

Why So Shy?

By Ava-Grace Sawyer

A teacher was staring at Mary with a glint of irritation. “Well?” she began, “are you going to remain anonymous or not?” she said impatiently, foot tapping. Mary attempted to gulp down the fear. Students were obediently sitting at their desks, glaring at her, silently processing Mary’s every flaw. Her heart pounded. Her chest seized. Words came out and retreated. In a complete heap Mary collapsed. It appears all the millions of students in the class were jeering, pointing their dagger fingers at her, laughing with scorn.

Her miserable daydream was disrupted by a call of her name. “Mary. Mary” said her mum. “Welcome back to Earth. We’re here.” Mary jolted up in shock. Snapping out of her heinous horrors. She glanced out the window. An ominous brick building loomed above her like a shadow with children running into the school with exuberance.

Mary let out an apprehensive whimper. “Mom, please don’t make me go!”

“Have you had one of those thoughts?” her mum asked gently. “Your new school looks fabulous!”

The only thing that looked fabulous to Mary were the verdant flowers in full bloom dancing in the breeze. Mary sighed, “I need to conquer this fear” she thought. Grabbing her courage, Mary put on her backpack, opened the car door and stepped out. Her body aching with anxiety and her knees shaking like jelly. “I believe in you” a voice called out, but before Mary could turn around to respond, the car sped away. She stood outside the school building and everything became a blur. Would her daydream become a reality?

The next thing Mary was aware is that she was inside a cramped classroom. Colourful posters hung on the walls like laundry drying in the afternoon sun. Students were staring directly at her, curiosity imprinted on their faces. Mary glanced to the teacher. She gave a small gesture. “Mary come introduce yourself”. Mary’s heart was like a rollercoaster. “Exactly like my daydream!” she thought. Her breathing became laboured. “I ... I...”, she stammered with fear in every syllable. She could take the agony no more. She fled out the door as fast as her legs would carry her. “Mary!” the teacher cried. Mary ignored her. She just kept running.

Mary sprinted towards the playground. Or the “perilous playground” in her imaginary world. She found a secluded tree shading her from the embarrassment that stalked her. Mary sat down and began to sob uncontrollably. Negative thoughts spiraling in her mind.

“Everyone hates me. I’m not good enough.” She felt as though she had a million violent thwacks to her stomach. Then Mary heard footsteps approach. She froze. Here comes the stigma.

Instead of feeling the wrath of a teacher, Mary felt a gentle hand upon her shoulder. She could sense the serenity in their fingertips. Mary glanced up and saw two pairs of effusive eyes interlocked with hers. There in front of her stood two children. A boy and a girl. The boy was dressed in vivid expressive clothing. Leather sandals, pink shorts and a loose shirt, splashed with all possible colour combinations.

The girl however, looked particularly bizarre. Her skin tone was the shade of lilac silk. Her cropped hair was the colour of a tropical sunset and her ears pointed towards the moon. She wore a headset and a large flowing cape that swirled in the ethereal breeze.

“Who are these strange figures?” thought Mary.

“Are you alright?” said the boy in a squeaky voice.

Mary’s forlorn expression became agitated in the blink of an eye. “Alright?” she said and shot up quickly, with the pitch of her voice rising with each word. “Alright? Of course not! I have been humiliated in such a way that I can’t recover from!” Mary’s anger began to transition into a melancholy state. She sat back down again. In a whisper, almost inaudible, Mary said “it’s only my first day”.

“Who are you?” Mary asked in a soft curious tone.

“We”, the lilac girl began, “are Attentive Alex” gesturing towards the boy “and I am Communication Cara”. We were sent from The League of Round Square Superheroes. Our mission today is to help you find your voice.”

“But why would you pick me?” enquired Mary with a quizzical expression.

“Well, we can tell that you need our help” answered Alex. “Cara, why don’t you explain what we do.”

Cara continued. “Our job to help you find ways to express your thoughts and share them to others in a way that you will be heard and understood in the merry-go-round of life”

“That’s not all”, said Alex enthusiastically. “Communication Cara also teaches us how to listen to others, so they feel heard and valued. That’s how she helped me. When I first arrived as a new student I would talk for “hours” on end to anyone who would care to listen, sometimes forgetting to take a breath!”

Holding her chin in her hand, with her brow furrowed, Mary pondered for a moment. “What do you suggest I do?”

Communication Cara explained. “You don’t have to give us the key to the vault of your innermost thoughts and feelings. Just tell us your story.”

Mary took a deep breath and told them her troubles. Once she had finished sharing, Cara began to talk.

“I have a solution for you. Try this.”

“Take ten deep breaths, banish negative self-talk and give yourself three compliments. With time and practice listening and talking are skills you will master. Yes, it sometimes takes longer to make new friends than we would like. But take heart, you will reach the centre of the maze, and you will feel as light as a helium balloon!”

Mary clasped these words and held them to her heart. “You have given me such powerful advice that I will always treasure. Thank you.”

The Superheroes wrapped Mary in a hug. As the bell rang Alex whispered in Mary’s ear...

“Now show the world how amazing you are.”

THE END