



I had noticed Jenny giving envelopes to several of the girls and boys in class and wondered what it was all about. My friend Paolo rushed over with his envelope.

“Can you believe it!” he said enthusiastically. “Jenny’s parents are letting her have a co-ed pizza party this Friday.”

“Oh, really,” I answered, puzzled.

I did not tell him I had not received an invitation. I was too embarrassed. I think I was the only one in the class who had not been invited. I had a strange feeling in my stomach; suddenly, I was not feeling well. The teacher agreed to let me go to the office to call home.

“Yes, Carolanne,” the secretary inquired as she saw me walk in.

“I’d like to go home, I’m not feeling very well,” I answered.

“Is anyone home today?” she continued.

“Yes, my Aunt Lily is visiting. She can probably pick me up,” I replied.

She called my house and Aunt Lily agreed to pick me up. I waited at the office for what seemed like forever. Once home, I stayed in my room all day, thinking about the pizza party. I went through the last few days in my mind, making sure I had not offended Jenny in any way. Then, I remembered the book report.

Jenny is a straight A student. She excels in writing and in public speaking. Last week, Mr. Miller, our English teacher, asked us to complete a book report. We were to read a book of our choice and write a report on it. Once we were done, we would present the report to the class. I did my book report on *Moby Dick*. On Thursday, Mr. Miller returned our papers. I got an A+ and Jenny only got an A. She had seemed happy for me but now I was thinking that maybe she was pretending. Perhaps she was jealous and that was why she was not inviting me to her party. How petty, I thought to myself. All of a sudden, the sound of the phone startled me.

“Hello,” I said.

“Hey Carolanne, it’s Paolo. How are you feeling?”

“I’m all right,” I said. “I had bad stomach cramps before.”

“I hope you’ll be okay for tomorrow,” he continued.

I hesitated “Me too.”

“Rest up,” he added. “Tomorrow, Mr. Miller is assigning partners for the last English presentation. Would you like to pair up with me?”



“Sure,” I answered happily. “I’ll see you at school tomorrow.”

I wondered if Paolo was taking pity on me. Perhaps he knew that I had not been invited to the party. Perhaps he wanted to make me understand that he was still my friend even if Jenny did not want me at her party.

I decided to go to school the next day and face the music. Paolo and I walked to our lockers and discussed the English presentation. Unfortunately, Mr. Miller paired me up with Constance O’Reilly. She is a nice girl, but I would rather have worked with Paolo. To make things worse, Paolo got paired up with Jenny. I looked around the class to see them, but realized that she was not at school.

“Where’s Jenny?” I asked Paolo.

“She’s sick,” he answered. “You might have been contagious. I heard she had severe stomach cramps.”

Contagious, I thought to myself. I was not really sick yesterday, how could I be contagious? Mr. Miller’s voice pulled me out of my trance. He was outlining the English presentation and wanted me to pay attention.

I got home at the same time as my grandfather. I have been living with my grandparents since my parents went overseas. They are both in the military and did not want me bouncing from school to school. My grandparents offered to take me in and raise me while my parents were away. It’s all right, most of the time. Sometimes, like tonight, I would have liked to have my mom around to give me some sound advice. I decided to send her an e-mail.

Dear Mom (& Dad),

Hope you are both well. I am fine and so are Pappy and Mammy. School is OK. I am doing an English presentation with Constance O’Reilly. She’s Daddy’s friend Pat O’Reilly’s daughter. Mom, I really want to talk to you about girl stuff. Please call me or go on-line so we can chat.

I love you both and miss you a LOT.

Car XXXOOO

I waited and waited but mom never called or came on-line. There is an eight-hour time difference and it was the middle of the night there. I thought that I would receive something in the morning.

I woke up eager to check the computer. I had received a message from my dad.

Hey, peanut,

Mom is away on a mission for a few days. She will be back on Saturday. I will tell her to contact you as soon as she gets back. If you need me, call. I miss you tremendously and love you lots. Dad XXXOOO

Saturday would be too late, I thought to myself. The party was on Friday night. I got dressed and dashed down the stairs for breakfast. Aunt Lily was leaving that day, heading back to Vancouver. I gave her kisses and hugs and headed out the door to catch the bus. I arrived at the same time as Jenny.

“Hey, Carolanne,” she said.

“Hey, Jenny. How are you feeling?” I answered.

"I'm better. Still a little queasy, but better," she answered with a smile.

"That's good," I said.

The bus arrived and we did not sit together. I sat with Constance because I did not want Jenny to notice how sad I was.

"Can we get together Friday night for the presentation?" Constance asked eagerly.

I hesitated. "Maybe. I'll have to check with my grandparents."

We talked about the project the rest of the way to school. Once at school, I hurried to get to my class, and did not want to talk to anyone. As I approached my desk, I saw something, an envelope, on the seat. I opened it up and read the card. It was an invitation to the pizza party. I was so relieved, but at the same time, I did not want Jenny to invite me out of pity. Just as class was about to start, Jenny walked up behind me and whispered,

"Sorry, I didn't see you the other day, and yesterday I was sick. Hope you didn't think I had forgotten you."

"No," I quickly answered. "I didn't even know about the party. Thanks for the invitation."

I hated lying to Jenny, but I was caught off guard and did not want to embarrass myself. I promised myself that someday I would tell Jenny the truth. I ran into Constance after class and told her I would not be able to work on the presentation on Friday night but that I would like to get together on Saturday, if she was available. I was so happy to know that I had not lost a friend.

