

The Black Lace – Neve, Year 5, TAS

Loni Bramble was woken from a deep sleep by the sound of an intense, verbal fight.

The constant drip! drip! drip of water inside the ceiling was getting seriously annoying and her room was starting to smell of mould. Loni had been trying to tell her mum about it for weeks, but she had too many other things on her mind to care, so Loni would just have to put up with the horrendous smell.

Loni quietly tiptoed into the hallway outside the kitchen to listen into her mum's aggressive conversation with the landlord. Her mum was saying how infuriating it was that the rent payment had gone up. It had increased drastically in the past month, and it was starting to become difficult to pay.

Loni's house wasn't big or beautiful, in fact it was more of an apartment, but it was home. Her mum and her had moved there when she was five so Loni could attend a new school. \

Loni ran back to her room and slipped on her blue school pinafore and white polo shirt, then put on her black lace-up school shoes. Now that Loni's mum had vacated the kitchen for her study, Loni darted in and grabbed a bright red apple and quickly made a jam sandwich. Then she hurried out the front door into the cold, dark laneway.

It was wet and rainy so peddling to school on a bike was not going to be particularly fun for Loni today, but she hated her mum dropping her off because she always found a way to be embarrassing. So, rain or not, Loni definitely preferred to get herself to school.

Arriving at the school gates of Milford Academy - School for Advanced Pupils, Loni jumped off her bike and ran to the safety of the school library. Loni didn't want to see Ester Bond, her arch enemy, until first period when she had to for class. Loni was shy and timid (even though her name meant lion!). She wondered whether she might be brave enough one day to stand up for herself.

"No time for day-dreaming Miss Loni," said buoyant Mrs Scarlett, Loni's favourite teacher at Milford. "You have a class to get to."

Loni went down the corridor joining a group of marching girls, trying to go unnoticed on her way to the English classroom. Mrs Scarlett took English - so Loni was excited.

Loni took a seat at the front of the classroom. Then Ester Bond came majestically striding in like she was the queen and sat right next to Loni! The whole reason Loni was at Milford was because of her talent for writing. Writing was something that flowed inside Loni's head. When she wrote, whole worlds would come to life in her vivid imagination.

Ester Bond was also a good student, but she had parents who could pay her school fees. Loni was a scholarship student and Ester never let her forget it. Loni wondered to herself why in the world Ester had sat next to her?

That day, Mrs Scarlett got them to write a narrative based on something that happened in their past life. Loni's story was about a girl named Emily, and the passing of her father. Emily was five and she and her best friend Lina would go bowling and to the movies with

Emily's dad. They would always laugh at the funny shoes Emily's dad wore. Together, they were three best friends - until Emily's dad passed away. After that Lina stopped coming to play with Emily, and Emily had no friends and was all alone, shy and scared.

The recess bell rang, and all the kids rushed out of the classroom. Loni wasn't in a rush. She had no intention of joining a swarm of hangry kids.

Mrs Scarlett approached Loni, "Loni did your dad pass away?"

"Unfortunately, yes, when I was five," replied Loni sadly.

Loni didn't want to talk about her dad, not even to Mrs Scarlett. That was something just between Loni and her mum. So, Loni ducked out to the big, beautiful, green trees in the playing field and took a seat away from everyone else.

Loni was just biting into her apple when she saw a piece of black shoelace hovering over her nose. She raised her head to see Ester standing in front of her.

"Go away Ester!" shouted Loni angrily.

"I would, but I believe this belongs to you." The black lace was twirled around Ester's fingers.

"Give it!" yelled Loni, with a teensy bit of confidence rising in her voice.

The black lace was significant to Loni because it was her dad's old shoelace. He put it in his yellow sneakers making the yellow and black laces mismatch. Loni's dad always made her laugh when he did that, and Loni didn't want to let that memory go. She wondered how Ester even had the lace – it was usually tucked inside her pencil case and she had definitely seen it at the start of English today.

"Loni, you want something I have, and I want something you have, so I'll make you a deal."

"What do you want?" asked Loni angrily.

"I would like a copy of your English homework for next week," whispered Ester slightly embarrassed.

Loni was unsure why that was what Ester wanted, but in a way, it was a relief as it was something Loni could provide.

"We will exchange here tomorrow at lunch time," said Ester. With that Ester walked off.

After school Loni walked through the office to the front exit. She could see Ester Bond sitting with her highly unimpressed mum and the principal.

"Ester you are a disgrace to Milford Academy!" exclaimed the angry principal. "If you don't get your grades up you will be expelled!"

Loni hid behind an archway as Ester and her mum left the office.

“Ester Lina Bond, you are an embarrassment to the Bond family!” Then Ester’s mum slapped Ester and said, “even your old friend Loni has more wit!”

Loni suddenly had an overwhelming feeling of sadness for Ester, and the young friend she once knew as Lina. That night when Loni went home, she had a lot to think about.

Lunch time of the next day came, and Loni trudged towards the trees feeling incredulous about what she was about to do. Taking her place at the bottom of the tree she waited for Ester to arrive.

“Homework please!” demanded Ester impatiently.

Loni gently passed Ester the homework.

“Here’s your father’s old shoelace,” said Ester rudely.

“Ester, can we talk?” asked Loni kindly.

“Fine, whatever,” said Ester.

She was getting on Loni’s nerves, but Loni kept going.

“Look, I know about your grades, and I’m willing to help.”

“Loni how could you help, I’m done for, I’m going to be expelled--” Ester started yelling at Loni.

“I’ll tutor you in English,” cut in Loni.

“Why would you do that?” asked Ester, “it’s not like we’re friends.”

“Since I want to help, do you want my help or not?” exclaimed Loni frustrated.

“Yes,” whispered Ester, without looking at Loni.

“Right, we start tomorrow at lunch in the library,” said Loni, relieved it was over and done with.

The next day Loni sat in the library and waited for Ester to show up. She felt nervous about hanging out with Ester again.

“I’m here,” came a slightly irritated voice, and Loni turned to see Ester walking through the library doors.

“Ok then, shall we start with narrative structures?” said Loni calmly.

Loni and Ester worked all of lunchtime and finally Ester started noticing some improvements in her writing.

The day after, Loni and Ester stayed after school and worked on building characters. Over the next few weeks Ester and Loni worked hard, and they even started to laugh together. They made English flashcards with characters they made up, some of which made them giggle. One was based on the crabby librarian, who they named Mrs Malory Crabious (and who made them leave the library one day when they giggled too much).

As end of term arrived, they thought Ester was ready to ace her narrative test. If she didn't, she would be expelled from the school for good.

The day of the English exam arrived. Ester sat down anxiously with Loni by her side. It was finally time to see if Ester's hard work was enough.

"You have forty minutes to write a story of great calibre. The test begins now!" exclaimed Mrs Scarlett.

Loni and Ester both wrote determinedly. When the time was up, they handed in their papers.

The next morning Ester and Loni sat nervously waiting for their results. "Great job on your tests yesterday everyone," said Mrs Scarlett, as she handed out the papers.

When Loni and Ester got their marks, they had two perfect A's. Loni was overjoyed.

"Ester, you get to stay at the school!" The two best friends hugged, united once more.