

# Accepting **Change**

By 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
ELA Students  
at Frederick  
Douglass  
Academy III





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By 9th Grade ELA Students  
at Frederick Douglass Academy III

Behind the Book • New York

Behind the Book's mission is to develop engaged readers and writers in underserved NYC public schools by designing and delivering programs that are multi-disciplinary, culturally responsive, and promote deeper connections to books and their authors.

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**In the interest of honoring student voice, Behind the Book presents students' work as received from the teacher.**

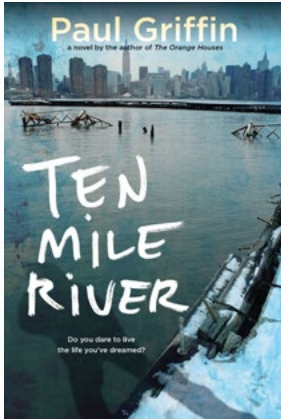
**This book was made possible by a generous grant from The Korein Foundation.**

## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to the incoming freshmen, and to all children and teenagers who are going through something similar. Thank you to our families, friends, and community for their support. We'd especially like to thank Ms. Jacques, Mr. Faust, and Ms. Paul for helping us improve our writing skills and allowing us to share our stories and feelings. Also, thank you to Behind the Book and the amazing Paul Griffin for helping us on this journey.

**We wouldn't be where we are today without you.**

# About the Program



What does it mean to “come of age,” those moments in life that are a turning point?

The 9th grade ELA students reflected upon this idea while reading *Ten Mile River* by Paul Griffin. The novel is a story of two best friends, Jose and Ray, who've escaped from foster care to live on their own, but struggle to find their own identities as they envision a future for themselves.

Prior to the author visits, BtB drama consultant, Karen Butler, led the students in activities to help them come to an understanding of what the characters in the book were thinking and feeling when they made key decisions.

Author Paul Griffin led two workshops with the students. During the first meeting students asked many questions about the characters in the book and why he had them make certain choices. What was his inspiration?

After reading a scene in *Ten Mile River* that illustrates a “coming of age moment,” Paul discussed with the students what makes a coming of age moment different from an experience that just happens. He then gave them their writing prompt, Think about something that happened to you that made you realize you had changed (come of age). Write about what happened, what about the event changed you?

Between the first and second workshops students began the drafts of their stories. They shared their ideas and outlines with Paul at his second workshop. He provided feedback and discussed the importance of dialogue and descriptive language in stories. With the help of Behind the Book volunteers students refined their narratives, focusing on story arc and critical details.

Next, Behind the Book teaching artist Candice Humphries led the classes in creating tunnel books, which are made from pages held together by folded strips and give the illusion of depth and perspective. The layers and the elements of art helped the students to reflect on and communicate their written narratives.

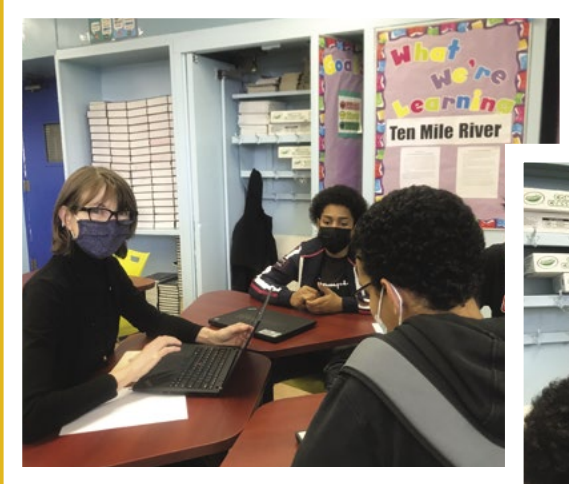
We hope reading the students' stories inspires you to pause and reflect upon a turning point in your life.

# Period 2

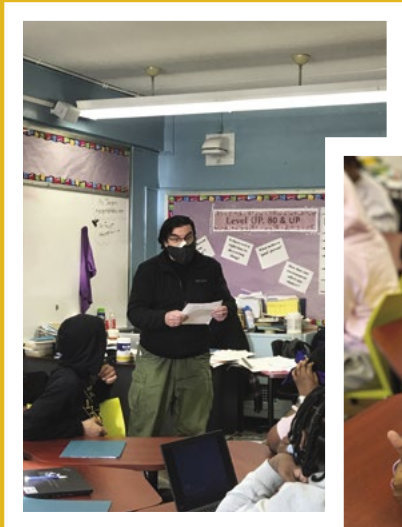




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# Period 2



# Reina





# REINA

## Faith Away

I wasn't always so happy, Covid-19 really took my life as well schools were closing stores were closing everything was going downhill.

Some things really stressed me out. It felt like nobody supported me and I had nobody in life. I believe that losing faith drains you very much, especially when you are alone.

In 2020 I had so many friends and I lost each and every one of them. That year made me realize everyone's true colors and who was really my friend from the beginning and I lost all of them.

There was this one girl I called my best friend. Her family loved my family. My family treated her like part of our family. So much love in are relationship that you would never think things would go the way they did.

One day me and her and one of my other friends went ice skating. We were having a good time and we were laughing because we didn't know how to ice skate BOOM I fell hard. It hurt a lot . After going ice skating my so- called best friend started moving very funny on me. I wondered why but never put my mind into it i didnt think I needed to worry about it.

So therefore I asked my other friend that had gone with us that day if she knew anything that's when I came to find out She was saying "I do too much, I was this, I was that"

Feeling stupidly i just thought "what did i ever do." Seeing I had no one left I felt unhappy with everything. All night thinking about these things made me lose confidence in myself because no matter what I did they wouldn't like me.

When 2021 began, I wasn't fully good but I was getting there but still struggling because school work became harder for me since I was barely in class . I kept working hard to fix this because I saw I still wasn't at the best I could be. When i was doing remote all my grades dropped i was failing all my classes besides one class which was spanish i never saw myself doing so bad. My grades from ELA went from 90% to 55% even my teachers were like what happened because i used to do good, keeping track

of my work was to much for me it was overwhelming seeing so much work being posted in one day doing it on my own

When I came back to school I started finding things I was interested in to keep me busy and moving because I felt I needed to come back from my little depression stage. It was affecting my life in the real world. I started putting my head to my school work and grades and basketball. Basketball really keeps me distracted. It's my favorite period of the day and favorite sport. I kept my mind into it to keep my head of what's happening around the world at the moment. This year made me realize succeeding is what's more important. My grades began to increase. My classwork began to make sense to me again, also socializing with other new people, getting to know them and hanging out with them. I met new people at the moment I felt nervous because I didn't know them until I realized I actually knew one of them. "I think I know her" she went to my old school and the waves were comin at me like the past she recognized me. I got one friend I can play basketball with who matches my energy,another one I can act like we've been that purr but anyways they are very cool to hang out with.

Now beginning a new year 2022 finally feeling like myself again and I also got closer with my family. Having more people around me helped me recover from the damage that this virus did in my life. I haven't felt like myself in a very long time so now seeing myself again made me feel contented .Covid really took my life from me but showed me important lessons I probably was blind to see. ▼

# ZOE

## My vacation

When I went on vacation to the Dominican Republic for the second time, it was the most fun time that I ever had. I was able to share this vacation with two of my best friends who are also my cousins. One of them is the same age as me, she is 14 years old, she is much taller than me and the other is smaller than me. My other cousin is 11 years old and the same size as me. It was also fun because many members of my family were going to be a part of this vacation and I would also get to spend time with my loving dad.

My parents chose a beautiful resort for us all to go to and my dad rented two big cars to fit the whole family. When I got there I saw they had a water park and a huge swimming pool for everyone and another for little babies. My cousins and I could not believe how amazing this place was, we didn't want to wait to put away our luggage. We wanted to go to the water park and have fun. My mother said we had to put the luggage away and change into our bathing suits. We ran into the elevator, jumping and giggling. We ran upstairs and quickly threw our things in the hotel room. We dug through our luggage looking for our bathing suits and quickly put them on. I turned to my two cousins and yelled, "The last one there is a rotten egg!" "the two screamed back," "You are going to be the last one!" "No, No, NO!" I yelled back, running to the elevator "the first one is a tortuga." I laughed.

All three of us arrived at the same time, laughing and jumping around. I looked at them and said "who is going first" with a gleam in my eye. I knew I was going to push them in any way. the two girls pointed at me" you first Zoe" they said together.

"Ok" I said" wow look over there is that an eagle?" my two victims turned around and I had my opportunity. I pushed both of them in the water at the same time. The two girls wanted to kill me. My cousin who is the same age as me was very angry. Her hair was dripping wet and messy. Her makeup was sliding off her face. My younger cousin joined me in laughing and pointing at her. "It's ok Zoe It's ok" she repeated. The three of us continued to

have fun and later we went to eat with the family. It was a great day that ended with a no parent pajama party.

The next day we all went to have breakfast and went back to the pool. Today we decided to have a competition. We wanted to see who could swim to the six foot side of the pool. we started on the deep side of the water but it was getting too deep. I turned badly. my little cousin wanted to keep going she wanted to touch the floor of the pool, she asked me to come back so she could get on my hip while she tried to touch the floor she wanted to assure herself that she could swim in the deep part. When she was ready she said "Let me go."

In seconds, she was flailing around in the pool, she could not touch the ground and got scared. I tried to help her but she was pulling me down. I couldn't breathe; every time I came up water kept going in my mouth. Are we going to die? She couldn't stop moving around. My tall cousin saw the trouble and started calling my name. She came to our side of the pool and swam quickly to us. She tried to put her arms around my cousin but she was making it so difficult and she was basically drowning me. Finally My tall cousin yelled "relax!relax! So I can help" finally she stopped moving so much and my cousin was able to help her thereby giving me the opportunity to breathe.

I was so exhausted the only thing I could do was float on my back.

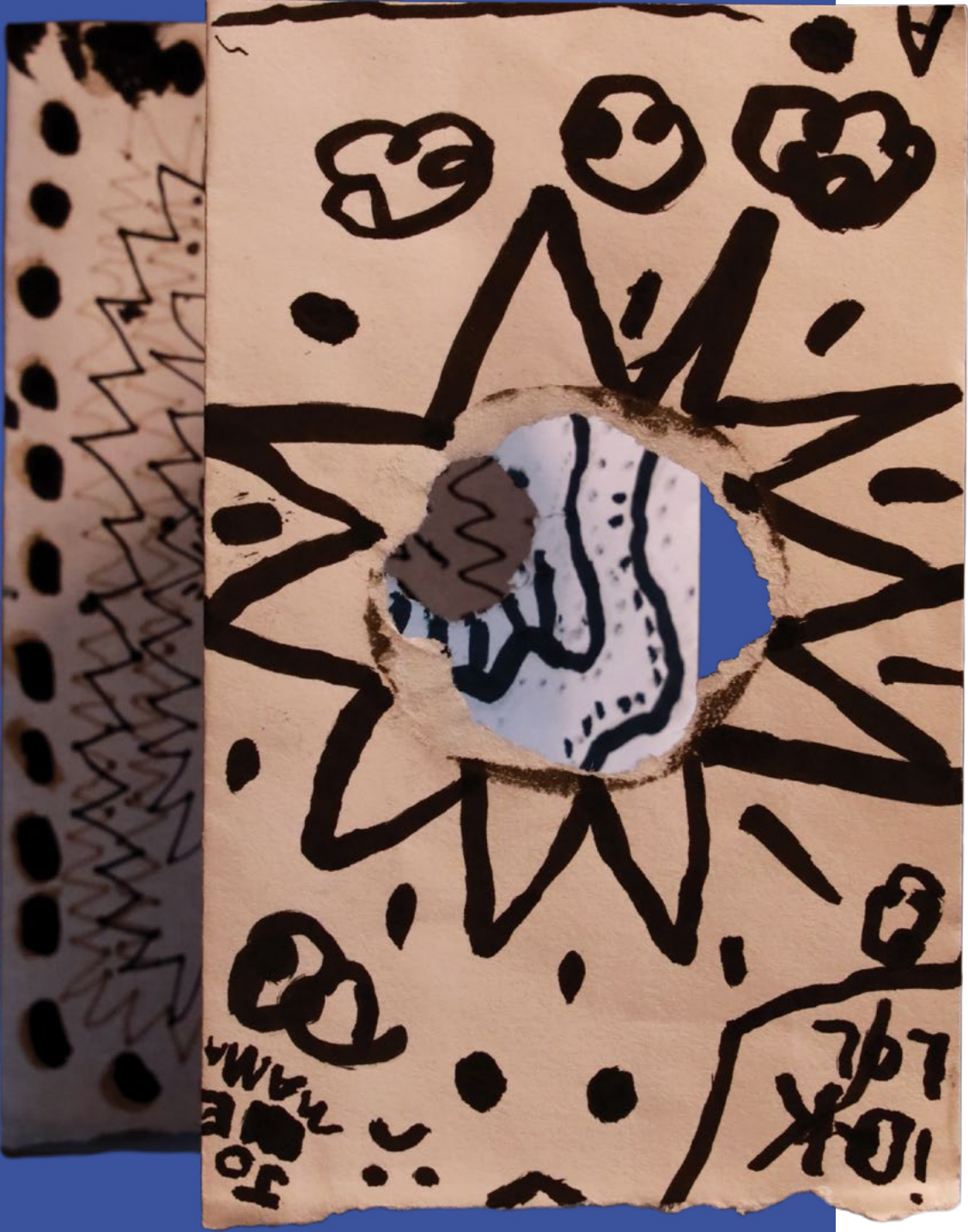
Later after my father found out, he took us back to the pool on the deep side and said ma "you need to relax, when the water is high. If you put in your mind you can die, you will panic and drown fast." "Relax," he told us again. I did what my father said because I trusted him. My cousin asked my father to hold on to her. She was still a little scared. "He told us to pay him and things will be fine. After a little while the three of us had gotten comfortable and were soon swinging the six foot deep of the pool. He taught me what I can do. Now I realize that when you are scared you can not make good decisions. ▼





**Zoe**

Luis



# LUIS

## The missing Nintendo

Me, my mom and my sister were going to a store called Megacentro and I brought my Nintendo with me in case I got bored. When we arrived we start having fun, eat pizza, play video games, play with other kids and ect, until i wanted to put some new games on my nintendo, so we had to go the first floor for that, so we go to the first floor and when we arrived to the video game zone a realize that I forgot my nintendo. I felt really nervous and thought: "I'm never going to get my Nintendo again..."

So i went speedrun mode (A Dream reference) and went back to the second floor with my mom and my sister, when I was in the second I ran to the playground where kids play and... it wasn't there, only a kid that try to tell us who steal the nintendo "it was a kid that had colorful shirt and he went that way" the kid said to us, but we still didn't find that kid, we still tried to find him until we gave up. My mom was really upset, the nintendo was a gift she gave me for my grades. When we arrived home I learned a lesson and I told this to my friends and they were disappointed. And that was 5 years ago since that happened I guess lol, I still forget about things sometimes like 1 month ago I forgot my bottle of water in school, except when something really important like a phone or things that are not mine. ▼

# EVELIZ

## April 6th

On April 6th, riots continued following assassination of Marther Luther King J.r. Actor Mickey Rooney died on april 6th. A Naval plane crashed in Virginia on this day. April 6th 2016, was also the day my mother passed away. The day my life changed.

My mother and I were very close. She would always be the person I turned to when I was sad or had to talk to someone because she really understood me. My mother was like my other half. She had diabetes which has made her body a little difficult already.

About three days ago, she already had a little cold and didnt get out of bed not even to eat. It's like there was something wrong with her emotionally that I didn't know. My brother offered to take her to the hospital before but she said she didn't need to go. This night was so flashing because I have never seen my mom ready to be gone on our own bed.

It was 4:00am. My mother wasn't stable enough to stand up since she hadn't gotten out of bed in days. My dad called my brother to come over and help put on her clothes so we could go to the hospital. Then my brother came. They held her up while putting on a sweater and some sweats. About half an hour later, me, my dad and brother started heading downstairs to bring her to the car. She was so pale and dehydrated that she didn't even look or sound herself. I sat in the back of the car with her while she was desperately asking me for water. I slowly teased because I knew I couldn't give her that much since she hasn't eaten in days. My last full conversation with her was when she was telling me how she cant breathe and to go get dad. The last thing I said to her through text days before was that I loved her. I really wish I could've had a full conversation with her knowing she was sick, but I never expected that type of ending. She got very sick. Later on, My dad went back home with me after we dropped my mom and brother off at the hospital because I was only going to have an hour to sleep before school.

I always thought to myself later that day in school *Hey, she's gonna be okay. She's strong.*

While she was in the hospital I was at school not worried about anything because I knew she was a fighter..

Finally I got picked up. About 20 minutes later I got to the hospital and the first person I saw was my sister crying on the phone. "evie.. Mommy died" says my sister bursting into tears and coming down to hug me.

I instantly dropped. Tears came running down my sister's face. I then heard my brother and dad talking about how my mom's heart stopped three times. The third time was her last ever heartbeat.

My mother died from high sugar and pneumonia in her left lung. Doctors tried all they could to bring her sugar down but it just wasn't going as planned. My father once told one of my aunts that once he saw so many doctors around her and tubes, shots and things connected to her, he already knew it wasn't a good ending.

The funeral came. My family and I decided that we were going to cremate my mom instead of burying her because that's what she wanted. My father told me and my brother and sister that my mom wanted to be cremated then her ashes thrown in the river because she still wanted to be free and not underground. She knew her day would come someday, so she had already planned for it.

After this day, I realized I had to teach myself girl routines from now on. I had to learn how to do my hair by myself, I had to learn how to shower and use feminine products and hygiene needs. I also had to learn how to clean and my own sizes in things like clothes or shoes. It was hard because I was so young and not used to doing things on my own.

Now I live with my dad and my dog. My dad learned how to be a father and mother figure to me from that day moving forward, I learned to always be grateful and cherish every moment with someone. Me and my family are still planning what river to throw most of her ashes in till this day because we want it to be special and not just any river. ▼

# BABACAR

## Mon Carrier

J'ai toujours rêvé de devenir un joueur de foot. j'étais jeune je jouer dans une équipe qui s'appel Dalifort Football club cette équipe était très très mal a chaque matche perdu je me disputer avec l'entraîneur de l'équipe et les joueur parce qu'ils jouent tous individuellement et je deteste quand ton coéquipier ne te fait pas la passe et un jour, un jour alors qu'ont n'avaient perdus ça faisait 8 matches perdus et sur 13 matches jans n'avait mar alors je me suis encor disputer avec l'entraîneur en lui disant "tu doit nous entraîner au jeu collectif pas individuel ont dirait que tu n'est pas un entraîneur" il était très fâché il m'a répondu

"Petit ce n'est pas toi qui va me dire ce que je doit fair"

"C'est pourtant clair qu'ont soyons toujours au mauvais classement du ligue"

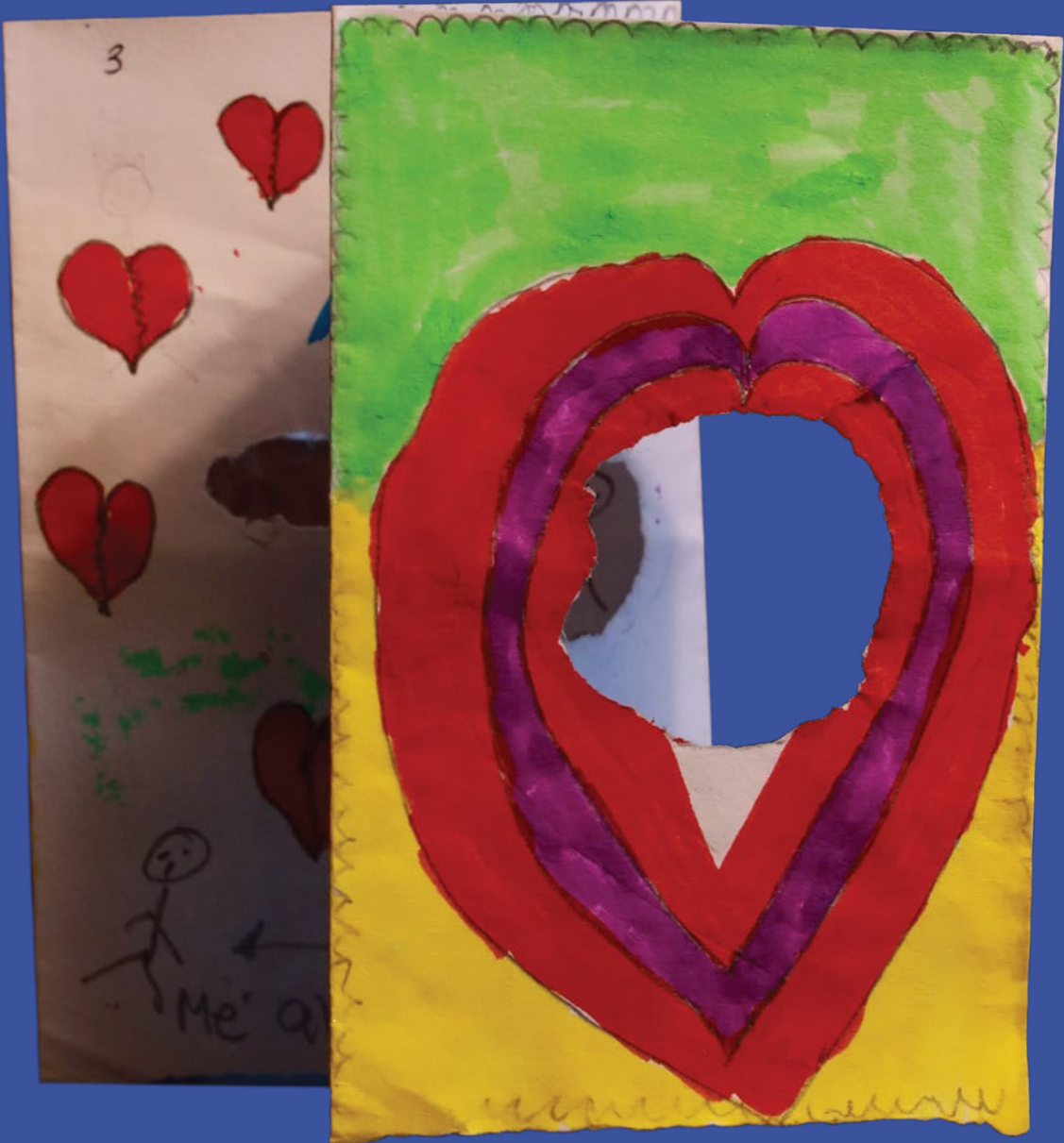
Après cette dispute le a décidé de se venger de moi dans les 2 heures d'entraînement qui suivait il ma fait fair des entrainement plus durre que les joueur dans l'autre moitié de l'heures qui suivre je les courus dans le sable,après que l'entraînement se termine je lui est demander pourquoi j'ai eu un entraînement plus dur que les autres il m'a tout simplement dit "Ne revint plus jamais à l'entraînement si tu te plin beaucoup ce n'est pas a toi de poser des questions"

Alor je me suis excusé et j'ai repris l'entraînement j'ai refait ça pendant 2 mois et les matche je rester dans le banc de touche, alor moi aussi j'ai décidé de me venger j'ai d'abord quitter l'équipe, ensuite mon amis ma dit de contacter l'entraîneur de leur équipe en vrais leur équipe était très bonne alor ses se que j'ai fait, l'entraîneur m'a proposé de venir fair un teste y'avait aussi des autre jeune joueur qui faisait le teste en même temps que moi a la fin l'entraîneur m'a retenu dans son équipe et d'autre joueur aussi les deux matche qui suivez l'équipe l'avait gagner mais je ne jouer pas parce que dans 32 milieu de terrains tu devais choisir que 3 mais a ma grande surprise l'équipe etatis 5em du classement après des matche passer l'entraîneur commence a me fair jouer les jours de matche j'avais enfin obtenu une place dans l'équipe maintenant

je joue a chaque matche un jour on a rencontré mon ancien équipe et ont la battue 3 à 0 et j'avais marqué un but et deux passe décisive les matche passer et ont devait maintenant jouer le demi final c'était un matche très serré mais malheureuse quelqu'un m'a blessé au genoux et ont n'a interrompu le matche pour me ramener à l'hôpital mais le médecin a signaler que je doit porter une platre pendant 6 mois pour pouvoir courir a nouveaux le était rapporter jusqu'à jeudi, heureusement ils ont gagnés le matche mais ils ont perduent le matche final mois je pensé que c'était les erreures de l'arbitre mais l' entraîneure a dit que c'est normal donc on n'a applaudit l'autre équipe et on n'a reçu nos meday même moi le blessé j'ai reçu une meday et une très bonne nouvelles parce que une équipe qui s'appelle FC TIGRE il amène des joueur à l'olympique de Marseille apres etre remi de ma blessure j'ai jouer pour l'équipe pendant deux ans et ont na fait une deuxième sélection et mois j'étais sélectionné pour aller à Marseille j'étais très content jusqu'à ce que j'arrive à la maison ma mere ma informer que je devrai partir en US pour rejoindre mon père le 18 Septembre le billet était déjà acheter je ne pouvais rien fair alor jai fait comme si j'étais content mais j'étais malheureux alor je les raconter à mes amis mes ils ont dit qu'il voulait être à ma place mais les autres ne m'ont pas crue alor le jour est arrivé et je suis venus biensure que j'ai continuer a m'entraîner tous les jour meme plus que mon frère et un jour j'ai fini par abandonner mais un jour une madame qui s'appelle Stéphanie, elle a su ce qui c'est passer elle décidé de m'aider elle a eu une équipe pour moi je doit aller fair une testés dans mais c'est en Mars je ne c'est pas quel jour, un alor que je me suis disputer avec mon frère, depuis mon frere ne m'autorise plus à porter ces chaussure de foot ni à prendre ces ballons quand Stéphanie a su sa elle a récupéré un chaussure de foot pour moi et un ballon en rentrant à la maison un autre prof il s'appel Ibrahim il ma offert son vélo ce jour l j'ai sentie que mon frère était très furieux et j'étais très content alor j'ai commencé encore à jouer du foot je ne sais pas ce qui va arriver a la suite mais j'ai fois. ▀



# Nataly





# NATALY

## Untitled

I was in Honduras in 2017. It was me and my sister in law, my brother's girlfriend .She was 21 at that time and her daughter was 2 years old. We lived with my aunt we were not really family but we lived together in my stepmother's house my age at that time was 10 years and my aunt's age at that time was 43 years Before it was just me and my aunt but my brother-in-law moved to the same house with us to form a slightly large family and so that we would not only be me and my aunt, it means that we already had a company that was my crib and her girl.In the first days we spent days happy moments we got along very well one day we went to the beach and my aunt arrived super tired that she sat in a place and if she could talk to me and she told me daughter if any case I die I want that you always have me in your heart and be a good girl that you study you grudges that you always pay attention to people older than me and that you will never disrespect .

The time was 43. First I wake up in the morning and I see her that she star to said that she see my brother on from of her and I look,I was like losing regnition because when she talk me that my brother was not there if not that he was here in the united states then he talk me that my

stepmother with whom I live now was there and she was not there either, she was here in united states I quickly wake up my and talk mommy feels bad she went to the bathroom to sit in the living room and I she kept quiet I started to crying we had no money she have another aunt in a office across the street where we came from and everthing for the health of my mother I told that lady to give me 150 pesos which here means 150 dollars to be able to go to the hospital with my sister and we brought her clothes and a little of everything and case she stays there. My aunt died and I see her when she died body in the morning I wake up she was in the hospital she sleep in the hospital when the day dawned somebody from the hospital call my brother to talk him that she died I start to cry and I start to think a lot things but at the same time I relax I see her when the hospital he went to leave her at my house and her other family was prepare her because in the next day we was supposed to go to the funeral when they buried her I never forgot her finally when she died the mother of my brothers my stepmothers thought of bringing my to the united states and I arrived here in 2019. ▼

# EMILY

## Stop the Bleeding

My brother was a big inspiration to me because I always loved the way his personality was, the way he was with his daughter, and how he was such a good person. He always said he didn't think he would make it past this summer and shockingly, his thoughts were correct. My brother passed away on April 21st a few days after the get-together from a gun shot through the back.

This happened at 2am. He was out riding his dirt bike and he stopped at a gas station with his friends. One of his friends saw someone who they count as their enemy. They shot at the people in a van. Then they went away, came back, and started shooting crazy. They didn't care who got shot. Someone else was grazed on the head by a bullet. But my brother was the only one who passed, and it wasn't even for him.

How I heard about this was when my dad got a phone call I heard it and for some reason I woke up out of my sleep. My father had gotten a call from his ex-wife (my brother's mom) and told my dad that my brother was in the hospital. My dad quickly got up and got dressed. He

asked if I wanted to go with him to the hospital. I said yes but while I was on my way downstairs my father had said "Emily hurry up, they just called, he passed." with tears coming down his face and he was sobbing. But I didn't believe him because I never see my father cry, he always hides his emotions. So while we were in the car my dad was driving through red lights then I realized that he wasn't lying. As soon as I realized I started sobbing because I was thinking about my niece.

At the funeral there were many dirt bikes because that's what he was into. A lot of people came because he was a likeable person. Everyone in his lifetime said it. My brother was as stiff and cold as a log in the winter time laying on the ground. But this time, it was a casket. Seeing my brother in that position triggered something in me to want to be an EMT nurse/doctor because I thought maybe if I became one, I could possibly help the people who have been hurt like my brother. When I went to see my niece, (his daughter) was crying and it made me cry because she was going to have to grow up without a father. ▼

“ A lot of people came because he was a likeable person ”



Emily

Tyler



# TYLER

## The Lost Child

Imagine losing your family at the beach!

When I was four years old, my family had planned a trip to the beach for my cousin's 23rd birthday. There were about 10-12 people there and they were all adults. It was so hot that day so I decided to go into the cold blue crystal clear water. It was so refreshing.

I swam for a little bit and sat there for a while. It was so refreshing. *Wow this water is really nice. It's not hot but not cold and it's not shallow but not deep, it was just perfect.*

About five minutes later I hesitated to get out of the water because I saw a family of tadpoles. They looked like little worms with a big head. I turned around and I realized that.... I lost my family!!!

Realizing that I lost my family at the beach was very scary and was very traumatizing because I didn't know if I would ever see them again.

About 15 minutes later I came across a lady that was about 5'7", and she had freckles all over her body.

She seemed caring so I asked her, "H-h-hi my name is Tyler and I think I lost my family. C-C-Can you please help me find them?"

She replied with, "How can anyone say no to a cute little face like that? Of course I will help you find your family munchkin. Now let's go find your family Tyler," she said as she grabbed my hand.

Later that afternoon we started to walk down the wet beach with the waves brushing up against our feet. I had my head down because I was feeling mixed emotions. I was scared, but I was also disappointed.

About three minutes later, I picked my head up to the sound of someone yelling my name. "TYLER!!TYLER!! WHERE ARE YOU!!?"

I had hope again. I was so relieved because I felt so happy when I saw her because I knew I would see my family again.

After the events of my sister finding me she had texted my mom telling her that she had found me. After my sister had told my mom that she found me, the lifeguard alerted the people on the beach that I was found "The lost boy on the beach wearing light blue trunks with black and navy blue sharks has been found and the search for him will be canceled EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY!!!. We went back to where our family was and i ran to my mom and she hugged me so tight I could barely breathe she said " HAY MIJO DON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN" As soon as me and my sister went back to our family,we packed up and went home.

After that day at the beach I've learned a lot about being alone and being in panic because you're afraid about never seeing your family again. I have grown a lot since then and I have become very mature. Although that was a very traumatic experience to go through at a very young age I still got through it. Looking back at that experience is kinda funny because seeing myself at such a young age making stupid decisions is very immature. Everything was back to normal after we went home. My mom was happy. ▀

## The Way to The American Dream

I was in Mexico when I was Only 13 years old . Because it is the way to get to the united states for the American dream , I am not from Mexico but I was living there for two months, I was with my mother my father my brother my sister and my two little brothers they are have different characters .Before coming to the United states my family lived because they are from honduras. One morning my mom woke me up and told me to get ready because we are leaving Honduras.. She used to tell me for a long time my mom used to tell me that the United States was a good place and we could have a better life but many times she would also tell me she did not have the money to go there. This day however, was the day and I thought to myself, how many days is it going to take for us to get to the United states.

It took us one week to go to Mexico by bus. I slept most of the time but when I wasn't sleeping I looked at the beautiful houses we passed on the way. Would the United States have beautiful houses Like these? When we arrived in Mexico, we had to move quickly, we had to get to our destination in choluteca.

"Why do we have to go so fast? I'm tired"

My mom said " We don't want the police to catch us"

"Why are we hiding from the police if we didn't do anything wrong?

"It is the law in this country. If they catch us I have to pay them."

" How much money do you have to pay them?"

" I have to pay them 1,000 pesos?"

My eyes opened wide" 1,000 pesos! That's a lot of money"

The next few weeks were difficult and frustrating because we had to hide for many days. And live in a different hotel each time . One day when we were in the hotel , I heard a lot of noise.

"Quiet!" my mom said.I slid under the bed. She made me understand that the police would come to the hotel and send people back to their country or sequester them.

We did not want to get caught. We stayed quiet for 3 long hours.It was not enough because finally they came to our door, but we did not answer the door. We were not out of danger because they came back another time. This time I heard the men say, Open the door or we will break it down."My mother was scared, and my little brother began to cry. I ran under the bed again. Finally she opened the door and the policeman asked for money. She gave them 100 pesos. "100 pesos, what am I going to do with 100 pesos? I want 1,000 pesos. I will kidnap your daughters and you will never see them again." She begged them to give her more time. My father had left us to go back to Honduras. He would be able to send her the money to keep us safe.

Later they came back and she gave them the money. My mother told us to pack up our stuff and that we would be making the trip to America tonight. It was very scary because we walked in the dark and we had to walk fast and not make noise so that the people of the emigration did not hear us. I was afraid to return to my country because in my country there is nothing, things were getting difficult to find work was hard. There was no longer any opportunity to study compared to other places. Where I lived the politicians closed the school and to get education we went in the backyard of people's houses or in churches when it rained we did not go to classes because the backyard were filled with water

When I arrived in the United States, they sent us to a shelter in San Antonio, Texas. We stayed there for two days. They gave us clothes and food, and on the third day a cousin of my mother picked us up and took us to her house. She made us food, I took a bath and I made myself comfortable. It felt good to be in United states and I was already making new friends

Three months later my mom decided to go for New York but she did not have money thankfully the hostel gave her the free tickets and my mom went and booked 5 tickets but the trip was by bus. It took us three days to get







**Wwilma**

# WVILMA CON'T



to New York . Sometimes I got tired and crowded because also there were a lot of people it was cold because as we didn't have clothes for cold weather gave us clothes but when I put them on my body itches but then after we got to new york we lived where my uncle and we lived there for two days then we couldn't live there anymore because the house was too small.

One morning My mom cousin I called and she said that if we wanted to go live with her we could I was happy because we were finally going to get comfortable from there my life began to change i went new places. I Went to the beach my cousins took me to eat and there I felt that making an effort was worth it and the stress. ▼

“

*My mother told us to pack up our stuff and that we would be making the trip to America tonight*

”

# KEYLA

## My 2021 vacation

The first days of my vacation in the Dominican Republic, I spent them greeting my old friends while my brother's friends came to play with him every day. We were also going to celebrate my brother's birthday. When the day arrived, my family and I invited his friends to celebrate. We had ordered pizza and I went to get it. When I got to the door I, I saw him. He was the cousin of a friend of my brother's.

Wow, he is really cute! Looking at him is like looking at the sky. I thought, from that moment on, I noticed him. But what I never knew was that he also noticed me. I shook my head and thought he would never talk to me because he didn't even know me and probably had a girlfriend. I told myself, don't fall for him. Maybe he is not for you, over the next several days. I saw him many times. He and his cousin would visit my brother just about every day stay all day.

Our friendship grew. We spent our afternoons riding our bicycles and sharing funny stories, these moments I will never forget. We also met at night to eat and play with our friends, but neither of us told each other the truth, but we were both developing feelings for each other.

Sometime later, it was time for me to return to the U.S. My vacation was over. We said goodbye, but he did not know that I was sad because I did not know when I would see him again and have our adventures.

Luckily we were friends on WhatsApp. We kept talking and playing games on the phone. As time passed, we became closer, and each day we fell more in love until the day came that I never thought would come. I remember that night we were talking by video call with one of his cousins, and in the middle of the conversation, he told me, "Keyla, I need to tell you something, may I"? I told him flatly yes. Then he tells me, "My cousin is in love with you, but

he's embarrassed to tell you when he told me that I did not believe him because It never crossed my mind that he was in love with me.

It was a beautiful full moon night, and I spent that night thinking about him, thinking and thinking about what his cousin had told me. The next day we were all on a video call, his cousin again mentioned that he liked me. And I told his cousin that he needed to tell me himself for me to believe it. A few minutes later I talked to him, and he confirmed that he was in love with me. I did not have words to express what I felt, but my mind took over at that moment, and I told him I didn't want to have a relationship with anyone, and his answer was "Ok."

As the days passed, I noticed that he was strange. He didn't talk to me anymore like before, and we even got a little distanced, his face looked sad, and he was very disappointed since he was really in love. We were no longer as before. We were embarrassed to be around each other. I liked him. I just felt confused. My heart was telling me to talk to him about it again. I thought about all the beautiful moments we had spent laughing, playing games, and talking to each other. I decided to speak to him again on a video call. My stomach felt like I had butterflies dancing inside. My body went hot and cold. I blurted it out, "Don't you want to ask me again if I want to be your girlfriend? I saw the smile spread on his face, and he said "Yes" followed by "Linda, you want to be my girlfriend". The two of us had big smiles. I said to him, "Yes, lindo i want to be your girlfriend." As we ended the conversation we both whispered "Te quiero". Since that day my life changed, I am thrilled we are leaving our relationship in God's hands. This experience taught me to give things a chance and not think negatively. ▀

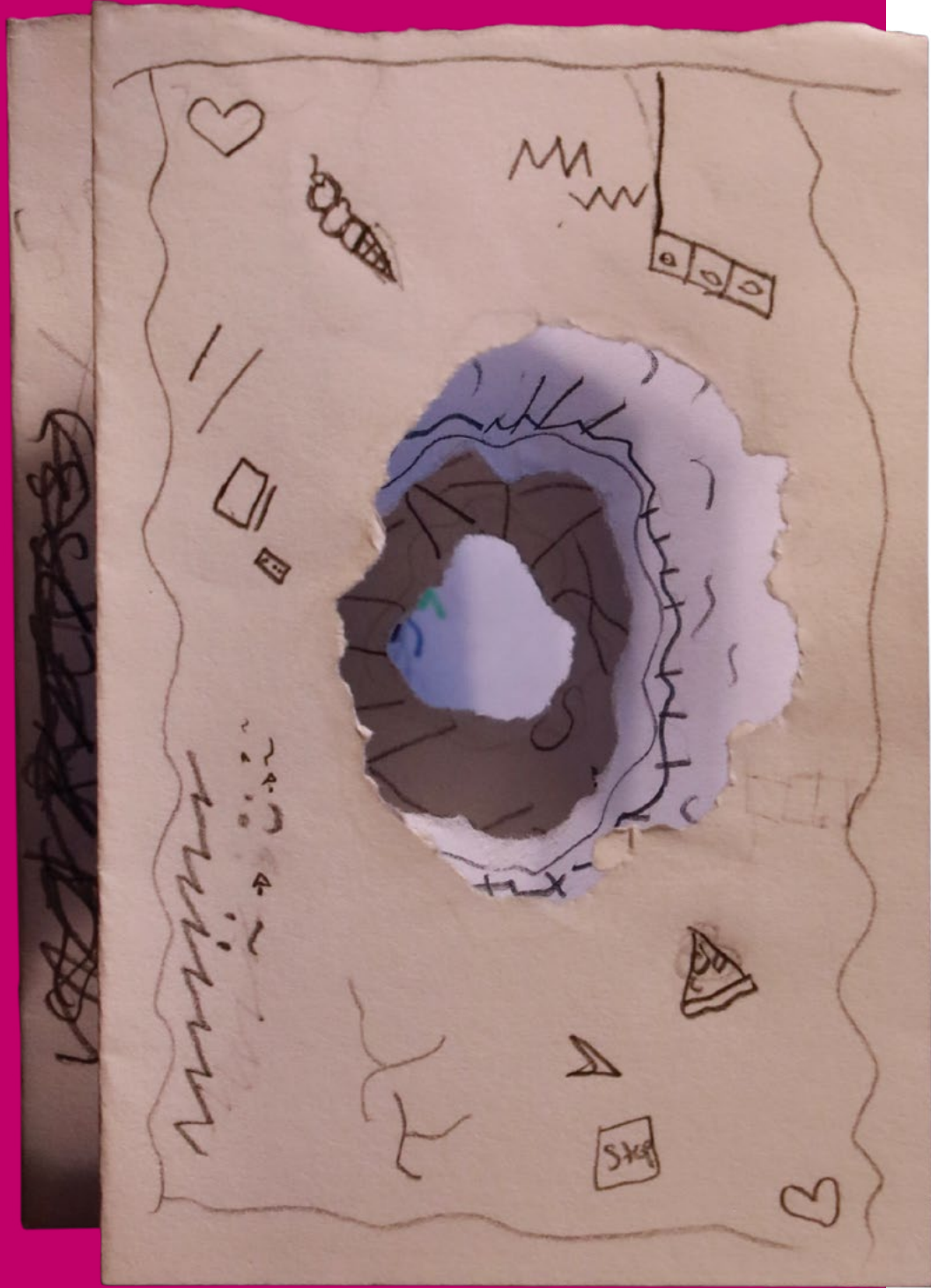




# Period 6



# Clarice





# CLARICE

## A Long Weekend

Friday! After a long week of school and basketball practice, Soumaya, Trinna, Laura, and I were tired. We were excited for the weekend because we had planned things to do. Soumaya, Laura and I were asking who wants to go hang out friday" Anissa said yes what time?

" Laura said 5:30",

"Trinna agreed "

Soumaya, Laura, Anissa, Trinna and I got on the bus. We stopped on the way for ice cream and Dunkin Donuts. We got there an hour later because we were talking and walking so slow so it was taking a long time to get to the bus.

We finally made it to Laura's house. We all took our shoes off and we all went straight to her room to think about what movie everyone wanted to watch.

We were eating and watching a movie, having fun doing Tik Toks, playing truth or dare, and listening to music and also talking . Mostly they were talking through the whole movie. I was just waiting for it to get over because Trinna was telling the whole movie.

When the movie was finished, one of the girls went home because "Trinna's mom had called her saying she had to go"

Trinna said "ok i called a cab and it's coming soon".

She didn't want to go because we were listening to music, but she left.. I was going to leave with Trinna but I had stayed even though I knew my mom would soon be calling.

I got a text from my boyfriend and was talking to him for a little while because "he called and said you know what time it is:"

"I hung up"

My mom called me. I answered but she couldn't hear me because my phone died. I figured she was a little worried because I couldn't answer her. I Was thinking, *Omg i don't know what to do she is gonna be mad at me.* I was just thinking the whole time because I already knew I was in trouble.

That's when I went home because I knew that I was going to get in trouble."i was thinking i know she not going to let me outside again"

I had stopped to get Chinese food while waiting for the bus and I had missed the bus because the food was taking forever and I was getting mad because the next bus had taken too long.

Then I finally got home at 11:00 pm! My mom was waiting in her room watching tv. She was a little mad. My mom said " I couldn't go see my friends",

"I said that's not even fair"; So I left her room.

I stayed in the house for two days even though I was mad and all because I couldn't see my friends or go to practice.

Now I make sure my phone is charged all the time because now I always go to my friends house, movies, sleepover because I tell my mom where i am so she wont get worried where i am my mom is now not that worried where i be at all the time because i'm always safe and call her whenever im about to go home. ▀

# ANDREW

## The 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2022

The day started out with the simple tweeting of a bird throughout the fresh New York air that really just smelled like pollution and nachos, I would take a fresh whiff of it before getting up and out of bed to start my morning routine which is when I heard my mothers footsteps along the floors, talking into what I assumed was her phone. I had been informed my great grandfather died and that's when it all started. The downward decent into a frenzied panic of discovery along with a pinch of maturity on the side, seeing as my mother had just gotten off the phone from her room which caused my curiosity to spike through the roof and even more when she exited and told us to get dressed and start to head out.

The drive to my grandparents house was horrid with the silence that filled the car the entire time, causing my entire body to suddenly feel a cold draft from the window. It made me look around frantically with that blank look always dawning on my face each and every day, rushing into their home in order to get away from the feeling in the car only to find a comforting warmth inside.

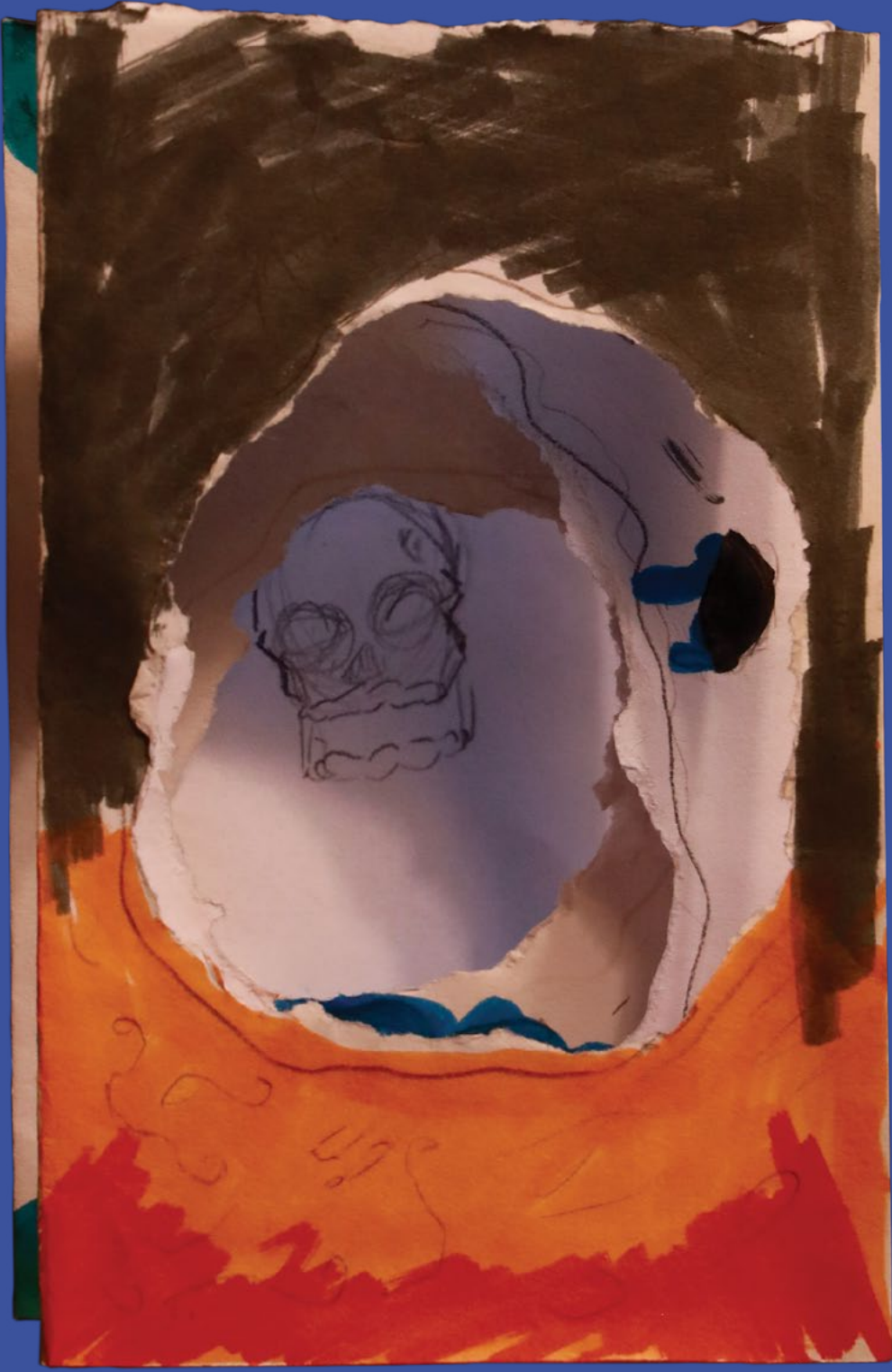
I could see the others already inside of their home and talking with my grandparents about the entire situation along with the plans on when to get to the seeing service. I could hear them at that point because her home wasn't very big, causing them to swarm me with greetings and worries to get their mind off of the recent event we were going to attend just that afternoon.

Eventually we made it back to the car in the afternoon after discussing the seeing service and greetings of relatives who hadn't seen each other in months, I could sense the excitement that laid bare their voices. Overlaying the disconsolate tone they originally took on when first hearing this new information and massive change in their lives considering we couldn't ever see our great grandfather ever again due him being dead and all.

Entering that same cold and indifferent car was still a horrid experience due to that feeling, once getting there however, the feeling completely switched to a feeling of complete and utter dread due to having to go and see all these people be sad inside the musty velvet carpet having funeral home that held the seeing of my great grandfather. Each and every person in our family took turns holding his hand in order to tell them their wishes for him and themselves. It was finally my turn, which allowed me to experience how cold a body really is when it dies.

I never wanted to be like the others in my family who enjoyed their youth and felt as though being old was the biggest burden you could have in your life, I had never wanted to be that Jiji which was unloving and displeased with everyone in the family even when they gave him the things he had wanted. That warmth I felt when around him and his home, that burning love for his great grandchildren is what I want them to feel.

The silence once again overtook me while I came to this realization from just one empty old man's hand. It felt as if it had been underwater for way too long, wrinkly enough to be painful if he had been here still. Seconds turned to minutes as I told my empty great grandfather what I wished I could become in due time. I wanted to live a happy life as he had. Many great grandkids he enjoyed having the company of. I then let go and stood up due to the tap on my shoulder from my mother, heading out slowly and back into the car so we could go home. Eventually I remembered what he had said to me, since we visited weeks prior to his death, He told me how much he appreciated my company. He told me that he loved me, I won't forget that. ▼



**Andrew**

# NAISHALEE

## Best Summer Ever

It was a hot August day so I was planning on going out with my friend to get ice cream. My mom approached me and said, "Cancel your plans, we are going to a water park."

At first, I said, "No mom, I had already made plans with my best friend" and still I had to go. Plus, she already paid for the tickets.

The water park was in Connecticut. The water park is called Mommy Poppins so I just shrugged it off. In my head I was just like let's get over this bullshit. I was complaining but acting like I was excited.

She told me we had to wake up early because it was a two-hour ride.

First I acted excited but when I searched up the place to see how it looked I went from acting exciting to actually being exciting.

I went to sleep and woke up excited. The first thing I did was, of course, shower to wake myself up more and get my bathing suit. My mom got in the car and turned it on to let it heat up while I finished getting dressed and preparing food, snacks, and water bottles for the water park.

The two-hour trip went by really fast. My favorite cousins were there, we laughed and sang along with the songs as they played. It felt like half an hour only.

There was a long line but the line decreased really quickly so we were in the park in two seconds.

I got so excited that I went on many water rides. I went on rides such as the park with water swings and a sweater slide until I saw a ride that had waves. I got more excited when I saw how huge the water park was. I never imagined it to be this huge with so many huge rides I can

go on. I saw many people laughing and enjoying it so I'd thought it would be fun to go in the wave pool.

I went to the 6ft wave pool. I did not know how to swim so I just went 5ft in my head. I was gonna be fine right? Wrong. As the waves came by I started panicking it didn't feel like 5ft as the waves came it felt like 8ft. My head started hurting and almost drowned basically almost passed out in the water.

I had a hard time breathing and my chest was getting tight. I knew what was coming for me.. An anxiety attack. I caught an anxiety attack right after panicking in the pool. I ignored the first one but as I kept getting more and more anxious my chest kept hurting more and more till my mom just said we were going to the hospital. It turns out I was overthinking and panicking because I couldn't feel my feet underwater.

When we got home I was calmer and searched for tips on how to avoid anxiety. After that I would still get panic attacks, but not as much as I used to. Every time I catch a panic attack my mom tells me to breathe slowly. I tried many times till she hugged me. It's like my mom is my healer. I calm down when she hugs me.

I'm happier than ever now that I kind of know how to control my anxiety when it comes to getting stress and stuff. Even though I caught many anxiety attacks, I still had fun because not only did I know how to control my panic attacks but I also learned from them. I was very appreciative that my mom took me there. It was an amazing day. ▀

# JANIYA

## My First Relationship

I have known this boy, Anthony, since the second day of school. We started talking to each other, but he used to bully me and my mom always told me that if a boy bullies you that means they like you. I kind of liked him at that time so I was hoping he did like me.

On a Monday night around 8 pm, my best friend texted me and said, "Anthony likes you."

I didn't go to school that day so she couldn't tell me face to face. I texted her and said, "How do you know?"

She was like, "Because he told me."

She also asked me if I was going to date he and I said I wanna talk about this at school with him. Then a few minutes later he texts me and says " Idk if tamiah told you but I like you and I'm ready to be in a real relationship with you idk if you feel the same way but I just have to get that off my chest" and I say "I think we should talk about this a school and he says "ok."

The day at school I got there late so I didn't see him until second period. then when I got up to my stairs friends were I heard anthony likes you, so are you going to date him? And I said "I will tell him at the gym when I see him. so when I was at gym I was too nervous to tell him so I never told him at gym class.

Meanwhile, at the end of the school day I finally said yes and we became official. then that day when I got home my mom asked me "what happened at school today?" I told her that I said yes to being has girlfriend and she said that she wanted to have a conversation with me and I said "ok" I hope she doesn't say I should break up. so she was telling me not to get to attached to a highschool relationship because your only 14 and not all relationships last long when you are young plus she was telling me that its not ok to da "but if it makes you happy to be in a relationship then I will allow it but I don't want you grades to slip or don't only focus on a boy and get your work done" I said ok. And to this day we are still together happy, healthy and non-toxic. ▀

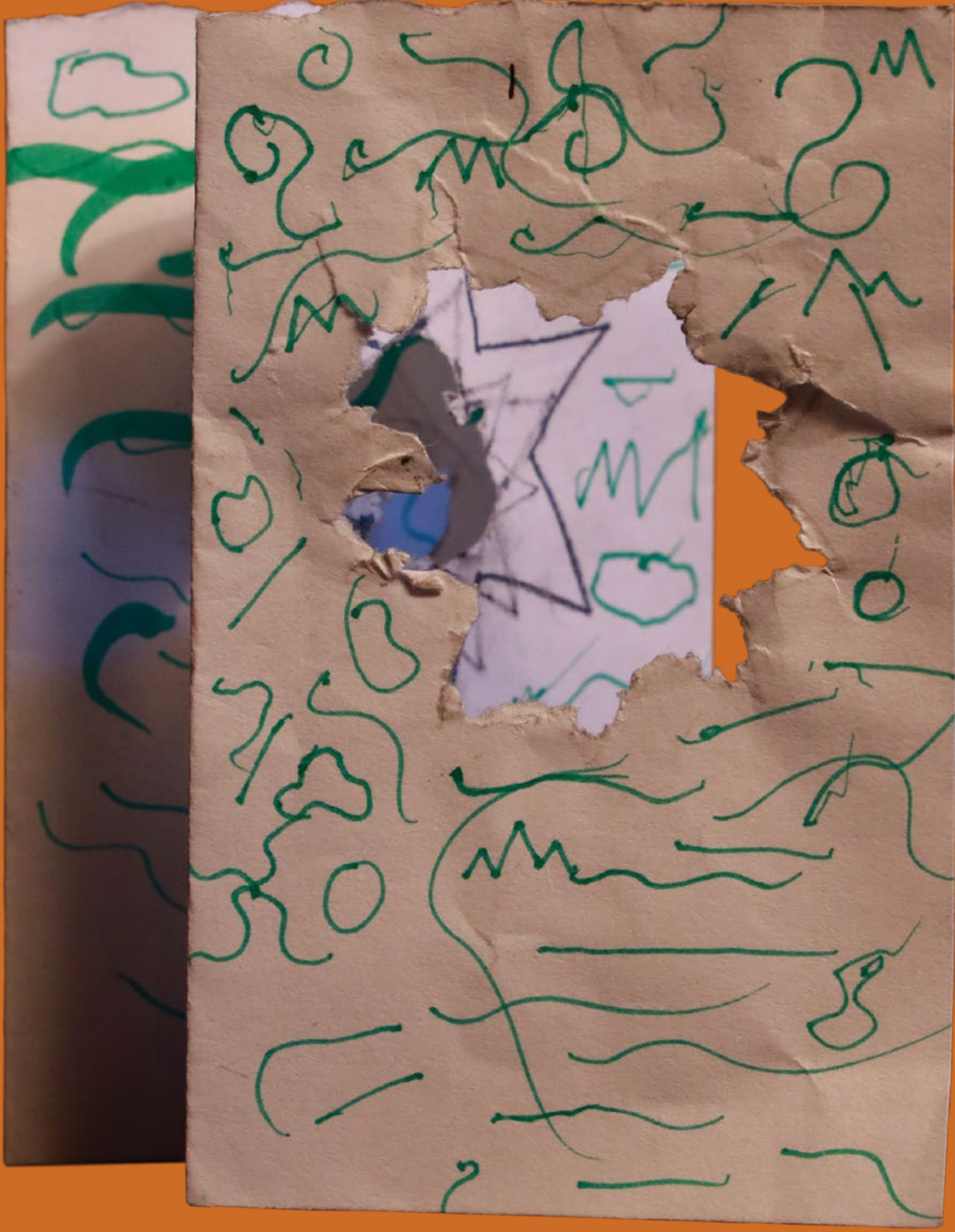
“

*If it makes you  
happy to be in a  
relationship then  
I will allow it*

”



# Brianna



# BRIANNA

## The Vacation

I've always wanted to go on a trip to Six Flags ever since I saw the commercial. I was covered in glitter just thinking about the fun I would have if I was there. My dad noticed how mesmerized I was when I was looking at the TV. then he took one glance at it then smiled and said "I went there when i was at your age i went ther- "HEY" i said in a annoyed tone "NO SPOILERS!" My dad just chuckled "maybe we will take a trip there some day" my eyes lit up with excitement when he said that "when?" I asked, still filled with sunshine in my stomach "soon real soon I promise" he replied. I waited and waited and waited but still no news about the promise that he made and then soon enough I slowly started to forget about it until while I was playing on my phone, my dad flew the door open. The man looked like he was trying to break it "oh no i hope i'm not in trouble" i thought to myself while butterflies were swarming in my stomach. I felt like I wanted to throw up but apparently he did that from excitement? "Get dressed we're going to six flags' 'I almost fell right out of the bed then before he knew it I immediately got in the shower and got dressed. I always loved to sit next to my dad in the car seat. I dont why but I've never felt so comfortable just sitting there. We had a long car ride which felt like hours but i didn't really care because i had my phone with me at the time. After an hour my phone ended up dying. I wasn't mad, just a little disappointed so I just decided to sleep in the car. The beeping and the screaming woke me up i ask my dad what was going on "were stuck in traffic" said in an angered tone. ▽

# LOGAN

## Untitled

One day i was in gym sitting down and this chick named aamina started touching me and she hit me in the eye with her fanny pack and the zipper hit me in the eye and then i got up and starting fighting her and she ran away, Then i asked to fight.

She said, "no."

i was like, "come."

She left the gym and reported me to ms.white and i was upstairs ms.white came took me and asked what happened at gym i told her what happened and she said stay away from each other

the next day she started talking to me and then yea she's weird asf... and everytime me and her argue she always wanna act tough online and every time i tell her about herself she always wanna be like oh that was last year and i be like if it was last year why u don't keep that energy when she see me, and every time i ask to fight she be like just because i don't wanna fight doesnt make me scary and i be like "... and then atp she's scary to fight me and thats it the end. ▼







**Bryant**

Amanda





# AMANDA

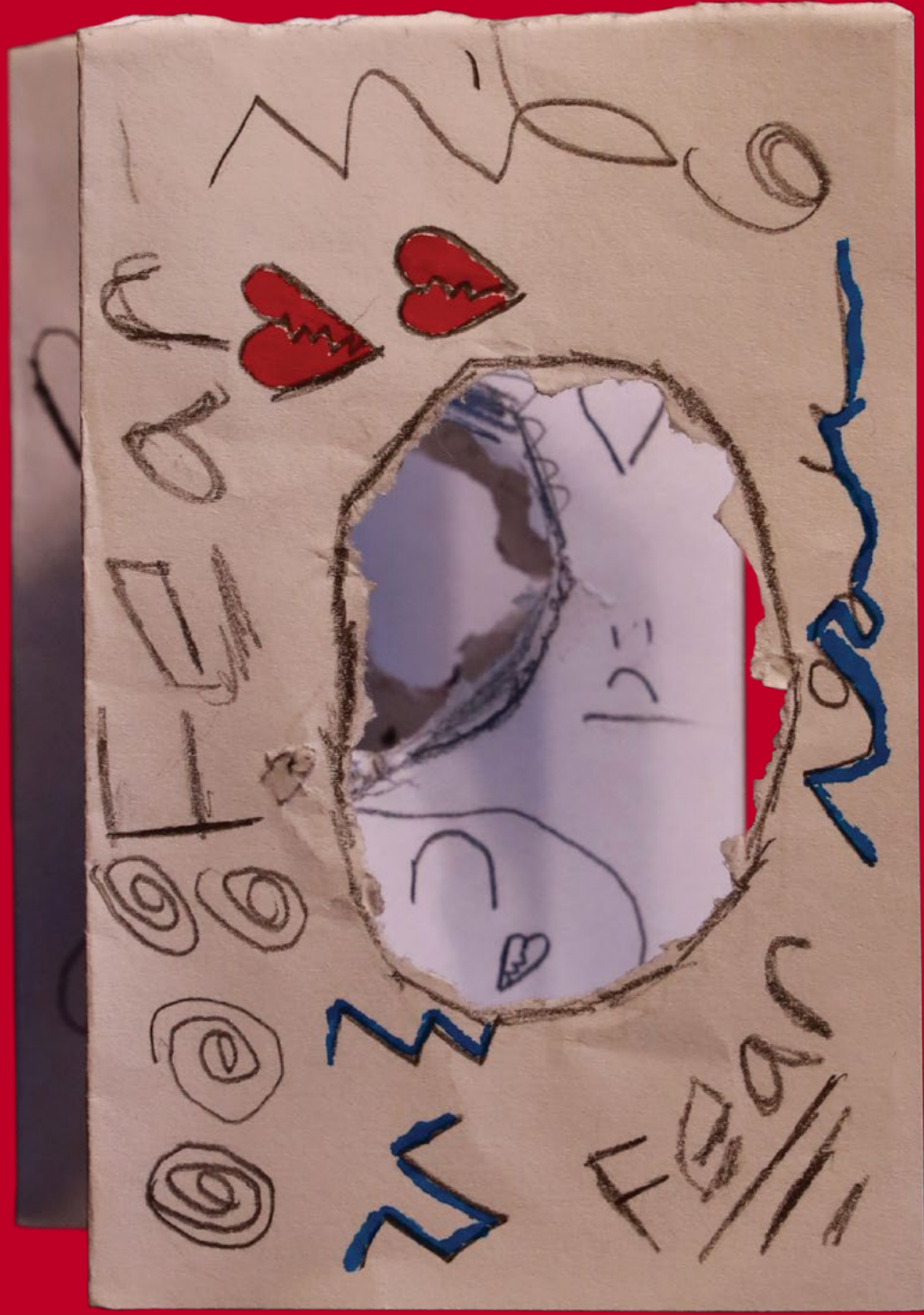
## The Girl I Hate the Most

This girl named Aamina started being mad rude towards me for no reason. We met in 6th grade. About two years later anytime she used to see me in the hallway she would put her hands on me. I told her to stop a few times but she didn't listen to me. It started getting very annoying

Once she did it again I told her if she touches me imma end up slapping her, and she took me as a joke and started laughing so I walked away. The next day around 4th period I was walking in the hallway to go use the bathroom and she saw me. She ran towards me and slapped me in my face. That pissed me off so I turned around and pushed her to the floor and kicked her in the head and she started crying.

So she went to tell the principal on me, and the principal ended up calling my name so I could go and see her in her office. Once I got there the principal asked me questions on why I pushed Aamina on the ground. I told her it was because she kept putting her hands on me and I highly dislike being touched by people. Aamina was crying and the principal told me to go back to class and for us to stop talking to each other. We did stop talking, but until a month later she apologized to me for touching me when I told her I didn't wanna be touched and asked me if I wanted to be friends again. But I said no thanks and walked away. After the day she asked me and I said no she started talking about me behind my back. We were supposed to fight it out when I pulled up to shawtys block but she never came outside. But I just left it and now we still have beef till this day. ▀

# Robert



# ROBERT

## The Upcoming of Robert Orr

I had just gotten the news that Grandpa was in hospital from testing positive from Covid-19. By the look on my mom's face, I knew she was very worried.

She exhaled hard.

I gave her a hug and told her, "Everything is going to be okay."

About two days later, after hearing the news about my grandfather, we got notice we could come and visit him. While my mom and brother were getting dressed, I was scared to see him in bad condition.

I ended up telling my mom I don't wanna come

She understood how I felt and let me stay home.

About a few hours later, my mom and two little brothers came back from the hospital. My second youngest brother came into the room with a calm face.

"is he okay?" I asked.

no he said with a low sad tone. since he already had a heart problem it was very hard for him to fight it off so we had to wait a few days to see if everything would work out."

How was it? I asked"

He had a tracheotomy tube down his throat cause it was very hard for him to breath

My brother said he could tell by my grandfather's face he was suffering and he didn't want pain anymore.

"Why didn't you come?" My brother said,

In my head, I had second thoughts about seeing him,

which made me feel really guilty. *What if it was my last time seeing him? I thought to myself I had feelings of regret and I know I really messed up knowing my whole family went to see it and I'm the only one that didn't go.*

After a few hours of stressing on how I messed up I wanted to check up my mom to see if she was okay

"Mom, is everything okay?" I said.

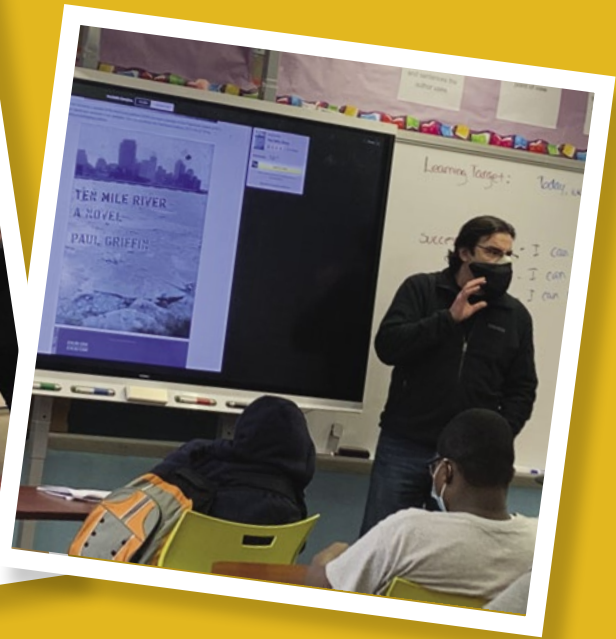
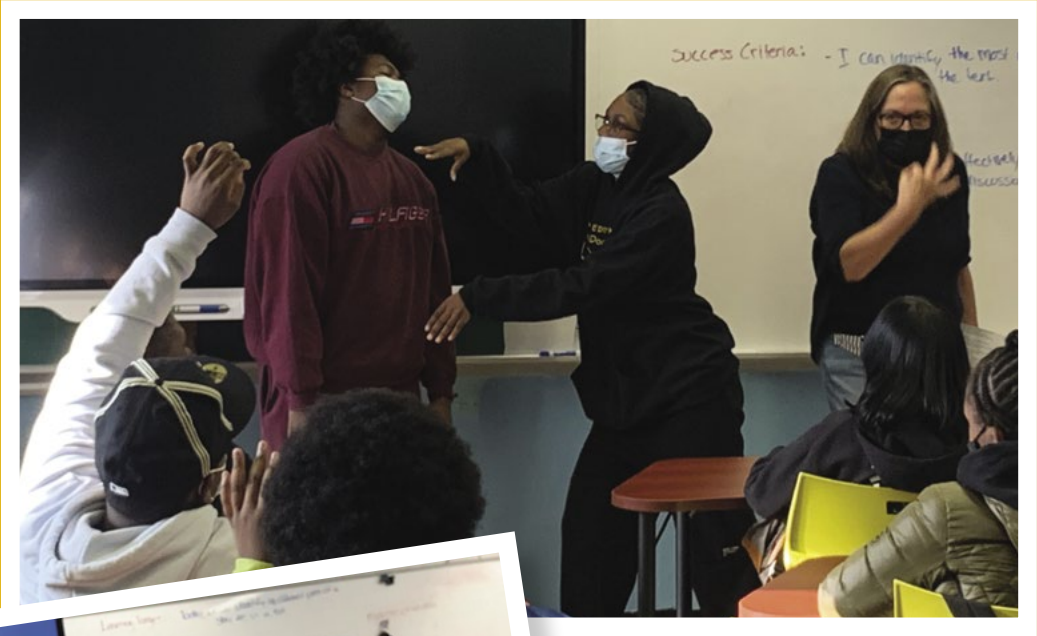
She seemed very stressed so I gave her a hug to calm her down."He's not in good condition. He might not be out of the hospital."

The next morning I woke up hearing my mom yelling "he's gone noo why him lord"

My heart dropped. I had never heard my mom cry that hard before. I rushed into the living room and saw my mom on the phone and all of them crying. The way I felt was unimaginable

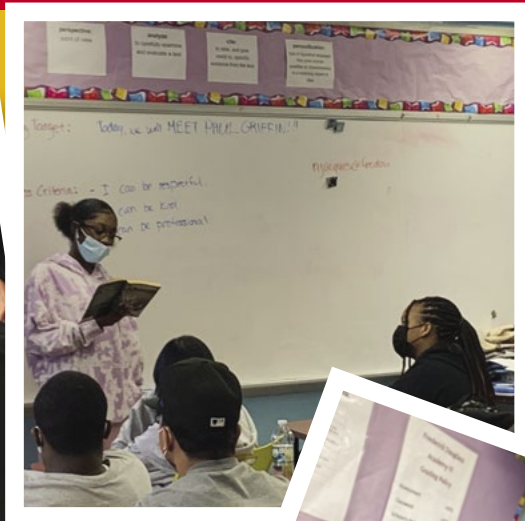
I felt as if I was wrong for not seeing him and I should've gone when I had the chance and this made me cry. A few weeks after my grandpa died I was stuck and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life till this thought of my grandfather saying how good I was at basketball and some day I'll be something so I took it to heart and was on my grind to success.

I've been happier and since I'm in highschool I had better grades and even made new friends. ▀



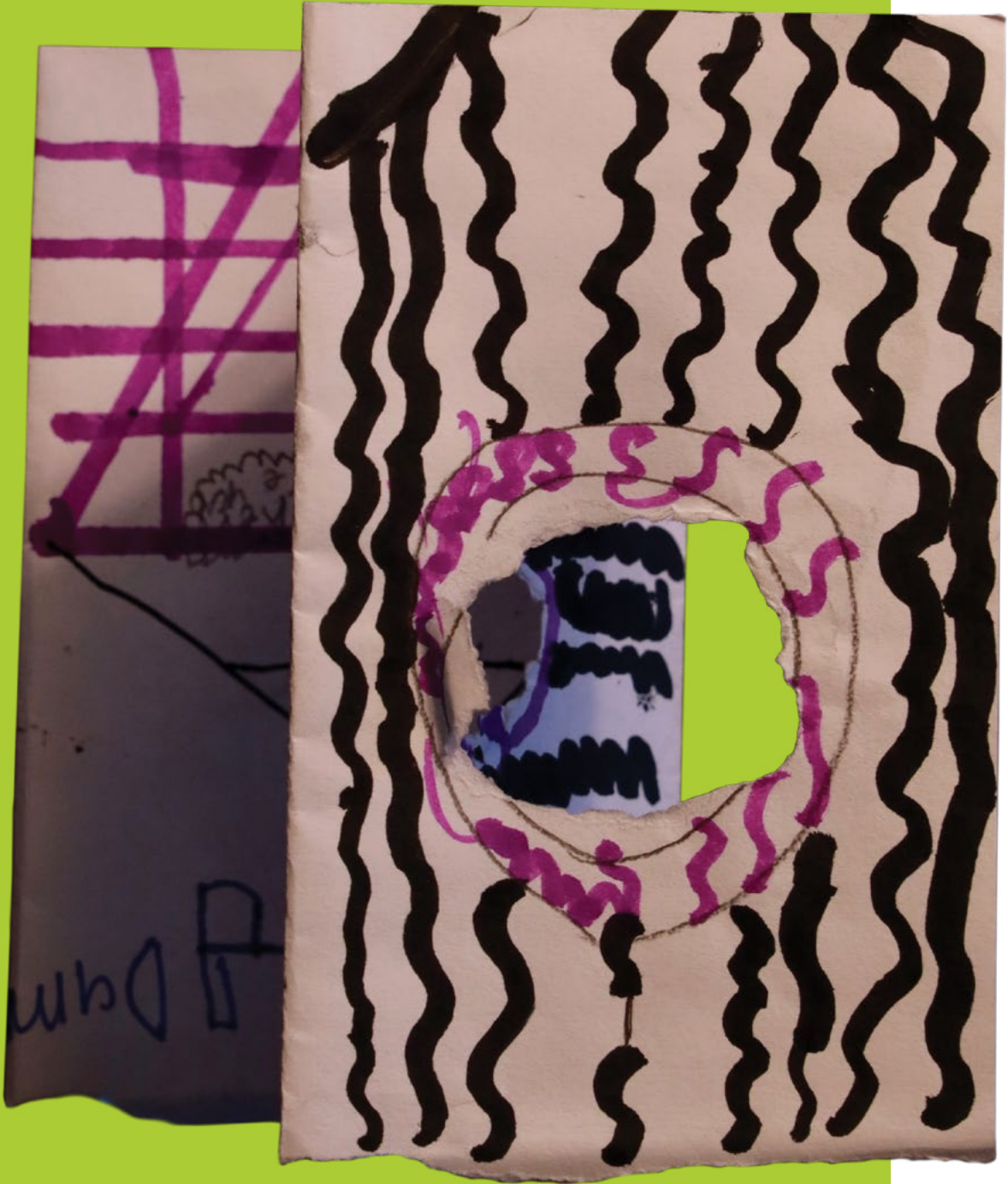


# Period 7





Ali



# ALI

## The Tragic Nightmare

*I am totally afraid of reading but Mr. Faust said it's your turn.* Then it happened; He asked me to read. As the words got shushed I went for my glasses. As I went to go in my bookbag I looked at Ibrahim and unzipped my bookbag. As I took out the case in my bookbag it felt light as if it wasn't there. I unzipped the case and looked inside. When I looked inside the case my glasses were gone. I started to panic. I went to the teacher.

My heart fell to my stomach. First I asked my teacher to use the bathroom. Without her permission I got up, grabbed the pass and went.

"May I please use the bathroom?"

She said, "Yes."

but before I went I yelled at Dorion "WHERE ARE MY GLASSES?"

He said, "I don't know!"

*He looked at me as if I was dumb.* Next I went to the bathroom but it was not there. "Then I looked in the stalls but it was not there. Therefore I went to the last classroom I came from. I went inside to check the desk but it was not there. Finally I went to my locker but it was not there. I felt like I was in a black hole getting sucked in and I was chasing my glasses.

Then I decided that it was gone for good and stopped looking for good and stopped looking for good. I came back to the classroom and as I put my head down water dripped down my eyes. After I stopped crying, Joseph told me to stop but I would not stop. It felt like parents when they get divorced and One of the kids Has to go. I went downstairs and got confronted by the principal on my way out. He said we will keep on looking. I went home and got confronted by my principal while leaving the school . He said we will keep on looking. I came home and mom said "where are my glasses"?

I said that I lost it. She said that I was irresponsible and left. That showed me how careful I have to be when holding my things and also how can people take thing and don't give it back

The next day in class I was reported to the office. As I went to the office I wondered if I got in trouble or something good. They said that they found my glasses. I was so happy that I was "more" hyper than a kid that ate a lot of candy. I said thank you so much and "water came down my eyes agina". This changed me because I learned how to be responsible and never leave my stuff around because someone can steal them or worse get lost. ▀

# IBRAHIM

## Trying Something New Might not be so Bad

The cold wind had slapped my face the moment I entered class. It was another day of 6th grade and I was tired of it at that point. Boredom had filled my mind as whatever I was learning went through one ear and out the other. A teacher had arrived at our classroom. I didn't think much of it until she announced we were going to be learning about poetry. It sounded boring as all I knew of poetry at the time was writing about love and death.

"...There will also be a poetry slam by the end of the month..." She said,

I fixed my posture as my eyes widened. My mind was now filled with curiosity and excitement. I thought of what to write about in my poetry but the thought of performing in front of an audience disturbed me.

"What are you going to write about?" Asked Justin.

"I don't know, but I don't want it to be generic or we'll lose. What if we go ask our other teammates?" I responded.

Justin and I have been friends since the beginning of middle school and he was the only one who knew me well.

A week had passed since the poetry slam was announced and Justin and I had so many questions racing through our minds. We approached our teacher and asked her:

"Where will we perform if we get to the finals?"

"When will we start doing the trial rounds?"

"How many people would actually be at the finals?"

"When do we actually start our first round?"

"How many rounds do we have?"

"What time do we meet for the first round? Where do we meet?" As soon as we got all of these questions off of our chest, I let out a big sigh.

"We'll meet in the library during lunch time. I'll give you answers when I'm informed of them. What you two need to worry about is editing and memorizing your poem." My poetry teacher responded.

I soon started to realize what I was getting myself into and I started to question if I still wanted to do this. *You*

*haven't gotten too far into it, so you can just back out if you wanted to. Besides, no one isn't forcing you so you can leave if you want to. But, doing this has been fun, leaving now will be for no reason.* I was conflicted but hid it, I then went to lunch to practice with my teammates, still deciding.

The day for the trial rounds had come. Me and my 6 classmates went into a room to perform but if we wanted to go to the finals, we had to start at the bottom.

"Alright guys, let's do this and win!" One of our teammates had called out.

As I was called, my decision had already been made. Each step that I made had sounded so loud to me as if a speaker was near my ear. I had arrived in front of the camera.

"My name...Is Ibrahim..." I muttered, as I tapped my foot on the ground quickly and as my teeth chattered.

I took a deep breath and tried again at a slow yet normal pace and read. I finished reading and sat down. Meanwhile, all my teammates had read their poems and we waited to see who won.

"With 102.03 points, team MS328 comes in first." One of the judges declared.

Smiles and yells of joy erupted. We had won. *First round done...but two more left. What if we lose one of the other two rounds? All of this will be for nothing.* I ignored such thoughts and focused on winning. Later on, the second round had come. I was nervous which was expected but then suddenly, I felt the air shift around and found it hard to breathe as I started crying. My vision started to whirl, it was as if the earth had flipped upside down. I soon regained my composure with the support of my teammates, then performed. We had won again and following after, the 3rd round had come and we won yet again. We were going to the finals.

It was the day for the poetry slam. We went on a bus. *This is it, the poetry slam was here at last. You can do this, with all of us here, we won't lose.* As the ride to the poetry slam had begun, my team and I entertained each other. We





# Ibrahim

# IBRAHIM CON'T



ate snacks, played games, and did other activities to ease ourselves. As we did so, the lingering thoughts of doubt had come again. *Whether we win or not, this was fun. But what if we don't win??* we arrived at the location. We went Inside and looked around the premises. It was large in size, posters along the walls and stairs leading to upstairs. Then, hallways leading to different rooms, exits, and stages. We immediately moved on to our private room. We went In and out, talking to each other and reading our poems together. We did other things to distract ourselves from feeling nervous. It was finally the time for us to perform. When It was my turn, I went on, I walked . "Mothers, They know all your secrets..." I was confident and acted as If I was alone reading to myself.

The winners were announced, and we heard our team name. We jumped up and down In excitement as we had won our first poetry competition! We did poses as bright medals were placed around our necks. After the long night, I had finally arrived home.

"I'm back, and we won!" I cheered.

I received a "good job" but I felt so proud of myself. I changed and got into bed. I sighed, smiling and staring at the ceiling. Thinking of it, I felt something else for poetry. I felt relieved and also a bit surprised. That way, I could use It as a place for me to express myself and my feelings, and share my experiences with everyone else so they can somehow relate with me. Society makes It seem that men, or well boys can't share their feelings and that they don't feel nor experience pain. They are tough and can't be broken down but really they can and as a boy, I always felt I should hide my feelings and not show "weakness". I had 6 other classmates who shared their experiences, fun and bad or neutral experiences. One of my friends who was on the team shared about their life In the "hood", the bronx. What he sees everyday and what he goes through. One of my other friends spoke on relationships and girlfriends. One of the females talked about how women are strong and that they are seen to be weak also and that they need others for support and comfort to live life. ▼



# ADRIEL

## The Dirty Dishes

Washing the dishes has always been one of the most disgusting things for me , it's dirty,goeey,and it's just overall nasty. On this particular cold winter night I was hungry.

I told my mother , "can you order me pizza? i'll pay for it" she replied "ok". A few minutes later there's a knock on the door "bom,bom,bom" I opened up my wallet and took out a 20 dollar bill and headed over to the door. I opened it up and the pizza guy said "15 pesos por favor" I gave him the whole 20 dollar bill because it was so cold outside and i felt bad. I take the pizza box inside and put it on the kitchen counter.i open it up and it's a gooey,shiny pizza with pepperoni on top. I take one slice and headover to my room to sit on my chair and start chowing down. After taking down two more slices, I head over to the kitchen sink and I am awaited by dirty pots and pans with all types of stuff on them, I thought nothing of it.

As I go back to my room I hear a yell "ADRIEL!" i replied "what" my mom said "come here now". I slowly walk back to the kitchen where my mom is waiting for me pointing at the sink. She says "come wash the dishes" and at first i was like "no" but then i ended up getting smacked in the back of my head. So as I walked over to the sink I saw plates with all types of stuff on them, then I told my mom "yeah im not washing nem" so she smacked me again. She grabbed the sponge and the soap, put soap on the sponge and gave it to me. I started washing the dishes with the cringiest face. After washing the dishes my mom asked me "was that hard" i replied "no" And after that I realized how easy my mom makes life for me, She washes my clothes, cooks for me and makes sure i have everything i need. I will forever be grateful ▼

“

*After that I realized how easy my mom makes life for me*

”

# ISIS

## Everyone Grieves

I have always put my grades before anything else in my life. I never did that for anyone but myself because it made me happy and proud of myself, but the day my grandmother died it caused a big change in my personality and priorities and i didnt even notice.

My mother was always angry and stressed out and she always took out that anger on my brother and I so I didn't want to talk to her as much as I used to when she was happier and less stressed. That means I started hiding things from her and acting differently. Part of my difference in personality was the fact that I wanted to please everyone I knew so I became the person they wanted me to be, meaning around my mom I was the best daughter I could be, I did my chores, took care of my brother and did my homework but for my friends I was a little reckless and tried to be fun because that's what i figured would make me more popular. In addition to me having fun that made me start misbehaving and putting popularity above everything including my grades. The teachers clearly saw this because I wasn't like that in the beginning. My mom eventually found out about all my lies because I was lying about every and any little thing but that didn't stop me, it just made me sneakier. My mother also realized that because she had a super strict mother when she was younger she knew what being sneaky was like and she was getting progressively upset because she didn't want me making any extreme bad decisions I can't take back. She didn't see the reasons why I didn't feel comfortable talking to her though. She thinks that she's an easy person to talk to but since I was little she always made me feel guilty for any bad mistakes i've made, big or small.

One day in school it just hit me how much I've changed. I realized how horrible the people I was hanging out with were.

"Did you hear samaya and kaitlyn aren't friends anymore."said a random kid in the hallway. I overheard the rest of the conversation and it was a bunch of fake gossip

*But I was just hanging out with the both of them like a*

*half hour ago, that can't be true*

I said to myself with the look of confusion on my face.

*Why would someone lie about something so stupi-*

I stopped and really thought and asked myself why.

*Well the only reason i could think of is drama, but this person doesn't even know samaya and kaitlyn why start drama with them.*

Then I thought again and realized the true intentions of everyone in middle school. We all want to stay relevant so we do anything and everything to stay relevant even if that means creating fake gossip to start fake drama or make yourself seem cool and popular.

When I got home that day everything was going great until I fell asleep.

"ISIS WAKE UP"

I woke up in shock having no idea what was about to happen.

"Why did I get a call from your school saying you were skipping your classes and FAILING!?" She said out of shock and anger

"I-"

I didn't know how to answer. She would never understand and she would think i'm irresponsible and not let me have any freedom

"Isis, I would have never expected this from you of all people, and you're only in sixth grade. WHY are you doing this?"

"I DONT KNOW!" I scream bursting into tears. "Ever since Mami died you have been so mad and your always working and so i felt i had to be so perfect around you but when im in school i feel the need to pleasure everyone there too."

My mom stops and stares. "I don't know what to do with you"

She sends me back to sleep even though the conversation was barely over and I feel my gut telling me something is wrong. The next morning she wakes me up and doesn't say a word to me.





Isis

# ISIS CON'T



*When is this going to be over, giving me the silent treatment is worse than yelling at me. I don't know if she's going to let it go or hold a grudge forever.*

The day goes on and I get to school. She may have been mad but when I'm in school I act like everything is fine so I don't cry and get pity. There is nothing I hate more than unwanted pity. Soon enough it is 2:45 and my mom has to pick me up. Today I was really testing my limits and I took my time going downstairs to meet her. It's freezing outside and i didn't expect her to say anything because she's giving me the silent treatment but as soon as I walk through the two front doors with my friends i hear words i only heard in the privacy of our home

"ISIS GARCIA COME OVER HERE RIGHT NOW"

I walked over to her with pride and attitude. You heard me right ATTITUDE!

The whole way home she was angry and I knew when we got home I was going to hear her complain for hours. As soon as we got home my mother locked the door and started speaking.

"I'm calling your school you're not going back"

She always overreacts whenever i tell her anything so how was i supposed to know this was going to be any different.

"Okay" I said, not thinking it was such a big deal.

I thought it was the end of the world at the time but I see why she did it now. I wasn't very happy with the idea though. My mother continued talking to me

"You know better than to be friends with people like that, what if I wasn't in front of the school. You would have been acting just like them. And you would have been getting in trouble and-"

i quickly cut her off

"Im not that dumb mom, I might wand to act a little bit older sometimes but I dont make dumb decisions like that"

*Why does she compare me to every bad influence and make me feel so bad about myself*

The conversation ended there with both of us not knowing what to say next. We went on with our day

though, resulting in me doing our homework, eating dinner, showering and going to bed. I thought the next day I'd be going to school thinking my mom was bluffing but she wasn't. I ended up not going back to school for about two weeks.

As I get older I realize why my mom is so hard on me and why she does the things she does. She just wants the best for me and I know better than to make the past decisions i've made and that's why she gets so disappointed with me. It was near the end of the school year anyways and when i got back everyone was surprised, they had thought i transferred schools. I decided to make better decisions for myself and made a new group of friends. That is to say that despite me making new friends I still knew everyone in my old friend group. The year went on and I ended with honor roll grades. Anyway, transferred schools right after. My mom let me make the decision on my own so I guess she thought I would want to stay but I realized how bad that school was for me so I decided to leave. When I got to my new middle school I started acting like myself again and getting good grades but then the pandemic hit and school closed down.

It was a blessing in disguise because my whole family became closer than we have ever been and we cherish every moment together because we never know if i could be our last. We always did these family gatherings when I was younger. My mother and I express our feelings now and we talk about what's going on in our lives. Sometimes I feel like we genuinely see things completely different and can't seem to get along. Now my mother and I are working everyday to improve our relationship and so far we are doing great. Therefore, if I recommend you take anything from this narrative, I believe you should learn to spend more time with your family. Work on your communication and build bonds with everyone because if ANYTHING ever happens you and your family will be close, you won't hide things from each other and you guys can trust each other and talk it out. ▀

# ELISABETH

## My Mom Feeling Ill

It was a pandemic lockdown. Many people were scared of catching Covid because it was a deadly disease. My family was very cautious about being safe especially when it came to the lockdown. Soon after, I started to see my mom feeling very ill and not feeling well. *Is she okay? What does she feel?* She was very down and to herself in the moment, and had looked dizzy. *Something was wrong.* That's when my mom had a serious talk with me.

I asked, "How are you feeling?"

She looked at me with a worry in her face and said, "I'm not feeling well. I am not sure if it's covid, I mean I don't have the symptoms but you never know....you do know that Covid is a bad virus. If I have it then that would mean that I can't be near you or anyone else till I feel better." Once I heard this my heart dropped. *Does this mean I would have to stay away from mom? How long would this be? What will happen now?!*

I had a strong bond with my mother. I wasn't ready to give it up not to be near her. For example, my mom was the only person in my life that was a parent. She had done so many things for me like cook and buy me things. She has always been helpful to me. I don't have any other parent but her. *If she had been feeling ill because of the virus, then I would have to try and help her because I love her. I helped her by making her feel calm and telling myself to be calm. That everything will be okay.* I later stayed with

my grandma just in case to be safe. However, before leaving to my grandma's house my mom and I had the idea to try home remedies. I believed that if she tried drinking things like tea, and ginger-ale then somehow she might feel better. Before leaving to my grandmother's house, I went to the store to buy some ginger-ale for my mom to drink. Later she was trying all the remedies to feel better. She said, "I am going to be using home ingredients like honey,lemon and salt for my throat, I know that it will help". She then drank tea and ate a lot of soup. After that my mother had felt very much better and she was not feeling anything bad at all. *This is great, she might soon feel better now that she is putting all her effort in trying to heal herself.*

Days after feeling better, she, my sisters and I later went to the doctors to get checked for anything and she tested negative including us. This meant that I was finally able to be with my mom and hug her again which made me very happy. From this situation on I realized that I should appreciate the moments with my mother before it's too late. Shortly after this my mom got her vaccine. *I'm glad she got the vaccine shot so that she would prevent getting sick.* Nevertheless we continued on being safe with hand sanitizers, wearing masks, and washing our hands. I later reminded myself that the Vaccine was a good decision because she is keeping herself safe. ▼



# ANISSA

## The Big Lesson

Life lessons. We all have them, good or bad. I myself have many, but the one i want to share is when i have rounded up the best collection of fake friends. I am sure you know where this is going cause we all have or had one or two of them.

I was in this friend group of six people, seven including me. It included Mya at the time, my best friend of six years, Morgan, someone who I knew for six years and called a sister, Theo, someone who was now looking back on it, one of the closest things to a brother I had for six years. Sheyenne, Dion, and Joey are people I only started talking to for a year or two. Now keep them in mind because they are the main people in the story.

It was around graduation that stuff started getting interesting so we will start there.

On graduation day I met up with Sheyenne and we walked to the school, "Finally we out of this bummy school," I said.

"Right," she said as we laughed.

Well sometime went by and I graduated. I personally think it was boring but llooked good so that all that really matters. We all took some photos and said bye to teachers with fake smiles the whole nine yards.

"So what we doing after this," I said with a smile on my face.

"We are going to drop our stuff off and then go out to eat. We will meet back up at the mall at 2:30." Morgan said, kind of annoyed.

In my head I took note of that and I let it go. I went home and put my stuff down, got my wallet and fixed my hair and makeup. You know the normal girly stuff.

As I was on the bus going to the mall I saw that the whole group was already in the mall eating and hanging out. They did go to drop anything off. I was confused on why they lied but said nothing.

I called a new friend I made a couple days before and asked if they wanted to go out and eat. After waiting for what seemed like 5 hours but we really most likely 15-20

min for her to show up we went to bbq's and ate, laughed and had fun.

Well, graduation passed and I learnt some stuff that I definitely shouldn't have known about people in the group, mostly because I haven't talked to them since graduation and I can tell the vibe between them and me was off.

Skipping to summer break cause life wasnt that interesting till then.

Now remember mya, she had moved in like seventh grade. Now of course I was sad and all. That was my closest friend but it's ok cause she always came and visited whenever she could.

One day I was chilling with some new friends at the basketball court. Now I don't do basketball so I was on the side on my phone. I had opened snap and saw that mya had texted me.

"Guess who's popping out to co-op tomorrow," the text said.

"It better be you," I responded now out of my seat looking happily at my phone.

"Of course me girl who else. Anywho yeah i'm coming down for two weeks."

"Aii say that tell me when you are here and tell me when you wanna link."

One day quickly turned into three. Three days is how long it took me to realize that she never told me that she was here. Which is very weird because I saw that everyday for those three days that she was with the group on snap.

*Maybe she just forgot to text me. She'll tell me when she wants to link.*

Yeah that didn't happen. She hung out everyday for two weeks and not once texted me.

*Something got to be off.*

After some time I figured out that they "cut me off,"  
*I mean I don't really care I saw this happening.*

Throughout this cutting off period they would watch my snap and look at my instagram story but never texted or called me.





**Anissa**

# ANISSA CON'T



One random day I was getting ready to go outside like I did the whole summer when my phone started blowing up with text messages from all the girls in the group.

I had looked to see what they wanted and they all texted me the same thing.

"Yo its been mad long we should link"

Now I don't know about other people but that seemed off to me. So i didn't answer them. I left them all on delivered.

An hour and a half went by and they kept going. I was finally ready so I was about to leave when I heard a knock at my door.

"Is Anissa home? We are her friends. Can you tell her to come out."

*I know these idiots didn't show up to my door. Let's see what fuck shit they want now.*

I saw all of them as I opened the door and some of their new friends I only really hung out with once or twice.

"You didn't see our texts," Morgan said while rolling her eyes.

"Or our calls," Sheyenne added.

"I did, I just didn't see the need to answer, why are y'all here exactly?"

"Well we have been hearing that you have been talking shit and now I wanna fight," one of their new friends had said.

*The fuck, who I'm I talking shit too.*

"What exactly did I say while quote on quote talking shit," I said confused.

"You gonna stand here and act like you did tell me that she was too close to Joey and how she needs to back up off of him," sheyenne said while taking off her shoes

*I know you fucking lying. She really believes that shit and what the fuck she taking her shoes off for.*

"When did I say this because I have talking to any of y'all for a good month soooo," they sound really dumb but why not she what lies they have said.

"You're doing too much talking I came here to fight."

"That sounds like a you problem because I'm not gonna fight you off of a whole lie that she telling you, so y'all can go," I said as I slammed the door in their face.

Well that happened a couple months ago and sheyenne ending up setting them up and so far only the boys apologized.

I guess you can say I learnt that not everyone is your friend. ▀

# ZAIDA

## The Day My Anger Took Control Over Me

I didn't like wearing glasses but I had to because i couldn't barely see without my glasses. I didn't like how I looked with them on my face.

My old school is PS229. On January 16, 2020, When I was twelve years old, I threw a chair at a boy because he was making fun of me because I was wearing glasses.

The next day I came to school and I was called to the principal's office and he said," Zaida there was no reason for you to react the way you did.

I said, "I don't like when people make fun of me for wearing glasses." I was thinking in my *head like I should have never done that*. I saw two police officers and they tried to take me down to the police station but my mom was telling them that they weren't taking me anywhere. I was scared I didn't know what to do. They also suspended me from school and gave me work to take home. Then my mom and dad asked me what happened. I told them what actually happened then they were saying that they wanted to change my school so I could focus on what's most important.

While I was out of school I watched movies, played games and did the work they gave me. My mom told me that glasses look nice on me and that wearing glasses isn't bad so I started taking pictures then I noticed glasses aren't bad after all . and my mom and dad also told me to learn how to not pay any mind to what people say about me or how I look with glasses on my face because it's not their point of view. ▼

“

*My mom told me  
that glasses look  
nice on me*

”

# JOSHUA

## The Lost Flower, But a New Bud

Life can change just like the day and night, it shifts and moves on, the sun can't shine forever. When happiness is destroyed it is always followed with false hope. But we have to set our heart ablaze, time stops for no one no matter how disheartened you are by your weakness pushed through with your head held high. It takes time for your wounds to heal but it's not the time that matters, it's where you're going. It's a slow process but quitting won't speed it up.

Fall has begun; The yellow and orange leaves fell so lightly. I could see everything through the window of the 4th floor of the apartment. Though the tree blocked most of the view it was beautiful and peaceful.

I had heard the doorbell ring. I was home alone while both parents were at work, brother summer school. He got up from playing call of duty cold war. "Damn, almost had the nuke" I had gritted, putting his headset down. I casually walked to the door with his hands in his pocket.

The door rang again, "Coming" I had said.

"Who!" A voice called back. "It's me, Haley's mother," she claimed in a light but yet sad tone.

She was always so kind no matter what, every time he had seen her she was always smiling and full of positivity. He wondered if she had news about Haley's whereabouts. I thought, Why would she be coming here? She didn't bring Haley... She would have yelled for me to open the door...

Joshua finally chooses to open the door with a smile on his face. His smile soon vanished. The first thing he saw was the tears on Haley's Mother's face as she was wiping her tears away.

She looked him in his eyes and said "She's dead, I'm so sorry I should have said sooner."

She died from an overdose but she didn't want to say it because she feared it would destroy him. But the damage had already been done. I didn't know she was taking drugs to find out it would kill him. I let go of the door in shock. Didn't lock the door but turned around and walked away. I

had taken his time down the hallway, really taking in what he had heard.

Stopped at the end of the hallway. Looked at the ceiling. I didn't want to accept it. Ran to the living room, picked his phone up from the couch. Called her phone, but she didn't pick up. But I didn't give up, he kept calling... Still no answer. Laid on the floor beginning to give up on life, but he remembered what she told him: "Don't ever give up, you don't get anywhere by giving up even if life gets bad, remember that I'll always be there for you"

I cried. Forgot he left Haley's mother at the door. "Damn it to hell with it all!"

Got up from the floor walking down the hallway still tearing, looking in at the ceiling, he opened the door holding onto the doorknob. He saw Haley's mother on the floor.

I had asked, "What's your name?"

She responded "Jasmine "

I didn't know her name until now. "Gift of god, huh?" I kept on and said, "How did she die?"

I held the knob tighter.

She responded with, "Overdose."

My stomach started to ache, chills went up his arm. *She had promised she'd never touch drugs or pills ever that fact that she would lie to me all while maintaining that smile.* I grit his teeth. I had so many things to say before she died he never realized how much he truly loved her until he died.

"Do you want to come inside?" I replied, tearing.

She responded "No, I've caused enough trouble. I'll be taking my leave now. I hope you feel better, you're a strong person, you'll be alright."

She left down the stairs.

I was left with emptiness the feeling of losing someone I cared so deeply about broke me to near the point of no return

A few weeks later I chose to go to therapy, but it didn't really help me as I expected. So I stopped going, leaving







**Joshua**

# JOSHUA CON'T



me with nothing to do at home but to cry myself to sleep all day. It was Friday about 1 in the morning my dad had come into my room

I asked "Have you heard on demon slayer yet"

It was weird because my dad doesn't normally talk to me. Nor does he know what happened, for something like this to happen out of the blue kinda shocked me.

I responded with "no" I knew that it had to have been anime since that's basically all he ever watches but after a few weeks without touching my tv I turned it on. I had lost my will to do anything, not even play games. I had been hoping this was worth it. After turning it on everything seemed so refreshing. I got on Netflix and put on a demon slayer. It took only 2 days to finish. But it was inspiring, it's about a boy whose family was killed and he instead of doing nothing with his life he became a part of something greater than himself. The fact that his family was murdered but he still had the will to push through everyday and train was inspiring. From there I got into meditation and knowing what I'm feeling, I know how to control my breathing. Every door was opening up for me. Then the memories hit, for the rest of my night I couldn't stop thinking about and crying. The next day I went over to Jasmine's house to see how she was holding up. I walked to the front porch of her house but she was already outside on the stairs.

"Hey Ms Jasmine I don't mean to be rude-"

"No it's fine" she interrupted before I had a chance to finish

"How are you doing, you know with everything that happened I know it wasn't and still isn't easy"

I looked in her eyes, it was just like Haley's blue, her smile just as bright as the sun. Her similarities with Haley were almost identical. Her hair is brown, straight. The only difference between them was their personalities. Haley said she had taken after her mother's looks but her father's personality, she never talked about her father often nor have I got the chance to meet him.

She responded lightly "I can't say I will be as happy as I once was but I'm doing better than before"

With that my mind was at ease even if she may not return to her true peace, she is better change may not happen as you want it to. Death is a part of being human but it's better than living in this stressful life where we can't control what happens.

"She's far from our reach but we'll join her one day. We all share the same fate in the end. Don't take that the wrong way though the world still needs kind people like you"

"You have such a kind soul Joshua I hope everything gets better for you, you've been through a lot you deserve to be happy"

I was shocked usually I don't get compliments but this one seemed so meaningful and genuine they it made me question my existence

I responded but my voice was more high pitched and I was smiling "Thank you, I appreciate it you don't understand how much that means to me. Sorry Ms Jasmine but I have to be on my way now I'm quite hungry and tired, good day"

"Take care of yourself Joshua"

While walking away I could see her waving me bye, such a kind hearted person.

I'd finally come home, threw off my clothes and just stood on my bed looking at the ceiling and I realized.

When you're picking flowers from a garden you would pick the best ones, Maybe that's why she was taken from us. But someday I have to move on, lost time is never found. I was waiting for the perfect time to tell her my feelings but I guess there's no better time than the present that was my mistake ▀

# VERONICA

## Untitled

Me and this girl I met in 7th grade were really close. Then Covid thing started and we got closer. When me and her first met she didn't like me. I honestly don't know why. Me and her became friends because of a mutual friend, and we had something in common like the shows we would watch and shows. 2 years later we both go to different schools and she goes to the same school of my friend. i told her a secret and then the next week my friend that goes to the same school as her texted me that the girl airdropped a picture of what i said in text to people in her school.

So then I texted her about it, i said "yo did you airdrop this?"(and sent a screenshot of what the other friend sent)

she texted back "why would you think it was me..?"

I texted " well I sent that text to you so kindaaa"

she replied "so what? It's not me you weird asf to think it's me yk i would never do that." I was confused. I'm just asking if she did

She was the only one who I had told at the time, the 'secret.' She had gotten mad because I blamed her, even though I had explained how she's the only one I had told.

So I just believed her, a couple days passed. We did not talk on the days inbetween. My friend that goes to the same school as her told me that she airdropped another converseon me and her had about the secret that i like both guys and girls.

So then i texted the girl again "wtf why would you airdrop this?!?"

she said "omg this again i told you its not me"

i said "yes because you're airdropping these things and it's you because you are the only one i told,""if its not you then who unless you sent our text to someone else"

she said " and? It's not like it's hurting you physically so just get over it you're just making this a bigger deal than what it is."

i texted "wdym it doesn't matter if its hurting me physically that doesn't matter what you did was wrong. ldc if it's hurting me physically or not it's still wrong ". I had blocked her after me and her argued a little more. I blocked her. I don't put as much trust in people as I did before. ▀

“

*I don't put as much trust in people as I did before*

”

# SHIANNA

## Will I Ever Go Back?

School; Exciting and boring at the same time. I've always gone to school in person and was never stuck at home for a long period of time. I am a person who would rather be outside than be at home. Something new was necessary, but little did I know something new would change my life and way of being.

It was March of 2020 and notices were sent out to parents that everyone was to do remote learning. "Wow" my mom says

"What happened?"

I reply while watching TV.

"Van a cerrar las escuelas por covid van a hacer clases en línea" she says while checking her phone.

At first, I thought it was cool because it was something new and I knew I would go back to in-person school in April.

The first few weeks of remote learning were fine. I completed my work and attended all of my online classes. It wasn't until after a few weeks that it was announced that the students were going to stay in remote learning for the rest of the school year. while I was sitting on the couch watching tv when I heard my little brother ask my mom ,"when are we going back to school?"

"Ya no van a regresar tal vez el otro año regresen."

Obviously my brother was happy, however I was mad.

Little by little I started thinking of how much work I was going to have to do and not being able to go back to In-person school made me feel overwhelmed. It felt like there was a lot of pressure being put on me, like the feeling of being underwater and not being able to get back up. After some time I stopped doing my work and all my grades started dropping. It got so bad that my teachers had to call my parents.

My mom called me with a voice that let me know that I was in trouble.

"SHIANNA JENISE ALVAREZ CASTILLO!" she calls from the room. She only calls me by my full name when i'm in big trouble or when she feels like bothering me

"Yes, mami" I responded as I started walking towards her room. I felt scared. I was confused. *Oh no... What did I do this time?*

I started thinking of the many things that I have done to figure out what was the reason for me getting in trouble. Then I remembered I had a lot of school work to make up and the teachers kept on telling me to do it but I never did.

At that moment I started to peel off the nail polish in my nails which I only do when I'm scared or not in the mood. *Maybe I could say that the internet doesn't work most of the time and that my work was never saved.*

I get to the room and she says "sientate por favor"

I sat, taking my sweet time.

She starts talking. "Recibí una llamada de la escuela me quieres decir porque?"

I sat there silently, refusing to talk.

"You've always been a good student with your classwork and your grades were always good."

*It's not that big of a deal.*

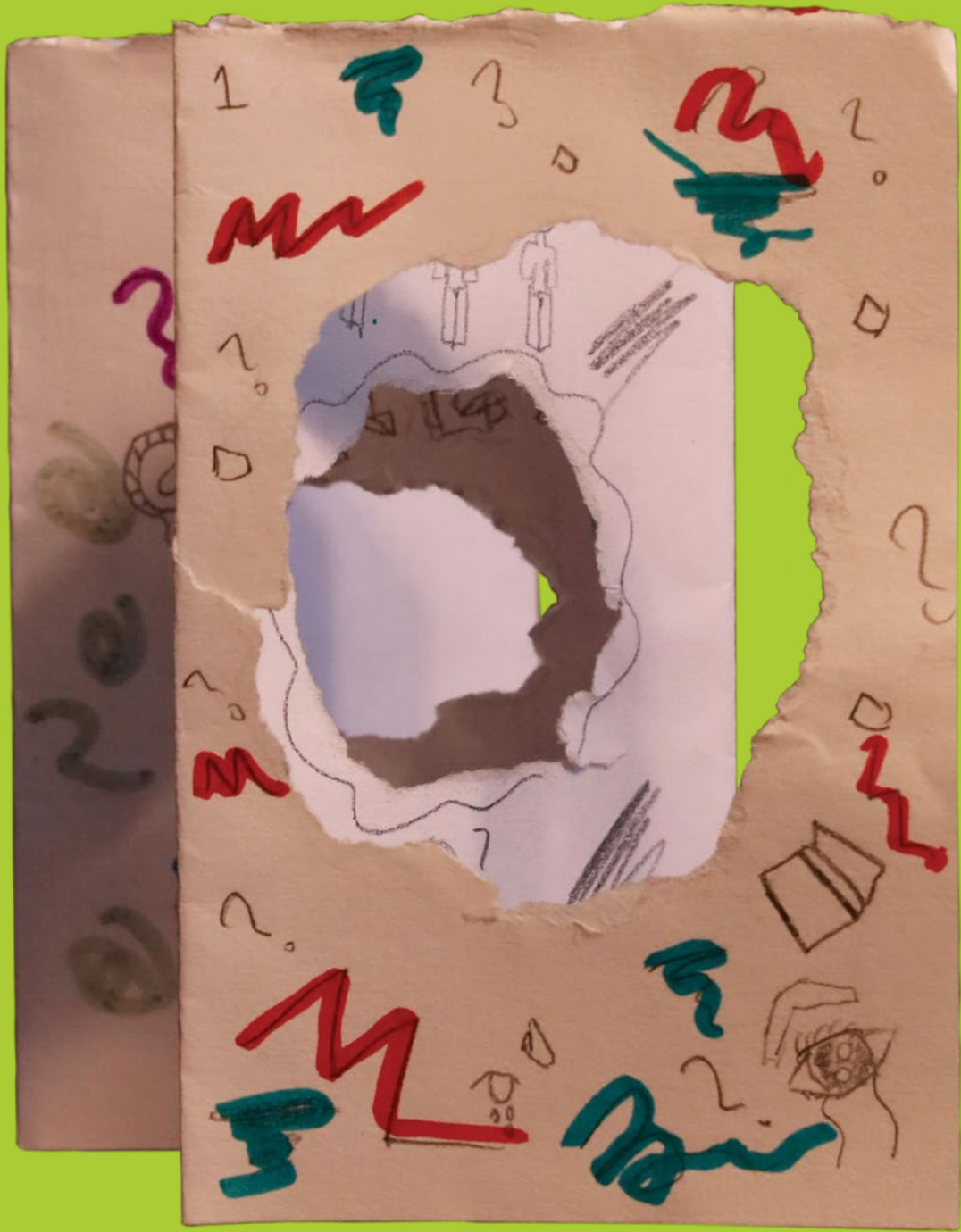
Despite me knowing, I acted like an idiot that did not know what my mother was talking about. We had a very long boring talk about the classwork and about how what I have done is very bad. I knew that what I had done was bad so I did not care or pay any mind to it. It wasn't until I heard that there were consequences that I did care.

Then she went on her phone as if she were texting someone to plan out the consequences. Once she was done she says " you don't deserve anything what you are doing is setting a bad example for your brothers as you being the oldest you should know better and help them get used to the remote learning" I tried to speak but she stopped me and continues talking " you won't be able to watch TV until all of that work gets done"

at least my phone exists. I say to myself but then she says

" And that phone you will give it to me and I will keep it until I think you are responsible enough to keep up with your work and help the others. The piano I will lock it up





Shianna



# SHIANNA CON'T



in the closet and it wont come out until I want it to come out." My siblings were watching so I tried to act strong. *The pressure of being an older sibling*

"Fine, go ahead and take them if you want" I said while I left to my room.

my heart dropped if I was not able to use my phone or watch tv I was not going to be able to dance in dance was where I let out all my feelings and if i was not able to play piano i was not going to be able to motivate myself and find a source of entertainment through the tough times. I thought to myself *"how will i be able to set a good examples for the younger ones in the house if i feel sad myself and now everything that made me happy was taken away from me"*

From that day on I did work and afterwards will go to the room and stood there being alone reflecting on how sad I was feeling all i wished for was to go back to in-person school and go outside. The end of the school year came and I ended up passing with my highest grade being a 75. I completed all of the missing assignments and the ones that were still being assigned, yet I still could not find happiness being stuck at home.

In 2021 it was said that schools were reopening and I was going to be able to go back to school. I felt happy yet nervous at the same time. It was the day the day i get to go back to school In-person.The doors opened and I went in it was a weird feeling seeing how everything had changed there was no tables in one side of the lunch rooms, there

has always been tables in the whole lunch rooms, seeing all the students with masks on and all the plexi glasses at the table of the classrooms to separate the students it was something new very different from what I had thought but it also felt reliving being able to be in the presence of a school building not being at home. While I was in school there was a great change in my grades. I started to do better academically.

While I am improving academically I am still struggling socially.Now I know not to get attached to things in life. One day you're living a normal life and the next day you could be living a whole different kind of life. It's just the way things are. *If I ever get stuck at home for a long period of time again I will adapt to it way better then how I did this time.* ▼

# ANANI

## Helping A Friend Out

I have been friends with this person for almost 3 years, we laugh, mess around and such. We're close so we get along really well.

He has been struggling with how things are going for him, feeling pressure and such so he usually looks down on himself. Can't really put much into details because it was personal.

I started comforting him when he isn't feeling well or very sad or in anger a bit after all the things he is going through. He used to hurt himself a bit and never was active in his daily activities.

After I knew all that I started to encourage him, trying to give him hope and try to be there for him as much as I can to keep him going so he could reach his goal. In the end he believes in himself more often as long as I'm there to support him.

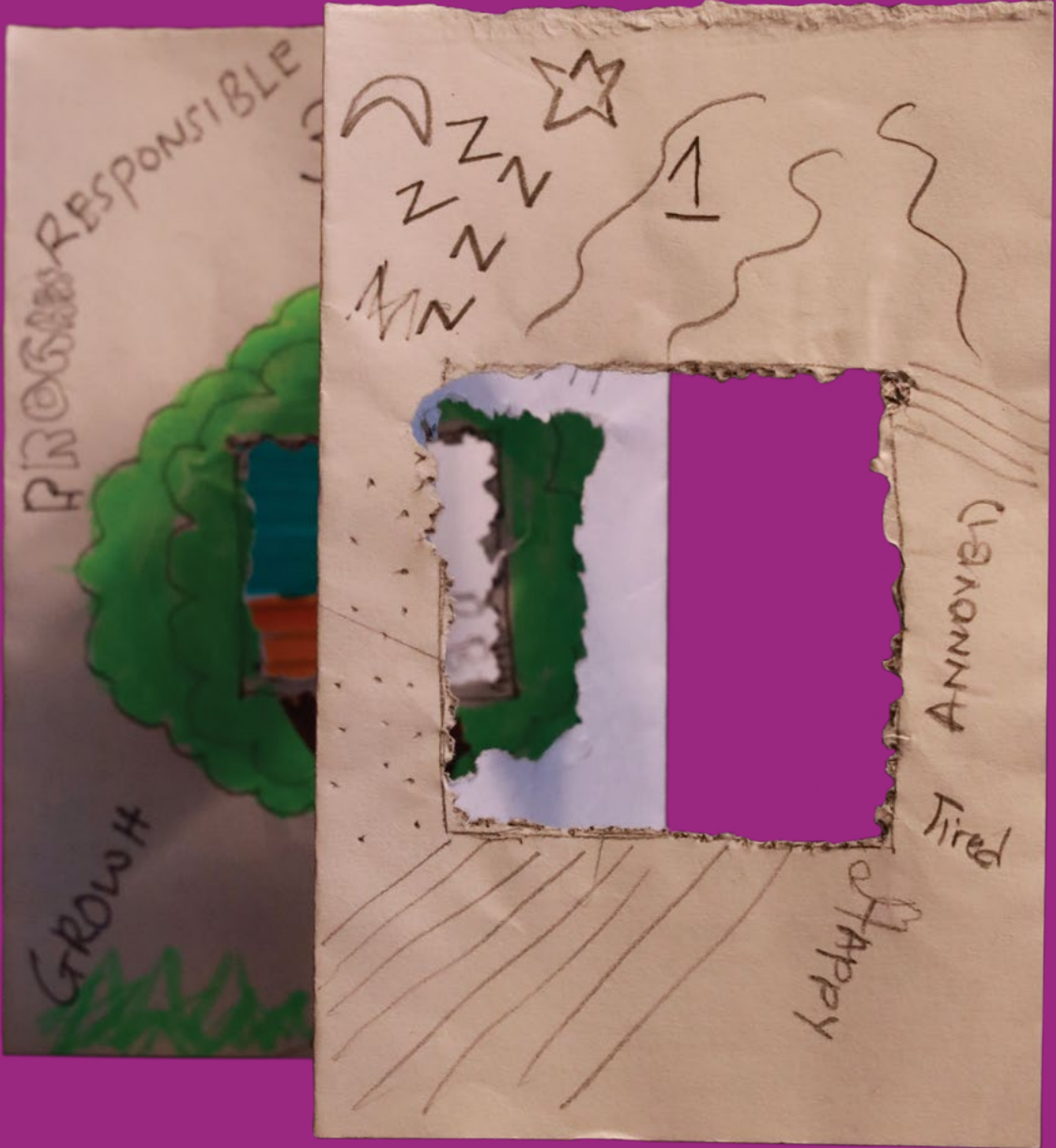
Our friendship has gone deeper ever since. He is more open to me and he stays active more often, he feels safe around me to be himself and express how he feels and I feel the same way. We see each other as family, we always stay by each other's side if we need each other. It's hard to express how I feel because I care for him so much in the heart of our friendship. The more we hang out the closer we get, we are still close friends till this day, we both don't wanna get separated, not ever, in years. It's better to listen to your friends, comfort them and support them to make them feel like they have a purpose. If you truly care for them that is. ▽

“

*After I knew all that I started to encourage him, trying to give him hope and try to be there for him*

”

# Josephine



# JOSEPHINE

## Lost in an Unknown City

I had so many things to say to her, things like *I don't like my height or the way I look. How annoyed I was at school and everyone that I don't like so she could advise me properly.* I wanted to tell her since she is the only one who understands me and my emotions.

But one morning, I got news from my aunt that changed my whole day.

It was a dull Monday morning, as usual I was unhappy about being in a new city, going to a new school and starting over. A knock on my bedroom door, my Aunt Veronica said, "Your mom is arriving in a few hours". It was supposed to be a surprise but she wants me to come home early from school.

I was filled with excitement and joy. All of a sudden a rush of energy that made me feel like I was twelve again, leaving for a whole new country, city and state. I couldn't wait to see her. I had so many things to say to her, things like *i think I'm getting short, how annoyed i was at school and everyone that i don't like so could advise me properly.* I wanted to tell her since she is the only one who understands me and my emotions. So in a matter of thirty minutes, I had to get ready for school, I got set and left the house. Since I just moved into that city. I was unfamiliar and a little uncomfortable, which made me dread leaving the house.

In a matter of 6 hours, I was on my way back, so pumped to see my mom, so overwhelmed that I hopped on the bus without caution and got on my phone the entire time. In a while I noticed my phone was about to run out of battery, then I looked up to see if I was almost home. Something didn't feel right. I noticed nothing looked familiar. Even when I decided to take my phone to call my

aunt I realized my phone had died. My heart began to pound with fear of being lost then my paranoia set in.

I got off the bus, *Is everyone watching me? Will I get kidnapped, why was I watching my phone, am I in danger, why do bad things always happen to me.* In a while I calmed myself, then decided to walk around to see if I would recognise any stops or signs or even buildings. At this point anything was going to serve as hope because I was freaking out.

I got myself together and looked around for help that I could ask for help. At long last I saw a cop, walked towards him trying to figure out how I would present this situation to him without sounding irresponsible, I then said, "I seem to have lost my way can you help," he then replied, "what happened". The I then gathered myself and told him how I ended up here. He spoke to me about being responsible for a bit and then he told me where I was, how to get back home, beginning with the bus to take and the stop to get off at.

Finally I got my way straight and got on the bus. The relief of now recognizing things and places brought such a relief to me. So I got home to see my mom staring at me, gave her a hug. Then I said in relief, "finally what a day," she then said in worry, "What kept you, what happened." I then told her everything that happened and how I was able to make it home, she then exclaimed, "I guess you learnt to be more attentive to your surrounding and also stop being so interested in your phone you don't want to hurt yourself do you," feeling little ashamed I mumbled, "No mom." We then spoke about how school was. She told me about her flight and then she said, "you'd be okay" I then said to myself *I know.* ▼

# BRYA-SKYE

## Never Trust Anyone Around The Pool

One day my family and I were planning to go on a family vacation to Florida. We were all packing and stuff to meet up with each other.

Later on that day we all met up and we were just waiting for the vans to come. It probably took like 10-15 minutes. So we got into the van (drove) and we were listening to music, talking about things, and other fun things that we like to do when we go on trips. Now, my cousin had said something to me when I had headphones in and said "we are almost there" and i said "okay that's good, now leave me alone" and he said "why are you telling me to leave you alone?" And I had said "because I don't want you to talk to me while I got headphones in my ear" and he said "whatever". After he was talking to me, some of us had gone to sleep and then a few minutes later before we got up, we stopped to go get food and started doing the same thing we were doing before we all had fallen asleep.

After that later on in the day, we got to Florida. We all were happy that we had made it there. All the kids were happy yelling, screaming, running around our hotels, and my cousins were posting on snap and instagram saying having fun with the family.

Now, all the girls went into one hotel and all of the boys went into their hotel so, all of the girls were saying how we

were going to the pool so we need to go change. We all had changed, then all of the boys texted our mini group chat saying are y'all ready and we texted back saying that we are ready.

Now that we are all together and making jokes Nuni had said "you are ugly to my cousin" and Taty said "oh you're fat and ugly" and we all were just laughing. Now, a few minutes later we are talking. I was like "when are we going into the pool, like omg"? And Bry my older sister was like "you feening we are about to go right now like relax" and i said okay dummy". Now, we made it to the pool. Everyone had jumped in the pool but my sister and I because I wanted to be in the heat for more time before I got in the pool, too. My sister and I were walking around the pool. We stopped near the 5ft side of the pool and she was like whoever jumps in first is the winner and i said i'm not going to jump in the pool i'm not even tall enough to fit in that pool and she was like i don't care and i said well i do care. Now the next 5 minutes went past and we were just arguing then we stopped. Then out of nowhere she pushed me in the pool and I got mad at her and started yelling. Now I learned my lesson to not trust people when I'm around pools. ▼





**Brya-Skye**

# XAVIER

## Cold Decembers

It was December 7, 2016. I was nine years old and it was three in the morning. My mother received a call. She woke me and my brother's up and told us, "Get dressed. We're leaving.

My two brothers and I put on anything we could find.

We go outside. It's a snowy day. We went to the nearest bus stop to see if we could take a bus but we couldn't because no bus was outside. In my head I wondered, *What the hell is going on? Why do I feel this urge to scream right now?*

My mother called the number back and she said we're gonna be late. My mom said, "We got a cab on the way."

The cab came and the guy was driving fast.

I told my brother "I'm scared."

He said, "Me too."

We arrived at the hospital. Now I was really worried. They placed my brothers and I in a waiting room and they called my mother. We waited and waited, sitting there in the waiting room asking, "Where's mom?"

Time goes by... 3 am, 4 am, 5 am, 6 am...

That's when my mother finally came back out with the doctors.

My mom said, "we've lost an angel!"

The angel was my baby brother.

I never cried so hard in my life.

They asked if we wanted to see my brother. I said, "Yeah. This would be my first time I'm seeing him."

They brought us into the room. There was Daniel - motionless not breathing.

They asked if we wanted to hold him. I said, "Yes, please,"

They gave my brother to me. I broke down as I started crying with him in my arms. He was the size of a Three liter bottle. He was premature and he was born on Halloween.

Blood came out his mouth. I gave him to my mom and ran into the bathroom. I began crying. I didn't know what to do. He was the only reason why I kept going on; he kept me happy.

The next day in school I had a mental breakdown in the staircase. Teachers came. I told them I didn't wanna live anymore. They called the ambulance they took me to a hospital

I don't remember where I was. I know they made me take off my clothes and change into a patient outfit. I said in my head, *I didn't mean it. I would have taken my life.* I go to sleep and I see my little brother. He said me, "Don't do it. Make mom happy."

That is why I go on in life: to keep my brothers happy, to make my mother proud, to make Daniel proud. Every breath, every smile, every word, every step is for those who care.

Now I'm fourteen years old. Six years went by and that day replays in my head. That day makes me shed. That day I learned not to give up even when it's something that strikes your heart like a knife. ▼

## About the Visiting Author

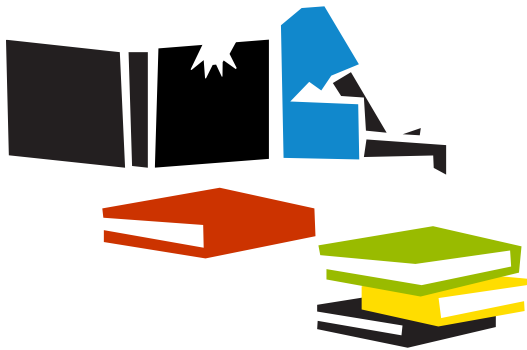


Paul Griffin is the critically acclaimed author of many novels, including *Ten Mile River*, *The Orange Houses*, *Stay with Me*, *Burning Blue*, *Adrift*, *Skyjacked*, as well as the middle grade novels *When Friendship Followed Me Home* and *Saving Marty*.

“Seeing young people learn how to tell their life stories in ways that might bring them a step closer to realizing their dreams—that’s like finding treasure.” Paul lives with his family, human and canine, in New York City, which is chock-full of stories, not to mention characters.

**He can be found online at [paulgriffinstories.com](http://paulgriffinstories.com)**

## About Behind the Book



Behind the Book brings authors and their books into classrooms to build literacy skills and foster a community of lifelong readers and writers. Working with classes from Pre-K through 12th grade, our series of workshops is designed to bring books to life and inspire students to reach their full potential. Behind the Book is embedded in the class curriculum, nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and self-confidence in New York City public school students. All programs meet the Next Generation Learning Standards.

## Next Generation Learning Standards Addressed

**9-10W3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**9-10W3a:** Engage the reader by presenting a problem, conflict, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator.

**9-10W3b:** Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and plot line(s) to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**9-10R4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood.

**9-10R5:** In literary texts, consider how varied aspects of structure create meaning and affect the reader. In informational texts, consider how author's intent influences particular sentences, paragraphs, or sections examine technical or key terms and how language differs across genres.

**9-10SL1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.





BtB empowers the next generation  
of readers and writers by nurturing  
critical thinking, creativity, and self-  
confidence in our students

