

A letter by 'Chloe' on a bullying episode in primary school
(drawn from lived experience)

Dear Daddy and Mommy,

Thank you for celebrating my 21st birthday. I am so happy and grateful to have you two as my parents. There was never a dull moment with you. You two don't just tell the lamest jokes (though I have to admit they do tickle my funny bone) but you two are also sometimes the jokes themselves.

I'm an adult now. I can hardly imagine. It's like I grew up overnight. But you know what? Deep inside I'm still your little girl. You used to tell me stories of how it was like when I was a baby; how you cradled and lull me to sleep night after night, how I refused milk and preferred cereal, how I would pull myself up and walk when I was just 7-month-old. Oh yea and how grandpa put me on a tree so I could cling on the trunk like a monkey! Haha!

Then one day you told me I had to go to big girls school. You said school would be fun. There would be many girls my age, wearing uniforms like the one daddy and you got for me. You two seem so excited. Although I didn't understand your excitement and enthusiasm, I believed you. After all you have always been my fun-loving parents and you've never been wrong. I also see mommy having so many BFFs from her school days. Before long, my school bag was packed. (Thanks for the pink Barbie school bag. I loved it!). I couldn't sleep the night before. I kept thinking about my new friends. I hoped they were like Elaine and Shaun. I know it's strange to think that but they were the only friends I had back then 😊

A-Mah got up early on my first day of school. She cooked my favourite porridge for lunch and daddy sent me to school. I was a little apprehensive and yet a little excited. I recognised my school when daddy parked the car. Daddy and A-Mah walked with me into the school hall. I HAD NEVER SEEN THAT MANY LITTLE GIRLS TOGETHER IN A HALL EVER! Most of us had the same hairstyle. I also noticed quite a number of them lost a few milk teeth, just like me. That would be cool as we won't be teasing one another about that. Haha! I felt at home even though it was just my first day at school. I looked around to see if

there were some friendly faces, anyone who might look my way and smile at me. Then I saw Jade. She wore glasses and had a ponytail. She smiled and waved at me. I waved back. Before long Jade and I became good friends.

Fast forward and months passed. School was ok. I could not explain but I was always happier when daddy pick me up after school. Whenever he asked HOW WAS SCHOOL? I would say GOOD. It wasn't the homework. They were manageable. I loved the canteen food. Jade was nice except we were not in the same class. It wasn't even that girl who would push me from time to time ... Yep, you heard right. There was this girl who would ask me to look away and then pushed me from the back. I didn't tell you about it. I thought it was normal. I thought that was how school was. Maybe girls that age would do such things. After some weeks I noticed she doesn't push anyone else – just me. Did I tell any teacher about this? No, I was afraid of the teachers. I didn't want to be close to them, didn't know how to tell them. I tried to but the words got stuck in my throat. I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to tell the teachers either. I just didn't Day after day I avoided her and it wasn't too difficult as we were not in the same class. Just as I thought that was the end of my trouble, another brewed.

There was this class monitor. At first, she was friendly and talked to me often. As time passed, she got to know a few other girls better. For some reason, those girls didn't like me and they instigated the class monitor to be nasty to me. Our form teacher trusted those girls and put them in charge of class discipline whenever she stepped out of the classroom. They were told to write the names of the whoever talked too much or too loudly and guess what ... my name was ALWAYS on the board. When this first started, I was shocked. The teacher didn't believe me although I protested. I was punished. Was made to stand at the back of the classroom for a whole period of class. Before long, it became a weekly affair. I wished I would want to punch those girls in the face but I didn't. You didn't teach me to be violent or vengeful. You taught me to love and to be kind. I wished my teacher would be more observant and know that I wasn't a naughty girl. She couldn't bother. She was always so busy. She hardly ever looked at me much less looked into my eyes. If she did, she would have known

how those girls lied about me. That was my life as a P1 pupil. I never told you but that was why I quickly agreed when you asked if I would like to be transferred to Asher's P1 school. To you it was to make sending and picking more convenient but to me, it was an escape route from hell!

Please don't feel bad. I am fine. You didn't know because I didn't tell you. I made many good friends in Asher's school. Although that didn't undo the pain I went through, I have since had many good memories of school. Years after that unpleasant episode, I learnt the name of what I went through – BULLY. It's still a tear-jerking memory but that's all. I am a healthy and strong young woman today, thanks to the two of you for always giving me a listening ear and believing in me. I will finish Uni in a year and a job is waiting for me so, don't worry yea.

Love you!

Love.

Chloe.