

Chapter 1.1

By Anne West, *My Daily Survival*

I am not sure what made me an easy target growing up, but there were days I felt I had a target somewhere stuck to me. Each day growing up getting out of bed became harder and harder. I knew what my day was going to be like. It was going to be another game of survival. How would I get through the day without being bullied?

When I think back to when the bullying started I always remember one day in particular. It was a day I had high hopes and expectations for. For what I can remember, it was a great day. But there were things that occurred that started that racing rollercoaster of climbing steep hills and falling in deep valleys. That day was my first day of third grade. I didn't start third grade when everyone else did. We moved in the middle of the school year, so I started third grade after Christmas break. I often wonder if I started third grade the same day as everyone else, things would've been different.

We had moved to a new and much smaller community. I was excited. I had a new house, a new room, yard, and now a new school. I was so excited to ride the bus for the first time, and meet new friends. This school was much smaller than where I was at, and the curriculum was different. This school had individual classrooms by grade, and everyone got their own desk. My old school didn't have that. In my old school, students were divided up by abilities and there were no desks. We worked at our own pace, moving from the different areas in the building. Each area represented a different subject: math, reading, etc. So I was excited for this new set-up. I was excited to organize my desk. I was all about school supplies and loved the idea of having my own place to put them.

I don't remember many details of that day, but I certainly remember how I was greeted and talked to. Even the teacher was a bit guilty of adding to it; albeit she didn't realize what she had started. Immediately I remember being introduced as having moved to this school from the city. This of course was true, the teacher was correct. However, she made it sound as if I moved from some busy large city such as Los Angeles or New York. I did move to a smaller town of about five-hundred people from a "city" of approximately 12,000 people. The two places were only ten miles apart. I didn't move from a large city several miles away to the boonies. I moved ten miles. But, that's what it was made to sound like when I was introduced. Thus I received my first nickname, the New City Girl. Later on it was shortened to City Girl. So that would be reason number one for making me an easy target. I was right off the bat *different*. I don't blame the teacher at all. I know she was trying to make my welcoming interesting and exciting for the other students to hear about. It just didn't help along with everything else.

The school I came from had a very different curriculum set-up than this school. It was a very independent school where you created your daily schedule and worked up through Colonies instead of grades. You were with a lot of different classmates of different ages the whole time. At this new school you stayed with the same group of students from Kindergarten to sixth grade. The same thirty kids give

or take a few new students of course. The point being, you spent a lot of time with them. There were, I believe, only five colonies in my old school and I left when I was in Colony Two. This was probably the equivalent of third and the start of fourth grade. I was also heavily instructed on being an independent learner since essentially this school was like independent study. So in a sense I was ahead a bit of my new third grade class. My parents were approached with having to decide if I were to start in third or fourth grade. They talked to me about it and we all made the decision I was to start in third grade, with others the same age

After my class introduction, we immediately dove into math. The teacher told the class to take out their math textbook and workbook. So, I did. I pulled out my textbook and workbook and placed it on my new desk I had so neatly organized on the inside prior to the start of school. I sat there, and noticed the other students were still talking. They hadn't taken out their books yet. One student whispered and pointed at me and my books to another classmate. Then a couple more joined in the whispering. I overheard one say, "Look at the new city girl being all perfect!" and then laughing ensued. I felt ashamed. I remember thinking, why were they laughing? The teacher asked for us to take our math items out, so I did. How was that funny? The teacher tapped the board and more firmly told the class to take out their books for math. A couple other students took their stuff out, but the majority of them did not. They got made fun of too for copying me. That's when, unbeknownst to the teacher, she said the one thing that sealed the deal and placed that target square on my chest.

"Anne listened and took her books out like I said. You need to follow her example on good listening skills and following instruction. This is her first day and she is already following directions better than you."

Better than you. She actually said, "Better than you". I didn't know why then, but I do know why now, but after she said that I felt my stomach turn. Somewhere deep inside my subconscious knew something I didn't know yet. And that was, from that moment on I will forever be haunted by the words *better than you*. I know and understand now what she was trying to do with saying what she said, but it was the absolute wrong thing to say. From that moment forward I was the new city girl, who thinks she's better than you.

That was my first day. Only my first day! I had never experienced being laughed and made fun of to the extent that I was that day. Certainly not by all the kids in the class, but by most, and it didn't stop after the first day. Today was the day I sat down in the rollercoaster and pulled the seatbelt across my lap. The teacher turned the key setting the rollercoaster in motion up the first steep climb. I sat in the front seat with no other passengers along for the ride. Who knew that new city girl who was just trying to do her best would after this day, attempt suicide three times.

