

A fortnight before the summer vacations



A fortnight before the summer vacations were to commence, we stopped taking interest in studies. Everyone of us made ambitious plans to tour this or that place. But, ' man proposes and God in his turn disposes'. On the very first day of the vacation, my mother developed serious pains and she had to be admitted to the hospital.

In the hospital, her condition worsened and it was decided by the doctors and she would be operated upon. It led to the cancellation of our annual trip to Nainital. The decision of cancellation did not make me unhappy but my mother's illness made me indifferent to the tour. My mother was hospitalized the very next day.

Worry was waiting large on father's face and tears rolled down my cheeks. Unfortunately, my mother's condition worsened during the operation and it was for sure that her recovery would now take a long time. I took the responsibility of preparing food for my family and, after giving it to everyone in the home, I would go to the hospital. In the hospital screaming, wailing and crying of patients made me sad. When I came back home, my younger sister would cry to go to see the mother.

She refused to eat or drink. Our clothes were dirty and house was unclean and in a very bad order. Cooking was turning out to be a nightmare for me. The dishes were often spoiled.

At this point of time, I came to realize about the hard work my mother used to put in. I myself could not eat the food that I cooked, I could not talk my heart to anyone as my sister was too young to understand me and all my friends were away with their families enjoying their vacations. The vacations

were passing at the blink of eyelid. Sometimes I used to think of the happiness of my friends and compare it with that of mine. My life had become a dull routine going to hospital and preparing food. It bored me a lot.

All activities like reading books, watching television, which I had interest in, were suspended for weeks. The days passed and the summer vacations came to an end. On the other hand, I thought that going to school was more interesting. I knew that my first day of ninth grade would be challenging.

There would be higher expectations than eighth grade and the teachers would be stricter. I was scared that my classmates would all have changed over the summer—gotten taller, prettier or even smarter, making me the only stupid ugly duckling who didn't change. But I missed everyone, and that helped me forget my worries. In the midst of my anxiety, the phone rang on the Friday before the first day of school at La Canada High School. It was a recording of our principal.

Sounding incredibly serious, she said that school was cancelled on Monday and would be delayed until Tuesday. This was because of the fire in the La Canada-Flintridge area near my house, school and hangout spots. My school was being used as a shelter for those whose houses were threatened. The thick black smoke was everywhere; not just outside but inside our house too, even though we kept the windows and doors shut at all times.

We had a too-perfect view of the fire from our window; we could see the flames burning everything in its way. Though I was frustrated with the fire, strangely, I was also happy at the same time because we had an extra day of

vacation. On Monday evening, I was preparing for my big day. My red backpack was filled with new notebooks and binders.

Then the phone rang. Again a recording of the serious-toned principal told us to stay home: the fire was still going and it would be impossible to go to school with the smoke still thick in the air. I could feel my anxiety growing inside of me. When was school going to start? Will my nerves ever calm down? I just wished that the first day of school would hurry up and come so that I could get it over with. Finally it was Wednesday.

The real first day of school. I walked onto campus feeling nervous even though I had walked these same grounds for two years because the middle school is next door. Everything looked and felt different now that I was in high school— The middle school building looked so cute, like an old memory that was done and over with. I looked at my schedule. First period—German.

I took a deep breath as I opened the door to my first class. Here I go. The room was big and spacey. There was no carpet, and we had an old-fashioned blackboard that's usually a more modern whiteboard in other classrooms. I sat down at a random desk and the bell rang.

Class had started. Our German teacher was very friendly and I liked her from the beginning. What I didn't like, though, was that I was surrounded by sophomores, juniors and seniors, with only five familiar faces. Though I was excited that I would get to know people out of my grade, I was a little scared too. I didn't know how juniors acted.

They might be nice but then again they might be bullies. I had to walk all the way across campus and up three flights of stairs to get to my third period—biology honors. Our teacher’s name is Ms. Compeau, and I think that she will teach us a lot this year because she is very to the point. She also has her unique way of saying “ be quiet,” she says “ alligator.

She explained that she is the king, or should I say queen, of the class because alligators are the “ king of the swamps. ” I had a feeling that this class wouldn’t be a drag like some of my science classes in the past.

GROWWL. Wow, I was hungry. Fourth period used to be the time to eat lunch back in middle school, but not anymore. We have one more period before lunch.

Now it was time for concert choir. I walked into a chaotic room with people in cliques talking, laughing and eating. The accompanist was going over his pieces as I walked in trying to find someone I knew. There was one freshmen girl who I barely knew and everyone else was older than me. So I sat alone.

I was so lonely that for a second I wanted to quit concert choir. When I finally got to meet my friends to eat lunch once again, I felt happy. The familiar spot and people brought back memories of last year as we caught each other up on our summers. After lunch, I went to my English class. After surviving five periods without too much of a challenge, I didn’t feel too bad about ninth grade. However, fifth period changed everything.

I didn’t feel ready after all. Read aboutThe SchoolboyMy teacher’s name is Mr. Valassidis but he told us to call him Mr. V.

Mr. V told us that we would have to write 40 essays and read AP-level books such as *The Odyssey* this year. I love reading and writing, but come on, 40 ESSAYS? AP-level books? Now I was scared. He also talked about how important it was to be organized and focused. I wasn't too worried about the organized part, but the focused part? Last year was not a very "focused" year for me. While doing homework, I was often talking on the phone, or engaged in a conversation on Facebook.

I planned on stepping it up this year because I wanted to stay an honor student. All in all, the first day of ninth grade was good. I enjoyed (most) of my teachers, classmates and classes. I was able to see my friends who I didn't see all summer. But most importantly, I was now in high school. Though it was my first day I already felt like I was well on my way toward a successful high school career.

And you know what? High school can be fun. Surrounded by unfamiliar sophomores, juniors and seniors, I have managed to make a friend in concert choir in the first couple of days.