Name: Date:

New school, new beginning Graham Gardner

In Graham Gardner's novel Inventing Elliot, *the protagonist Elliot is starting a new school. He was a victim in his last one, bullied by other boys.*

Elliot Sutton swallowed the sick, sour fear that threatened to engulf him. It was New Year's Day. Less than a week before he started at his new school.

Think positive, he kept telling himself. It was supposed to be a new beginning here. His new school had been told nothing about what happened before. He was coming to it with a clean record, a blank identity. It would be a fresh start – as it was supposed to be for all of them. [...]

Think positive. Elliot looked around his bedroom at the full cardboard boxes, bulging carrier bags and the battered, open suitcase spilling clothes on the floor. It had been two weeks since they'd moved to the new house, and he hadn't yet been able to bring himself to unpack properly. He just pulled out the clothes he needed each day and pretended to himself he'd do it 'tomorrow'.

The truth was, he dreaded unpacking. Everything in the boxes, in the carrier bags, in the suitcase, was a reminder of where he had come from – and it was a place he didn't want to go back to, even in his mind.

As he stood there, he realised that he had made a decision without really being conscious of doing so. He wasn't going to unpack. Most of what was in the boxes and the bags belonged in the past, not the present. It should stay there. He would get out only what he absolutely needed; the rest could stay out of sight. Maybe he'd even get rid of it – that way there would be no temptation to go back to it.

He felt a surge of energy, and set to work before it faded. He emptied the suitcase on to the bed. Three pairs of jeans – they were pretty ancient, but that didn't matter. They could stay. Likewise his sweatshirts and T-shirts: One of the few compensations about staying much the same height since he was twelve was that he didn't yet need any new clothes. [...]

The problem was school uniform. He needed trousers, a blazer, shirts, tie, games kit ... It was going to cost a fortune. There was no way his mum could afford to buy brand new. They would have to go to the second-hand shop.

Which meant he would get noticed straight away. [...]

He had a chance. The chance not only to leave the old Elliot behind, but to invent a new Elliot. An Elliot built from scratch.

'No one knows me,' he whispered aloud.

It didn't have to be like before.

I won't let it be like before.

From: Inventing Elliot, *London, 2003*

Annotations

6 **bulging** overfull, stretched

10 **dread sth.** [dred] fear sth. that is going to or might happen

18 **surge** (n) sudden increase

19 **ancient** ['eɪnʃənt] very old

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