

Being Real

by Sherwood Smith

So that Monday Lys lay on her bed, supposedly doing her homework. She was actually watching fanvids on her laptop when she was interrupted by all this car and people noise outside the window.

It was not, for once, another loud, crashing fight among the people Lys's family called the Freakenstoner Monsters, who lived across the street. She spotted the RealTV logo on the sides of two big vans and almost put her head through the glass to see if they were just there for one of the neighbors, or . . . ?

A guy with big, white, straight teeth bustled to the front door below her, a bright green envelope in his hand, as a young woman in jeans and an old sweater shot him with a hand cam.

Oh. No. Oh *yeah!*

Lys *knew* what that envelope was. It was *the* Green Envelope, the one that meant your family had been picked for the *Home Show*, the biggest reality show on RealTV.

Lys reacted like a typical sixteen-year-old: first she squeed. Then she reached for her cell.

"Alyssa! Could you please come downstairs?" Mom called out in the sugary voice that meant there was company.

Hello! Were they, like, filming *right now*? You were supposed to be Totally Natural, but there was no way she was going to appear before millions in last year's gym shorts, a ratty t-shirt, her hair like an old witch, and oh yeah, her side of the room? Totally Natural did not include everyone in the Free World seeing underwear and stuff all over the floor.

"I'm in the bathroom!" she yelped, grabbing armfuls of laundry.

A few minutes of really hard work didn't quite reduce her mess to the neatness of her older sister Julia's side of the room, but at least it had been tamed to a Totally Natural that people, could, you know, *see*.

A fast shower, hair and face fix, her best jeans, a cute-but-casual top--dirty clothes in the hamper--and she opened her door. Heard unfamiliar voices, tinkly social laughter.

So she walked downstairs in her most casual walk--were the cameras swinging to get her?--no. Nobody paid any attention. Her parents sat side by side on the couch, facing Mr. Piano Teeth, who was talking. Behind him, the female from outside held a camera slack in one hand. Her eyes had that stare-into-space look of boredom.

Lys's fourteen-year-old brother skulked on one of the kitchen bar stools, drumming with his fingers on the stool next to him. When she sat down on it, he made a face and shifted his drumming to his knees.

". . . so do you have any questions?"

Dad looked around his own house as though secret cameras had sprouted in the corners. "You're really not filming?"

Piano Teeth's tone made it clear he'd already answered this question at least once. "No. As I

