**Back to School - Whitebriar Academy**

by LeahR

**Part 2 - Peeling an Orange**

As Jessie and Aunt Becca waited in the school's outer office, a conversation was taking place inside the principal's office that was actually about Jessie, although none of the people in the office or waiting outside knew that. Henry Baumhart, head of the Whitebriar Academy English Department, had just complained to Principal Amanda Spencer that the senior English classes were too large, being up to seventeen students, when the school prided itself on much smaller class size than that.

"You know we try to limit classes to no more than fourteen or fifteen," he said. "I thought the directors had agreed to hire another English teacher."

"I thought so too," replied Amanda, "But apparently they changed their minds."

"Well, did they say as much? Shouldn't we inquire?"

"You know how they are, Henry. They make the decisions, we find out when it happens, or when they're ready to let us know. They sent no information about any new hires. I'm not stirring the pot by asking."

"I just feel we're not upholding our usual standards."

"Look. Why don't you take a couple kids out of each class and I'll teach one period. It will require some schedule shuffling, but this early in the year, it shouldn't be too disruptive."

So the conversation ended without either of the participants realizing that the requested teacher was sitting right outside the room.

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The door marked 'PRINCIPAL' opened and Mr Baumhart exited, nodding at Jessie. A distinguished looking middle-aged woman looked out. She focused on Aunt Becca. "Mrs Schmidt?"

"Her name is Schmit," Aunt Becca said, nodding toward Jessie. "My name is Rebecca Mackenzie. I'm her aunt, and it is Miss, not Mrs."

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have assumed. Nice to meet you, Ms Mackenzie. Won't you please come in?"

Jessie started to get up, but the principal said, "Not you, Jessica. Please wait here for us."

Aunt Becca and the principal went into the office and the door shut. Jessie assumed it would be only a few minutes but it was at least twenty minutes before the door opened again. "You may come in now, Jessica," the principal said. "You may sit," she added as Jessie entered the office. Jessie sat next to her aunt in front of the desk, ready to receive the apology she expected.

"So Jessica," the principal began, "I am Mrs Spencer, principal here at Whitebriar. It is nice to meet you. Your aunt has been telling me all about you."

"Good! Then we ca....." Jessie started.

The principal held up her hand in a 'stop' signal. "Please don't interrupt," she said sternly. "As I said, you're aunt has been telling me all about you. It seems you have quite an imagination, young lady."

Jessie looked at Becca, who was staring straight ahead, a slight smile on her face. Imagination? What was the principal talking about?

"She has told me all about your obsession with being a teacher. About how real it seems to you. About how you used to line up your little dolls and hold 'class.' I want to assure you, honey, that we at Whitebriar pride ourselves in our ability to care for troubled children. I promised your aunt, and I promise you as well, that we will do everything in our power to help you adjust."

Jessie listened in disbelief. What could Aunt Becca have said to this woman?

"I suggested we have you seen by the school psychologist, but your aunt explained that you have your own psychologist, at who's recommendation she enrolled you here at Whitebriar, specifically because of our liberal use of corporal punishment. It seems he recommends immediate physical punishment whenever you act out...."

Jessie stood up. "This is bullshit! I am a teacher!"

"You sit down right now!" the principal said.

"No! You have to listen to me!"

"I do not," Mrs Spencer said, "have to listen to a girl who talks back to me and uses such language. You need to learn that I, we that is, are the adults and you are still the child...."

"I am not a child!"

Mrs Spencer stood up. "Really?"

She walked around the desk. Like nearly everyone else in the world, she towered over Jessie, emphasized by the fact that she was wearing three inch spike heels. She glanced at Becca, who nodded.

Jessie spotted the ruler on Mrs Spencer's desk just before the principal picked it up. It looked identical, or at least very similar to, the ruler that Miss Martin had used on her. Jessie could see now that it was longer than a foot, probably around eighteen inches, and was about one quarter inch thick and an inch and a quarter wide.

As Mrs Spencer grabbed the ruler, Jessie yelled, "No! You can't! I'm a teacher, not a student!"

"Are you?"

"Yes!"

Lightning quick, Mrs Spencer seized Jessie and sat down on the edge of Jessie's own vacated chair. Once again Jessie found herself positioned for spanking. Her short uniform skirt was quickly flipped up out of the way and Mrs Spencer delivered a quick blow with the ruler to Jessie's panty covered bottom. "You think I won't follow your aunt's wishes? Are you a teacher?"

"Yes!"

Swiftly Mrs Spencer applied the ruler twice more. "Are you?"

Jessie squirmed, holding back tears, but her nose was starting to run. Stoically, she refused to reply, what was the use?

"Answer me girl!" Mrs Spencer said, delivering another, single blow. "Are you a teacher?"

Jessie squealed in pain and sobbed, "Yes," though this time it lacked the conviction her earlier answers had had.

Mrs Spencer applied another pair of swats. "Are you?"

Jessie whimpered but didn't answer, bringing on one more single vicious swat. "Are you?"

Jessie gave in, "No. No, no! I'm not!" she sobbed. "I'm not a teacher. I'm not!"

"That's better," the principal said, still holding Jessie across her knees. "Every teacher and staff member will be given instructions to swiftly paddle you every single time you mention this teacher fantasy of yours. Do you understand?"

"Yes ma'am."

Mrs Spencer let her up then, and went back behind her desk, placing the ruler back down in front of her nameplate. "You are to return here after last period, understood?"

Jessie nodded.

"Understood?"

"Yes Ma'am."

Mrs Spencer punched a button on her desk phone. "Miss Martin, Come in here please."

Miss Martin was instructed to return Jessie to class. The principal and Aunt Becca remained in Mrs Spencer's office and Miss Martin closed the door. She took Jessie behind the counter in the outer office and opened a door to a small bathroom, one with just a sink and a commode. "Here, go ahead and wash your face."

Jessie looked at herself in the mirror and could see that her face was streaked from the tears. Gratefully she washed while the woman waited. "Okay now?" Miss Martin asked when she was finished.

Jessie nodded.

Miss Martin inspected her. "Better straighten your skirt," she said, and Jessie did so.

Miss Martin looked at the clock above the door and pointed to the bench. "It's almost time for the end of fourth period, sit there and wait for the bell."

"But I missed my lunch."

So Miss Martin took her to the cafeteria and put her in the serving line. "Stay in the cafeteria when the bell rings. I will return in fifteen minutes."

The bell rang while she was still in line. She got just a muffin since time was short, and was amazed to see that she had also put a carton of milk on her tray. She sat down carefully on her sore butt as the cafeteria began to fill with students. "Hey!" she heard, and looked up to see Ashlee, with a tray piled high with food.

"Don't you have English now?" Ashlee asked as she sat down.

"I spent my lunch period in the principal's office, so I have fifteen minutes to eat."

"Your aunt was there? What happened?"

Jessie shrugged, "I got another beating."

"Wow. You're gonna set some sort of record for paddlings or something. What for this time?"

Jessie thought again about trying to tell Ashlee the truth, but then thought better of it and just said, "I said something they didn't like."

Jessie saw Miss Martin enter and start looking around for her and said, "I gotta go, Ashlee. See you next period." She returned her tray and Miss Martin escorted her to the remainder of her fifth period English class.

When they got there, Miss Martin knocked on the classroom door and stood there while Jessie entered and gingerly took her seat. "Nice of you to join us, Jessica," Mister Baumhart said. "We are going over the syllabus I handed out yesterday. Thank you, Miss Martin."

Jessie dug through her backpack and found the syllabus that she hadn't paid much attention to yesterday. It looked like she might need it now if she was to have any hope of avoiding daily paddlings. Mister Baumhart was already on page two so she quickly skimmed the first page. They had to read The Red Badge of Courage! That at least would be easy, as Jessie had done a paper on teaching it in college.

On the second page of the syllabus were instructions to log onto the Whitebriar intranet and download worksheets to a laptop. She raised her hand. "Mister Baumhart, I don't have a laptop."

"Well, you're going to have to call your parents and have them bring you one. Most coursework here requires a computer."

Jessie didn't bother telling him that she wasn't allowed to make calls, and didn't have any parents to call for that matter. The rest of her classes were pretty much the same thing. Assignment lists, expectations, grading and rules for each class were all explained. Jessie accumulated quite a long list of homework assignments, most of which she wasn't going to be able to do without a computer.

Ashlee had Mister Capeletti's History assignments for her, and also had some news. "I went to the office during lunch and I got my English and lunch switched! We'll be able to eat together!"

"That's great Ashlee!"

Jessie really was glad. Ashlee was the only one in the school who had so far always treated her kindly, and she needed at least one friend. She so much wanted to tell her the truth, but she had been promised spankings for even mentioning it, and she didn't want to get the girl in trouble by entrusting her with the secret.

When the final bell rang, she told Ashlee that she had to go to the office. Ashlee wanted to go with her, but she told her she preferred to just go by herself. When she got there Miss Martin was just leaving. "You can go right in, she's expecting you, just knock first," she said, "Goodnight Jessica."

Jessie knocked and opened the door to the principal's office.

"Ah, Miss Schmidt. Come on in. You may have a seat."

"Thank you Mrs Spencer," Jessie said. At least the chairs here had cushions. She'd had to endure the hard wooden seats of the student desks all afternoon.

"How was your afternoon?"

"Fine Mrs Spencer."

"Good. We do want you to like it here at Whitebriar. Do you prefer to be called Jessica, or Jessie?"

"Jessie please, Mrs Spencer."

"Okay Jessie. Now, your aunt and I had a nice long talk after you left. She loves you very much Jessie. She only wants what is best for you. You realize that, don't you?"

Jessie thought there was nothing further from the truth. Her aunt seemed to be deliberately lying to the school this afternoon, perpetuating their mistake, and forcing her into the role of a student, of a child. She was pretty sure stating so would bring her another beating though, so she said, "I guess so."

"Good! So she and I have come up with a plan. A list of rules as it were, to help you adjust. I am going to let you read it yourself." She handed Jessie a sheet of paper. "This is just a starting point. Hopefully, if you behave, the rules can be relaxed in time."

**Jessica's Rules**

1. No outgoing phone calls, may receive calls from guardian only

2. No visitors without permission from guardian

3. No field trips without specific permission from guardian

4. Immediate spanking if any mention is made of being a teacher or other adult role

5. To be treated only by own psychologist unless otherwise permitted by guardian

6. Teachers to report any misbehavior including missing or late assignments to principal and guardian

7. To remain on school grounds at all times unless accompanied by guardian or Mrs Amanda Spencer

8. Above rules to be modified as necessary based on behavior

Jessie studied the paper only briefly. "These are my aunt's ideas?"

"For the most part, yes. I think number six and eight may be ones I added. However, we are in complete agreement on them. Each of your teachers, as well as the administrative staff, will receive a copy of these rules, with strict instructions to enforce them."

Jessie could see that the principal had swallowed Aunt Becca's lies hook, line and sinker. She looked at the rules again. She essentially was a prisoner here. Well, she knew what the smart thing for a prisoner to do was. She would stay out of trouble and bide her time until she found an opportunity to escape.

She attempted to hand the paper back to Mrs Spencer. "Okay, I guess."

"No honey. That is your copy. Now, how are things going in your classes so far?"

"Fine Mrs Spencer. The teachers seem..." She was going to say, 'competent,' but changed it to, "...nice. Oh, Mister Baumhart says I need a computer to do assignments, but I don't have one."

"You don't? Hmm. It should have been on the list of things to bring with you. Well, I was going to call your Aunt Becca after our meeting anyway. I will tell her to get you one."

"Thank you."

"You see Jessie? You can be a very sweet girl when you don't talk back. Forget that fantasy about being a teacher. Don't try to grow up too fast. You may go to your dorm now."

Jessie went back to her dorm room, where her roommates glowered at her. "In trouble again?" asked Pam, the girl who had threatened her yesterday.

"No."

"Yeah? I heard you were in Spencer's office twice!"

"I'm not in trouble."

"You just better not bring any trouble around here."

"Okay."

They left her alone after that. She got out some of her books and tried to work on some assignments, but sitting on the hard chair was too painful for her to get much done. Soon it was dinner time anyway, so they all went to the dining hall. She ran into Ashlee there, with another girl in tow.

Ashlee introduced the girl as Marty, one of her roommates. Jessie recognized her from a couple of their classes, but she wasn't sure which ones. They ate together and chatted. Ashlee wanted to know what had happened in the principal's office after school.

"I just got some rules."

"Rules?"

"Yeah. My aunt and Mrs Spencer cooked up a list of rules."

"Like what?"

"I can't talk on the phone, have visitors or go anywhere."

"That's it?" asked Ashlee.

"There's others, but those are the main ones."

"Why can't you do those things?" asked Marty.

"Because I want to get out of here, and my aunt wants me to stay. She doesn't want me to be able to get help."

"If you really want, maybe I could call somebody for you," said Ashlee.

"Maybe Ashlee. Maybe that would work, but it'd have to be the right person. If it didn't work I'd be in even more trouble and so would you."

When they were almost finished eating one of the matrons came to the table. "Are you Jessica Schmidt?"

"Yes ma'am."

"You have a visitor."

"I thought you weren't allowed to have visitors," said Marty.

"Except for my aunt, so it must be her."

"Want us to go with you?" asked Ashlee.

While Jessie wouldn't have minded some support, there were some things she wanted to say to Becca that she wouldn't be able to say in front of them, so she went on her own. The dormitory building had several small study rooms that could be used for conferences and such. Aunt Becca was waiting in one of these.

"Why are you doing this to me Aunt Becca?" Jessie asked after the matron left. "Why are you lying to them?"

"I told you honey. I always wanted to have a little girl of my own. You can be my little girl, can't you?"

"Aunt Becca! Cousin Becca! I'm not a little girl! I'm almost twenty-five years old!"

"Hush, or I will tell Mrs Spencer that you are not following the rules!"

Jessie rolled her eyes. "Anyway, you can't get away with this. They're gonna want to see things like my birth certificate, my transcript. They'll only wait so long for those. Then they'll know the truth."

"Oh, don't worry about that. Soon you'll have all nice new identification! Birth certificate, transcript, even a shot record! It's costing me a lot of money, but it will be worth it. Everything will be fine."

"Aunt Becca! Please!"

"Everything will be fine. You'll see. Now, Mrs Spencer said you needed some things." Becca picked up a shopping bag she had at her feet. "These are things you were supposed to bring on the first day of school," she said, handing the bag to Jessie.

Jessie looked inside and saw a few articles of casual clothing and some shampoo and body wash. There were a couple pairs of pajama or lounge pants. That was okay, she could use them in the dorm, but 'Good Morning Bunny,' and 'The Dancing Unicorns?' Really?

"Couldn't you just get plaid or something Aunt Becca?" asked Jessie.

"Oh, these are just so cute!"

It was the same thing with the three t-shirts, babyish pictures and themes. There were slippers, which thankfully were pretty plain, and some flip-flops.

Aunt Becca had one more bag, smaller than the first, and she handed that to Jessie as well, saying, "Mrs Spencer also said you needed this." This bag contained a tablet type PC.

Jessie tried one more time. "It looks like a nice computer Aunt Becca, but please, please tell them the truth."

"The truth Jessica is, that you are now my little girl! Now, you be a good girl the rest of the week and I will visit you on Saturday. If Mrs Spencer gives me a good report, I'll bring you a nice surprise. Now, give me a hug goodbye."

Jessie allowed Aunt Becca to hug her, but she didn't hug back. She was stunned. She was still sure that this wouldn't last. Somehow the truth would come out. Aunt Becca left and Jessie picked up the bags and went back to her room.

Her roommates were more interested in talking to her than usual once they saw her unpacking her brand new tablet. Aunt Becca had gone top-of-the-line and the other girls oohed and aahed over it. Once Jessie had it unpacked and running, she was only interested in one thing, had Aunt Becca given her a means to escape? Could she send email?

Her WiFi told her there was one network available, 'WBacademynet.' "How do I connect to the internet?" she asked no one in particular.

"Internet? You can't," said Pam. "You can only connect to the school intranet. The password should have been in your drawer."

"Then I can't send email?"

"Only to your teachers."

She found the slip of paper with her username and password and soon she was connected. The page that opened was the school website. There were links to schedules, the library, teacher's pages and a calendar, but no way that she could see to the internet. There was a 'Staff log-in' link but that required a different username and password.

"So no way to connect to the internet?"

"Nope. Too many of the boys would spend all night surfing porn sites," Pam said.

"And some of the girls," Becky added.

Jessie did click on the links to her teacher's pages, and was able to download the worksheets and other materials. She started rereading The Red Badge of Courage from the link on Mister Baumhart's page, but it still hurt to sit in the hard desk chair, so she shut down her laptop.

She didn't really want to sleep in her underwear so she changed into the bunny lounge pants and a t-shirt. She found was becoming less self conscious around the girls even though she did change in the little corner space at the foot of the bunk bed she shared with Becky. She put a couple of her textbooks up on her top bunk and climbed up. No one said a word about the cartoon characters on her pants.

She laid on her tummy in her bunk with her books spread out in front of her and tried to figure out her math assignment. She had never been very good at math and she knew that even now she was going to struggle with it. When the lights flickered she put her books on her shelf and was asleep almost before they went out.

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Jessie found that once again she slept soundly. When the morning bell rang and the lights came on, she climbed down from her top bunk and began to make the bed. Becky stopped her. "No, You don't have to make the bed today, it's Wednesday."

Jessie wondered what Wednesday had to do with it. "It's a linen day," Becky explained. "We're in an even numbered room, so Wednesdays and Saturdays we get new sheets. Odd rooms get Tuesdays and Fridays. The matron will make the beds. We just gotta straighten up."

Jessie wondered what other useful information she had missed by not paying close attention that first day. She was going to have to look over the student handbook again, and read all the other handouts she had gotten. She asked Becky about laundry.

"There should be a laundry bag in your closet, just put your stuff in there, the matrons do the washing for us."

For breakfast today they had big fluffy waffles, with what Jessie was certain was real maple syrup. She stuffed herself again, promising herself that she would put herself on some kind of diet to keep from getting fat, but that could start at lunch.

In homeroom, despite her decision to try and keep a low profile, Jessie still couldn't stop thinking about finding a way out of her predicament. There must be someone she could approach. She didn't know any of her teachers very well yet, but she began going over them in her mind, wondering if she could risk telling one of them the truth.

Jessie had let her mind wander, and Mister Baumhart caught her at it. "Jessica! Miss Schmidt!" she heard him saying.

"Huh?"

"Huh, indeed. What was I just saying?"

For the life of her, Jessie couldn't recall anything he'd said since the opening bell. She thought it best to just admit that. "Um, I dunno Mister Baumhart."

"Come up here."

Jessie went up to the front of the room where Mister Baumhart had her stand next to his desk. He told her to hold her hand out over the desk, with her fingers together in sort of a cone shape, pointed upward. When she did, he took his ruler, the heavy one which seemed to be standard equipment for teachers and staff at Whitebriar, and brought it down sharply on her fingertips.

Pain shot up to Jessie's elbow and she screeched, pulling her hand back, and cradling it in her other arm.

"That should help keep you awake. Any more daydreaming will mean a detention. Understood?"

"Yes, Mister Baumhart."

"All right, back to your seat."

Jessie thought she obviously wasn't keeping a very low profile at all, and she resolved to try and do a better job.

Mister Baumhart reminded them that they must sign up for at least one extracurricular activity by Monday. "There is a list in your handbook, as well as on my homepage. You can either give me your choice on a slip of paper or sign up on my page."

Great. She was being forced to participate. She decided right off, that 'Future Teachers Club' was out. She wasn't sure she even wanted to be a teacher anymore.

Jessie concentrated on staying out of trouble and things were pretty quiet until lunchtime. She sat with Ashlee and Marty and they talked about trivial things, until Ashlee, looking over Jessie's shoulder, suddenly said, "Don't look now, but there's a guy that's been checking you out."

Of course, Jessie immediately turned around. She saw a table of boys on the other side of the cafeteria and turned back. "What do you mean?"

"I told ya not to look!" Ashlee said. "One of the guys at that table has been checkin' ya out!"

Jessie started to turn around again, "No!" Ashlee hissed, "He's lookin' now!"

Jessie frowned. She couldn't imagine one of those boys being interested in her. "You must be mistaken, Ash."

"Nope!" Ashlee said smugly. "I been watchin' him. He's in Baumhart's class and Music. He's always lookin' at you!"

"Really Ashlee, he can't be interested in me! You're mistaken."

"Nuh-uh! I know that look!"

Great! She had enough problems without dealing with teenage boys! She stole another look around. "Which one?"

"He's peeling a orange."

Jessie looked around one more time. Wonderful! Why couldn't guys that cute have paid her any attention when she really was in high school? Even worse, this time he caught her looking, and their eyes met before she could look away.She saw Ashlee smiling toward the boys. "Ashlee! Don't encourage them!"

"Why not?"

"Because I'm..... I'm not.... I don't want to have anything to do with them Ashlee. I can't."

"Why not?"

"Please Ashlee. I don't wanna talk about it."

"She's lesbian," Marty speculated.

"I am not lesbian!" Jessie said, loudly enough to draw attention from a couple of senior girls at a table next to them.

"Did you ever kiss a guy?" asked Ashlee.

"Yes!"

"Ever kiss a girl?" asked Marty.

"Ye... I said I don't want to talk about this."

The truth was, she and a friend in high school had 'practiced' kissing, which had led to a bit more experimenting, and in college she had had two brief affairs with other girls, but she had also had a couple of boyfriends and considered her female experiences to be just experiments.

But Ashlee wasn't done. "Ever gone farther than kissing?" she asked.

"I'm not talking about this anymore!"

That stopped the conversation, although Jessie saw Marty mouth to Ashlee, 'She's gay.'

Well let them think that. She certainly didn't want any teen aged boys lusting after her. She turned to look at the boy again, who was now engaged in conversation with his table mates.

He really was cute, Jessie decided. He had short, light brown hair, and what looked like really pretty eyes from this distance, and he really filled out his Whitebriar Academy polo shirt nicely, with broad shoulders and muscular arms. Why couldn't he be nine or ten years older?

Jessie let herself fantasize for a bit that maybe he was older, maybe just turning twenty-five like she soon would be, and trapped in the same circumstances as she. She had let her mind wander again, and Ashlee was poking her. "I thought you said you weren't interested! Anyhow, the bell's gonna ring. Let's get going."

Before Mister Baumhart's English class Jessie noted that the boy was seated a row behind her, but a couple rows to her right. Afterwards, she didn't turn around, but tried to concentrate on Mister Baumhart's Red Badge lecture.

After English, Ashlee excused herself to the bathroom and caught up with Jessie in Mrs McCort's algebra class. Jessie had always struggled with math in high school and college, her best grade being a 'B' in Geometry, so she tried to concentrate. It didn't help that after getting her undergrad degree, she had forgotten, almost deliberately, what little math she had managed to learn.

Everything Mrs McCort was talking about seemed completely foreign to her, almost as if she was hearing it for the first time. It gave her an eerie feeling, almost a reverse type of déjà vu, or, really, jamais vu. For the first time she wondered, what if she really had imagined going to college? Could she be the one that was mistaken, deluded? Was everyone else right?