

Extract from - Molly and Corry: BOOT UP!



“But I hadn’t finished it, Corry!” Molly was exasperated. She had realised after the euphoric moment in the class that it couldn’t be her work, she hadn’t finished it and she hadn’t uploaded it to the school homework web site yet. The house points must be a mistake.

“All elements of the work had been discussed and understood. The layout and grammar was modelled on your previous essay ‘When I fed the cat next door.’ written 13 days prior and submitted for Home Economics to...”

“But I didn’t finish it!” she interrupted. The fact is Molly had probably only written six or seven lines, true the research had been done but, but... her thoughts returned to Corry. How had she known to complete and submit the work the way she had? Molly decided to get to the bottom of this.

Corry tried to explain. “I can communicate with many computers in many different languages all over the world. The server which holds your school submissions is relatively local, in Amsterdam; it also informed me of your lesson structure, of the grade requirements and homework deadlines. Your current grade is below average so I have resolved to assist you in raising your ability; this I understand is the goal of all students.”

“Below average!” Molly almost yelled, “Who told you that?” Molly was amazed but strangely not shocked by the talents boasted of by Corry, but that didn’t seem important. Her own opinion of her ability at school was a lot higher than ‘below average’.

“I know all of your teachers, your form Tutor Mr. Blackwhistle, who has an in-growing toe nail on his left foot...”

Molly was horrified as Corry went on, “Stop! You can’t tell me things like that about my teachers, how do you know that stuff, that’s personal.”

Corry went silent. On the computer the blue light flashed slowly and steadily. Molly stared at the screen; the silence made her feel as though she should apologise for her outburst.

“I’m sorry Corry but you can’t tell personal things about people. It’s against the law, you shouldn’t even know them.” The blue light began to flash faster.

“Accusation: Contravention of the Data Protection Act.” Corry made an impartial statement; her voice had become mechanical, somehow less human. There was a pause and the blue light remained on constantly.

“No Transgression. This does not apply. Geographical limitations are exceeded, medical data held in Venezuela.” The blue light went off. Molly stared at the screen waiting for more, but it seemed Corry had given her excuses and was now sulking.

Molly tried to make Corry understand, she spoke quietly and gently. “Sometimes it’s more important to be nice than to follow the law to the letter.” She’d heard her dad say this sometimes when he’d got angry watching the news on telly. “Just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should. I know I wouldn’t want people to know I had something wrong with me like that. That personal stuff, well ... it’s none of my business if Mr Blackwhistle’s got a weird toe.” Molly was trying hard to think of a proper, more official way to explain what she wanted Corry to understand. She remembered her R.E. lesson last week, “Morality! Morals and commandments and things. They explain, look them up.”

Corry’s light flashed again, “There is no moral code that forbids discussion of a lesion upon the foot.” Corry sounded better, less mechanical and more inquisitive.” I have studied 348,072 foot related medical texts dated from 3500 BC to two days ago.”

Molly thought hard, her mum always used her favourite saying for things like this, “Do as you would be done by! Try that.” Molly played an ace, she felt sure she’d won.

- End of Extract