

THE ROBOT GIRL

July, 15th 2020 in San Francisco.

- Hello ! Would you like to take part to an interview ? It's about bullying.
- Yes, I would.
- Ok, so, when did you last gossip ?
- I never really gossiped, but once, I was the witness of rumours. It was in year 8, in 2012, rumours were about a special girl.
- Why was she so special ?
- She was different because she didn't have any right hand so she had a bionic hand, her surname was strange, she walked oddly, and she was new in the middle school.
- How did the rumour start and spread ?
- When our class teacher, Mr Ladripénard, took the register for the 1st time, and that we heard Lea's family name, everybody laughed, even the teacher ! It's true, having the surname «Metallica» when you have a bionic hand, is not common. Gabriel (my best friend) and I were the only ones who didn't laugh. Unfortunately, a lot of people weren't like us so a few pupils started to talk about Lea, about her handicap, the way she walked and also about her intelligence. Lea was very clever, brighter than everybody in our class. But the rumour really started during a class activity. It happened on a Friday morning: Lea was absent because she had a medical appointment. So everybody was in the classroom, except her. We thought that the teacher was going to talk about the school, but he didn't. He said that Lea was strange, so were her bionic hand, her intelligence, her walk. According to him, obviously she was a robot. Everybody started to give his / her opinion about Lea (except Gabriel and I). Fortunately, they changed the subject quickly.
- What did you do, Gabriel and you ?
- Gabi and I were so shocked that the teacher could talk about a pupil like that, so we decided to talk about this event to the Head of the school. She didn't believe us, she said that we had invented the story to harm Mr Ladripénard. So we gave up the fact that we could talk to adults when we have problems.
- Ultimately, how was your relationship with Lea ?
- After this discussion with the Head of the school, we decided to talk to Lea, we didn't want her to be alone anymore. When we talked for the 1st time to her, we discovered that we had a lot in common. So we quickly became friends.
- Did the bullying stop when your friendship started ?
- No it didn't because after the class activity, a group created a page on facebook, and it talked about Lea. A lot of people were in it. Unfortunately, a lot of people still believed that our friend was a « robot girl. »
- Was the bullying just rumours or was it more ?

- Oh, it was more. She suffered insults and teasing. I remember that once, we were walking along the lockers when we saw a picture representing a robot on her locker. She cried and then she told me that she felt very lonely, even if we were friends Gabriel, her and I.

- How did the rumour finish ?

- One day, when we got in line, I didn't see Lea, and it was weird because she didn't have any medical appointment that day. When I saw the head of the school in the classroom, I immediately understood. She told us everything : Lea's mother found her child dead in their bathroom in the morning.

The kindest, the smartest, the funniest person in this world committed suicide ! I cried... and I cried at least for two hours. It wasn't possible.

She was too young to die. I could have kicked myself, if I had done something for her, maybe she would have still been here with us !

Nowadays, I don't see Gabriel anymore, we were too affected by her death.

It's for that reason, after the death of my friend, that I created an association against bullying, to help victims. I have been thinking about Lea every day since she left us.

- Your story is so sad !

