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BHS BACK IN SESSION, INEVITABLE HUMILIATIONS TO ENSUE

Holly, don't you think you should at least wear a new pair of jeans for the first day of school? Why don't you dress up anymore?"

I rolled my eyes and took a deep breath. She was starting already. "Mom, I'm not in first grade. No one dresses up for the first day of school anymore. Don't listen to those JCPenney commercials."

As the words came out of my mouth, my eleven-year-old sister, Ann, walked into the kitchen looking like a "Back-To-School Cool!" advertisement in a JCPenney catalog. Her long hair was pulled back with a hot-pink headband that matched her hot-pink tank top, and she wore a long gray cardigan

and black leggings. On her feet were black Chucks complete with hot-pink laces.

My mother looked pointedly at her and then at me. I glanced down at my gray hoodie, perfectly distressed skinny jeans, and flip-flops. I shrugged. “Ann’s still optimistic about life.” Mom rolled her eyes and went to finish getting ready in the bathroom.

Ann walked over to the refrigerator, where she pulled out a gallon of milk. And like every other morning before school, I pulled out two huge glasses. She poured milk to the very top of each glass, and then we chugged it all down.

I let out a loud dairy-induced burp. Ann countered it with an even louder burp. We laughed devilishly.

“GIRLS!” Mom hollered from the bathroom.

“WHAT? You’re the one who makes us drink this every morning! Don’t you know that Asians are naturally lactose intolerant?” I hollered back.

Mom rushed in, dressed in a suit, pulling curlers out from her hair and grabbing her purse. “I’m SO sorry that I work ten-hour days and don’t have time to make you spoiled brats a fancy breakfast like all the other moms do!”

I shook my head. “Wow, guilt projection much?”

She grabbed her keys and gave me a no-nonsense glare. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, but be quiet and hurry up because we’re ALL going to be late!”

Ann and I grabbed our backpacks and ran out the front door, jumping into the car as it was practically rolling down the driveway already. If anything, our mother was always efficient.

“Okay, Ann, do you know where to go for your first class?” Mom asked as she put on her makeup and eyed the traffic signal at the same time.

“Yessss. I’m not a baby!” Ann responded huffily.

“I’m not a baaaby!” I mimicked in a whiny voice, then yelped when Ann kicked me in the shin. I gave her a kick right back.

“You are BOTH being baby right now!” Mom shouted, steering with one hand and running a lint roller over her jacket with the other.

Being baby?! Ann and I cracked up and were still laughing when we pulled up in front of Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

Ann took a deep breath and opened the door. Before she got out, I felt a moment of anxiety for her. How did Ann become a middle schooler so fast? I hope she fared better on her first day than I did. On mine, I wore the same T-shirt as a popular girl who loudly pointed out that I wasn’t wearing a bra yet. Yeah, no duh. WHY would I need to wear a bra when my chest looked like a Ken doll’s? Joke’s on you! Ha-ha!

Ann looked like a little kid as she stood outside before shutting the car door. The school yard was already filled with students running around and shouting loudly. She turned back one last time and called out, “Bye!” then walked cautiously toward the front lawn.

I swore I heard my mom sniffle — and was reminded yet again that my sister was, and always would be, the baby of the family. Me on the other hand . . .