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I heard a gasp behind me followed by a whisper.

“Is that...?” There was a pause and then another gasp.

Another voice whispered, “Do you think we should say something? I’d *love* an autograph...”

They continued to whisper in voices that I could not hear. Then the first girl started giggling.

“Imagine what everyone at school would say if we told them we met her! They would be sooo jealous,” she whispered.

“Be *quiet*, Allie, she can hear us!” The second girl hissed.

It was just another normal Saturday morning in Los Angeles, California. Trying to ignore the whispers and giggles behind me, I continued walking. Jeff had told me to be on the set by eight o’ clock and no later. I was going to have to hurry up. I began walking faster but the two girls caught up to me.

“Um, excuse me,” one of them giggled. “I’m Allie and this is Rachel, and um, we uh, saw you in... that movie.”

“Yes?” I raised one eyebrow, something I’d learned to do years ago but it still came in handy.

“So, we were wondering if we could possibly have an autograph?” the other girl said.

“Sorry,” I said. “I don’t have time today. But it was nice meeting you. Good bye.” I turned and continued walking, hoping they wouldn’t try to follow me.

As I walked down the street, I found myself thinking about how much I hate this place. Mom made us move here three years ago after I successfully auditioned for a part in the movie, “Starstruck.” After I got the part, Mom made us move here from Minnesota because she was convinced that I was going to be a famous actress. Since then, I’d been in four commercials and two movies. It was fine, except that I hated being in movies and I hated living in this part of L.A. There’s nothing around here except mansions and freeways. Oh, and movie stars of course. I looked at my watch and gasped when I saw that it was eight o five. I was late already. I began running and I had

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barely stepped onto the set before Greta grabbed my arm and pulled me into the make-up trailer. Greta was my stylist and her job was basically to smear make-up on me until I looked totally ridiculous to anyone standing within ten feet of me. At least it looked good on camera.

“Where have you been, Francesca?” Greta asked, sternly as she lined my lips with bright red lipstick.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I was mobbed by paparazzi on the way here.”

Greta looked at me out of the corner of her eye and gave me a small smile. “I’m not sure if I believe that excuse, but I like it.” She handed me a kleenex. “Blot.” She instructed.

The door of the trailer flew open. I turned around and found myself face to face with Jeff Cramer himself.

“Francesca,” He said. “I see that you’ve decided to join us.”

I blushed behind the gobs of makeup.

“Hurry up and get out here. We start filming promptly at eight thirty.”

“Yes, sir.” I said, weakly.

Greta took my costume off it’s hanger. This movie was called, “Hooked on Hoops.” And it was about a girl who was a basketball star. My character was named Ashley and she was the basketball girl’s best friend. It wasn’t a terribly original story line but it was expected to be a very successful movie.

“Put this on.” Greta gave me the outfit.

I was relieved to find that the outfit wasn’t uncomfortable, like some of the other costumes that I’ve had to wear.

“Perfect,” Greta said. “Now get out there. Jeff will have a heart attack if you’re any later.”

This movie was being filmed in a middle school that was just a short distance away from the make up trailer.

“Francesca! Hurry up!” Called Julia, who was playing the basketball star in the movie. We’ve never really gotten along. She was standing in the doorway of the school, looking very annoyed.

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“I’m sorry,” I said. “I was mobbed by paparazzi on the way here.”

Julia smirked. “Paparazzi? You? Yeah right!”

Like I said, we don’t get along, which is ironic since we’re supposed to be best friends in the movie.

Jeff was standing behind her, frowning. “Francesca,” he said in his thick southern accent. “Hurry up, will you? We don’t have room for irresponsible people on this cast. We’ve got a movie to film!” He turned to face the cast, who all grew quiet instantly. Jeff looked from one person to another. “Let’s move it people! We’re starting from scene one! Everyone to your places!” The cast scrambled to their places.

‘Annnnd... action!’

Julia gave the camera a huge smile and began her first line. Jeff was beaming the whole time. He thought that everything Julia did was perfect. That was because he didn’t know about the time that Julia spilled orange juice on my costume and told everyone that I’d done it. Or the time when she stole my homework to copy off of. I was so lost in my thoughts that I missed my entrance.

“Cut!” Jeff called and turned to glare at me. “Francesca!” He snapped. “What are you doing? Do you know how much time we’ve wasted already? We’re already way behind, thanks to you! You need to shape up or you won’t be on this cast anymore, understand?”

My legs were shaking. “Yes,” I said, softly, thinking about how upset my mom would be if I was fired.”

“Okay, let’s try this again. Action!”

“I’m home,” I called.

“Oh, good!” Mom said. “You need to get ready. We have to leave at 7:00 for your interview.”

“Interview?”

“On LA News Broadcasting!” Mom said.

“Oh, yeah.” I sighed. A public television station was going to interview me and some of the other cast members about the movie. As I got dressed, I found myself thinking about why I hated my job so much. I liked acting, but I didn’t like being in movies. I hadn’t been to a real school since I was ten and I never made any real friends. Most of all, I hated working for Jeff. I didn’t like waking up every morning afraid that I would be fired for being late again or coming in at the wrong time. I didn’t like the chaos and action of being on a movie set, and I would give anything to quit the job forever, but how could I disappoint my mother? As we drove to the television station, I thought about how awful my day had been. Although, these days, every day at work is pretty awful. Suddenly, I knew what I had to do.

“Hello everyone! We’re here on LA News Broadcasting to interview the cast of the new movie, *Hooked On Hoops*. Every young girl in America has been excitedly awaiting it’s release and today we’ll be hearing from some of the cast members including Julia Bennett and Francesca Martinez. Julia, will you tell us a little bit about what it’s like to be in this movie?”

As Julia talked, my heart was beating. I knew that I was going to have to answer a question next.

“That’s wonderful!” The interviewer said. “And Francesca, what are your future plans? Which movie will you be auditioning for after this one?”

“Actually,” I said. “I won’t be auditioning for any more movies.” I took a deep breath. “In fact,” I said. “From this moment on, I will no longer be on the cast of *Hooked On Hoops*. I’m quitting.” From the back, I heard Jeff gasp.

“What?!” He said, in a shocked whisper, more to himself than anyone else.

I could see my mother in the audience. She looked madder than I’d ever seen her before. She also looked really surprised.

The interviewer looked surprised, but to her credit, she was very professional about it. “Well, that’s certainly a surprise! I know that the cast of *Hooked On Hoops* will miss you quite a bit. May I ask what you’re planning on doing after you leave?”

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“I’m going to move back to Minnesota and live with my dad. And I’m going to go to a high school and get an education like every other kid.” My mind was working fast. I hadn’t quite thought about what I’d do after I quit. I wanted to look back at my mother but I wouldn’t let myself. I would deal with her later. For now, I was on top of the world.