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Title: from stranger to friend.

From outsider to friend.

Binnie Kim.

"Come on, Jen. You're going to be late on your first day of school," shouted my mum as I was leaving the bathroom, sounding quite disturbed, as I was acting sluggish (I don't even know if there is a word like that, but I think it's the best description for my action, like a slug. Slow and lazy)..... oh sorry. I have forgotten to introduce myself. My name is Jennifer Colonell. I am 15 years old and I used to live in Cardiff but my dad got transferred to London at work (he's a lawyer. It's a great job, but it gets quite annoying when he starts to get some preaching done about the 'wonderful world of law' whenever I do something which does not please him). So it was goodbye Cardiff, and hello London.

For some reason, I don't like it here. I don't know why, because there are no reason whatsoever which could make me not to like this place. We have much bigger house than we had in Cardiff, there's much more places to go shopping than in Cardiff, and its much more modern here than it is in Cardiff, and I don't have to learn that boring old Welsh (yes!) but I just don't like this place. It's just..... not mine. It just feels so strange. But like that matters to my mum. She thinks it's the perfect time for me to get a little more socialized. It's not like I'm a nerdy little girl who has no friends and who only knows about studying.

It's that..... I get quite shy around people. That's why I hate Moving. And I hate moving, because I have to leave my old friends, and make new ones. I wanted to stay with my granny in Cardiff, but since I'm the only child (yes. I have no siblings. Yippee.) mum was worried about me even if I was old enough to take care of myself.

Anyway. I managed to pull myself together somehow and got ready, ate breakfast and off we went in my mum's Volkswagen.

"Why the long face, honey?" mum asked in a call-me-a-sweetie way. "Nothing. Don't worry, I'll be fine." I answered back, frustrated. I think she figured out what is wrong with me and why I am behaving like this since this morning, so she stopped talking.

We arrived. We walked into the building, where a lady who looks like a staff of this school was already waiting for us.

"Are you Mrs. Colonell?" she asked.

"Why, yes I am. And you must be Ms. Goss. Jen, say hello. This is your headmistress"

"How do you do?" she asked in a very formal and polite way.

"Not bad, thank you."

"Okay. Mrs. Colonell, you may leave your daughter now,"

"Oh, right. See you honey." And there, she left. The headmistress turned to me, and said,

"Okay now, Jennifer. I'll take you to your classroom. Here are your timetables, student diary, maps and some information for you to read."

We headed off to my class. Everybody looked at me as if I was a monkey in the zoo. I know that it's very normal to stare at somebody new, but it's not very pleasant, and especially for a girl who's shy. We arrived at the classroom. Ms. Goss made a triple-gentle knock on the door, and opened it.

The first impression of my new class was..... a mess. There were people all sorts of people there. There were people who were concentrating, and also doing nothing, and bunch of dudes sleeping, and groups of girls chatting, some eating and drinking secretly..... but once they've seen Ms. Goss, they all stopped what they were doing and stood up. Ms. Goss smiled, and asked one of them,

"Where has your form tutor gone?"

A nerdy looking boy answered,

"I think she's gone to the secretary's office, ma'am," and just as he finished, a huge, but kind-hearted looking woman tapped Ms. Goss on the shoulder and asked,

"Anything wrong, Ms. Goss?"

"Oh, no. it's just the new student that I've told you about. Jennifer, this is your form tutor, Mrs. Taylor. She's in charge of your class problems and information, and also she teaches German."

"Oh! Guten morgen, I am Mrs. Kristie Taylor."

"My name is Jennifer Colonell. Nice to meet you,"

Ms. Goss look at us with delight, and added,

"Very well then. I'll leave you guys to it. Have a great day, Jennifer."

And left. Then the class sat down like nothing ever happened. They didn't whisper about me, didn't stare at me, and didn't even take a notice of me. I hoped that no one would give me strange look like on the corridor when I was with Ms. Goss to the classroom, but this was out of sorts. Suddenly, I felt like an invisible person. Of course I wanted this kind of situation but maybe I wanted to be recognized a little.....?? Well I don't know myself that well and especially it happens more often when you are a teen-age girl.

Mrs. Taylor calmed them down by starting to introducing me.

"Calm down now!!!! Okay. We have a new girl joining us from this term. Her name is Jennifer Colonell, and she's been living in um... where, dear??"

"Um... in Cardiff, miss."

"Thanks, darling. She's from Cardiff, and I would like you guys to treat her well. Okay. Um....."

She turned to me ,then said,

"Jennifer, I am told by Ms. Goss to give you a student guide, who could help you for a while. Do you mind?"

"No, absolutely not,"

"Good. You would prefer girls, won't you? It's much better with girls. You know how crazy the teen-aged boy are right? So I'll choose you a friendly girl..... Oh Mein Gott!! Hey! Troy! Stop disturbing him, you! Or you'll get your merit points off!! Oops, sorry dear. Okay.....let's see....."

I was pretty amazed how she can actually talk to herself, then me, then to another boy while talking to me. She suddenly said "Oh!". So I turned to her.

"Oh!! Jennifer. I have a perfect student guide for you. Stacey, love. Come here for a second."

This girl called Stacey came out to the front, answered Mrs. Taylor in a very clear voice,

"Yes, Miss?"

"Oh Stacey dear. This is Jennifer Colonell like I introduced to the whole class. Um, I would like you to be her student guide for maybe a couple of weeks, if you don't mind."

"Of course, Mrs. Taylor,"

"Lovely. Okay. Take her to the seat next to you, would you sweetie?"

"Sure thing," and she said to me, very kindly,

"Follow me,"

So... I followed her. She led me to the seat next to her, and she said,

"Hi! I'm Stacey Garner. I hope we could make a great friend. So, if you need anything, or if you have any problems, just ask me, okay?"

"Um..... sure."

As soon as I have said that, the bell rang.

"Okay, it's lunchtime now. Did you bring anything to eat or do you have to go to the cafeteria?"

"I have to go to the cafeteria. I haven't anything."

"Cool! So I'll tell you how when we get there. So. How was it like there in Cardiff? Bet it was nice, huh? I've always wanted to live somewhere in the country side. It's just too noisy and polluted in the city.....don't you think?"

"Um... of course,"

Man, she's chatty..... but I was glad that she was being friendly to me, also because we had the same point of view of the city, and how it's nice to be in the country side.

"my grandparents live in Newport. You know, right next to Cardiff,"

"yeah I know! I used to live right in the middle of the two cities! Once, there was a power cut in Newport. Our house was closer to Newport, so we had a power cut as well, but then we got a call from my dad's friend, by mobile phone of course, that he wants to have tea outside with us. So we went outside by car, then the Newport's half of the street lamps were off, but the Cardiff's side of the street lamps were on! It was so funny!"

Wow, I was amazed at myself for being that chatty. I think I was excited because my hometown was the subject of the conversation.

We arrived at the cafeteria. It was packed with people and also indescribably and awfully noisy. My old school in Cardiff was very noisy at lunchtimes but it was much worse here. I think Stacey noticed me with those 'oh my god' looks, she said,

"Oh. It's usually very loud in here, so we'll get sandwiches and eat outside. It's really warm outside, so there should be no problem,"

"Oh sure. It sounds great,"

"I'll tell you what you how to buy your lunch here. You walk through the passage there with the tray and pick what you want to eat. Then..."

"then you pay for the food you have chosen. I know how the system works. I'm not a freshman,"

I guess it sounded a little offensive. She didn't talk to me no more until the end of school. The only thing we said after that was 'bye' .

The next day, I thought I was being too harsh on Stacey, so I decided to apologise to her. I saw Stacey on the way to the tutor's class, so I ran up to her and I was about to call her name, when some groups of girls about three or four came up to me and said,

"Hey, you're Jennifer Colonell, right?"

"yes, I am,"

"Hi. I am in the same class as you are, do you remember me?"

"Not really, no,"

I wasn't trying to be offensive, again, but it just came out like that. But the girl who has been talking to me and seems to be the leader of the group replied me as if she didn't care.

"so we'll get to know each other. My name is Jessica, and this is Sophie, Angela and Gabrielle, but you can just call us Jess, Soph, Angie and Gabi. We prefer it like that, anyway,"

"Okay ,but why are you introducing yourselves to me?"

"oh, I thought it would be nice to be friendly, you know. So see you later, Jennifer,"

These girls..... they seemed to be in the popular groups. I was wondering for a very long time when the bell rang. So my chance of apology just got blown away.

From the very beginning of the lesson, till the end of my second day, the popular girls were being friendly to me and helping me at everything I do, which I couldn't figure out why. But I was nice to hang around with the popular girls. You know, everybody looks at you with envious eyes and such stuffs..... I wasn't very popular in my old school, so I didn't know what it was like to be popular. But due to the fact that they're 'taking care of me', I had no chance whatsoever to talk to Stacey, or apologise to her. In fact, I haven't said a word to her all day.

Two weeks later, I have gotten completely used to this school, and of being popular. I think I am a pretty fast learner. Anyway, from the very day that the girls became close to me, I had forgotten Stacey. I think she wasn't very popular. The popular kids hang around with only the popular kids, so I haven't had an opportunity to talk to her. But I was fine. Things were running smooth. I was enjoying myself too much around the girls. Well it had to be enjoyable, seriously! We did all the things that girls do in the teen movies. Going shopping, and getting manicure and pedicures done,

parties, pyjama parties, and talking about boys Etc. So I was just IN to being popular. I did all the these things in Cardiff with my old friends but with the populars, it was twice as much as it was. I had no idea how sly they can be until that day.

We usually meet at the front gate of the school in the morning to go together, but by the time I arrived, there were nobody there. So I thought I was the first one, so I waited, and I waited, and I waited. I've been waiting for maybe half an hour, but still nobody came to the front gate. I thought there were sick altogether or something (it's highly impossible but it's not completely impossible) so I just walked by myself to the school building. As I was walking by, I saw them. I saw Jess, Soph, Angie and Gabi in front of the building, laughing their heads off. I felt a little strange but I ran up to them to find out what's going on.

"Hey guys! Where have you been! I was waiting for like ages, you know, out there at the front gate,"

"Yeah, right. Sorry mate,"

It was all they said, and kept on talking without me. I didn't know what was going on.

I expected them to say something during the day or maybe explain what happened, but they haven't said a word to me all day. How could they? I was all upset when Stacey came up to me. I was surprised, and simultaneously sorry, because she's the one who helped me at the first place, but I was being all popular and never set an eye on her since. I stammered,

"Oh. H...hey. W...what's up?"

I was feeling all guilty and everything, when she said,

"It's okay. It happens every time there's a new student,"

I was curious. I asked her,

"What happens every time?"

"You know. the popular guys. They always get close to the naïve new students, and you know. gets close with them, and then they ditch them. Do you know what I'm saying?"

"Oh my god..... so it's just like a play to them?"

"That's right. I get to be the student guide most of the time, because I request the to pick me. I want to be a travel guide, so I want to get used to the job I'll be working for. Only it's the different genre,"

"Okay, so?"

"So I take care of the new students, and it happens every time,"

"the popular guys taking the new guys?"

"Yup. It's sickening. I've told them several times, but guess what? They won't listen. Surprise, surprise,"

"So why haven't you told me? You could have told me that they were doing pranks on new kids,"

"Well I've been trying to, and I have tried to all the kids that I get to student guide, but they're all too busy being popular and they won't even come close to me, so I wait until they're ditched. Sounds fair enough, doesn't it?"

I thought about it for a moment, when I came to the conclusion that I've been such a horrible girl to my real friend, instead of the ones that are only having fun with me. I finally thought it was the time. Time to apologise for what I've done.

"Um.... Stacey. I am so sorry that I've been such a jerk. I didn't know anything about being popular, so I thought for the first time in my life that I was cool, and I was really enjoying school. Well, it was all just a stupid thing now. I feel awful. I am so sorry that I don't think I'll be able to make it up to you and I've been wanting to say this since my first day. I am sorry if I offended you that day. You know, about the system thing. I was just so upset that I had moved and..... I have nothing to say to you,"

Stacey smiled at me, and said,

"It's all right! Everybody makes mistakes. It's just one of the mistakes that a human can make. No biggie, really,"

"So we're cool, now?"

"Yeah, we're cool,"

"Awesome! Thanks a lot, Stacey,"

"Oh my god. How many times do I have to repeat? It's all right, for Christ's sake! Really. To really show that I am okay, I want to invite you over to my house for a sleepover. Of course if you would like to,"

"Of course I would! My mum wouldn't mind either. Oh my god!! Thanks a bunch, Stacey!!!!"

I was hugging and jumping and shouting thank you to Stacey. She said in a cool voice,

"No problem. Let's go and get your things!!"

In case you're wondering, I told the girls how stupid it is, and they fought back, but I wasn't afraid, because I had Stacey with me. I told Ms. Goss about the whole 'play' thing. She was extremely furious and called their parents right away. I bet they had no idea how their kids are behaving at school. But the way I see it, most of the parents haven't the foggiest idea about their children at school. So. That's it. Thanks for hearing, well in this case reading my story. Thank you!

- THE END-