

PICTURE DAY

ROSE CLUTTERDORF HAD OVERSLEPT . . .

again.

“Hurry! Hurry!” her mother cried.

Rose snatched yesterday’s clothes off the floor and flung them on. She raced downstairs and—grabbing her backpack and a cold Toaster Tart—raced out the door. She didn’t even take time to brush her teeth, or pee, or run a comb through her tangled hair.

Minutes later, she screeched into the classroom and—Rose shook her head.

Why did everyone look so weird?

Ashlee A. was wearing a ruffled skirt and panty hose.

Ashleigh B. was wearing a shimmery green party dress.

And Ashley Z. was wearing dress pants and a collared shirt—and his shirt was tucked in!

The truth hit Rose like a ton of social studies books.

“Oh, no!” she gasped. “It’s Picture Day!”

Victoria walked over to Rose and smirked. "You obviously forgot."

Victoria had dressed for Picture Day as if it were her wedding day. Her long blond hair had been swept up into a swirling mass of curls and hairpins. She was wearing a white velvet dress, white lace tights, and—

"Nice pearl collar," snickered Lenny.

"It looks like something my grandmother would wear," added Bruce.

"Or my basset hound," put in Emberly.

"Humph," snorted Victoria. "Boys don't know anything about fashion." And she flounced away.

Any other day, Rose wouldn't have cared what Victoria thought. She wouldn't have worried about her clothes or her hair. But today was different. Today was Picture Day.

Rose looked down at her wrinkled pink jeans and rumped yellow T-shirt, which read MY GRANDMOTHER WENT TO BORNEO AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS T-SHIRT. Tears pricked her eyes.

Her best friend, Missy, tried to cheer her up. "I have some extra barrettes in my desk," she said. "We can at least fix your hair."

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Rose hesitated. Barrettes? She never wore barrettes. It just wasn't her style. "No, thank you, I—" she began.

But Missy cut her off. "Do you want to look special on Picture Day, or not?"

Rose nodded.

"Then come on," said Missy. She pulled Rose into a corner of the room, right next to Mr. Jupiter's suit of armor—"Found while exploring the underground tomb of the Knights Templar," he had explained—and began pinning plastic butterflies all over Rose's head.

At that moment, Amisha walked over. "You need earrings, too," she said, and she clipped a dangly pair onto Rose's earlobes.

Earrings? Rose never wore earrings. They weren't her style either. Besides, they pinched. "I'd rather go without jewelry," said Rose.

"No jewelry on Picture Day?" gasped Amisha. She jangled her gold bracelets. "You wouldn't look special enough."

Before Rose could reply, Victoria pushed her way into the corner. "You, girl, need some color," she proclaimed. Whipping out a tube of Cha-Ching Cherry

lip gloss, she aimed it at Rose's mouth and said, "Pucker up."

"I don't know if this is such a good idea," said Rose. "I've never worn makeup before."

"That's obvious," replied Victoria. "Still, you want to look special on Picture Day, don't you?"

Rose nodded.

Victoria smeared a thick pink streak across Rose's mouth, then touched up her own shimmering lips. "Now we *both* look special."

Rose longed to wipe away the sticky mess, but before she could grab a tissue, Emberly slipped a pair of rhinestone sunglasses over her eyes.

"Now, *that* looks special," he declared.

Then Jackie draped a basketball jersey over her shoulders.

"Really special," she declared.

And Ham tied a bow tie around her neck.

"Really, *really* special," he declared.

"I don't know—" began Rose.

But her classmates paid no attention to her. They were too busy adding:

Knee pads.

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A nose ring.

Tube socks.

Snow boots.

Press-on fingernails.

A cowboy hat.

A charm bracelet.

Temporary tattoos.

A sequined belt.

A silk scarf.

And a plastic Hawaiian lei.

At last they stepped back to admire their work.

“What do you think?” they asked Rose. They turned her so she could see her reflection in the suit of armor’s shiny breastplate.

Rose gasped. None of it—not the tattoos or the boots or the nose ring—was her style. She looked—

“So, so special,” sighed Missy.

The others nodded their agreement.

Rose looked from her ridiculous reflection to her smiling classmates. How could she tell them she thought she looked stupid?

She couldn’t.

At that moment, Mr. Jupiter, dressed for the occasion in a Mayan ceremonial robe—“A gift from the

President of Mexico," he had explained—clapped his hands. "Line up, please. It's time for pictures."

Everyone hurried to the door.

Miserably, Rose followed.

In the lunchroom, Miss Turner was already in front of the camera. Or at least the fourth graders thought it was Miss Turner. In place of her usual shapeless jumper and bulky sweater, however, the librarian was wearing an attractive blue dress that showed off curves no one had ever known she had.

"Say 'cheese,'" said the photographer.

"Cheeeese," said Miss Turner, smiling.

Flash!

She wiggled her fingers at Mr. Jupiter before hurrying back to the library, her sensible loafers making their faint *shush-shush* sound.

Then it was Victoria's turn. Pinching her cheeks and biting her lips to make them redder, she smiled a dazzling smile.

Flash!

Emberly grinned from ear to ear.

Flash!

Lenny stuck out his tongue.

Flash!

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Finally, Rose stepped gloomily in front of the camera.

"Smile," said the photographer.

"How can I?" she sighed. "Look what I'm wearing!"

The photographer shrugged.

Flash!

Rose couldn't smile for the class photo either. As she knelt in the front row—earrings pinching, tube socks falling down—she crossed her fingers. *Please, oh, please, let the camera break. Let the photographer accidentally cover the lens with his thumb. Let the photography studio lose the pictures. . . .*

Three weeks later, Mr. Jupiter announced, "Wonderful news, children. Your pictures are here." He began handing out envelopes.

Victoria ripped hers open. "Lovely, as usual," she purred.

"I look good too," said Bernadette.

"Boy, I'm handsome," said Melvin.

The others ignored him.

As for Rose, she held the envelope in her trembling hand. She couldn't bring herself to open it.

“Yowza!” yelled Humphrey. “Look at the class picture. Look at Rose.”

Everyone but Rose pulled their class picture out of the envelope. She braced herself.

“Man, your hair looks like a bees’ nest,” snickered Ham.

“Like a butterflies’ nest, actually,” corrected Stanford.

“What’s with the knee pads?” giggled Amisha.

“And the bow tie?” tittered Lil.

Then Mr. Jupiter shouted, “Stop!”

Everyone looked toward the teacher.

“I can’t believe it!” he cried as he peered at the class picture. “How could this have happened? How? It simply will not do.”

“What won’t do?” asked Bernadette. “Rose’s tattoo?”

“My outfit,” explained Mr. Jupiter. “Don’t you see? I wore a Mayan ceremonial robe without holding the matching canary-head scepter.” He slapped his forehead. “In the tribal world, it’s a complete fashion no-no. Well, there’s nothing else to do. We’ll have to retake the class photo.”

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“We will?” said Rose hopefully.

“Absolutely,” replied Mr. Jupiter.

Rose smiled with relief.

“Want to borrow my butterfly barrettes again?” asked Missy.

“No, thanks,” said Rose. And she smiled at her ordinary, everyday reflection in the breastplate of Mr. Jupiter’s suit of armor.

MORAL: Try to please all, and you end by pleasing none.