

RUNNING FOR HER LIFE

"But mom," Carla said as she reluctantly made her way to the door, "I told you I don't want to go to school, I like being homeschooled. Plus if I start acting I might not even need to go to school."

"Honey," her mother replied "Maybe acting isn't the right dream for you. Plus I already signed you up for middle school. You can't just not go."

Carla was almost twelve and going into sixth grade. She had been homeschooled most of her life after a bad experience with school in second grade: There was a bully in second grade that had a bunch of followers. He told them that Carla had broken his computer, which she didn't of course. But his friends or followers believed everything he said so they all came after Carla. In the end she had ended up with a broken arm and two lost teeth. After that Carla was so scared she wouldn't go to school. She had been homeschooled ever since. But this year her mom decided it would be a good idea to join school again for middle school.

"It will be good for you," Carla's mom said for the hundredth time. "It doesn't start for a few more weeks. We still have time to get ready." So Carla waited and enjoyed her summer for the last few weeks she could.

Finally the big day arrived. Carla slowly inched out of the passenger seat of her mom's car, grabbed her backpack and made her way up the stone steps to her new high school. The first thing she thought was that there were way too many kids. They all looked like they knew what they were doing. She tried to just blend in but she felt overwhelmed. Are schools supposed to be this big? Where is my next class? Why did my mom make me go here?

Suddenly she remembered the end of second grade for her. She remembered screaming, scared, running, out of breath, kids laughing. It all came back to her, she tried to push everything away and tell herself that this would be different, but she couldn't.

Out of nowhere came a voice. It didn't fit in with the rest of the voices. This one sounded nice and like it was directed towards her. "Hey!" the voice said

"Uh... hi" replied Carla. She saw a sweet looking girl around her age with beautiful brown hair. Carla knew at once that the girl had no enemies.

"Hey so you're coming in this year right?" The girl asked.

"Yeah."

"Wow. Then let me introduce myself. I'm Jamie; I've been here since kindergarten and I love it here. So tell me about yourself. I hear you were homeschooled, right?"

"Yep. I have been homeschooled from second grade."

"Cool. Well, why did you start being homeschooled?"

"Um... well... I don't really want to... talk about it. Sorry," Carla replied hoping for the best.

"That's alright but if you ever want to share I'm always here for you."

"Thanks," Carla said amazed and relieved by Jamie's kind response.

"What's your first class?"

And just like that Jamie and Carla became best friends. They didn't know it yet but they would both help each other out a lot in very different ways. Starting in their first class.

"Ugh," Jamie complained. "I hate math class. I don't know any of this stuff".

"If you want to we can study together after school. I sort of like math,"

"Oh, that would be amazing, Carla, thank you so much," said Jamie as she pulled Carla into a tight squeeze.

So at three thirty right after school ended they decided to meet in the empty history classroom.

"Thank you again for agreeing to help me out with this math. I am really having trouble," Jamie said as soon as Carla walked in. Carla smiled and replied "my pleasure."

The two girls worked for about a half an hour on their homework before they started to play around. Throwing paper airplanes, and having eraser fights, they were having a really good until Jamie asked, "So, why did you start being homeschooled?"

Carla's face fell. She felt her cheeks get hot and the back of her shirt dampened a little. She considered lying but she really did trust Jamie and she didn't want to ruin their friendship.

Finally after a long silence Carla decided to tell Jamie the truth.

"Ok. I'll tell you. So there was this bully and he had a bunch of comrades. I don't know who but they were quite scary if you know what I mean. Well, anyways he told them that I had broken part of his computer.

Which I didn't of course. But they believed everything he said so they came after me. I tried to run but I wasn't fast at all and they caught me and I thought I was going to die. After that I was so scared I wouldn't go to school. My mom tried to make me but eventually she just gave up. And I've been homeschooled ever since."

After Carla had explained everything to Jamie she felt a little scared. She wasn't sure how Jamie would react and she was afraid that Jamie might tell everyone. But instead of being freaked out or thinking that Carla was a scaredy cat, Jamie was really supportive.

"You know I'm on the track team and it really has changed my life. I think that you should join. Or at least come check it out."

"Wow. Thanks Jamie," Carla replied, relived. "I've only known you for a few days but already you're the best friend I've ever had."

The next day Carla ran on the track with Jamie. She was nervous but when she got there a huge smile crept across her face. She couldn't wait to run. When she started out she was a bit slower than the rest of the track team but she didn't care. She felt the wind in her hair, and in her face. The ground was hard against her feet, and she knew that she loved to run. She loved to feel free, and she loved to know the track team.

Ever since that day Carla has run with the rest of the track team and she realized that Jamie was right. She wasn't running away anymore. Now she just ran because she liked to, because she could, because it was all she wanted to do. She was finally running toward something, instead of running away.