey! This ain’t cool Molly,” I yelled, sounding braver than I was.

Molly turned around to face me, surprised. That didn’t last long. “Well, whatcha gonna do about it, Arabella? Go cry to your Mommy?” she asked in mocking tone.

“I’m , um, I’m a, I’m a gonna go tell the principal,” I managed to stutter.

Molly cast a strange look at her friends. In a flash, I remembered that two days ago, Molly had showed off her “hard earned” letter of acceptance from the high school she’d been praying to get into. She didn’t need me anymore.

Molly and her friends were the only ones in the washroom now, the little girl had run away. Molly slowly came close to me and started reaching out to slap my head and mess up my hair. “Stop!” I yelled. Then she made a wad out of a toilet paper roll and started to jab it at my mouth. Then she said in a sing-song mocking voice, “Poor Arrrrrabella, can’t find a fella...”

“What are you doing?” I yelled and almost got that toilet paper jabbed into my mouth.

They all started giggling and circling me, singing that stupid rhyme. I was really scared but didn’t show it (hopefully). Finally, some other girls showed up there and they had to stop.

“Catch you another time,” Molly whispered to me, “And oh, why don’t we keep this between us? We wouldn’t want the whole school to find out who’s been cheating away in her new school, right?”

“But, but, but...” I stuttered, “*You* asked me to do your homework for you”

“Meh, details, details. No one cares about the details. See ya later, sucker!” she waved her hand backwards and walked away.

When I came out, lunch recess was over. I wasn’t sure what to do. I was furious, but also scared to tattle on Molly and friends, in case Molly told on me about doing her homework. I was scared I could be expelled for that.

Robotics was the next class. As soon as I stepped through the door, Athena signaled me to come to her desk in the back

“Sooooo, don’t be too mad at me,” she said.

“Wait, how do you know what happened? Wow, news travels fast around here,” I murmured, half to myself. “Anyways, it doesn’t matter. Why would I be mad at you? *You* didn’t bully me.”

“Yeah, sorry Arabella, but I kinda set you up.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“I mean, I know how Molly is. Who do you think did all of Molly’s work before you came?”

That kinda made sense. Athena was a bright girl too. I could see Molly using her.

“Molly’s always been a bully,” she went on, “I don’t know why everyone’s so nice to her. They can all see her messing with the younger kids but they make excuses. Maybe they start thinking it isn’t a big deal? Or maybe they’re just scared. Molly is too sly to do anything when grownups are around, and you know how all the teachers think she is an angel, right? I complained, but my proof wasn’t good enough. And yes, if you’re wondering, she did make my life miserable after that.”

“So, how’d you set me up?” I reminded Athena.

“Well see, I knew they were messing with that little girl in there and I knew you would do something. So, I got you and I recorded it!”

“How?” I didn’t see how Athena could’ve done it. There was no one else in the washroom at the time and this washroom has no windows except for some high skylights.

“Yup, you know that periscope I’ve been making in this class? Yes, I was making it for just this. I rigged my cell phone to it, held it to the skylights and recorded the whole thing!” she said proudly.

I didn’t know if I should laugh or cry. I’d been set up! But it was for a good thing, right?

“So, you recorded the whole thing?”

“Yup I did. And I’m gonna show it to the principal now - if that’s cool with you of course.”

“Do it,” I told her. I knew I might get into trouble for the homework part, but I knew Molly had to be ratted out.

Over the next week, Athena and I started a YouTube channel. There we talked about bullying, how it was like and how it was like to feel powerless. We talked about real problems, real stories. People started picking up on this and a few younger kids at our school shared their stories where they’d been bullied and been too scared to tell anyone. Slowly, the stories started to come out. There was bullying going on at our school and no one could deny it. People were actually believing us.

We also filed a complaint with the principal, using the recording of the washroom incident. Many students joined us and told about the different times Molly had bullied them too.

Molly was suspended for two weeks, her parents contacted and her letter of recommendation taken away. And then, her fancy high school said they didn’t want a bully in their school and took back their acceptance letter! So, she’ll be joining the local high school next year where I’m sure, everyone’s already heard about her bullying. So, yeah, I don’t think she’s gonna be the most popular kid there.

I, on the other hand, suddenly am the cool girl. Every girl wants to sit next to me in class; every lunch table wants my company. Why? Because somehow the video got out and everyone thinks I’m a hero! I love it! I wouldn’t tell anyone- Athena wouldn’t want it. But I mean... she did do a lot. Okay, more than a lot. Fine she did the whole thing! There, I said it.

The best part is... we’re BFFs now.

Now in most stories this would be the end. But my story doesn't end here.

My dad just got told at work today that he's being transferred to another city, again.

So, now, I have to move again.

I have to go to a new school again.

I have to do *this* all over again.

Just great. I'd better call those Guinness folks about that world record.