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Opening extract from

Notebooks of a Middle-School Princess

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Wednesday 6 May
9.45 a.m.
Biology Class



Middle school has not been working out the way I hoped it would.

Of course, my expectations were somewhat high. I'd heard such great things. Everyone always goes, 'In middle school you get to do this,' and 'In middle school you get to do that.'

No one ever told me, 'In middle school Annabelle Jenkins is going to threaten to beat you up by the flagpole for absolutely no reason.'

But that's exactly what happened just now when Annabelle Jenkins shoved me in the

hallway after second period.

My first thought was that it all had to be a mistake. What have I ever done to Annabelle Jenkins?

That's why I said, 'That's OK!' to Annabelle as I squatted down and gathered up the pages that had spilled from my organizer. I checked and saw that my pink schedule was still taped to the inside cover. Phew!

I know it's weird that it's May and I still worry about losing my class schedule, but I can't help it. You get a demerit if you lose your class schedule. I've gone the whole year without getting a demerit.

Plus I like knowing my schedule is there inside my organizer just in case I suddenly get amnesia or something.

'Don't worry,' I assured Annabelle as I stood up. 'I still have my schedule.'

That's when Annabelle did something really weird. And I mean *really* weird, especially for the most popular, prettiest girl in the sixth grade at Cranbrook Middle School.

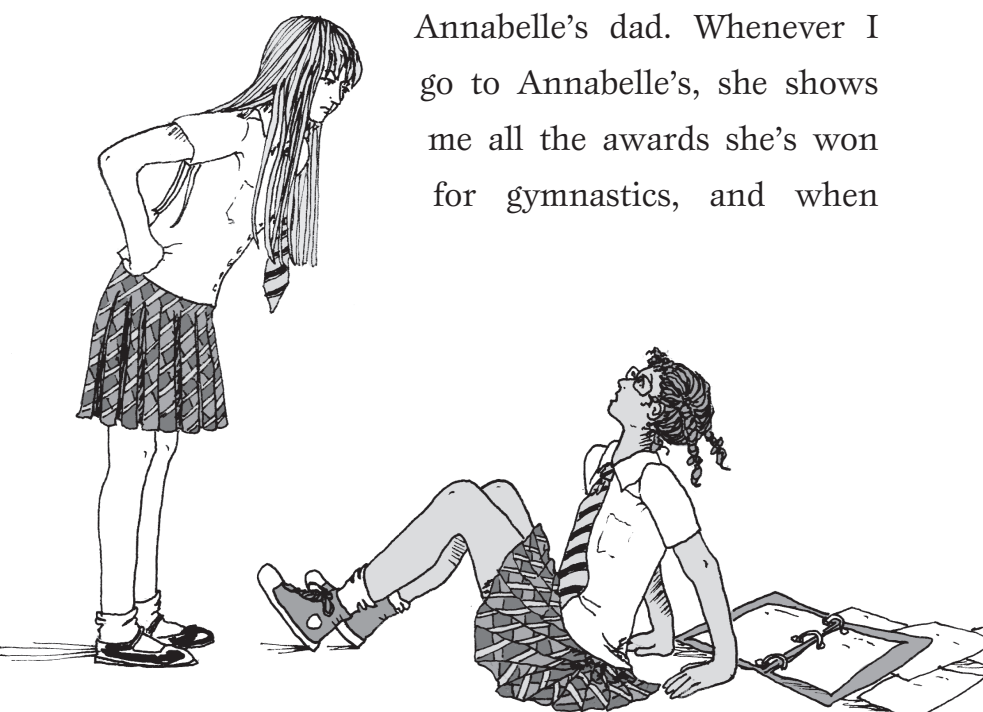
She shoved me again!

She did it hard too. Hard enough so that I lost my balance and fell flat on my butt in front of everyone.

It didn't hurt (except for my pride).

But it was still totally shocking, considering that, up until that moment, I'd always thought Annabelle and I were friends. Not *good* friends – we don't sit together at lunch or anything. Annabelle is very selective about who she invites to sit at her table.

But we certainly aren't enemies. We've been to each other's houses, since my step-uncle works with Annabelle's dad. Whenever I go to Annabelle's, she shows me all the awards she's won for gymnastics, and when



she comes to my house I show her my wildlife drawings. She's never been very impressed by them, but I always thought things were cool between us.

I guess not.

'I'm not worried about you losing your schedule,' Annabelle sneered. 'You think you're so great, don't you, *Princess Olivia*?'

'Whoa,' I said, straightening up. 'Annabelle, are you OK?'

The reason I asked this is because there was no reason that I could think of for Annabelle Jenkins to:

1. Knock my organizer from my arms.

2. Shove me.

3. Ask me if I think I'm so great.

4. Call me a princess.

I thought maybe she'd just found out her dog had been run over or something, and she was taking it out on me. If she even had a dog, which I wasn't sure about. I hadn't seen one the last time I'd been at her house. I like dogs, so I probably would have noticed.

But I guess I was wrong about us getting along, since the next thing that happened was that all of Annabelle's equally pretty, popular friends – who'd gathered around and were watching Annabelle humiliate me – laughed even harder as Annabelle imitated what I'd asked her, using a high-pitched, whiny voice that I personally don't think sounds anything like me.

'*Whoa, Annabelle, are you OK?*' Annabelle pointed at me, but glanced at all her friends. 'Olivia is such a loser – she thinks I actually like her. She thinks we're friends.'

The look on Annabelle's face made it very clear that we were not now, nor had we ever been friends. We'd probably never even got along.

Then Annabelle leaned her face very close to mine and said, 'Listen here, *Princess Olivia Grace*

Clarisse Mignonette Harrison – if that's even your real name, which I doubt. I'm sick of you thinking you're so much better than me. Meet me at the flagpole as soon as school lets out today. I'm going to give you the beat-down you deserve. And if you tell a teacher I'll make sure to say you started it, and *you'll* be the one to get a demerit.'

Then she gave me one more shove – not as hard as the last one – and disappeared, with her friends laughing behind her, into the throng of scarily tall seventh and eighth graders, who take up so much more space in the hallways than us lowly sixth graders.

Fortunately by that time my friend Nishi had come up alongside me.

'What was *that* about?' Nishi asked.

'Annabelle says she's going to give me the beat-down I deserve after school,' I said. I guess I was still in shock, or something. It felt like I was watching myself in a movie. 'She called me a princess.'

'Why would she call you a princess?' Nishi wanted to know. 'And why would she want to give you a beat-down? I thought you two got along.'

'So did I,' I said. 'I guess I was wrong.'

'That's weird. Does she think you're a snob, or something?'

'Why would she think I'm a snob?' I looked down at my clothes, which are the same as Nishi's, since we have to wear uniforms to our school, which include a skirt. I'm not wild about the skirts, which have pleats in them. Pleats are generally not flattering, according to my step-cousin Sara's fashion magazines. 'Do I *look* like a snob?'

'I don't think so,' Nishi said as people streamed around us, trying to get to their next class before the bell rang. 'Not any snobbier than usual.'

I gave Nishi a sarcastic look. 'Gee. Thanks.'

'Well, sometimes people who like sports think people who like to draw wildlife illustrations are—'

'But I've never been snobby about my drawings! It's just a hobby. It's not like I've won any medals for them.'

'Hmm. Weird. Maybe you should tell a teacher.'

'Annabelle said if I did she'd say I started it and make sure I got a demerit. I've gone the whole

year without getting a demerit.'

'Why would they believe Annabelle and not you?' Nishi asked.

'Probably because Annabelle's dad's a lawyer,' I reminded her glumly. 'Remember? She's always saying her dad will sue the school if things don't go her way.'

'Oh, right,' Nishi said, shaking her head. 'I forgot. Well, I'm sure it's just a misundertanding. We'll figure it out at lunch. See you then.'

'See you,' I said, not feeling quite as hopeful.

Then we both dived into the hallway throng, since we didn't want to be late. At Cranbrook Middle School, if you're late to class, you lose a merit point. If you lose enough merit points, they won't let you pass on to seventh grade.

Now I'm sitting here still trying to figure out what I could have done to make Annabelle hate me so much, much less want to give me a beat-down.

But I'm coming up with nothing.

Nothing except the fear that after school I'm going to die.