**Rumors Running Wild**

By Kelly Hashway

 Michelle watched everyone crowd around Paige to admire her new leather jacket. Michelle had been Paige’s best friend since kindergarten, but now everyone wanted to be Paige’s friend. Paige’s dad had gotten a promotion and bought her expensive gifts. Everyone always wanted to see what the latest gift was.

 Michelle walked past the crowd and slumped into her chair.

 “Everything okay, Michelle?” Mrs. Tisley asked.

 Michelle nodded, but as soon as Mrs. Tisley walked away Michelle mumbled, “Just Paige with all her expensive presents thinking she’s better than the rest of us.”

 “She said she’s better than us?” Allison asked.

 Michelle turned to face Allison. “Um, well-“

 “Just because her family has money now doesn’t make her better than us!” Allison got up and stormed across the room. Michelle was afraid she was going to say something to Paige, but it was worse. Allison went straight to Lexi, the class gossip. Michelle’s stomach lurched.

 By lunchtime, kids were calling Paige a snob. Michelle walked into the cafeteria and saw Paige sitting by herself. Michelle’s heart raced as she walked over to her.

 “Can I sit with you?”

 “I’m surprised you want to. No one else does.” Tears streamed down Paige’s face.

 Michelle had to do something. It was her fault Paige was upset. She took a deep breath and turned to face the rest of the cafeteria.

 “Listen up!” Michelle yelled. The room quieted. “Paige never said she was better than anyone. I mumbled something mean about her because I was upset. I didn’t mean for anyone to hear it.”

 Michelle turned to Paige. “I’m sorry. I was jealous because you were spending time with everyone else. I felt like you forgot about me.”

 Paige nodded. “I’m sorry if I was ignoring you. It’s just that everyone was paying attention to me. I liked being the popular one for once. But I shouldn’t have let it come between us. You’ve always been my best friend.”

 “And I always will be.” Michelle sat down again. “That is if you’ll forgive me for spreading that rumor.”

 Paige hugged Michelle. “Only if you’ll forgive me for ignoring you.”

 Michelle smiled. “It’s a deal.”