**Back to School - Whitebriar Academy**

by LeahR

It was a very big day for Jessie Schmit, one that she had looked forward to for a very long time. It was her first day at her new job. Her first day at any real job at all for that matter, having just obtained her Master's in Education from Weber State. It was her first day as a teacher at Whitebriar Academy. It should have been a very good day for Jessie too, that is, if it were not for the whims of fate that conspired against her.

The first thing that fate had done to Jessie happened long before this tale starts. It was something well known to Jessie and everyone who knew her. It had been her fate to be born petite. Very petite. She had been waiting since her mid teens to grow one more inch to five feet. Now at the age of 24, it didn't seem that that was going to happen. Added to that was the fact that she was also of very slight build, thin and wraith like. Because of her small size, she often had a difficult time finding clothing that both fit and flattered her. She sometimes had to resort to shopping in the children's department and hope to find things that looked a little more mature.

The second trick of fate happened at Whitebriar Academy the week before she was to start. It seems that the school had hired some temporary clerical help for the summer. One of these clerks had been assigned to prepare student and personnel folders for both new students, and new employees. This poor clerk, being slightly dyslexic, had transposed two digits when entering Jessie's birth date in the computer system. '1989' became '1998,' and when the computer populated the rest of the form, her age instead of '24,' became '15.' That might not have been too much of a problem except that this clerk, inexperienced as she was, also did not know that staff was to have their data printed on green file cards, while student cards were yellow. Six new folders had been delivered to Whitebriar Academy's office the day before the first day of school. Five new transfer students, and one new teacher, Jessie. The school secretary, finding the six folders, had sorted them by the expedient method of flipping them open and checking the color of the card. Six yellow cards, six new students. She stacked the folders on the counter to await the students' arrivals.

Fate was still not done with Jessie. The third trick that fate had played on her involved the airlines and her luggage. Yes, her luggage was lost. All she had to wear was what she had traveled in, shorts and a polo shirt. The only place she could find to shop on such short notice was a discount store, and the only clothing she could find to fit her was from the teens section. She bought a couple of the most mature looking outfits she could find. They would have to do, until either her luggage would arrive, or she would be able to make another shopping trip. Also missing with her luggage was her brand new briefcase, which she had packed inside one of the larger suitcases to keep it from being scuffed. She resigned herself to carrying her supplies in her old backpack, the only thing she had carried on the plane.

The very last thing was, that while waiting in the airline office to report her missing luggage, someone had gone through her purse and made off with her wallet and all her identification.

It happened that Jessie had a first cousin, a woman enough older than Jessie that, even though a cousin, she had always called her 'Aunt Becca.' Since her dad had disappeared and her mom had died, Aunt Becca was her closest relative. Aunt Becca lived relatively near her new school, and had picked her up at the airport, then took her shopping when her luggage failed to arrive with her. Jessie was going to stay with Aunt Becca until she could find an apartment of her own.

Jessie had never visited Whitebriar Academy, all her application and interview process having been conducted online and by telephone. Aunt Becca drove her to work that first day, and instead of just dropping her off, said that she would like to see the school, so she parked the car and they went in together. They went into the office together and while Becca looked at a school brochure, Jessie went up to the counter, where there was a sign, 'Miss Martin.'

"Yes?" said the secretary, with a decidedly disapproving look.

"I'm Jessie Schmit. I'm a new...."

Miss Martin cut her off. She recognized the name Jessica Schmidt from one of the new student folders. "Yes, yes, I know. You're early. Orientation doesn't start for three hours." She flipped open the folder, checking for what she personally considered important, mainly permission slips and medical consent forms. As usual, they were not to be found. She looked past Jessie at Becca. "Excuse me, are you her mother?"

"Um, no. I'm her aunt, her mother died about five years ago."

"I'm sorry," Miss Martin said without emotion. "Does she live with you now?"

"Well yes, for now," confirmed Becca.

Miss Martin, only interested in someone to sign the forms, ignored the 'For now.' "Well, there are some forms that must be completed before she can start here at Whitebriar."

"Forms?"

"Yes, for instance we need to know who to contact if she gets sick or..."

"But..." interjected Jessie.

"Please be quiet. This is important," Miss Martin said to Jessie, and continued to Becca, "If she gets sick or hurt or if any number of other things come up."

Jessie tried to interrupt again, but Becca said, "It's okay, Honey. I have a little time before work. I can fill out forms for you."

Miss Martin handed Becca a stack of permission slips and a clipboard and pen and she went to sit down to fill them out. She now turned her attention back to Jessie. "Perhaps you'd like to use that restroom across the hall to wash your face."

"Wash my face?"

Miss Martin leaned across the counter and whispered, "Makeup is not permitted. You don't want to be in trouble your very first day, do you?"

Well Jessie certainly did not want to be in trouble. It might be a stupid rule that teachers could not wear makeup, but teaching jobs were not THAT easy to come by, so she went across the hall and washed off what she had considered rather conservative makeup.

When she returned Aunt Becca was at the counter, handing the clipboard full of forms back to Miss Martin. Jessie went and stood next to her. Just as she did, her cell phone beeped with a text message. She pulled it out and had just enough time to read that her luggage had been traced as far as Fargo, North Dakota, when Miss Martin reached across the counter and snatched her phone away.

Jessie opened her mouth but before she could protest, Miss Martin snapped, "Cell phones are not permitted on school property!" She handed the phone to Becca. "If she has need to make a call, she can ask to use the office phone."

Becca was now running late and had to get to work so she said, "All right I guess. Honey, good luck. I'm proud of you."

"Thank you, Aunt Becca."

Becca left and Jessie turned back to Miss Martin, who studied her face. "That's better. Now you look more like the kind of young lady we want at Whitebriar." Miss Martin smiled, though to Jessie it looked more like a grimace. "Now, I don't see a grade transcript in your file. What school did you go to last year?"

"Weber State," said Jessie.

Miss Martin heard that as 'Weaver-Tate.' "Where is that?"

"It's in Utah."

"Well, we'll just have to get them to send a transcript. Until then let me see..."

She punched a few keys on her computer and got a printout from the printer, then handed it to Jessie. "This will be just temporary until we get your transcript."

Confused, Jessie stared at the paper.

Schmidt, Jessica SOPH

1st Homeroom 204 Baumhart

2nd Phys Ed GYM Staff

3rd Am Hist 116 Capeletti

4th Lunch CAF ---

5th English 3 204 Baumhart

6th Algebra 1 206 McCort

7th Study Hall AUD Sommers

8th Music Appr 100 Pierce

It took Jessie a few moments to realize she was looking at a student schedule, with her name, albeit misspelled, at the top! Suddenly she understood some of Miss Martin's odd ways of treating her. They thought she was a student! She waved the paper at Miss Martin, "No. You've made a mistake."

"We can't make any adjustments until we have your transcript."

"No!" said Jessie, raising her voice. "This whole thing is a mistake!"

"Hush, child. Yelling is not permitted. Do you really want a paddling on your first day of school?"

"Huh? Paddling? You can't do that!"

"Of course we can. At Whitebriar Academy we believe in a policy of 'Spare the rod, spoil the child.' Your aunt has already approved."

"WHAT?"

"Lower your voice Young Lady, or you will get the first spanking of the school year at Whitebriar." She leafed through the stack of consents and pulled one out, holding it up for Jessie to see. Across the top of the form was printed, 'Consent to Administer Corporal Punishment,' and Becca's signature was at the bottom.

Didn't Aunt Becca read what she signed? "I wanna call my aunt."

"No."

"Then I want to call the POLICE!" she shouted.

Miss Martin rolled her eyes and said evenly, "All right Young Lady, that is enough."

She walked around the counter and grabbed Jessie by the arm, sending the schedule flying. Miss Martin spun her part way around, then with her open hand she delivered three practiced, powerful smacks to Jessie's behind. Jessie shrieked, more in surprise and embarrassment that the woman had actually hit her than in pain.

"Oh hush! You little baby! That didn't even hurt! I couldn't get any real leverage."

Miss Martin yanked her by the arm into an empty corner of the room and pushed her face-first up against a cork board. She grabbed one of several push-pins stuck in the wall and replaced it exactly at the height of Jessie's nose. "Now you keep your snotty little nose pointed at that pin and don't you dare speak or move until I tell you to."

Jessie didn't know what to do. The woman obviously wasn't going to listen to reason. She judged there was room for two or three more people to stand next to her against the wall and deduced that this was some sort of 'time out' punishment. She decided it was better than being hit again, so she kept still to wait for a more reasonable staff member to arrive and rescue her.

She couldn't see a clock from her position, and she didn't dare try to look at her watch. Miss Martin had said that orientation wouldn't start for three hours, and she thought that at the very most, an hour had passed since she had first entered the office. She might have to stand like this for another two hours!

It was completely impossible to judge the passage of time. She could sometimes hear Miss Martin, or possibly someone else, typing away on a keyboard. Now and then a printer, or maybe a fax machine, whirred to life. After a while, she had the idea that maybe, when she heard typing, she might steal a look around, but then she had the crazy idea that Miss Martin was sitting there, tapping on the keyboard, but watching her, hoping to entice her into turning around so she could spank her again.

At long last she heard footsteps in the hall, then in the office behind her. Voices, too low to understand, but one of them identifiable as Miss Martin, discussed something. There was a noise like a chair scraping across the floor, then a snicker.

"Never you mind, or you'll be standing there with her," said Miss Martin.

Shortly she heard more people enter the room. Eventually she could tell from whispered conversations and other noises that there must be several people besides herself and Miss Martin in the office now. Suddenly a small child's voice asked, "She's a bad girl, isn't she Mom?" No one else said anything and the child repeated, "Isn't she?"

An older woman replied, "Yes Dear. She's a bad girl, now color your picture."

Something in Jessie snapped at that. Being snickered at, held out as an example, then finally being labeled as a 'bad girl,' was too much. She spun around and spied a preschool aged girl, coloring at a table, seated next to her mom who was filling out a clipboard full of forms. "I am not a bad girl! I'm not even..."

Miss Martin was on the move, already around the counter and striding toward her. Three teenagers, two girls and a boy, seated on a long wooden bench near the door, gaped at her. Quickly she spun around, putting her nose to the wall again. "Oh no you don't! You're not going to get away that easy, Young Lady!"

Miss Martin grabbed her and yanked her away from the wall. Jessie could see that in her hand she held a sturdy wooden ruler. Not one of those cheap flimsy ones, but a sturdy one more like a short yardstick. Miss Martin said to the mother and child, "You may want to wait in the hall."

She pulled a chair out from under another table and sat down, spinning Jessie around and pulling her face down over her knees. "You're going to get a proper paddling this time!"

"No, Please!"

"BE QUIET!"

Such was the woman's authoritarian manner that Jessie shut up. Miss Martin flipped Jessie's skirt up, exposing her panties to the three students. Jessie tried to hold the skirt down, but the woman was much taller and stronger than she, and quickly pinned her in position. She was actually glad she was wearing the new, plain panties she'd had to buy due to her lost luggage, rather than the lacy bikinis she usually wore. Jessie thought she was embarrassed enough, but then Miss Martin yanked her panties down too!

Jessie knew the three students could now see her bare behind. Without warning Miss Martin brought the ruler down across Jessie's behind. Jessie shrieked. This time it HURT! Miss Martin was an expert at paddling and continued to spank Jessie in front of the others, each blow resounding loudly through the office. Miss Martin varied the blows, spreading the punishment over Jessie's entire bottom. She soon lost track of the number of swats, only aware of the burning pain as Miss Martin continued until Jessie thought she might faint, then stopped and let her up.

Jessie quickly pulled up her panties, then regretted it, as her bottom felt like it was on fire! She was crying from shock, embarrassment and pain. Miss Martin got a box of tissues and handed her one, saying almost gently, "Here child. Now blow your nose, then get back against the wall."

Jessie could see the boy and the two girls watching her. She blew her nose, then asked, "Miss Martin, may I have another tissue?"

"Yes you may. Here. Now get your nose back to that pin until I call you."

Jessie wiped her eyes, then looked for a place to dispose of the tissues. Miss Martin pointed to a waste basket in the corner near where she had been standing. She threw away the tissues, then resumed facing the cork board. What should have been the best day of her life, of finally realizing her dream of becoming a teacher, had turned into the worst day ever. She had never been spanked in all her life, now her poor butt throbbed and she was sure she would have bruises. She couldn't believe this school still used such cruel punishment on children, though she had to admit it worked. She for example, had absolutely no intention of speaking out of turn again.

More people came into the room. Someone was speaking with Miss Martin in tones too low for her to understand. The pain in her butt subsided some, though the memory of her embarrassment remained vivid. She couldn't believe she had been spanked on her bare behind in front of three students!

At last there was a stirring behind her. Miss Martin addressed her, "Jessica, you may turn around now and join us."

Jessie turned to see that there were now five students standing near the office door, three girls and two boys, all staring at her, "Pick up your backpack," Miss Martin told her. Jessie did and raised her hand for permission to speak. How quickly she found herself slipping into her old high school habits!

"Yes?"

"Miss Martin, I need to use the restroom."

Miss Martin looked at her watch. "All right. If any of the rest of you need to go as well, you may have five minutes, then be back here so we can get started."

Jessie went across the hall to the same bathroom she had used before, noting this time the 'GIRLS' sign on the door, not 'Women.' One of the girls who had witnessed her spanking followed her. As soon as they got in the door the girl said, "Wow! What did you do to piss HER off?"

"Nothing."

"That was one heck of a paddling for nothing. Why did you have to stand there in the first place?"

"I guess I spoke out of turn. Anyway, I really do gotta pee."

When Jessie came out of the stall the girl was looking in the mirror, and applying makeup! "That probably isn't a good idea," Jessie said.

"Why? I'm Ashlee, by the way."

"I'm Miss... Um, I'm Jessie. Because that's what got Miss Martin angry at me first."

"Miss Jessie?"

Jessie thought about telling the girl that she really was a teacher, not a student, but she didn't think Ashlee would be able to help her anyway, and she didn't want to risk getting her spanked too. "Um, no, just Jessie. When I was little some people used to call me Missy but I really don't like it. So anyway, Miss Martin says makeup is against the rules."

"I'll risk it. I know how to look cute and innocent. Anyhow, she's focused on you. The rest of us can probably set fire to her desk and get away with it. We better get back though."

They went back across the hall. Jessie thought about simply going out the front door and escaping, but Ashlee saw her looking and pointed out an 'Alarm Will Sound' sign, so she thought better of it. That and she spied Miss Martin standing in the doorway to the office watching them.

Back in the office, Miss Martin handed her the schedule again, saying, "Here, you will need this," then, "All of you, make sure you have all your things. Now follow me."

She picked up the pile of student folders and led them down the hall and around a corner, then down that hall till she came to a room with a number 105 above the door, then opened the door into a classroom. She ushered them inside and a fiftyish looking man seated at the teacher's desk, stood up. He had oily looking black hair, and when some of the students started heading toward the back rows, he said, "Please sit as close to the front as possible."

Jessie raised her hand.

"Yes?"

"Um, could I stand please?"

The man glanced at Miss Martin. "No you may not, take a seat."

There were four columns of seats and Jessie ended up in the front row, in one of the two middle columns. She sat down as gently as possible, since her bottom still hurt. Miss Martin approached the man and held a whispered conversation. The man looked at the group seated in front of him, then whispered to Miss Martin, who nodded. He frowned at Jessie, then waited while Miss Martin left the room before he started to speak.

"Good morning. I am Mister Zloty. I am both a Social Studies teacher here and a guidance counselor. I am here to welcome you to Whitebriar Academy, and hopefully to help you get started off on the right foot, even if some of you may have all ready taken a misstep or two. Now, before we go any further, how many of you are incoming sophomores?" Three of the students raised their hands. "Juniors?" Two more. "Seniors?" None.

"Okay," he said, speaking slowly. "There are six of you in here, but I saw only five hands, so, just to make sure, are there any freshmen in here? There should not be." No one raised a hand and he went through the three classes again, with the same results. This time he walked around his desk and up to Jessie. "So, since you have declined to raise your hand, may I see your schedule?"

Jessie handed him the paper. Since she wasn't even a student, how was she supposed to know what class they had placed her in? He glanced at the schedule, then turned it around so she could see it, his finger pointing to the 'SOPH' on the top line. "What does that say, Miss Schmidt?"

"Ess, oh, pee, aitch."

"Yes, Miss Schmidt!" he said condescendingly, "And what does that mean?"

"Um, sophomore?"

"Yes, Miss Schmidt! You are a sophomore! Now if you could please pay attention! We have a lot to do before the rest of the students arrive for full orientation."

"But I'm not even a st...." she began, but bit her tongue when she immediately saw his gaze begin to darken. She could NOT take another spanking like the last one! She was afraid that if that happened, she would actually be blistered! So she said simply, "Sorry. I'll pay attention."

"Sorry what?"

"Sir?"

"That's better." He looked up at the other students. "You will address all faculty and staff as 'Sir, Ma'am, Mister, Miss or Misses." As he spoke he got a stack of small books off of a library cart next to his desk and began to pass them out. "It's all explained in this student handbook. In my case, you may call me Mister Z."

He sat on a corner of the desk and continued, "If you turn to the last couple of pages, you will find several different bell schedules, depending on whether or not there is an assembly, sporting event, or shortened schedule on that day. Today however, and it's not in the book, there will be a special schedule of fifteen minute periods, starting at two o'clock, when you will be joined by the other returning students. You will go to each of the classes on your schedule in turn, where you will meet your teachers and be issued your textbooks. During your lunch period you will be given a snack. Any questions on that?"

There were none and he proceeded to go through other items in the handbook. Jessie tried to pay attention because she didn't want to anger him, but she really couldn't concentrate since she felt most of the information would be meaningless to her once she got things straightened out. She did pay attention when he pointed out the floor plans, partly because she was hoping to find an exit by which she could escape, and partly because one of her fears, nightmares really, had always been being lost in school, and winding up being late for class.

She kept reminding herself that she was NOT a student, that once she got home, she would be able to make a few phone calls and straighten this all out, but she kept finding herself slipping into a student mind-set, identifying more with the students she was seated with than with the teacher speaking to them. She shook her head, trying to bring her focus back to reality.

At last Mister Z finished speaking. Looking at the clock on the back wall of the classroom, he said, "All right, there are a few minutes left before the bell rings. When it does, go to your homeroom. Again, welcome to Whitebriar. You may spend the next few minutes talking among yourselves quietly. QUIETLY."

He went around behind his desk again and started going over some papers. Jessie felt a tap on her shoulder and turned around to see Ashlee. "Give me your schedule," the girl said, and Jessie handed it over. Ashlee compared it to her own. "Darn!" she said. "We have exactly the same classes, EXCEPT, I have English fourth and lunch fifth! I was hoping we could eat together. Maybe we can get it changed."

"Yeah, maybe. Except I probably won't be here long."

"You won't?"

Jessie shook her head, "Once I get home tonight this will all be a memory."

Ashlee frowned, "You mean you don't know? Your parents sent you here and didn't tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"We don't go home tonight. This is a boarding school. We stay here. There are two dormitories behind the school building, boys and girls, with a big fence between. 'Never the twain shall meet.'"

"No matter. I'll just call my aunt and she'll come get me."

"Yeah well, good luck with that then."

Before they could say anything else, the bell rang.

"C'mon," Ashlee said, "I already figured out how to get to 204."

Jessie followed her out into the hall, now teeming with students. Ashlee found a stairwell with 'UP' and an arrow stenciled on the wall. Different stairs for up and down? Jessie resolved to watch that, going the wrong way would probably mean another spanking.

They found 204 with enough time to spare that they found seats in the back. Mister Baumhart had other ideas however, and had them all stand while he assigned seats alphabetically. He took them out into the hall, admonishing them to be quiet, and assigned them each a locker, giving them a slip of paper with a combination.

Jessie again had to try and focus on her true identity, and had to keep forcing thoughts out of her head like how she must memorize the lock combination. She had the same problem in the next class, Gym, contemplating the communal showers while the teacher told them about how showers were mandatory, until she realized she would never use them. Once she got to a phone and called Aunt Becca, this would all be over.

So they went from class to class, with Jessie constantly reminding herself that there was no need to pay attention to instructions about homework expectations and such, but she would find herself jotting down notes anyway.

They separated for the English/lunch switch and the snack turned out to be milk and cookies. Jessie hated milk but she drank it anyway because she had been so nervous this morning that she couldn't eat breakfast. The cookies were soft, peanut butter cookies that were very crumbly, but so good that Jessie ate every crumb.

During the last class period, the teacher, Miss Pierce, announced, "There will be no final bell. Instead, when the allotted time is over, students will be taken to the dormitories. This will be done in order of class, seniors first. You will wait here until someone comes to collect you."

Music Appreciation was one class where they had been allowed to choose their own seats, so Ashlee was right next to Jessie. After a time they could hear people walking through the hall as first the seniors, then the juniors were ushered out of the building. Ashlee asked her, "Are you really going to get your aunt to take you away?"

"Absolutely."

The girl sighed. "Well, I was hoping we could be friends, but, if I don't see you again, good luck."

"Thank you, Ashlee. Maybe, if things were different, we could have been friends. Good luck to you too."

A few minutes later a woman appeared, dressed in a costume that was kind of a cross between housekeeper and nurse. Miss Pierce rapped on her desk for attention. "Ladies, go with the matron. Gentlemen, I'm sure your supervisor will be along shortly."

The matron had the eight girls walk in single file, and led them down a hall to another classroom where she had them wait in line against a wall. She went into that room and emerged with six more girls, whom she put in line behind her first group. They started off again, and this time they emerged from the building into sunshine, onto a concrete walkway.

Ahead was a blocky looking two story building. To the right was a brick wall, about twelve feet high, topped with a four foot hedge. To the left was a chain link fence, perhaps fifteen feet high, beyond which was a building identical to the one which they were approaching.

They followed the matron into the building and to a large room with a counter. Behind the counter was another matron, who, mostly by looking at each girl, with the only measurement taken being bust size, apparently judged their size and presented them with a bundle of clothing. In an adjoining room they were measured for shoes, and given two pairs, one pair of green and white saddle shoes and one pair of sneakers.

Jessie kept her eyes open for a payphone, or any kind of phone, but the only ones she saw were phones without dials. Finally while waiting in one of the lines, she asked one of the matrons if she could use a phone. "Yes, but calling time is not till after supper."

At last they ended in a big room full of couches, televisions, library tables and even a few video games. They were told to sit and one of the matrons started reading names and room numbers from a list after saying, "When your name is called, you may leave to find your room. Remember, supper is promptly at six. Be ready for the bell, do not be late."

Jessie's name being nearer the end of the alphabet than the beginning, she had to wait until most of the other girls were gone. Ashlee was called before she was, and they did not share a room. The rooms turned out to be for four girls each, with two bunk beds in each room. There were four desks, but no phones. Each set of four rooms were supervised by a matron.

When Jessie got to the room, the other three occupants were excitedly trying on their new uniforms, which turned out to be pleated, green plaid skirts and white polos with 'WA' embroidered on the left breast in kelly green, white knee socks and the saddle shoes. Jessie simply dropped her bundle on the desk they told her was hers. "Aren't you gonna try your stuff on?" one of them asked her.

"No."

"Why not?" another asked. "If they don't fit right, they'll give you new ones."

"I won't need new ones."

The first girl walked over to her. She was more than a head taller than Jessie, and glared down at her. "Well Darlin', you need to unpack anyway. The matron said everything had to be put away before supper. Besides, you need to get out your gym clothes. We're supposed to wear them to supper."

Jessie shrugged and started to open the bundle. She didn't need to have students beating her up in addition to the teachers.

"I heard about you," the girl continued. "You're a troublemaker. Listen up. Every time you mess up, we get demerits too, so don't mess up!"

"Don't worry, I won't."

"You just better not."

Jessie hung up the skirts and tops and found that the package even included underwear, with both the bra and panties being kelly green. She stuffed those and the socks in a drawer. She wasn't used to undressing in front of other people so she changed to the gym clothes, dark green shorts with white piping and a kelly green t-shirt with the WA logo in white, as quickly as possible.

They didn't wait long before the bell rang indicating it was time to eat. The dining hall had long tables and the food was served family style, by young women dressed like the matrons, except in all white instead of the dark green and white the matrons wore.

At first Jessie wasn't really interested in eating, just wanting to get the meal over with so she could get to a phone. The food however, like the cookies earlier, was wonderful! Roasted pork loin, with redskin potatoes and asparagus. She was still hungry, having only had a couple of cookies and milk all day, so she stuffed herself. She wondered what the tuition was to a school that served such delicious food.

Despite wanting to get to a phone, she was one of the last to leave. On the way out, she saw a matron and asked her about making a phone call. "Sure Honey," the matron said. She looked at her watch and said, "It's still a few minutes early, but by the time we get to the office it should be close enough."

They walked together to the office. Another matron was at a desk and looked up as they entered. "Phone call," the first matron said.

The second matron nodded and placed a phone on the desk where Jessie could reach it, which was just what Jessie started to do. "Not yet," the second matron said. "What is your name dear?"

"Jessie Schmit."

The matron typed that into her computer, then reached and took the phone away. "I'm sorry Honey. You're on the restricted list."

"WHAT?"

"Keep your voice down please. Your phone privileges have been suspended."

"Why?"

The matron touched a few more keys. "Well, it looks like you had a few behavior problems today."

"So when can I make a call?"

The matron looked at the screen again, "Well, if you behave between now and then, Saturday."

Saturday? Jessie wanted to scream, but so far that had only caused her trouble. Then she realized. Her Aunt Becca wouldn't wait until Saturday. When she didn't come home, Aunt Becca would call the school, or come looking for her! All she had to do was wait.

Jessie went back to her room, actually humming to herself. When she got there the other girls were organizing their desks. Jessie pulled open her desk drawer and found a piece of paper on which was printed a plan. It seemed everything had a prescribed place on the desk. Jessie started to organize her desk too. She could play along for another hour or so. Aunt Becca would be here any moment!

That hour or so dragged on into two, then three. Jessie organized and reorganized her desk, then her backpack. No Becca. When it was nearly nine, the lights flickered. "What was that?" Jessie asked.

The other girls were all returning students from last year and one of them answered, "It means lights out in five minutes, better get ready for bed."

"But I don't have anything to wear to bed."

The girl who had called her a troublemaker earlier was up on one of the top bunks and rolled over now and looked down at her. "So sleep naked, we won't mind, though the matron might, or sleep in your underwear, that's what most of us do." Jessie stripped down to her underwear just in time for the lights to go out. She climbed into her upper bunk in the dark. Where was Aunt Becca she wondered.

She usually slept on her back, but her behind was too sore so she lay on her stomach. If she actually went to school here, the way things were going, she imagined she'd probably have to sleep on her stomach every night. She thought nine o'clock was way too early for bedtime, but she was so tired and jet lagged that she fell asleep quickly and didn't wake till the morning bell sounded.

All the girls grumbled and Jessie couldn't help but wonder what they had to complain about. She was the one facing another day of this nightmare. There was a clock above the door and it read 6:00. They had to get moving though, not only did they have to wash and dress, but beds had to be made and the room straightened up. Breakfast was again good and Jessie had to restrain herself from overeating.

A bell sounded and most of the girls got up and left the dining hall. Jessie went to her room and got her backpack, stuffing her gym clothes and shoes in like she saw her roommates doing. She followed them out the door and over to the school. She hadn't seen Ashlee, but she managed to find her own way to homeroom.

Ashlee was thrilled to see her. "I thought you were going with your aunt."

"She didn't show up."

"So you're staying then?"

"No."

"Oh. Wow. How did you do that?"

"Do what?"

"For a minute there, you looked really old. Like twenty or something. It's gone now though."

Mister Baumhart had a few announcements to make but this early in the year there wasn't much to do in homeroom. Jessie wouldn't have minded if it went on forever though, as the next class was gym.

Jessie steeled herself and tried to pretend that she was changing clothes back in her own room, ignoring the other girls as much as possible. She tied her shoes and trotted out to the spot she had been shown on the gym floor yesterday. For fifteen minutes they did stretching exercises, then the gym teachers tried to teach them the fundamentals of volleyball. Not a great sport for someone as diminutive as Jessie. It was with both relief and anxiety that Jessie heard the whistle and one of the teachers yell, "Okay. Showers girls." Again Jessie tried to pretend she was home in her own Shower, but with all the laughing and giggling going on, that was near impossible. She hurried through the shower and got her clothes on as fast as she could.

Before third period class could start, a student appeared at the door and handed Mister Capeletti a note. He unfolded it and read it. "Miss Schmidt?"

Jessie wondered what kind of trouble she was in now.

"It seems your aunt is waiting for you in the principal's office."

Jessie jumped up. Yes! Aunt Becca was finally here. It was over. She grabbed her backpack and headed for the door. "Bye," she said, mostly meant for Ashlee.

The messenger student escorted her to the office and sat down on a chair just inside the door. Aunt Becca was seated on the bench. Jessie ran to her, "Oh Aunt Becca! I'm so glad to see you! C'mon, let's get out of here!"

"My, don't you look cute in that uniform."

"Thanks a lot, Aunt Becca," Jessie said sarcastically.

"No, you really do make a very sweet looking high school student."

"C'mon! Can't we get outta here?"

"We can't go yet, Jessie. I have to talk to the principal."

Miss Martin said, "All she has to do is explain to her why she wants to take you home."

"They said it would be about fifteen minutes," Aunt Becca said.

They sat there on the bench in silence, waiting. Jessie turned and caught Aunt Becca looking at her oddly. Aunt Becca reached out and smoothed Jessie's hair, then fingered a lock of it. "You know," she said in a whisper, "Anyone looking at you would think you really are a high school student. I always did want to have a little girl of my very own. I wonder if....?"