

Molly the Very Best and the New School
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Welcome to the Very Best Molly

Molly. That's my name. I'm starting at a new school. My parents say I'll get loads of new friends really fast. They're probably right, but right now I miss my best friend, Ellen. I love hanging out at the summer cabin. Mingus and I have an awesome cave in the garden.

Lily is my new friend. She looks like an angel with super white hair. Like if angels can be crazy, I mean, because Lily is. She's good at climbing, playing catch and all that stuff. Her favourite subject is PE.

Ellen is my best friend. We've been in the same class until now. She's good at dancing, probably even better than me. Luckily we still have dance class together.

Liam is in my class. He's good friends with Bastian and Lily. He plays catch at every breaktime.

Bastian is always with Liam. He always notices how you're feeling. I like that. I'm sure we'll be friends one day.

Dad. Works at a hospital. I've been to work with him a couple of times. It's cool when he wears his white coat. Maybe I'd like to be a doctor too. I might be a vet. Dad often says Mingus is right when we fight. It's annoying, but it's always like that with little kids.

Mum is the best ever when she's not stressed. She says loads of stuff in the mornings but doesn't listen much. The best thing is just to smile.

My mum works in an office. I don't really get what she does, but it's something to do with making sure other people at work are happy too. When she has time off, she paints pictures.

Mingus is my little brother. He's the world's best brother and also super, super annoying. You don't get much alone time when you have a little brother. He always wants to join in. But when he's being looked after at Gran's, and I haven't seen him for a few days, I always miss him a lot.

Early One Morning

“Would you like cucumber in your sandwich?”

“If you want to bring a friend to the cabin, can you let me know?”

“Is Mingus up yet?”

Mum asks so many questions in the morning.

Molly knows she doesn’t need to answer, because Mum’s too busy to listen.

“Who am I supposed to bring?” asks Molly, looking down at her bowl. “I don’t have any friends yet.”

Mum’s listening after all.

“Have you tried showing them that you’d like to get to know them?” she asks.

Molly doesn’t answer.

Mum doesn’t understand that everyone in her new class seems like they’ve got enough friends.

She wonders whether Ellen has found a new friend.

Ellen cried when Molly said she had to switch schools.

But Ellen is the kind of person everybody likes.

Molly is sure loads of people would like to be best friends with Ellen.

Nora, maybe. Or Liv. Yeah, definitely Liv.

Molly pictures Ellen and Liv laughing together and holding hands.

She feels a stab inside when she thinks about it.

Now Molly only sees Ellen on Wednesdays for dance class.

Mingus is always tired in the morning.

“I want the blue bowl,” he says.

“You can have the green one,” replies Molly.

Why is he so annoying? He always makes a fuss when Molly is sad.

Mingus throws himself back in his chair and shouts, “Blue, blue, blue.”

Mum looks cross. “Can’t you just take the green one, Molly?”

Molly hurriedly pours muesli into the bowl.

She leans towards Mingus and whispers, “If you take the green one, you can come too.”

“To what?” he asks.

“Something exciting,” she answers, narrowing her eyes.

Mingus looks happy. “When? Now?”

“Later, you’ll have to wait,” says Molly.

The New School

The children are running up and down the steps.

Molly goes all the way to the edge and clings on.

There are loads more kids here than at her old school.

At least, it feels that way.

As though there are children and names everywhere.

On the first day, Molly's teacher Lars showed her round.

He'd told Mum she didn't need to stay.

Molly didn't agree.

But Mum kissed her on the forehead and said, "See you later, sweetheart."

And then Molly was standing there with the new school, all alone.

She made up a rhyme to help her remember where the classroom was.

The red door

On the right

Through and up the grey

Stairs.

Three floors up.

Look left.

Count one, two, three doors.

But the rhyme only worked if she started by the big tree in the middle of the schoolyard.

Molly is sitting in the middle of the classroom.

The girl next to her is called Lily.

Lily has very pale hair. It's almost white.

Molly wants to touch her hair.

Lily smiles every time she looks at Molly, but Molly feels shy anyway.

There are loads of things she wants to say to Lily, but the words won't come out right, even though they're inside.

Behind them sit two boys.

Liam and Bastian.

Lily is good friends with them.

They laugh and mess around.

Molly has already noticed that.

Lily looks like an angel, but she's actually kind of crazy.

But angels can be crazy too, she supposes.

Liam has brown hair and brown eyes.

He's a head taller than Bastian.

Partly because he's tall, but also because Bastian is short.

The classroom is quiet when they've got maths.

Lars writes on the board and explains how you add and subtract.

He tells little stories about eating apples and sharing sweets.

Molly thinks it's easy, but Lily needs help.

If only Lily would help Molly at breaktime.

It's SO hard to find her way round the new school.

Molly likes lessons better than breaktime.

She's not quite sure what she should do when all the others are running around playing.

Breaktime

The bell goes.

The quiet disappears, and Lars packs his bag.

Everyone starts talking and laughing.

Who wants to come play football?

Come on, or the pitch will be taken.

"You coming, Lulu?" says someone who is apparently called Frida.

Molly packs her things and makes sure not to look at anyone.

Hopefully no one will notice that she doesn't have anyone to talk to.

All the voices disappear out onto the stairs, and suddenly the room is empty.

You're not allowed in the classrooms during breaktime. Lars told her that.

Molly doesn't really like being alone.

But right now it feels nicer to be in the classroom than out there with the others, since she doesn't have anyone to hang out with.

Molly imagines what they're thinking. Look at that girl, Molly. She's so weird! She doesn't have any friends.

Molly goes out into the corridor to find her jacket. Lily is sitting right outside the classroom, tying her shoelaces.

"Want to come down with me?" she asks, getting to her feet.

"I don't know," says Molly.

"Yeah, come on! Let's find Liam and Bastian. They'll be doing something fun for sure," says Lily, taking her hand.

Molly almost can't keep up.

It's very noisy in the playground.

Some kids are running, others playing football.

Ellen and Molly used to hurry over to the swings during break, but not because they swung very much. Mostly they just chatted.

Molly stays on the benches under the pent roof.

There aren't any swings, but there's a big climbing frame.

Lily has climbed all the way to the top.

She's hanging upside down. It looks really funny.

"There they are!" she shouts, pointing at Liam and Bastian.

The boys are playing catch.

"You want to join in?" asks Bastian, looking at Molly.

"Yeah," she says, although she hates catch and is really bad at it.

The ball hits hard, but she catches it several times.

Her palms are burning.

"Catch!" shouts Liam.

"I've got it," answers Bastian.

Molly doesn't say anything, but it feels good to join in.

Lily runs around, her fair hair flying around her face.

She throws herself after the ball.

Molly wishes she was as cool as Lily.

When Lily misses the ball, she just laughs.

It doesn't look like she's embarrassed at all.

Bang! Molly doesn't see the ball, and it hits her right in the stomach.

All the wind is knocked out of her.

Bastian looks horrified. "Sorry," he shouts.

Lily puts a hand on her shoulder. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, fine," whispers Molly, but it hurts.

"Come on," shouts Liam. He's holding the ball, preparing to throw.

"Just keep playing," says Molly, trying to smile.

It would be embarrassing to cry now.

Molly blinks and blinks to hold back the tears.

That's something Ellen taught her when they were in pre-school together, and the big kids stole their hats for fun. You had to not care, Ellen said.

Don't think about Ellen now. Don't think about the old school.

Molly misses everything about her old school right now.

Even stupid Veronica, who bit her favourite rubber in half.

There are people sitting on all the benches.

Molly sits next to two girls who are looking at something on a phone.

They act like they haven't noticed her sit down.

Molly wishes she had a phone she could look at.

Hopefully the break will be over soon, so she can get back to class.

But Molly needs to pee.

Typical. She'd tried to pee before she went to school so that she could avoid using the school toilet.

Molly hates school toilets, and where are they, anyway?

Lars must have shown them to her, but there was so much to remember.

Molly is almost certain they're behind the climbing frame at the other end of the schoolyard.

A Stupid Lock

She breathes through her nose when she steps inside.

They smell really bad.

There are four brown doors to the toilets.

Toilet paper litters the floor.

Molly chooses the door at the end.

She turns the little silver lock and checks there's paper.

She can hear a group of girls come in.

They're laughing and chatting.

"He's super cute," says one of the voices.

Another voice thinks Albin is cuter.

"Typical," says the first, laughing.

Molly stays very still, hoping they don't find her.

It's embarrassing going to the toilet.

She doesn't know why. It just is.

Maybe they'll think it smells bad because of her.

Maybe they'll call her Poopy Molly if they find her hiding in there.

But the girls are just talking about boys.

They probably haven't even noticed Molly is in the toilet at the back.

The toilet door is covered in scribbles.

Molly reads some of them.

Lucas is gorgeous.

Mia is a pig.

Sara and Ditte. There's a heart around the names.

Someone has drawn a bum.

It's weird.

The bell goes.

The girls outside are finishing up.

Molly waits until they've gone.

She takes hold of the lock.

She turns it carefully, but nothing happens.

She tries turning it both ways.

The lock won't budge a millimetre.

Molly's mind is racing.

Imagine if she never got the lock open?

Will she be in here all day? Maybe all evening, before someone realises she's gone.

She tries again, but nothing happens.

It's quiet outside.

Class has started, and the playground sounds like it's empty of kids.

Is today the day she has to try and sleep on a toilet?

Why did she have to pee?

She hates these stupid loos.

They're so gross, and now she might never get out.

Molly has seen Mum put a tea towel around the lid of a jam jar when it won't open.

She wraps some paper around the lock to get a better grip, and tries turning it again.

Still, nothing happens.

Then she leans her body against the door as hard as she can.

But the door doesn't budge, not even a bit.
Tears are welling up.
Molly breathes all the way down into her belly.
Don't cry now. Just don't cry.
She tries to remember when she and Ellen locked themselves into the toilet at after-school classes.
At first they were scared, but then Ellen laughed so much that she couldn't help laughing either.
But back then everything was different.
Partly because she was with Ellen, but also because Lena had heard them horsing around and brought an extra key to let them out.

The tears want to come out. Molly can feel them running down her cheeks.

"Is anyone there?" she calls, first softly, then a little louder.

"Hey, help!" But it doesn't seem like anyone is in the playground.

At any rate, she can't hear anybody.

"Help! Help, help me!" Molly shouts louder and louder.

So loudly she can feel it scratching her throat.

Snot and tears are making her face wet.

She doesn't want to come to this stupid school ever again.

First she kicks the door cautiously, then a bit harder.

She kicks and kicks, cries and cries and shouts as loud as she can.

The door doesn't care.

"What's going on?" a voice says suddenly.

"I can't get out," yells Molly.

Luckily, the voice is kind.

"I'll help you. Hang on a minute, I'll try to open the door from the outside."

Molly tries as hard as she can to stop crying.

But it doesn't work very well, and when the door finally opens, the tears are still pouring down her face. Molly doesn't even see who opens the door before flinging herself into her arms.

Rescued

It's the teacher on playground duty.

Molly saw her during breaktime. Her name is Birte.

"There, there, my little friend. It's a good thing we got you out! Are you new here at the school?"

Molly nods.

"Let's find your class."

Birte keeps her arm around Molly as they walk back across the playground.

But Molly can't remember which class it is, and just wants to go home.

"Can you ring my mum," she cries.

Birte takes her hand, and they sit for a while on the bench.

She asks Molly all sorts of questions.

Molly tells her about her old school, but also about Lily, who might be a new friend.

Birte knows Lily well, and knows which class she's in.

They walk up the steps to join the others.

"There you are!" says Lars. "I was getting worried."

"Are you okay?" asks Lily, as Molly takes her seat.

Molly nods. She hopes they can't all see that she's been crying.

"What happened? Your eyes are all red."

"Nothing," whispers Molly. She doesn't feel like talking about it now.

"Shall we do the questions together?" asks Lily.

Molly fishes out her book.

"It's page 28," says Lily.

They do the first two questions, but then they end up talking about pretty much anything other than maths.

Lily asks if she has a best friend.

Molly tells her about Ellen.

Lily thinks Ellen sounds nice.

"Maybe you can meet her one day," says Molly.

Lily would like that.

"Do you have a best friend?" asks Molly.

"Not really," answers Lily. "I think I'm more the type of person to have lots of friends."

Molly thinks she looks shy as she answers.

That makes her happy – not because Lily seems insecure, but because she wants to be one of Lily's friends.

It's lovely talking to Lily, so Molly tells her about the lock on the toilet after all.

Lily says she can go with her next time, so she's not in there alone.

By this time Lars thinks they've done enough talking. He tells them to be quiet.

But it's hard, because Lily always has something she wants to say to Molly.

And, of course, Molly has to answer.