



*Reluctant Press*

# New Kid In Town

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*ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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**AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL**

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## *Reluctant Press TG Publishers*

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# NEW KID IN TOWN

by Joanna Mathe

## CHAPTER 1

No kid likes to move from his old neighborhood, away from his friends and all the familiar landmarks. He likes it even less if he moves a couple of hundred miles from his old friends. And even less if he moves to a tough neighborhood and an even tougher school. I know because it happened to me. But perhaps I should start at the beginning.

When my mother remarried I was only eight. The first time I met my stepfather I thought he was the biggest man I had ever seen. He had worked on the docks nearly all his life and he had developed a giant's physique and massive strength over the years of hard manual work. He didn't think much of me. He thought I was soft and that I had been spoiled by Mom. He used to say that I wasn't tough like he had been when he was a kid my age. He had tried to get me to lift weights and box with him but he gave up when I had started crying one time after he had popped me in the nose to 'teach me to keep my guard up'. After that, he stopped trying to do anything with me and mostly ignored me in preference to drinking beer and watching television.

It was just after my fifteenth birthday that the mill closed down. Mom and my stepfather started arguing after that. He started drinking a lot more than he ever had before and one day when I came down to breakfast Mom was sitting there looking all cried out and she looked at me with eyes that didn't seem to know whether to be happy or sad and announced that my stepfather had left us.

We left Rocville pretty soon after that. There was no work in town and Mom had me to care for. She was a proud woman and didn't want to end up as some of the women in town had, whose men had abandoned them. Mom decided to go back to the work she had before she was married. She had found a house with a little basement hairdressing salon in a town up north called Holly Vale. And so it was that I moved to a new life and a new future, as soon as the school year was finished, so that I could enter my new high school as a junior.

Mom wasn't sad to see the last of Rocville. She seemed pleased to be leaving all the recent bad memories there, but I felt the tears welling up in my eyes as Mom drove our old, blue Ford out of Gary Oldmeadow's Service Station, and I saw the school bus tak-

ing all my friends to school. Mom didn't say anything, but I knew she was a little afraid for me leaving everything that was so familiar to me.

I watched Rocville getting smaller and smaller in the mirror. And even when the mirror only showed a black ribbon of highway I kept looking, trying to hold the vision of the back of that old school bus that had taken me to school all those years.

We drove all day. Mom stopped for gas after a few hours and I was able to use the rest room. Mom wanted to keep moving and so we ate our hamburgers and drank our sodas as the scenery flashed by and I listened to the strange and new radio stations that seemed to fade in and out with the small towns and old houses we passed.

Sometimes we passed other travelers and I wondered if they were moving to Rocville to maybe live in our old house and maybe sleep in my room. Once I jumped in fright as a driver blew his horn as he passed us, scaring me out of my distant day dreams of my days in Rocville. The sound seemed like a rude shout ordering me out of our old house and I looked at Mom with wide fearful eyes and she patted my knee reassuringly.

“Well that wasn't us he was angry at I'm sure.”

I was asleep when the car tires crunched into the gravel driveway of my Aunt May's house.

Mom shook me awake and with the heavy steps of a child looking for sleep I was led off into the house with a 'closed eyes' greeting to my Aunt. When I awoke the sun was streaming in through the lace curtains on the windows and I noticed with a wrinkle of my nose that I was in my cousin Lucinda's room with its floral scents. I had barely gathered my thoughts when Mom threw open the door and marched in to wake me.

She smiled at me when she saw me sulking wide eyed under the pink satin covers of Lucinda's bed.

“Darling, you look so cute like that.”

I poked my tongue at her and she laughed as she opened the curtains fully, letting the sun illuminate the soft colors and textures of the room.

“I'm going into town to see the agent about our new house. Aunt May has made you breakfast. So be a good boy and help her wash up the dishes afterwards. Have a nice time and I'll see you this afternoon some time.”

She kissed my cheek and left me lying there looking at the sunlight that filtered through the lace curtains and painted Lucinda's wall with delicate swaying shadows. The faint touch of her perfume made me aware of the other feminine scents in the room and I lay there lazily gazing at Lucinda's stuffed toys and cluttered dressing table as if I were still in a dream.

I felt my tummy rumble and reluctantly rose from my warm, hiding place to throw on my jeans and sweat shirt before I made my way downstairs to breakfast. I had stayed at Aunt May's one summer about three years ago and I had found an instant friend in my cousin Lucinda. I was looking forward to seeing her and I wondered why I was in her bedroom and not in the spare room where I had stayed last time.

“Where is Lucinda, ma'am?”

But, before Aunt May answered my question, she went through her ritual by giving me a giant hug exclaiming how I had grown, which I knew was a lie. I was still too small to be picked in any of the teams at school for sports. Then she asked me all about me before she answered my simple question. Lucinda had asked to attend a special Girls School, was a weekly boarder, and only returned home for the weekends.

“You'll have the chance to see her in a few weeks when you and your Mom visit again.”

Aunt May must have seen my expression because she immediately reassured me that I would like my new house and I would be sure to make lots of new friends.

She said the same thing as we drove away the next day.

“You'll love your new school, you'll see Chris. It will be a whole new life for you in the big city.”

How right she was.

## CHAPTER 2.

When I saw our new home I thought to myself, *‘what a dump.’*

The street wasn't like my old neighborhood with its trees and shiny white houses. Our new house looked abandoned and broken down. Just like the rest of the houses on the street. There wasn't a tree to be seen and when we got out of the car I saw peeling paint on the walls beside the driveway.

Mom pointed out my new room and later, as I sat at my window looking out at the street below, I cried for the life I had left behind.

The next day, in the afternoon, Mom took me to enroll in the local high school. I wondered how I would make any new friends when I saw my classmates. They all looked like they could have been extras in that film The Blackboard Jungle and I shivered slightly as a group of boys in leather jackets with gum chewing girlfriends stared at me as I followed Mom down the hallway to enroll. Little was I to know that I was being marked out as I passed by them, and if I could have heard them I would have heard names like “Mommy's Boy” and “Pussy” from both the boys and the girls.

The Principal was quite a nice man, but I could see why there seemed to be no discipline in the school. He looked like a nervous type and he seemed more interested in finishing his paperwork than in talking to me. It was so different from the interest my last Principal use to take in the students.

As we left I almost felt relieved that the group that was looking at me when I arrived seemed to have disappeared. But as I followed Mom to the car park I saw them again and I blushed and turned away as one of the boys blew me a kiss and the girls laughed.

Mom didn't see it happen and I stared straight ahead as we drove out into the traffic and headed for home.

That night as I lay in bed I wondered at the changes that had occurred in my life in the last few weeks and I realized that everything we are so sure is permanent, can dis-

appear in a moment. My old life seemed a million miles away and I wished that some magical spell would take me back to our old house and my old school friends.

### CHAPTER 3

The next day Mom fussed over me as I got ready for my first day at my new school despite the fact that I was sixteen years old, and a high school junior. She complained about my pony tail hairdo, fussed over my wearing polished black oxfords to make a good first impression rather than my usual grubby white running shoes. She had made sure I had a clean set of clothes and she gave me two dollars for my lunch. She complained about her perfume spilling in her purse, but I didn't take any heed of it at the time. It was all part of her fuss-and-bother routine to get me off to school.

It was about three miles to the school and I nervously waited for the bus, wondering what my first day at school would be like. On the bus I sat by myself and the other kids just ignored me. How different it was from my last school where everyone went out of their way to make any new students feel at home.

As I entered the school gates I saw the group of kids I had seen the day before and as I walked by one of the girls smiled at me. It seemed like a friendly smile and so I smiled back and greeted her with a good morning and continued walking.

Suddenly, my shoulder was pulled back and I found myself facing a tall, heavy built boy wearing a black leather jacket! He was the leader of the gang of kids I had seen the day before and his name was Frank.

“Hey you, Pussy, what do you think you're doing coming on to my girl like that?”

I saw the girl I had smiled at whispering to a blonde girl and a couple of other kids in leather jackets watching expectantly.

I knew I was supposed to stand up for myself and maybe even put up my fists and threaten this person for grabbing me so rudely. My stepfather would have made me do that, but it was hopeless. Frank was at least six foot and I was only five five. Besides he had his friends there with him and I knew that if I got lucky and managed to land a punch on Frank, his friends would immediately jump on me.

I tried to back away.

“I'm sorry,” I said, “I was only saying good morning, I didn't mean any offense.”

Frank looked at his friends and laughed.

“Well well, she was only saying good morning boys,” and with that he delivered a punch to my stomach that made me double up and fall to the ground.

I felt tears swimming in my eyes and I heard their voices as they laughed at me.

“So Pussy what you going to do now? Want to try it on with me then, or do you want to be my friend.”

I didn't know what he wanted. He had punched me and talked nastily to me and now he was talking about being my friend.

“I'm sure you'd rather be my friend wouldn't you?” He held up my chin and looked at me.

“Well look the poor little thing is crying. Perhaps she's so happy she can be Frankie's friend,” his voice changed as he let me go. “Any friend of mine would be pleased to buy me lunch wouldn't he, Tony?”

Tony was a little shorter than Frank, with a shiny black pompadour hair style and a pair of motorcycle boots on.

“He sure would Frank.”

“Well Pussy, how about it, are you going to buy me lunch?”

“Sure,” I said, “I'll see you in the cafeteria.” I bent to pick up my books, hoping to escape and report this to the Principal. At my last School something like this would be sure to cause all those involved to be expelled, or at least suspended.

Frank spoke to me again.

“But I might not be here at lunch time. Perhaps you'd better just give me the money so I can get lunch anyway.”

I knew there was nothing else for it and so I reached into my pocket and took the two dollars my Mom had given me and handed it to him.

“That's very nice of you, isn't it Tony”

“That's right Frank, very nice of him.”

Frank took a big sniff of the notes and smiled at the rest of his gang. “Ahh the smell of fresh cooked lunch.”

The rest of the kids laughed.

I turned and started to go.

“Wait on a bit Puss, this money smells like it still belongs in your handbag. Smell this, Tina.”

He handed the money to the girl, who had started this all by speaking to me.

“Yeah sure Frank, it smells like Wild Rose, my old lady uses it, so what.”

When Mom had given me the money I had noticed the strong smell of perfume from her bag, but money was money and I had thought no more about it. Mom had even made a joke about the scented notes. “Why once I had to rescue a silver dollar from that old brown dog we had. At least this smells prettier.”

And we had both laughed as I put the money in my pocket. Now I wished I had that old dog, with his fiercely protective nature, with me.

Everything seemed to be getting worse. No matter what I did they seemed to want to torment me more. I had given them the money and now they were complaining that it didn't smell right.

“Well, well, Puss, did you forget your handbag today, or do you just perfume your money so you'll know that it's yours?”

I didn't say anything, and just kept looking at the ground.

Frank took the opportunity to punch me again.

“You're not being very friendly puss. How about an answer.”

“You've got my money what more do you want” I gasped as I again bent to pick up my books while he grabbed me by the ear.

“Puss, that's not very nice, we want you to be happy here at your new school. I'm even going to be your friend. You'll be his friend won't you, Tina?”

“Sure Frank, I'll be his friend, I don't mind if his money is perfumed.”

They all broke into laughter and one of the other girls, a girl with bleached blonde hair and thick red lipstick spoke, “here Frank, perhaps he can wear this to remind him about our lunch tomorrow?” She handed Frank a vial of perfume.

“That's very nice of you, Cheryl, isn't it Puss?” He grabbed me around the throat with one hand and sprinkled the perfume all over me.

They all laughed again as they saw my expression while I felt the overpowering scent enclosing me.

He pulled my belt and shook some into my pants. “There Puss, now your little panties smell pretty too. Say thank you to Cheryl”.

I started to run, but I was quickly seized by Tony.

“Puss, how could you be so ungrateful?” Cheryl seemed to be enjoying herself. “We girls need to share sometimes. You're welcome to borrow my lipstick, too, if you want.”

And she giggled with amusement at having a boy to torment, rather than being at the mercy of the boys in the gang all the time.

Frank spoke, “I'm sure Puss here would like that wouldn't you Pussy?” And he held out his hand to Cheryl.

I watched in fear as she reached into her purse. It was as if I expected to see her draw out a snake, for I knew the inevitable act I would be forced into when her hand withdrew. She handed the gold cylinder to Frank.

“Here Puss. You know what to do,” he ordered while he hit me again in the stomach with one hand as the other forced the lipstick tube into my hand.

It was all too much and I started to cry.

“Dear, dear Puss. Look at this, she's crying cause the girls are being so kind to her. It is very kind of Cheryl to share like this isn't it Puss. Perhaps you'll help her Sweets?”

“Sure,” Cheryl responded in delight and I felt weak and without will as she unscrewed the cap while the crimson tube of color glided into view. She pinched my cheeks and I felt the cool creamy texture gliding across my mouth.

I saw the look of concentration on her as she colored my trembling lips with her shocking lipstick.

In the background I could hear one of the guys laughing and grabbing his sides. “This is too much, too much”

Finally, she stood back and I hunched in shame before them.



“Well puss, that looks better,” Frank announced with satisfaction while he grabbed my shirt and pulled me up to him and I looked up with tear filled eyes at my tormentor.

“You'll remember your own lipstick tomorrow won't you, or perhaps you'd like to buy us lunch instead?” The cold look in his eye left me no doubt that I would be paying for his lunch for a long time if I didn't want to be bullied terribly everyday.

“And if you're thinking of running and squealing to the Principal, don't bother. Everyone here saw you give me the money for safe keeping, because little girls like you are afraid the big boys might pull your hair and steal your purse.”

They walked off leaving me to make my way to the rest room to wash my face and finally arrive late at my first home room class smelling of perfume while my lips were bright pink from the scrubbing it took to remove the lipstick.

Towards the end of the school day, I attended gym class with the other boys to notice a strange distancing by the other boys. Despite my efforts to be one of the fellows, they seemed to be quite nervous when they were near me, and when we played touch football I discovered that if I was knocked down, the boys on the opposing team seemed almost apologetic as they helped me up. Uncomfortably, I began to realize that they were treating me as if I were a tomboy, or something else that needed to be protected from injury.

When we showered after class the boys seemed to be shyly turning their backs on me, and quite anxious to leave. I couldn't believe it, a youth actually held the door open for me when I left the boy's gym, and I noticed that my gym instructor was shaking his head as if greatly disturbed by something.

On the way home in the bus I could feel the other kids looking at me and I knew that they all knew of my shame before Frank and his gang.

At home I went straight to my room and threw myself on my bed, feeling the hot tears dampening my pillow.

I prayed and prayed that the school would burn down overnight and I would be taken back to my home town.

## CHAPTER 4

The next morning I saw them waiting for me. As I walked in the gate Tony walked up beside me and grabbed my arm and directed me over to where they were standing.

“Hello Puss, got my lunch money for me.” Frank looked at me with those cold eyes.

I handed him his two dollars and started to go.

“Hang on puss, you look different today. I know, you don't have your face on. Look girls he don't have his face on. Perhaps you better help make him respectable.”

I looked in terror at Cheryl and Tina who were giggling and whispering to each other.

Frank grabbed my shoulder and sat me down between the two girls.