

Fitting In

By Luci L.

Sofia sighed and peered out the car window. Her father was offered a new job in a richer, and fancier part of town which meant Sofia would have to leave *Las Gradass*, change schools, make new friends, and try to fit in. That would be the hardest part. Sofia fit in just fine in her neighborhood. There was so much diversity, and everybody had their own story. In Sofia's eyes, everybody here was the same. They all went to the same school, they all had big families, and most of them even went to the same church. Sofia had not the slightest idea how she was going to fit in here in Waybrook. "*Mija*, we're here." Sofia's mother said in her soft, soothing voice. Sofia looked out her window. A humongous building consumed the late afternoon sky. Above the entrance, a sign read: *Waybrook Elementary School*. "*Mami*, is this my new school?" Her mother sighed. "We're just looking at it, Sofi. There's no guarantee yet." Sofia slumped back in her seat. Sofia's mother looked back at her through the mirror, and said "Sofi, *mi amor*, this was no one's first choice. I loved our life back in *Las Gradass*, but sometimes change is a good thing." Sofia rolled her eyes. "It was *Dad's* first choice." She grumbled. Sofia's father was a tech genius and worked for a new startup company. He would never turn down such an opportunity. "*Ay, no*. Don't bring your father into this. He is doing this so that you can have a better life." *I don't want another life. The life I had before was just fine.* Sofia thought to herself. Once they parked, her mother paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and said "Listen Sofi, I know this is hard. It's hard on me too. I loved our life in *Las Gradass*..." She paused "...But we have to do this. We have to be there for him. Sofia sensed how hard her mother was trying, so she decided to meet her halfway. "Okay Mami." Sofia got out of the car. Hand in hand, they walked up to the school. As they approached the door, a tall woman in a gray pantsuit opened the door, a picture perfect smile from ear to ear. There was no doubt she was very pretty. She had perfectly wavy brown hair with golden highlights. She had clear skin, and lovely blue eyes. Still holding the door, she stuck out her hand. "Hi, are you Mrs. Cisneros?" Sofia's mother stared wide eyed at the woman and almost forgot to answer. "Hello, yes, that's me, sorry." She shook her hand. "Hi, I'm Mrs. Blakely, the principal of Waybrook Elementary." She bent down to Sofia's level. "You must be Sofia. Am I right?" Sofia didn't answer. Her mother squeezed her hand. "Yes, I'm Sofia." She replied in a whisper. "Well, Sofia, I am so glad you are here." The three of them made their way inside Mrs. Blakely's office. Inside sat three children around Sofia's age. In the first chair sat a tall-ish boy with a completely freckled face. He had unruly ginger hair which almost completely covered his eyes. In the second chair sat a girl who had long blonde hair. She also had sparkling blue eyes. In the last chair sat another girl who looked almost identical to Mrs. Blakely. Except she had brown eyes instead of blue. She must've been related "Sofia, this is Kaden, Mia, and Mackenzie. They all go here. They're going to show you around while I talk to your mother. Okay?" Sofia nodded. *Wait, I'm going to have to do this alone?* She thought. Sofia looked at her mother, then quickly looked away. She wasn't a baby. "Children, we won't be long. Why don't you each show her your favorite place on campus?" The children nodded, got up out of their chairs, and walked out of the room. Sofia followed them. "So, where are you from?" Kaden asked, blowing hair out of his face. "*Las Gradass*" Sofia responded. The blonde girl looked at her, puzzled. "Is that, like, somewhere in Mexico?" The brunette shot a look at her.

“Mia! You can’t ask that!” She elbowed her. “Your mom said we should ask questions. I asked one!” Mackenzie rolled her eyes. “Not those kinds of questions!” They bickered for a little while. “Well she’s Mexican I think. Are you Mexican?” Mia asked. They all looked at her. “Um, half.” She replied. “Half what?” Kaden asked. “My mom is Mexican, and my dad is Vietnamese. So, I’m half of both.” Sofia had never had to explain this to anyone before. All of her friends back in *Las Gradass* already knew this about her. They walked in silence as Kaden led them to the school gymnasium. “Here we are. My favorite place in the house!” He ran to a cart full of basketballs, reached in, and pulled one out. He went for a shot. They all watched as it rebounded off the backboard, and into Sofia’s arms. “Pass?” Kaden outstretched his arms, ready to receive. Sofia paused for a moment, and then went for the shot. She dribbled up the court and made a clean layup. The ball fell onto the floor. The three kids looked at her wide eyed. Sofia blushed. “I love playing basketball. I played with my friends in *Las Gradass* all the time!” Silence. “Aight, let’s see what you got, kid!” Kaden picked up the ball and started taking shots. Sofia smiled. “Hey wait up, we wanna play too!” Mia said, rushing over. Mackenzie gave Mia a funny look. “We do?” She asked. “Sure, why not?” Mackenzie shrugged, and hustled over to join them. The four children spent the rest of the time playing basketball. They all smiled, and laughed together. Over all of the excitement, there was one thought on Sofia’s mind: Maybe fitting in wouldn’t be so hard after all.