

## Emma

“I hate you. You’re such an idiot!” The back door slammed loudly. Emma opened her eyes quickly and pulled up her soft comforter. Her heart was beating fast and she had a knot in her stomach. It was her older sister who had yelled and slammed the door.

“Lazy head, out of bed!” her father shouted from the bottom of the stairs. Heavy footsteps quickly moved through the house and then the front door opened and slammed shut. The car started and with a screech pulled away. Dad must be late for work. He often seemed angry now. Emma remembered happier times when he helped her with her homework and they would go to basketball games together. She wondered if it would ever be like that again.

Emma looked across the room and realized she had left her computer on all night. She squinted as the bedroom light glared into her eyes. Except for the noise of the computer, the house was quiet.

Sitting up on the edge of the bed she noticed that her hoody was all twisted around her neck. She pulled it loose and untangled her hair. Falling asleep late with all her clothes on was becoming a habit. Stepping across the room her foot caught some pants that were heaped with clothes across the floor. “When will Dad show me how to use the washing machine?” she thought to herself.

Walking past the family room, she saw that the giant-screen television was on but the sound was off. The time blinked 12:00 on the DVD player. A pizza box was on the couch with a plate and glass on it. Turning up the sound, she sat down. “So, what can you tell us about being bullied everyday?” asked the host of the talk show.

“I could be on this show,” she said to herself. The knot came back into her stomach as she thought of the girls who were two grades ahead of her and who threatened her every day.

The growling in her stomach reminded her she hadn’t eaten since those two pizza pops after school yesterday. She opened the big fridge. “No milk, no juice ...!” She found the last pizza pop in the freezer and stuck it in the microwave. The cappuccino machine had coffee left from yesterday. Picking out a mug from the dirty dishes, she poured the cold coffee into it. Removing the pizza pop from the microwave, she replaced it with the coffee and after the beep took them both down the hall to the family room to watch television.

The house seemed empty now that mom had moved back to nana and poppa’s. When was the last time she had seen her? Almost two months now. She hoped it wouldn’t be long before she could spend a weekend with her at nana and poppa’s.

“What time is it?” she wondered aloud. The clock on the stove said 8:35 a.m. “I’m late!” Quickly finishing breakfast she stuck her cell phone in her pocket and headed out the

door. The older girls would already be at school so she wouldn't have to worry about them until break time.

“My social assignment!” she remembered, and she grabbed it and ran down the stairs. Emma really liked her social teacher this term. Mrs. Cavendish was really helpful and treated her like she cared about her. “I really want to do better this term. If I can pull up my average, then next year I might be able to change schools. Maybe more of the teachers will be like Mrs. Cavendish. Maybe then things will change.”

Adapted from Roland Case, ed., *Caring for Young People's Rights* (Vancouver, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2004). Permission granted by The Critical Thinking Consortium for use by Alberta teachers.