

Tracy's New School

Tracy Bell dragged her feet.

'Come on, hurry up, or you'll be late,' said her mum.

'Don't care, don't want to go,' she said sulkily.

'We've been through it all before, this is the school you've been allocated.'

'But it's not the school I want to go to, I want to go to St Joseph's, with Shannon and Laura.'

'What you want and what you get are two different things. Now get a move on.'

Tracy stopped dead, 'No, I'm not going,' she said, shaking her head so vigorously that her long brown ponytail swished from side to side like the real thing. Her green eyes flashed and she planted her trainer-clad feet firmly on the ground. 'It's not fair you can't make me.'

'What's fair doesn't come into it, I marked St Joseph's as first choice on the form, but they have allocated you a place at St Mary's and there is nothing I can do about it.'

'I'm still not going, I don't know anyone there.'

'You better make up your mind to go, because I'm not going to get a fine, or go to jail, just because you don't want to go to school.'

'All right! All right! I'm going, but I hate you.'

Tracy's mum sighed with relief, 'Thank, God for that,' she said and stood and watched as Tracy trailed slowly through the school gates.

While it hurt to be told by your only daughter that she hates you. She knew that it was just the anger and frustration talking and Tracy would say sorry later. Tracy was a good kid and she had every right to be upset. They lived within the catchment area for St Mary's and while all her friends – one of them lived in the same street – had been picked, Tracy hadn't. She tried talking to the Headmaster, the School Governors and the Educational Authority, but it was a waste of time, as far as they were concerned the lists were made and that was that; So much for the right to go to the school of your choice.

In the schoolyard, Tracy stood alone and watched her mum turn and leave. She thought of waiting till her mum was out of sight and then slipping out to catch the bus into town. She would have too, if she thought she could have done it without getting her mum into trouble. Since dad had left, it took all of mum's money to keep them and she really wouldn't have been able to pay any fines.

It was Tracy this time that sighed, as she turned to look around her. The schoolyard was full of noisy, happy kids and they all seemed to know each other, judging by the shouted comments and laughter.

Although she was a friendly girl, she was a little shy and found it difficult to make the first move. As a consequence, she spent the first day hovering on the outskirts of various groups hoping to be invited to join in, but they all seemed to be so wrapped up in their friendships that they failed to even notice poor Tracy. She fought against the tears that threatened and smiled a thin smile and waited for the bell that would announce home time.

She was first out, ran all the way home, threw herself on the bed and let the tears flow. She cried until she could cry no more, then picked up a CD and pushed it in the player. At first she sat on the edge of the bed, thoughts of her first day swirling through her head and then as the music worked its magic, she began to sway. She loved to dance and had attended dance classes every week, since the age of six.

With the help of the music, her mood lifted a little, she danced a few steps across the floor, reached out, ejected the CD, replaced it with another and selecting a track, began one of her dance routines. Soon she was so immersed in the moves that the cares of the day fled and she seemed melted into the music. When the piece ended she clicked to another track, began a faster more complicated routine and by the time her mum came home, she was able to manage a smile.

‘Hi, darling how was your day?’

‘OK.’

‘What does OK mean? Did you make any friends?’

‘Yeah, a girl called Laurel,’ Tracy lied, she hadn’t meant too, but it was only a small fib and at least it would keep her mum from going on and on. Besides, if she didn’t make friends with anyone tomorrow, she wasn’t going back, and if mum tried to make her, she’d probably run away.

‘Tea will be ready in an hour, why don’t you go and call on Shannon?’

‘No, I think I’ll go up play some music, I’m a bit shattered.’

She wasn’t, but she couldn’t stand the thought of Shannon banging on about the great day – that she just knew – her friends would have had at St Joseph’s.

If anything the second day was worse than the first. She might as well have been invisible for all the notice that anyone took of her. That’s it, I’m not having any more of this, she told herself, when the bell rings, I’m leaving and never coming back.

But as she hurried along the corridor, a notice on the board caught her eye; “Drama and dance group 4pm in The Western Hall”. She hadn’t know that the school even had either a dance or drama group and thought she might as well take a look, she

glance at her watch, it was only 3.30 but she'd go anyway, you never know it might start early.

It only took 5 minutes to find the hall, she tried the door, it was locked, she looked around and spotted another near the corner, she tried the handle and the door swung open. After climbing a short flight of stairs she found herself standing on a well-lit stage. Shading her eyes, she peered out into the hall, but could see nothing it was so dark. She looked around the stage; it was empty apart from the sound system against one wall.

Walking over she spotted a pile of CDs and on the top was her favourite, "All That Jazz". She looked around, the place was still empty, switching on the sound system, she picked up a radio mike, tested it was working, slipped the CD into the player and at the end of the intro slipped smoothly into her routine. She had a good voice with just the right pitch for the song and flowed through her moves as if she had been born with dance shoes on.

When the song ended she made a sweeping bow towards the darkened hall and was startled as someone began to clap enthusiastically.

'Wow! That was fantastic,' called a voice. 'Hang on, I'm coming up.'

Tracy peered in the direction of the voice but could see nothing beyond the glare of the footlights and she was looking into the hall when a thin girl with long blonde hair, appeared at the end of the stage.

'I'm sorry, I didn't know anyone was out there,' Tracy apologised.

'Don't be sorry, that was so cool, I wish I could move like that.'

'Thank you,' said Tracy self-consciously. 'But who are, you?' she asked.

'My name's Laurel, what's yours?'

'Tracy.'

'You going to join the drama group?'

'Yeah, I think so.'

'Come on, then,' said Laurel, grabbing her hand. 'I'll show you around, before the rest get here.'

By Fred Watson.