

Sometimes truth really is...

STRANGER THAN FICTION



Sometimes truth really is...

Stranger Than Fiction



Stranger Than Fiction

Contents

- I. The New School
- II. A New Friend.
- III. At Allie's House
- IV. The Mysterious Text
- V. After School
- VI. The Youth Leader
- VII. Lunch in the Courtyard
- VIII. The Visit
- IX. At the Mall
- X. The Decision
- XI. Six Months Later

Copyright © 2018 by John Howard
Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts are from the New King James Version (NKJV), copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

Chapter One

The New School

Nichole still felt the sting of the word. One little word, but it stung like a paper cut. It rang in her ears like a siren or a school bell echoing through an empty hallway. It pounded in her head like a migraine. It pressed so heavily upon her that she felt helpless beneath the weight of it. She couldn't believe it as it fell off of her father's lips.

"We're what?"

"Moving." Her father tried to put his arm over her shoulder, but Nichole pulled away with a sigh. She had been born and raised a loyal subject of Canada. It had taken her sixteen years to establish her group of friends, her school, her lifestyle. Now all that was about to change just as she was preparing to enter her senior year. She felt so helpless.

It was only six weeks from the day the announcement came that the old familiar furnishings had been sold and Nichole found herself standing at the front door looking inside one last time. The walls looked so bare. The floors so desolate. The house so empty. So lonely. The old farm house that had held so many dear and precious memories now stood, a skeleton, a shell, like an old used notebook, worn down and rough around the edges, but packed with pages of memories.

"Nikki?" Her father's hand touched her shoulder. "It's time to go, honey."

And so it was. As the car drove off, a tear escaped. The dust from the gravel road veiled the scene as Nichole watched the little country house shrink and fade into the

distance. It's memory lingered like a sweet perfume as she boarded the plane and throughout the duration of the trip. Upon arrival, she looked at the walls, held up with nails and wood and drywall. They were a far cry from her old home. Those old country walls were far more solid, held up by laughter and pain, sweat and tears. Memories.

The sun set quietly on the quaint little New England neighborhood on the outskirts of Boston, nestling the community under a blanket of darkness. As the rooftops glowed softly under the moonlight, Nichole lay in bed with her head on her pillow, unable to sleep. Her mind buzzed nervously with thoughts of the new school and everything that was to confront her with the dawning of the new day. She wished she could just fade away into the darkness somehow, but morning came abruptly, bringing with it a whole new mountain of anxieties that Nichole seemed to hide so well under her plastic smile.

The hallway buzzed anxiously with students stirring about, gathering at lockers to exchange books and the latest gossip, texting, and passing notes. Nichole stood nervously. Awkwardly.

"Hey, you're in my algebra class." A girl with braces stood before Nichole and smiled.

"Excuse me?" Nichole questioned curiously.

"My name is Jenny. We're neighbors," she said, eyeing their lockers.

Nichole smiled back. "I'm Nichole."

"You're new here, aren't you?"

"Yea, It's my first day," Nichole confessed.

"I thought so. It's not bad. Most of the kids here are pretty cool."

“Sure,” Nichole replied.

Looking across the hall, Jenny started pointing out people. “Like there’s Becca. She’s a friend of mine. She’s real cool, except she has this thing about pink that drives me crazy. Not just pink. Like, hot pink. Look at her shoes!” The brightness drew her eyes downward to the shoes. Nichole smiled.

“You don’t have a thing about pink do you?”

Nichole shook her head.

“Good. Anyway, she’s alright.” Without hesitating to take a breath, Jennifer continued. “And that guy over there is Tim. He’s a little wild. He’ll try to hit on you, but stay away from him, if you know what I mean.”

Pointing across the hall, she continued, “Over there is Susan. She’s nice. A little brainy, but nice. Not like, geeky brainy. She’s just smart, but she’s cool.”

Just then another girl walked up to the lockers. She dressed modest and was very plain looking, wearing her hair in a ponytail.

“Oh, hey Nichole. This is my friend Liz.” Liz looked at her for a moment through the dark frames of her glasses then inquired, “How’s it going?”

“Good.” Nichole smiled at her.

“Nichole’s new here,” Jenny informed.

“Really, where did you come from?”

“Canada.”

“I thought so. I could hear the accent.”

Nichole looked at her curiously. “Really? You’ve been to Canada?”

“Sure, dozens of times. I have family up there.”

“What part?”

“Fredericton.”

“Wow. Really? That’s not far from where my family lived. We were in Millville. It’s a tiny little town about an hour west of Fredericton.”

“Right. I know exactly where that is.”

Liz just looked at her as a moment of awkward silence intervened, as if the two had something in common, but at the same time nothing in common at all. Kirsten felt so aloof. So new. So strangely alone in the midst of this new world around her. She missed her old friends and imagined just now that they too were standing at lockers. Maybe even now they were standing around her old locker like it was a tombstone, putting flowers and wreaths on it and carving the words ‘rest in peace’ on the front of it with sharp metal objects.

“Small world,” Liz said, bringing Kirsten back to the moment.

“Yea...It sure is.”

“So how do you like it here?”

“Seems nice,” affirmed Nichole before Jennie again jumped in.

“I was just telling her the ins and outs. You know, who to hang with and who to watch out for,” Jenny said looking at the students dodging in and out of lockers and rooms.

Liz smiled at Jenny. “Right.”

Nichole felt a little overwhelmed by the newness of everything as she took in the scene. Just then her eye caught a quiet looking girl in a flowered dress. Her demeanor appeared very cultured. Her disposition, humble. Polite. Confident. She seemed to glide down the hallway untouched by anything. Nichole imagined words and glances just fell right off of her as carelessly as feathers

drifting to the floor. Something about her incited the curiosity of Nichole. “Who’s that?”

Jenny’s face turned a touch sour as she noticed the girl in the flowered dress.

“Oh, that’s Allie Perkins. You want to stay away from her. She’s definitely a few fries short of a happy meal.”

“What?”

“A few cards short of a deck.”

Nichole looked at her curiously before Liz finally stepped in. “She’s strange.”

“Like how? She looks okay.”

“Well, for one, she’s a good girl. Squeaky clean, you know. Doesn’t drink. Doesn’t smoke. Doesn’t go to parties.”

“I see.”

“And for two, she goes to church on Saturday,” said Liz.

“So? Lot’s of churches today offer Saturday and Sunday services.”

“No, I mean she goes to church on Saturday...as a matter of personal conviction, she says, whatever that means.”

“You mean, like she has to?”

“Yea, something like that.”

“Really?”

“Really. I told you, she’s strange,” Jenny said.

“Well, I admit, that is a bit strange. Here we are in the 21’st century, and this poor girl still thinks she should go to church on Saturday?”

“Right.”

Nichole continued to look across the hallway at the girl in the flowered dress. Poised. Dignified. “She looks like

a smart enough girl. Are you sure about her?"

Jenny just looked across the hall. "There's one in every school. I guess she's ours."

"Have you ever talked to her about it?"

"No, religion is not something most people talk about here."

Nichole brushed a curl of hair out of her eyes and said distantly, "Well, I think Ms. Allie Perkins and I are going to have a little talk. She needs someone to clear things up for her. She's just too nice looking a girl to be deceived by some religion her parents probably tried to push on her."

"Well, you're braver than I am, but if you can get her to change you'll make everyone in school happy," Jenny said with a look of doubt, then glancing at her watch she said abruptly, "Oh, I've got to get to class. Hey, well talk later." At that, the three dispersed and were lost in the crowd of students rushing off to class.

Couldn't you use a little hope?
HOPE TRACTS

**FREE BIBLE
STUDIES**

**MAKE PRAYER
REQUESTS**

**WATCH VIDEOS
ONLINE**

**READ AND DOWNLOAD
BOOKS AND TRACTS**

**PURCHASE MATERIALS
AND GET INVOLVED!**

www.hopetracts.com