

I looked across the hallway at Britney and her little posse. She laughed at something that the brunette at her side said. Then suddenly, all their eyes turned to me. I turned away quickly. I waited until they wandered off before turning back around. I leaned against my locker and sighed. I've kept my secret identity hidden for a year now. I'm a little Muslim girl who hates how she looks, and who she is. My name at school is Abby. Abby has bleach blonde hair, blue eyes, and is very shy. On the other hand, at home I am Aisha, the girl who never listens to her father, speaks Arabic, loves to go on trips, and misses her mother very much. My mother died just two years ago, when I was in eighth grade. My dad has had to take care of my brother and me ever since. I live in Michigan, and the weather is not being a good friend at this point. It's summer already, and there's still lots of rain. I hate my life.

I snapped out of my daydreaming. I grabbed my books out of my locker and rushed to class. I got into the classroom just before the bell rang. Britney and everybody else were already in their seats. I quickly sat down. Mr. Zuer started his lecture on something about DNA, but I wasn't listening. Britney was waving at me. I smiled awkwardly and waved back. "What the heck?" I thought, "Britney....waving....to me? Okay, today is turning out to be the weirdest day of my life."

RING! The bell rang signaling the end of second hour. Britney skipped up to me just as I was picking up my textbooks.

"Hi!" she said brightly, shining her brilliant white teeth.

"I hate her," I thought.

"H...h...hi," I managed to stutter out.

"So, you enjoying the day so far?" she asked.

"Ummmmm....yeah....yeah....sure."

"Well, that's awesome!" Britney said, smiling way too enthusiastically.

There was an awkward silence.

"Sooo....you wanna hang out sometime .at your place?" she asked.

"Uhhh....ummm....uhhh....s....s....sure. That sounds great!" I chuckled.

"Really?! That's great! I'll meet you at your house this Thursday?" she said.

"Sure," I blurted.

She smiled and strutted down the hallway with at least ten boys chasing after her with flowers and cards. My best friend Crystal came up to me.

"Are you trying to catch flies? Your mouth is wide open!" she said laughing.

"Crystal let's go. I'm like freaking out right now," I said. Crystal didn't say anything, just gave me a weird facial expression. Crystal has been my friend since I was in sixth grade. She's one of the smartest people in the school and always has straight A's. We walked down the hall to our next class together. I was still thinking about Britney. "I can't believe what just happened," I thought.

When I got home, I put my hijab on just before I went inside the house. My dad didn't know about my secret identity. That's why I was freaking out about Britney coming to my house on Thursday. My brother was on the floor playing video games, as always, when I came in through the door.

"Imtiaz! Don't you have homework to do?" I said annoyed.

He was too involved in his game to notice. I stomped up the stairs. My dad was in his office typing furiously on his computer. My dad had been the only one in the family working since my mom died, so we barely saw him anywhere other than his small, little office.

"Hello, Dad." I said. He mumbled a response I couldn't make out. I went into my room and closed my door. I flopped onto my bed, closed my eyes, and buried my head in my pillows. "What should I do, what should I do?" I thought panicking. "My dad can't find out about my secret identity at school, and Britney cannot find out about my life at home. I have to think of a plan, and fast! It was Tuesday already. That gave me only two days. UGH! I took a hot shower to relieve some of my stress, and since I had nothing to do that night, I just went to bed.

The next day at school, Britney was still blabbing off about coming to my house on Thursday, which didn't help with anything. Britney just added to the mountain of things I had to worry about. I still hadn't thought of a plan and time was running out, quickly. I was thinking of getting my dad out of the house when Britney came over, but that was impossible, considering the fact that he worked on his computer all the time in the house. He never came out of his office when he was working, but I didn't want to take the chance.

I couldn't think of any other good ideas, sadly. With each passing hour, I got more and more nervous. I had less and less time to think of a plan. Then suddenly, it hit me. "I am so stupid! Why didn't I think of this before!" I thought. I speed-walked up to Britney. She was talking to her group of friends.

"Hey, Britney!" I practically shouted.

"Hey, Abby, what's up?" she replied.

"Ummm....about you coming to my house on Thursday. You can't come. We have a....uh....family reunion that night! I'm sorry, but maybe you can come another time," I said smiling.

Yes! I know she won't come now.

"Oh, Abby, I know you just made that up! A lot of people say that, and try to get out of stuff, but it never works with me. I notice things," she smiled like an evil witch.

Maybe I said that too soon....that evil, little demon.

"So I'll see you after school on Thursday, so we can walk to your house together?" Britney asked.

I looked at her with big, wide eyes.

"I'll take that as a yes," Britney said and walked away giggling.

Oh gosh! I'm dead. My dad would find out about the secret I had been hiding from him for a year, and Britney would find out that I am actually a Muslim. Things were not looking good.

I woke up on Thursday morning with a frown on my face. "Today is the day," I thought. I did not look forward to it. I still hadn't come up with an excuse, and Britney was coming over this afternoon. This was bad, very, very bad! I got out of bed and threw on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. I put my hijab on and ran downstairs to eat something before going to school. Once I was two blocks down from my house, I took my hijab off. I continued thinking about what to do with Britney this afternoon. I just got to the front door of the school when I had an idea. What if I told her that I forgot the keys and didn't

know where they were? That was a brilliant idea! I was pretty sure it would work, not certain, but it had a good chance.

I continued through the day trying not to look at Britney, which was really hard, since she was staring at me the whole, entire day. When the last bell of the day rang, Britney was at my side the second after it stopped ringing.

"Ready to go?" she asked.

"Let me get my stuff from my locker first," I replied. Britney waited while I stuffed my backpack with binders, books, and papers. Then, we started walking to my house.

When we got to the front door, I started to dig in my backpack for the key, but I had kept it in my shoe on purpose so that I wouldn't find it.

"I can't find my house key," I said, pretending to be shocked.

"What!?" Britney shouted, "I mean, where do you think it is?"

"I don't know," I said.

"I guess we can't go in ." I started to walk away.

"Wait!" Britney shouted, "Dump out your backpack. You never know. It might be in there."

I looked at her like she was crazy. But she made me dump out my backpack anyway. We sat on the porch digging through the huge pile of stuff from my backpack.

When Britney finally believed that I didn't have my house key, she said, "Well, so what you don't have your key. We'll just sit out here until your dad comes home." she declared.

I was just about to tell her that my dad was inside the house when my brother opened the front door and complained, "What's all this racket out here?" A huge smile spread across Britney's face.

"We can go in now!" Britney exclaimed. I grabbed her arm.

"But you have to help me pick all this up!" I said, pointing towards the huge pile of papers on the front porch.

"We can do that later. Now it's time to check out your house. I've never been here before." she said and went into the house.

"No!" I yelled. But it was too late. My dad was already downstairs and was staring straight at me. "Oh-no," I thought.

"What are you doing without a hijab on?" my dad yelled. "In my office, now!" he ordered. He turned to Britney as I headed for the stairs. I could hear him saying sorry over and over again.

When my dad came up, he yelled at me for another half hour before letting me go. I was grounded for three months and couldn't ever take my hijab off ever again. I didn't speak much the whole night.

The next day, I had to wear my hijab to school. Everybody was staring and whispering behind my back the whole day, including Crystal. I guess she didn't want to be seen with the freak at school. When I saw Britney that day, I looked away quickly.

"I knew you were hiding something," she said "Now the whole world knows the real Abby, or should I say .Aisha! You are welcome!" she smiled her evil smile. The rest of the day was filled with whispers and pointing.

The next day was the same, and so was the next, and the next, and the next. But by the time one week passed, people at school were saying hi to me again and weren't ignoring me like they were just the week before. I realized that being me wasn't as bad as I thought it was. I had friends, people talked to me, and there was no bullying. I learned changing myself into a whole new person wasn't a very good idea. I gave myself a new life, and I was never going to give it back.