



EVERYONE
HAS
A STORY

BY 9TH GRADE STUDENTS AT
FREDERICK DOUGLASS ACADEMY III



EVERYONE



HAS



A STORY

**BY STUDENTS IN MS. JACQUES, MR. FAUST
AND MS. PAUL'S ELA CLASSES AT FDAIII**

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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Behind the Book

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Special Thanks, Amazon volunteers: David Biderman,
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Mohsen Malik, Arif Razvi, Samantha Reiss

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.

**This book is dedicated to
the new incoming freshmen to help
them see that even if you don't have
any idea how to write a narrative
and tell your story,
you can do it!**

**Thank you to Ms. Jacques,
Mr. Faust, and Ms. Paul, for
believing in us and for pushing
us to speak about these
moments in our lives.**

**To the incredible writer
Paul Griffin who taught us how to
make a story out of anything and
to Behind the Book for giving us a
chance to tell our stories.**

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

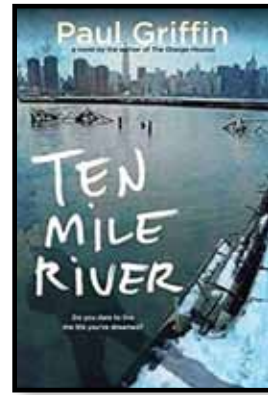
How do we turn our strongest memories into compelling stories? The 9th grade ELA students explored crafting their own memories into stories by reading *Ten Mile River* by Paul Griffin. The novel is a story of the friendship and struggles of two homeless youths, José and Ray, living in an abandoned building in upper Manhattan. As tension creeps into their relationship, Ray must find an identity and future separate from José and Ten Mile River. Themes of choice and consequence are woven throughout the novel.

Before author Paul Griffin first visited the classroom, the students met with Behind the Book drama consultant Karen Butler. She guided the students through activities that deepened connections to plot and character. When Paul met with the students, they were prepared with thoughtful, specific questions about various characters and plot lines. He then shared his story of how and why he started writing. He told them, "Writing is music. I want to hear language."

Students began writing their narratives about something unforgettable that had happened to them. They were instructed to include the specifics of what happened and what made the event so hard to forget. During Paul's second visit, he looked at their first drafts and offered suggestions for developing their ideas and strengthening their writing.

With the help of Behind the Book volunteers working in small groups, students refined their personal narratives, focusing on story arcs and critical details. Behind the Book teaching artists Candice Humphries and Barbara Coccioletti then helped the students create vibrant collages reflecting aspects of memory from their writing.

We hope you "hear the language" and view the art to appreciate all the thought and work that resulted in this book.



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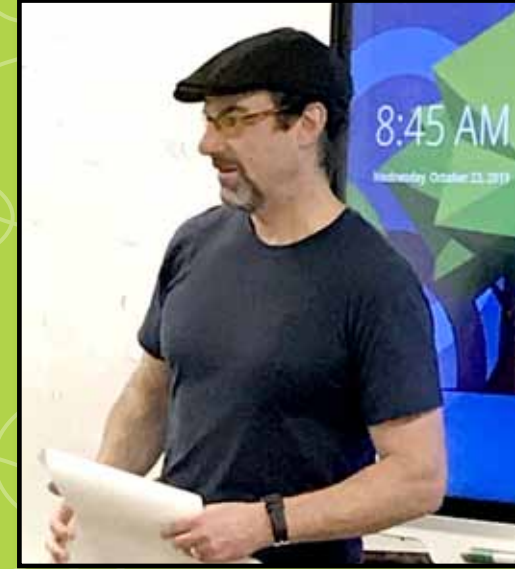
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PERIOD 1

PERIOD 1



SENDY

HOMESICK

I used to go out with my mom's friend Paty a lot, I also used to go to her house to play with her son Daniel and talked with her daughter Gaby (Gabriela), I really liked being with them. She and her husband Yovany used to invite me to go out with the family on weekends, I had a great time, we went to rivers, parks but where we lived the most was the rivers we ate, we played. The river where we live is called "Cangrejal River" we used to go to that river a lot, the river was beautiful the water is transparent, there are rocks in the water and avia very different but beautiful rocks, everything you see in the water was seen, the Heaven was always beautiful, it was light blue, it was practically paradise.

One day I woke up very badly, with a fever, a headache, my body was weak, I just wanted to go to bed, I couldn't eat because I was vomiting. my mom called Paty and brought her

son Daniel, she helped my mom with everything she had to do because my aunts were working, so they tried to give me something to eat because I had not eaten anything, the vomiting was falling apart and I started eat well, then as in the afternoon Yvany Paty's husband arrived at my house to take me to the hospital to check me out what I had, time passed and they told my mother that it was nothing serious that everything is fine and I It's better, when I left the hospital they took me to my house, and then I got hungry and started eating very well, everything was fine. the next day I was as if nothing had happened to me, everything remained normal, the next day I went to church, and there I met her.

Hi sister paty (so we say to the church member)

Hello sendy how do you feel?

I feel good sister, thank God and how are you?

I'm fine thank God

After everything continued normal, they invited me to rivers, to eat with the family, ect, a few years later we came to the United States.

SENDY





DIANA

DIANA

MOM'S RING

My mom had this beautiful gold ring, I always wanted to wear it. That ring shined every time I looked at it, Especially that diamond in the middle of the ring. Every time I look at it I just wanted to wear it more and more.

One day my Mom told me that this ring is really important to her because my dad gave her that ring when they get married,

One time, my mom was in good mood and when she was sitting in the living room, I took the chance and I told her about what I wanted.

"Mom? Can I wear your wedding ring for one day? I promise I will not lose it," I said.

She said, "Okay but don't lose it. This ring is important to me,"

I said, "Okay mom I will not lose it."

I was not confident about saying I'm not going to lose it.

The next day I went to school and showed my friends the ring.

One of my friends said, "Wow that's so cool."

Other friends that I don't like said, "Your mom let you wear it, or you stole it from her."

I said, "Say whatever you want because I know that I didn't steal it." and I Was showing off.

I was so happy and every time I looked at the ring, I would be thinking, *Will I ever get one like this from someone who loves me? And I love him?*

When I was going home, I tried my best to hide the ring inside my jacket so no one could see it and steal it from me.

Everything was fine until I got home and realized my mom's ring was not on my finger. At first, I was thinking, *What if someone stole it from my hand when I was on the bus?* I was shaking I started looking for it everywhere in the house. I was nervous, sweating, going crazy trying to find the ring. I knew my mom was going to get mad at me. I knew I was going to be in big trouble by mom and dad

When mom walk up from her nap, she was looking at me so weirdly like, *Why are you so panicking like this?* Then, my mom knew I was looking for something because I was looking under the couch. Then she asked me, "What are you looking for?"

I stood in my spot look at my mom. I wanted to lie and say, "I'm looking for my phone," but I couldn't because I told myself that's a lie, then I told her that I lost the ring.

She was not surprised and gave me that look that showed me that I been going crazy for no reason. "I have the ring," she said.

I started to cry because I thought that I lost it and when I know that my mom found it I was thanking God and then I asked, "Mom where did you find it?"

She said, "I find at the top of the sink in the bathroom."

I remembered that when I come home and went to use the bathroom to wash my hands. I took it off and put it in the top of the bathroom sink.

I was relieved and I promised myself that I will never wear or use something that is so important or is not my stuff.

ROSA

DOUBTS

Growing up people always made me doubt myself and made me feel like I'm not smart enough and that I'll never accomplish anything in life. I was never really good at math or English throughout my time in elementary and middle school. English was not my first language so learning it was a struggle. It was hard for me to comprehend things like everyone else. People had always accused me of cheating off "my friends" which was false. People would call me stupid, make fun of my physical appearance, etc. For example, I felt so insecure and ashamed of my own self because of my skin. I never felt comfortable with people looking at me or even talking to me. There was this staff called Mr. Martin who would doubt me for everything and would always tell me,

"When you get to high school you're not going to change and you're still going to be coming late to school every day and keep on missing days."

I told him, "Okay, and?"

He always gave me an attitude and despised me for no reason. It embarrassed me because a lot of teachers and staff would hear. I tried not to show my emotions, but I was hurt inside by the rude things he would tell me. I would miss school days when my skin would get worse because I knew people would judge me and it's not something I wanted. I was stressed out and it made my face worse, I didn't feel like myself. People would find any bad and offensive names to call me. At one point I was always called really "skinny", but I was short, and I grew so that problem was resolved. My classmates would set me up to get in

trouble and make fun of anything I did. Once they locked me out of the room and the assistant principal caught me and I had to get detention for two days. I got my parents called and everything.

I tried telling Ms. S, "They locked me out the class, if it was me then they would've opened the door, but they just laughed" *Why me? Everything's always turned on me.*

I was angry, I turned red. I looked at everybody with raging look and I stormed out of the classroom going into the assistant principal's office. I stared at her with an enraged face. I wanted to defend myself, but I didn't want to get in any more trouble. I went into the classroom and whenever someone tried talking to me, I would get angry and take my anger out on them.

Soon then, state test rolled around for science, I was really nervous because I didn't know how well I was going to perform. People had tried cheating off me, asking for help, etc. To sum up, I ended up getting higher test scores than the people who I supposedly "cheated off" which wasn't surprising to me at all but it sure was to everyone else.

I told my science teacher Mr. Awumey, "I told you I can do it, just because I don't participate often, it doesn't mean I don't know anything!"

Mr. Awumey told me, "I know, I had more confidence in you than the rest of the people here" which shocked me because I always felt as though he believed I wouldn't do well and that I wasn't smart like the rest of the people in my class. *Woah. I didn't know I was capable of doing this well at all.* I was so happy and proud of myself, I showed off and told people to not doubt me.

Soon after, I graduated and moved on to High School. Then, I thought to myself and realized that I shouldn't let people put me down and made me realize that your education is something you should not be ignoring and

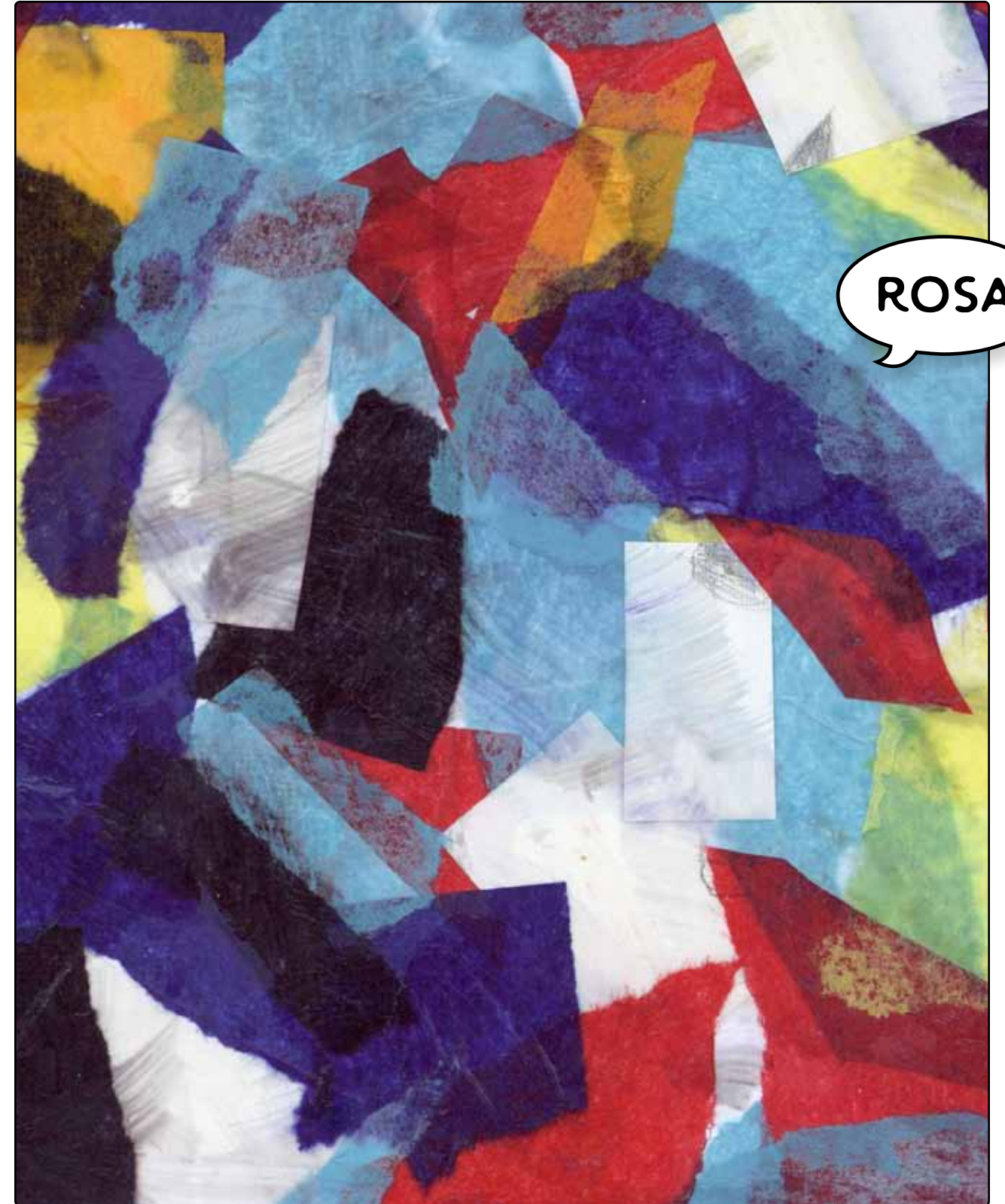
it's something that YOU should be working hard on.

I started working hard when I entered High School and I realized that I want to become a better person, get my diploma, graduate and get into a good college because I know it'll make my parents proud because they were not able to get the education that I'm getting today and it's something that should not be taken advantage of. I spoke to my parents about my dreams after high school which is moving to Atlanta and going to college there. They said that once I graduate, we can go over there and they'll help me find an apartment. People brought me down and made me stop caring about my education which is something I wish I never let them do. My mom is my biggest inspiration, she makes me care less about what people think of me and reminds me that I can do better than they can, she is a hard-working woman and I don't ever want to let her down. I've realized that going to college can help you get more job opportunities; my dream is to finish college and join the military and maybe become an orthodontist when I'm done.

My math teacher told me to join the military because I'm really good at math, especially graphing which can be useful. I thought to myself, *maybe I should... I'm strong and I have an uncle who was in the marines who can train me.*

I learned that people will try to put you down so they can feel better about themselves. I learned to be more confident in myself even if I don't feel the best, I know that I can push myself harder to become the person that everyone thought I was never going to be. After all, I'll never let anybody make me doubt myself ever again, it is important to have confidence in yourself because people will always try anything to put you down.

ROSA



YOHENNY

THE CARDIAC MONITOR

That cardiac monitor sound brings me memories of my grandfather lying down in bed seeing him die. It started with my grandfather grandma giving a genetic problem of cancer in my family and that's when the nightmare started, my grandfather was a 60 year old man victim of cancer he never wanted his family worried too much, He always acted like everything was fine even if he knew it was not. Me and my mom went to the hospital my aunt came out and pulled my mom away from me.

"I don't think he gonna make it," crying she said.

While I was hearing everything my mind went blank, I was just thinking about all the good moments that me and my grandfather had together. Then I saw my mom crying I acted like I didn't hear anything.

"Mami que paso, Porque lloras?" I said, knowing what was happening.

"I am going to be honest with you," with sadness in her face, she said.

"Is grandpa ok" I said.

"He is not, your auntie told me he might not make it," she mumbled.

I just stayed quiet, we went to his room it was full of my family members and there was my grandfather lying down in bed with a big white blanket everyone with sadness in their face, I felt like I was in a funeral. I walk up to my grandfather bed I hug him.

"Hola abuelo," I mumbled.

He didn't answer me back. I was hoping so bad he would answer me and say Hola mi nieta but he never did, I grab his hands it was so soft like cotton candy, My grandpa and my mom where like bestfriends.

The next day, my mom got a call from my uncle, "Dad is really bad you need to come right now," with frustration he said.

We pull up to the hospital, me and my mom look at each other with a worried face, we went to his room, I stood there for a good five minutes more, just staring at him knowing that might be the last time I see him. After an hour the cardiac monitor made a sound doctors came to the room took my grandfather out of the room

This can't be happening, I told myself.

All my family members started crying, Tears started coming out running down through my cheeks,

He is gonna be fine, I told myself.

After a good 30 minutes of standing outside of the room my grandfather was in, the doctors came out.

"We are gonna be honest with you guys," the doctor said.

"He didn't made it" the doctor mumbled.

My mind went blank for a few seconds, *This can't not be happening to ME.* Me and my family went to my grandfather's room there was him, lying down in bed with that white blanket I was so devastated that I run up to his bed and hug him I knew that was my last time I hugged him.

Come on, he's gonna be in a better place, I said to myself. I looked at my mom, tears were slowly coming down through her cheeks, I hug her tight, my family started facetimeing my other family members that couldn't make it to the hospital and tell them the news, my mom stayed in the hospital my dad pick me up from the hospital because I had school the next day.

The next day my mom isn't home yet, my dad woke me up and started to get me and my little brother ready for school I didn't want to go but I had an important exam, when I got to school everyone knew something bad happened my face expressed everything, I couldn't even concentrate on the exam i try not to cry but tears always came out from my eyes i tried to stay strong

and not be sad around my family, just thinking he would be in a better place.

I got home my mom was in her room crying getting ready to go to the funeral then she told me to get ready, we went to the funeral when i went inside everyone was wearing black, and there was my grandfather in a white coffin with a black suit he look so pale and skinny that if you had a long time without seeing him you couldn't even recognize him. Just having that feeling that he was the one who was there the whole time with me since I was born and now see him died just like that with not even saying goodbye just broke my heart and seeing all my family members that live far gathered together, I never wanted my whole family to gather together in a place like that and in a moment like that seeing all of them crying. I sit down, stayed there just looking at that white coffin tears coming out like crazy hearing everyone crying it was just the worst day of my life. Everything *is gonna be fine.* He *is always gonna be in my heart and he is going to be in a better place,* I always told myself, My cousin came up to me

"I know our whole family is in a bad moment right now but we gonna get through this together," she mumbled.

I just stared at her look at round seeing all my family friends that where there for us, *I never thought so many people would be for us in a moment like this.* Me and my family went home i went to my room, I couldn't hold my tears just remembering that white coffin and that moment when the cardiac monitor started beeping, my little brother as 6 years old, he came up to me when he saw me crying in my room.

"Don't cry our grandfather is going to be in a better place and he is always gonna be with us in our hearts." hugging me, he said.

Then I realized that we all need to go to those hard times and that we all gonna end up in the same place and that my grandfather always is going to be in my heart.





ASHLEY

ASHLEY

HOSPITAL WALLS

I was standing in my kitchen in sudden shock. My mom had just called. Wearing a hospital gown, she was laying there. Without saying anything, I screamed and ran over to my sister. I was frantic. We hopped together excitedly. Overfilling joy slowly creeping up our hearts.

At home, I was listening to my favorite song while doing the chores that were expected to do that evening. I wasn't expecting anything that day, not even a call from mother saying she was getting surgery.

For months we had been waiting for my mom to get better. She had been rushing in and out of dialysis. Drinking soda every day when she was young made her really sick and had to get hospitalized. The doctors told us she needed to get a new kidney, or she could easily get really sick with only one. We remained in the hospital, waiting for someone to donate. Finally, my grandmother decided she wanted to give hers. She got the surgery, Taking really good care of her after that. Sadly, it didn't last because she needed a donor again.

Our grandmother took us to a fast food restaurant while we waited for her. I worried because I didn't know what they did to her there. As we walked to the Burger King our grandmother exclaimed,

"Your cousin used to go to this school before he moved to Alaska. He was quite troublesome when he studied here."

We laughed and replied, "I remember you used to pick him up here."

I knew she said this to cheer us up, and it did for some time. But again, I was back to thinking. I wanted to go back and stay there with my mom, but we also couldn't join her in there because it was risky, and hospitals weren't really my thing.

We arrived at Burger King, I remember the smell of fried food. "What do you guys want to order?" Grandma asked.

I gestured toward the biggest burger. "I want that one."

My sister pointed toward the one stuffed with bacon. "And I want that one."

I tried eating quickly so we could go back, but it didn't end well. I soon got a stomach ache. When she finally stepped out, I was alleviated, and we went back and spent the rest of the night together.

My mom continued to go to dialysis, but my sister and I didn't go with her. We kept in touch after that to see how she was doing and so far, she was doing well. She then had my baby brother Matthew, who had led her to have problems with her kidney again. So again, she was in the hospital waiting for surgery. We immediately visited her. *She is really skinny*, I thought, *I really hope this treatment doesn't last long. It must hurt a lot*,

"Hey mom," She looked at me as I pointed to her arm, "Does that hurt?"

"I have already gotten used to it." She looked at the tubes going through her arm like veins. "But yes, it does hurt...a lot."

I felt my heart drop every time I saw her blood go through the tubes. *Don't mention it again*.

"So anyway... Do you remember last Mother's Day?" I asked, to break the awkward silence dwelling the room.

My mom and my sister looked at me and smiled. We all remember. *I loved those times*. I sighed. We left

after spending time with her but came back frequently. I talked to her even when I wasn't with her, feeling that a heavyweight had been lifted every time that I did because I knew that she was well. I knew that she would get better because she was strong. *I want her to get better already*, A sudden sadness came over me. I imagine what she must have been going through.

All of her family had been hoping for her to get better. My sister and I especially. We helped each other out by comforting each other. We were all waiting for a call. Finally, a call comes through it's my mom

She says, "Guys, I'm fine and that she just needs some recovering."

"Great I really needed to hear that," I replied honestly, "I was really worried about your health."

She sighed, "You don't have to anymore I will get better very soon, I still have to go to dialysis though."

I was so grateful that she was good, but still had questions. I told my sister. She happily replied

"Really?" She was smiling too and told us that she might heal in about three months. Three months was too long for me, but I was still happy.

We continue to wait but progress has been made, Mother had gotten the tubes out of her arm, but still had to have one going through her collarbone. She was getting better. Our family has been less stressed about her and so have my sister and me. She thankfully doesn't drink as much soda anymore which can help her the healing process. Hopefully, she won't need surgery again in the future. From this, I have since been more aware of my well-being as well as hers. Now I care not only of my mom but also of myself because of this entire experience.

MARITZA

UNTITLED

It was one cloudy evening and I was just about to enter the kitchen until I heard noises coming from my brother's room. I struggled to make it clear as to what was going on, so I decided to quietly rest my head on the door. I was beginning to hear my dad talking to my brother, slowly raising his voice more and more.

"Why do you have to be so angry, what have I ever done to you?" yelled my dad

Ugh, what did my brother do now?

My brother was always naturally a grumpy person and would often get it trouble for just that. My family would usually call him out for his behavior, and I wouldn't dare to lay a foot in his room whenever he's having a bad day. My greatest instincts were to go to my room and not listen to their conversation anymore otherwise I would feel terrible for both of them, which I do.

I then heard a door slamming shut. My curiosity got the best of me, so I went to check once again what was happening. As I was walking to my living room, I found my dad on the couch, head in his hands. I quietly walked back to my room and tried to think of ideas that would make my dad feel better. A couple minutes later I came up with the idea to draw my dad a picture. Taking a loose-leaf from my binder, I started drawing. I drew a huge heart that read the words "I love you" on the inside, then my dad and I at the bottom of the paper, right below the heart. Before walking out the door I prayed my dad would like it.

"Here goes nothing," I said as I walked out of my room, starting to feel confident that my dad would approve of my drawing. After handing it to him, I waited for his reaction. I was starting to get nervous after a while, thoughts rushing through my head. That ended when my dad finally gave me a response after observing the childish picture, I drew him. He ended up saying "Thank you" numerous times with a smile plastered on his face.

He then proceeded to keep the picture. This immediately boosted my self-confidence and made me like a genuine person. Since that day, I learned to use art as a way to cheer others up. And so, I did just that with my family members, such as my mom and my sister. And even my own friends as well whenever they were feeling down. I would draw things like their favorite animals or characters from their favorite T.V show, or even their idols.

As my dad was preparing to leave, we shared a goodbye. When he left, I went to my room, took out a loose-leaf paper and a pencil, and began to draw more and more pictures



MARITZA



LAURA

LAURA

UNTITLED

One day I was saving some money to buy myself a new backpack because the backpack was like \$76 and I didn't have that much money to buy it, so I tell my dad how much it was.

But one day I was in my room and my dad called me.

"Laura come here. Where do they sell the backpack you want?"

I was thinking what to say to him because I have to pick a store because there is a lot of stores that sell backpack, so I said it was Modell's the closest to my house because I didn't want to walk that much.

My dad was laying down in his boxers looking at me with a face that he was mad about something. I didn't know that he had to plan to buy me the backpack because I was like, *Omg I'm going to buy my own backpack, so my dad doesn't have to pay for my book bag.*

Then five minutes later I rushed out of the shower and got changed so we could go out.

We go outside it was hot and sunny. We walked through Creston down to Fordham. It was a long walk to Fordham. There was a lot of people that day in the sidewalk.

Then I could see the store and we walked to the store and we make it to the store and saw a lot of backpacks that were cute but and I said to myself, I will never buy them.

I see the store we go inside and I look for the backpack that I want it but I didn't find it so I look for another one and I liked it so when I went to pay for it. The woman showed me how much it was. I was only missing \$1 so I can pay for my backpack.

Then the thing I didn't know was that my dad was going to pay for it. I was so happy that he paid for my backpack.

But one week later some nice shoes came out and I wanted them so bad and I asked my dad to buy them for me but he was like, "No I got you a backpack."

"But I want the shoes that only cost \$119".

Then he was like, "Oh you buy them."

At that time I didn't have that much money to buy the shoes. We kept talking about the shoes for hours and my dad was like, "Okay I will not buy you the shoes you want too much from m because I paid for you bookbag."

Then I tell him, "Why did you had to buy the bookbag? I'm happy that you did that for me I love it, but I want to buy my own bookbag with my money not yours."

Then he starts saying that I want to spend all his money.

After that I learned a lesson: don't ask for too much. They are doing all this to give you what they can so you can be happy with the things that they give you.

Thank you dad for buying me that bookbag. I love it.

BAYAAN

SOCCER

My name is Bayaan and this is a story about how I became better and more confident at playing soccer it was hard, but I was able to make it.

When I came to America, I was a decent enough soccer player. When I was in the 4th grade and heard there was a soccer team. I joined because I didn't know that much about basketball or other sports. When I joined it was actually really fun.

I know I said I was decent at playing soccer, but the coach taught us how to play. it really made sense. They worked with this group called the NYCFC while we were there. They didn't just teach us how to play soccer, they taught us about how to eat healthy among other things.

They gave us slips to an event. It was for us to meet at the gates of the Yankee Stadium. When I went in, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. They told me and my dad to follow we walked through this hole why a lot of people were preparing.

When we went, they gave us uniforms. We changed into them and that was when we saw the player. There was this soccer game in the stadium a lot of people watching. A lot of my friends were told to go with the players. They picked three kids, me included. We were told to go with the mayor. I was able to get a picture taken with us shaking hands. he held our hands and walked to the middle of the field, He gave an announcement I liked it because it wasn't that long after that the game started we were told we could stay and watch but all my life in soccer or any sport I never did like watching so I left.

After that day, we did some more practice and the year ended.

I was then in 5th grade. I joined the same soccer team. The drills were different because we were now in the 5th grade. We learned a lot.

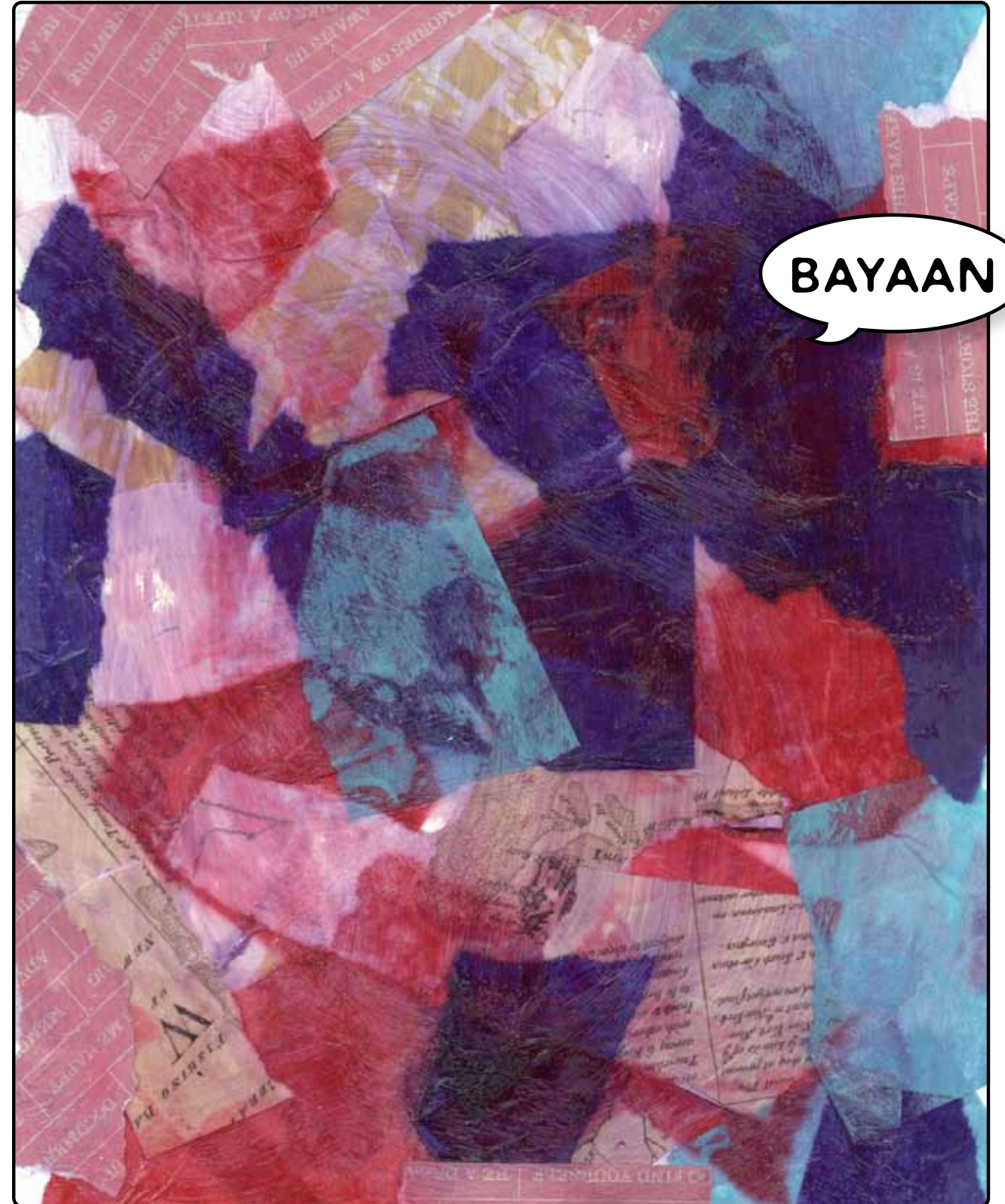
Around the same time as before, we were given a slip. This time they actually told us what we were doing so when we went through the same procedure, everybody was mostly doing the same thing. But for me this time I had a chance to go with the player.

After that year the NYCFC was gone. There was a soccer team, but not as good as what the NYCFC was like so I didn't join. They were not even that serious to play as I was so I did not do any other sport till the 7th grade. It was track since my friends thought I was fast so I gave it a shot. I didn't feel as I did when playing soccer, but it was still fun I made some new friends.

I did some throughout 8th grade, graduated. Now in high school, I joined the soccer team. It was a lot different than middle school. They were too bossy: do this, do that. It was too much. But one of my friends kept cheering me on, so I didn't want to let him down.

I learned to cooperate with the team and in return made me better at playing. They sometimes show me tricks I should do while playing a game. So I learned to be better at something, you have to go through some hardships and don't give up why when the reward you will get for trying will be amazing.

BAYAAN



CELENA



CELENA

THE BABY BLUE INHALER

The color of the baby blue inhaler reminded me of my little brother's face.

It all started in a hot summer. Me, my little brother Aaron of two years old who had a lot of problems of flu since he was one year old, and my little sister Bianca of five years old and my mom were in the living room sitting down to have a typical day. As always, my mom and I were minding our own business being in our phones. I was watching DIY videos on YouTube and my mom was on Facebook. Everything seemed alright like a regular day in my house.

My little siblings were watching Sponge Bob. Out of nowhere, Aaron started coughing. I wasn't worry or anything at the time because he had problems of coughing before. Then I was getting a bit worried because the coughing was getting worse and worse.

My sister was just there standing there without knowing anything, and I was just shocked that he was getting a fever. My mom calmed it with some Ibuprofen to get the fever down. I was relieved that it did.

Everything went back to normal, but then at night, his coughing and the fever got worse. Sponge Bob was still playing. He was screaming. My mom was freaking out. She was walking around the house nervously. I called the taxi.

My mom grabbed my brother and got him his hat, pants, and coat. The taxi called. "I am here," giving his last, "beep-beep".

I just responded with an "Okay," and told my mom "Bye, take care."

She responded with a nervous smile. "We will be fine"

And just took my brother to the hospital. I wanted to go but who was going to stay with my sister? So, I stayed.

I was wondering if I would I ever see my brother scream again. I was just thinking that a simple flu could converted into the worst nightmare for someone that you love a lot. Then I just told myself, *He would be okay. Right now, you have a sister to worry about. Just prepare dinner for your sister.*

I was still crying/upset that I couldn't go with him and be there with him. It was already 12:00 Am.

I texted my mother. "How is Aaron doing?" I said.

She responded, "We have to stay the whole night at the hospital, but he is okay."

I was relieved with what my mom said. I texted back, "Okay Mami. I would see you tomorrow."

I just started thanking God that my brother was okay.

I made sure my sister had finished her milk and cereal. I washed the dishes and went straight to my bed and fell asleep.

I woke up at 9:00 am. Seeing my house so empty without my mom and my brother felt weird. My sister was still asleep, so I went straight to my closet and changed my pjs. Then I went to the kitchen and made something for me and my sister.

She woke up and said "Where's Mami?"

I looked around and responded, "She is in the supermarket."

Then both of us just went straight to the kitchen. She grabbed her phone and sat. I made some pancakes and she ate them all up. I just remember how happy she was. Just seeing her like that I was a bit sad thinking about what could happen if my mom didn't take my brother to the hospital. But then I said to myself, *Stop thinking of what didn't happen and just be thankful that he is okay.*

Thinking all about that even my sister went to the bathroom to brush her teeth. I was just like, *Wow she never does that.* I finished my breakfast, picked up our dishes, and went to the kitchen to wash the dishes.

I finished with that I started cleaning my whole house. Around 12:30 pm I heard a knock-knock on the door. I opened the door without even asking "Who is it?"

Seeing my brother was like not seeing him in years because Aaron and I, we are like gum stuck to together even though he is 2 and I am 14 and we are separated because of school. But every time I come back from school he comes saying "Ce-ne-na"

Just that word makes my day!

I was just remembering what would be of me without him I hug him and just feeling that the hug really meant something. I was feeling like I was on the softest blanket! And then me and my mom just gave each other a look and smile of that everything is back to normal.

Until right now he is going great but that sometimes he got to use an inhaler because of little problems but he is okay and that's what am thankful for.

MARISOL

UNTITLED

A time when I said something I regretted was when me and my mother got into an argument.

It was on the weekend, a Sunday morning. I was so tired, didn't even want to get up from my bed. All day Saturday I was so busy helping out my aunt because she was moving. My body was so sore from moving things around and carrying these really big heavy boxes. So, I thought Sunday was going to be my day to tranquilize.

Then my mom came into my room telling me to wake up and start cleaning. I told her I was tired and that I just wanted to sleep for a couple more hours, but she didn't care. She didn't even place confidence in me when I told her that I was with my aunt helping her since she was moving. My aunt had asked her if I could help, so I didn't get the point as to why she thought I was lying.

I tried going back to sleep after she woke me up, but I couldn't because she was still talking. I got up from my bed brushed my teeth, took a shower then did my hair.

After that I made my breakfast then washed my dishes. I then grabbed the broom and mop and started cleaning. I was really just going to stay in bed all day, but I didn't want her to be upset with me.

I then put some clothes on and went to the store to buy candy. When I came back home, I went inside my room.

Five minutes later, she knocks on the door and asks, "Where did you get the money to buy the candy from?"

I told her, "My aunt gave me money, since I was helping her."

She thought I had taken her money because said she was missing money from her wallet. I had no clue where that money went because I didn't take it. At that point I was so upset because I didn't like the fact that she blamed me for taking her money. I told her I wanted to leave the house and move in with my father because I was so mad and I just wanted to leave.

After a while I realized that I should have never said that because she has been there for me since day one and my father has never been in my life so I thought that was a very bad thing to say because she's the woman who gave me life. I'm never in need of anything and I have everything I need. But because I was upset, I said it.

When I said that she stood quiet and went into her room. I felt bad and decided to speak to her about the situation. I told her I didn't take her money, but before I even continued to talk, she said, "I'm sorry for blaming it on you, or even thinking that you could have stolen from me, i realized that i had spent the money a couple of days ago on some things for the house."

I felt relieved because at least she didn't continue to think stole her money, and knew what she did with it.





CESIAH

CESIAH

GASP FOR AIR

I love going on summer vacations. I've always wanted to actually enjoy the cool water on a hot day, and Volcano Bay was the place to do that. Me and my family were headed to Orlando Florida which is far from where I live. It took almost two to three hours to fly over on a plane. Though I've never been on a plane I knew it was going to be worth the wait.

It was a family trip. My two sisters, my mother, and uncle and his girlfriend. Being on trip with my family means everything to me. It just isn't happy or fun without them. I guess that's something u should look forward to in a family. There was nothing better than the view of the volcano with spiraling slides attached and a pool rushing with waves right underneath. It was like I was in Hawaii. As I entered the park, tropical music played all around me. I was about to have one of the best times of my life.

Wow this is just plain beautiful, I thought.

We stopped at a corner to bathe ourselves with sunscreen. As I rubbed lotion on my arms my uncle, who was just about finished, said, "We have to ride every single ride here, got it?", with an excited but daring face.

There was one thing that remained in my mind though. I didn't want to ride anything that consisted of me landing straight into a pool. The only way I would be if I had a floatie. I knew that they wouldn't understand because they knew how to swim while I didn't. Sometimes I wish I did.

While walking towards the pool, behind were people relaxing on their backs, and kids rushing to get on the different slides. There were many of them. Assorted in many colors like green, yellow, purple, and many more that twist and turned together. After a few hours I was able to ride most of the rides.

"I can't believe we finished the whole park in just a few hours," I blurted as we walked towards another section of the

park. The sound of our flip flops clacking against the ground made us sound like old grandmas walking around a house at night.

"Yea but there's one more thing to end the day." I heard from behind me. It was my sister.

The Rapid River. It was a fast-moving stream of water. I thought it would be similar to a lazy river except this time you were to where a life jacket and the water went at a quicker speed. I felt weird knowing that I didn't want to go even if I was wearing a life jacket. *I've never even used a life jacket in my life before.* But I saw four-year olds get on, so I didn't want to make a fool out of myself and stay behind.

"Come on, it's not that scary!" they begged.

My expression made it look like I was being forced by the gut. My sister handed me a life jacket which was placed on a big medal rack dripping with water. I buckled the straps and oddly felt claustrophobic. As I look ahead, I saw lifeguards help get everyone moving.

"Make sure your life vests are buckled and move straight to the right."

My heart was pounding a bit, but it looked kind of fun. I held my sister's hand as we walked in the water. As soon as I went in, the force of the water was strong enough to push you forward just like an actual river. In front of me were little heads moving like rocks on a lake. I floated but I wanted to latch onto the side walls, but they were too high. A quarter of my body shook out the water. I was trying my best to keep the water from reaching my mouth, but it was just too fast.

A loud siren sound came from behind me.

As I slowly turned my head around, waves appeared to be forming. *Nobody never mentioned waves!* I panicked in my mind which made me sink little by little by little. I could only imagine myself smacking against the water, sinking like there was no room for my body to float. I was afraid.

The waves were heading toward my way. I closed my eyes and held my breath because even if I didn't know how to functionally swim, I could go under water easily with no problem. But not moving water!

I held my breath for a few seconds in what felt like a lifetime. *How could I be drowning with a life jacket on?* I felt foolish. My nose rushed with water. Then the sound of my name coming from my sister sounded foggy due to the water clogging in my ears. I wanted to say, "Help!", but I couldn't gasp for air.

I couldn't get myself to float and that's what I was what doing wrong. I was panicking instead of relaxing. I could see my sister trying to grab on to me, but the water kept moving.

"Cesi-". I couldn't make out the rest, but I knew she was trying to help me.

After what felt like a lifetime of splashing and struggling a blurred image of a man in red shorts began to clarify as I was being pulled out of the water. I gave a few coughs as my nose began to burn from the chlorine in the water. The lifeguard who was all soaked placed his hand on my shoulder.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

I gave a nod as I shivered in relief and said thank you.

"Are you sure? You almost got me there," he said smiling.

Then I laughed while breathing to catch some more air. *How could this happen to me?* My uncle went up to me, shocked, but laughing too. As well as my sisters who probably were just as scared as I was in the moment.

"Yo watch mom's reaction. Bro I can't believe this happened," I said while giving a few chokes of coughs at the end.

We giggled and went up all cold to my mom who was just lying beneath the sun. She had no idea. My mom is a big dramatic person when it comes to her kids or family getting hurt. She was stunned by the story.

"But you was wearing a life jacket!" She laughed.

I gave her a "I know right" look and responded, "I don't think I'll ever learn how to swim."

I knew for sure she was going to tell this to everyone in our family. But it's ok because sometimes it's good to have crazy memories like this to share to others. I always think about certain situations where I need to know how to swim and though this probably scared me for life, I hope that one day I'll face my fears and learn.

APRIL

ONE MAGICAL CHRISTMAS

It was one Christmas day. I woke up, very excited to go to see what was under the tree, if I remembered to get out of bed.

Once, I got out, I went rushing down the stairs. When I checked the bottom bunk, I saw that my sister was not there. *Where could she be? I thought to myself. As the youngest aren't you supposed to be waking everyone else up? Movies what liars,* I thought.

After noticing no one was there I closed the door behind me. Making a turn for the living room, I see shadows coming from the Christmas tree lights. When I checked over to see what was going on wrapping paper was on the ground scattered

all over. They were already opening presents. Everyone was there; my mother, brother, older sister, and little sister who was about to turn one. My brother was talking to my sister, then to me.

"Well, look who just woke up. And just in time too!" he happily exclaimed.

For what? I wondered.

After wondering what it was, he slowly handed me a medium sized box. With thought of not even shaking it to guess what it was, pure adrenaline kicking in, the feeling was like no other.

After, we were done with presents. it was time for movies. Thankfully, every year at Christmas they give movie specials on ABC. After, they gave the second movie which was Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, or something.

There was a knock on the door. All a sudden, it was like an instant stomach pain just hitting your body. At first, we did not know who it was and we stayed quiet. A few minutes

later the knocking was still on like an annoying fly that just kept buzzing in your house. Then, my mom heard some voices in the hallway. She checked through the peek hole so slowly it felt like a horror movie for a second - all quiet and someone checking something all scared and nervous.

Then, she said, "Ooh you're going to like who it is."

Then she opened the door. It was my uncle and cousin, then my best friend from elementary school. We still are friends; we're just not in the same schools now. It was a lot of fun giving each other presents and singing and watching movies.

Then it was night time. Everyone went home and it was about bedtime.

It was one magical fun Christmas that I will never forget.

APRIL





SCARLIN

SCARLIN

YA ME ADAPTE

Hace años atrás yo tenía muchos amigos y me gustaba mucho mi manera de vida.

Mis amigos vivían en el mismo barrio que yo y salíamos todas las tardes a jugar después de la escuela,

Tenía una mejor amiga ella era de mi misma edad y nos gustaba mucho pasar nuestro tiempo jugando volleyball ya que a las dos nos apasionaba el mismo deporte.

Luego a mi papa y ami nos comenzó a salir los papeles estadounidense,tardó 7 años en salir cuando por fin nos tocó la hora de viajar,yo no quería dejar mi vida que tanto me gustaba y mucho menos a las personas con la que crecí,pero no había forma de quedarme.

Yo pensaba en lo mucho que iba a extrañar a mi país y lo que lo compone,como mi comida favorita el mangu con queso y salami y un aguacatico,también la rica comida que hacía mi mamá.

Ya cuando llegue a New York era todo lindo y nuevo para mi,ya que llegue en tiempo de

Vacaciones y salía mucho a conocer lugares nuevos y me gusta mucho el verano y ir a la playa ,pero cuando comenzó la escuela uffff todo cambio.

Mi primer día de clases,mi papá me acompañó a la puerta de la escuela, era una escuela grande de color azul y gris,yo estaba nerviosa sin conocer a nadie entre, ya cuando estaba adentro no sabía que salón me tocaba,así que me acerque a una maestra con poca estatura,de pelo corto y de piel clara que hablaba español y le pregunté "dónde tenía que ir " y ella, busco mi nombre y le dijo a una niña que no parecía muy amable, que me llevara a mi salón.

Todo fluía muy bien,hasta que llegue a la primera clase y la maestra me comenzó a hablar inglés y yo

Estaba apenada ya que en ese tiempo era muy tímida y no sabía nada de inglés y haci pase todo el día sin saber lo que nadie me decía,solo me llegaba en la mente regresar a mi país y estudiar con mis amigos.

Llegó un tiempo donde no quería salir,hablar con otras personas ni comer,fue como caer en depresión.

Pasó el primer mes y ya como que me estaba adaptando,y fui conociendo personas que hablan mi idioma y otras que no pero de toda forma se comportan amable con migo.

"Mi familia me decía que no me preocupara que yo me iba adaptar rápido y que tenía un gran futuro por delante" y tienen razón.

Cuando pasaron 8 meses me adapte por completo, y entendí que no hay mejor forma de recordar a las personas que quieres que llevándolas en tu corazón.

Ahora conozco personas nuevas y tengo grandes amigos/as, son pocos/as pero son sinceros y grandes personas.

Entendí que cada persona hace su propio mundo.

MARIFER

ASTONISHING DENTISTRY SMILES

I have always liked running up and down my bunk bed. After I felt tired enough, I would just lay down and relax. This was a way for me to escape my problems which most of the time came from stress about me becoming a dental hygienist. It is a lot of hard work but that is not what stresses me out. It's the fact that many other people want the same job and it's competitive. I just don't believe I'm good enough.

Today was different though, as I'm making my way to lay down after running up and down my bunk bed, I found a letter. It was from NYU College of Dentistry and I was lost for words. At that moment I had figured out how it had felt to be truly astonished.

Something was off about it though, it said I had to jump into my TV, and it would take me there. Which I was skeptical about but still went for because it had been a dream come true. I stuck in my leg and believe it or not I was in another dimension and I had no idea where I was. This place was huge, the building went up like a Kit Kat bar in the middle of Manhattan and the reception room had white walls, floors and ceiling just like a marshmallow. Everything was going great until it came to my attention that many other talented people were invited.

At that moment I really started doubting myself and wanted to go home. But there was no way out...

"Everyone line up the first challenge is starting up," said Mr. Host.

That was when all the commotion started up around a table. It was sparkly white and clean just like the most perfect set of teeth. When I went over to check what was all the buzz about it was a toothbrush. Why was everyone so excited over something you put in your mouth and this was just one of the many thoughts that had been going through my head at the moment. Toothbrushes Are Bacteria's Playground so really though why were people so excited.

"Hi hello," I said to some kid with a blonde like fro as I went to tap him on his shoulder.

"What is all the chat about?" I exclaimed.

"HI HI HI my name is Jeffery and there are three rounds to this game the first round is called Brush the Best," he said in a very jumpy voice while fidgeting with the floss in his hands.

The word "Thanks," came out as I awkwardly walked away.

While I waited on the line to go into the room, I was very confused and thoughtful as to why they would make this a challenge when it's so simple. Sweat starts dripping down my face making me sticky like gum. *Yuck* I thought to myself. I did not like gum at all. Noticing people were leaving that room some looked confident or devastated but all I knew was that...

"Next up on line," said the lady that was taking people into the room "oh hi come in."

"My name is Mrs. Kendall and I will be guiding you throughout these next few challenges," she revealed.

She asked, "What is your name."

After I introduced myself, we wasted no time and started with the challenge right away. There was a fake mannequin head just staring at me, I was alarmed by it. Suddenly I went for it picking up the toothbrush, wetting it and applying the toothpaste. For good luck I wet it once more. Then I was brushing at a 45-degree angle to the gums. I had butterflies in my stomach due to the excitement and nervousness I was feeling at the time. To finish up, I washed out the heads mouth out with water and mouthwash for extra points.

I couldn't believe it, *that wasn't so bad.*

I headed out and Mr. Host announced that everyone had thirty minutes to rest in the lounge room before we started the next challenge. I just couldn't get over the fact that his last name was Host and he was hosting all these challenges.

Ha that's funny and a huge coincidence, I mumbled to myself.

Other than that, those snacks in the lounge room were calling my name but I was far too stressed to eat so I went to get a head start on lining up. Right before my eyes Mr. Host was already telling us to line up again.

What in the bloody gums, I whispered to myself, *thirty minutes passed already?*

Once again, I see Mrs. Kendall walking towards the table, as she proceeds to pick up the toothbrush and place the new item.

MARIFER



Floss are you serious? I thought to myself as I also wondered if these people think we're some jokes. I was the first to walk in since I was first on line. The first thing that caught my eye was that same mannequin head just looking straight at me.

"Oh, hey it's you again," said Mrs. Kendall "you may start whenever you're ready."

First, I wrap the floss around my middle finger and pinched the floss between my thumbs and index finger leaving two inches in between. Then I gently flossed in between the teeth using a sawing-like motion. I felt like a lumberjack but instead of cutting down trees I was flossing down teeth. Before I knew it, I was done, and walking out of that room feeling prouder of myself than ever. No stress, no extra thoughts just pure happiness.

So now that I have thirty minutes to spare, I go into the lounge room. As I walk up to the snack table someone taps me on the shoulder.

"Are you Marifer?" a girl with long black hair that reaches her waistline said.

I responded with, "Yes I am."

"Well I just wanted to say that you're not winning this competition and you're going down, I don't care how many good things people are saying about you," she said while flipping her hair.

"Girl what are you talking about?" I expressed while looking confused.

"People are saying you and me are going to the last round," She said. "And we are going against each other."

Wow I have been that good? I thought to myself before I was interrupted by the same girl again.

She said, "The name is Meredith and remember it because you will be losing to me."

My hands were trembling, palms were sweaty like mom's spaghetti. So, I dropped my twinkie back on to the table and walked away, that sweat sponge cake with a cream filling inside.

Jefferey caught up to me before I walked away too far.

"You got this," he said. "Don't listen to her."

Somehow that same word came out "Thanks."

Jesus Marifer real smooth I thought.

I made my way back to the stage where Mr. Host would be announcing the two last contestants. He came around the corner and walked up the stage.

"You have all made it a very long way and we have been watching each and every one of you," he said. "But we do have two winners that have been outstanding this evening and I would like to invite up to the stage Marifer and Meredith."

People were clapping, crying and I was scared but I looked into the crowd and see Jefferey smiling at me while putting his thumbs up. Mrs. Kendall comes up to the stage along with two other people and tells us to have a seat while they prepare everything. Meredith looks at me and my palms get sweaty.

"For this final challenge all they have to do is give these two lovely people a teeth cleaning, Mr. Host said. "You may start now."

First off, I checked the patient for any gingivitis or other signs that can be a concern. Soon after I grabbed a small mirror and a scalar to get rid of plaque and tartar around the gum

line and in between. I was looking around quickly and wasn't focusing on my work. My heart pounded as I began to feel the throw up slowly come up my throat, but I kept on going.

Lastly, I was finishing up as I applied fluoride treatment and fluoride varnish so that it will harden when in contact with saliva so that my patient could eat and drink after. Meredith did finish early and they were waiting on me. After I was finished the two professionals from earlier came in to check our work and gave their answers over to Mr. Host and Mrs. Kendall.

Together they said, "And the winner is Marifer."

I jumped in excitement. It was a pretty close round. Meredith didn't apply neither fluoride treatment nor fluoride varnish. I was in awe. All this time I was stressing and didn't realize the bigger picture was that no matter how hard it will be, I can do it. Suddenly I was in my bed waking up. I got up and went to see if my mom was home.

"Hey what were you doing that you hadn't left your room?" she said while smiling.

"You know the usual just thinking about becoming a dental hygienist," I replied.

"Well no matter what you do, it sure will be bright and shiny just like your patients smile," she winked.

"Yeah maybe I was just worried about the wrong things," I said. "Also, I'm ready to move on from my bunk bed and get a new bed."

PERIOD 3

PERIOD 3



HENRY

PS4 FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is the best holiday that my family celebrates. My family always cooking food and giving out presents.

The thing I wanted for Christmas was a PS4. I was really obsessed with video games and my friends had it. I asked my parents if they could buy it for me but they could not afford it so I did not get it Unfortunately. I felt disappointed, but I had to understand. And at least I got money for Christmas from family members my Aunt and Uncle even cousins.

My aunt said, "Henry I know you want the PS4 for Christmas and I will give you some money to raise it"

I said "Ok Aunt thank you."

My mom did the same thing too. She said, "I will also give some money to raise son."

"Thanks mom and Aunt I appreciate it," I said.

Two months later I had enough money already for it and I felt excited, so I went to go get it.

I got the money by family members, It was around February when I got it, I went with my mom and dad to GameStop.

In the car, my mom Dad, and I went to the store and the PS4 was there and it was on sale and I knew I could get it. and I made it!

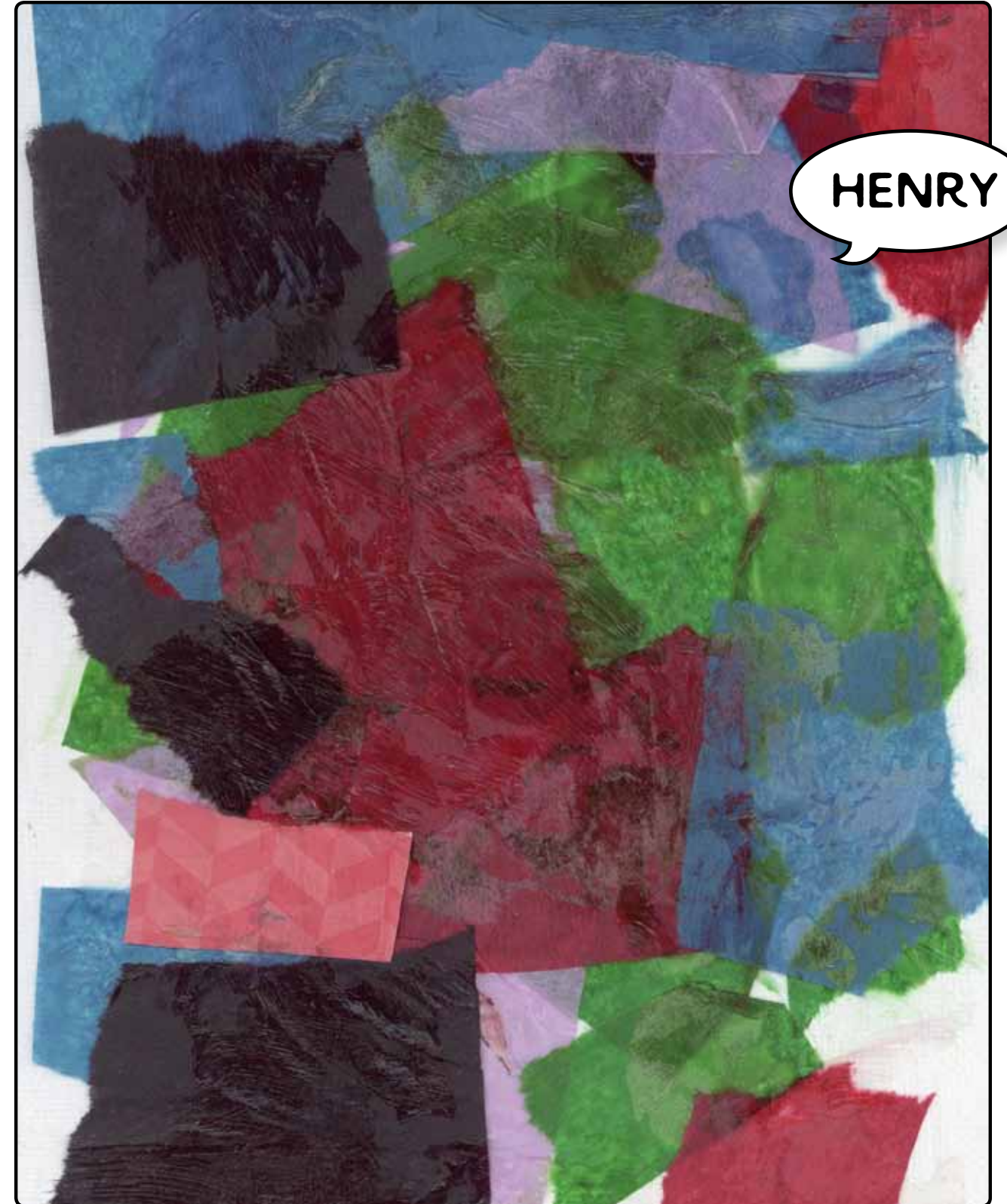
The first game I got for the PS4 was Call of Duty Black Ops 4 with the PS4 system. I downloaded Fortnite and I went to the second season of the game after playing Black Ops 4. The PS4 cost Three hundred dollars plus forty with the game Black Ops 4.

We went home and I was super excited about it. I connected the console with the wires on the TV and the PS4 controller and it came out nice.

I first played Black Ops 4 then I downloaded Fortnite and it was free. I started playing with it every day after getting home from school but first I had to do my homework and then start playing because that's what my parents told me and I have a curfew for when to stop playing to go to sleep.

The game Fortnite I was thinking if I could get V-bucks but I did not get any of it, I was still happy that I had the PS4, I learned that in life I need to be grateful and patient.

HENRY





LAYSHA

LAYSHA

FIRST DAY OF HIGH SCHOOL

A time that I felt nervous would have to be the first day of high school because I was used to my old school, my old teachers, my old friends. In my old school everyone got along, we were like family we have each other's back no matter what. Here there are many fights, There is always drama and conflict.

My old teachers in the Creston Academy would say to scare my friends and I, "High School is different from middle school We will not be there to help you. guys grow up. You guys are going to high school that is the next level." My old teacher used to say to my friends and I to make us work hard as we can.

I was also nervous because in Creston Academy my best friends and I knew each other for six years. We know everything about each other. We still talk to each other, and we still text each other. Even though we don't see each other as much as we used to.

September 5th comes and it's the first day of high school. My mother woke me up at 6:00 AM. We were going to her job first, but before that we went to McDonald's to get breakfast. I get a bacon, egg and cheese McGriddle with an orange juice. My mother got a sausage burrito with hot tea. After we finished eating, we started to walk to my mother's job which is two streets down from McDonald's.

My mother works as a homecare with a man and she takes care of him. he is an old man. My mother tells the man that she will be back. Then she says "Sr. Rafa voy a dejar a la niña en la escuela volveré." (Mr. Rafe i'm going to take my girl to school i will be back.) Then we left in a taxi to Fredrick Douglas Academy III.

On the way there I was thinking "am I going to make friends? Are people going to make fun of me?" I was in such a deep thought that I didn't notice that my mother and I had arrived to the new school.

I was nervous I was also scared because I didn't know anyone in the school. I didn't have friends I also had to find the classes by myself, I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't like this school because I was alone, I told my mother that I would complete a year in Fredrick Douglas Academy, then i would move to Belmont Preparatory High school. Almost all of my friends are there, Also my two of my best friends go there Steve and Sarah.

Once inside the school I went to the lunchroom to get my schedule. There were three teachers and they were given the scheduled so I went up to them and asked for me last name " what is your last name" a men he had a red shit that say Frederick Douglass Academy on it

" Montero" I answer, he said, " Here you go welcome to Frederick Douglass." I just nod and walk away from the lunchroom, the lunchroom it was different from my old school because in Creston Academy the lunchroom was large it had white walls, it had two doors took you to the backyard.

In Frederick Douglass Academy the lunchroom is smaller the walls are blaek brown.

Onces I left the lunchroom I when to look for the first class is Spanish.

Now I started to make friends that make me laugh and forget about my problems. A few months had passed I was at the gym. I was playing basketball by myself when a girl with short black hair come to me. She started talking to me.

"you know that we have three classes together?" she said.

I shot the ball and made it in the net " oh yeah you're Attoria right?" I asked getting the ball, Shot the ball again

"Yeah and you are Laysha" Attoria said

"Yeah that's me" I said laughing, "Do you want to play basketball with me." I asked, her because she was looking at me

Attoria siad "yeah sure but I'm not good at it."

Overall, in FDA III the teachers are so nice and cool, they also help me with things that I have to work on. Now I love the school, I have friends that I hung out with after school and I can see myself being here until I graduate H.S with my firends. I learned that you have to give a try to everything and see what happens.

LUIS

NOT AGAIN

Last year, On Memorial Day there was no school so my friends and I decided we should go to the park. Once I told her she said "No, you're always pushing yourself, take a break and that how you messed up your leg the first time." This kinda made me mad she always does this, and it really bothers me, why can't you just say just be safe.

While I was going back to my room, my mother said, "please do not get hurt again.",

"I won't," I said.

Twenty minutes later, my friends Jai, King, and Tim. We were in my room about getting ready to leave but I'm trying to find my compression pants but they wanted to ball out so we just left to play.

While we were shooting around some more people came to play so King asked them, "yo, y'all want to do a 5v5 full court,"

They said yeah sure just wait awhile.

While I was waiting, I shot around for a while, ten minutes passed, and we are about to start the game. We shot for first ball possession and missed. They try to get the first points of the game and we get the stop we go for the fast break and I get fouled my leg felt weird but kept playing. Score was 10 to 16 we are up by 6 they go up set the screen shot the three... SWOOSH. 13 to 16, they were making a comeback.

We needed to get a greater lead, but they got a steal and shot the three BANG. "16 to 16 we need to get a stop" King said " Lu you need to take the three or layup something we'll set u up with screens "

As I am taking the ball up the court I start running up the court two behind the back spin move threw the ball up but I fell to the floor

" DAMNIT,"

Everyone looks at me and see that I done messed up my leg again. When I looked at my leg my kneecap was out of place and I didn't know what to do. Do I just sit there or do input it back in place?

My friend Jai came and told me, "If you can try and put it a little straight I can try and put it back in place."

I said, "Ok but do it quick."

While I'm trying to get my leg to straighten up, Jai was trying to put my leg in place. Once I had my leg straightened he pushed it in and I was able to look at it but I couldn't so I tried walking on it but couldn't. My friends called the game off since I couldn't play anymore.

"You okay Lu?" King said.

"You good Luis?" Tim and Jai said.

I didn't respond.

Once I got in my house friends left knowing I was sad and mad.

Once my mom came to the house I told her and she was mad and scolded me for breaking my leg and told me it was gonna happen so I was even more mad cause she was right the first time. It was very hard to sleep because I sleep with my legs bent.

So the next day we went to the hospital I had to get x-rays to see if was in place correctly. And Jai actually put it in place. Jalif you're reading this thx bro. They told me I had to wait 6 weeks to play again, and I didn't take the news so well because I hate staying home.

I couldn't go to school because it was very far away at 205 st. Some of my friends asked if I was ok and I told them what had happened and they hoped that I get better.

Three weeks later I had to wear a brace where I messed up my knee. I kind of found it crazy that a fractured knee hurts more than a dislocated knee. So now I stretch before I play basketball and now I'm scared of messing up my knee again because I didn't like how it looked at all. And now I hate wearing shorts while playing basketball so I have to play in sweat pants so I plan on using compression pants. I still play basketball to this day and I don't plan on giving up playing basketball.

Just because something happens don't let it stop you. This is my story and I have a lot more but maybe next time.

LUIS





ATTORIA

ATTORIA

PROM NIGHT: KISS KRISIS

I was watching my big sister Sophia get ready for prom. I was only 10 years old and never had a prom before. All my sister constantly informed me was when I had prom it would be magical. She was so pretty as she twirled in her pink satin dress. Never will I ever forget that moment I desired it more than I needed oxygen.

Meanwhile, four years later, it was finally my time to shine. And no one could ever ruin it. But little did I know God had other plans on how my night would go.

It took twenty minutes to fix my hair, five minutes to get dressed. I had to buy makeup to go with my dress. It was my first school dance with all my friends in eighth grade.

I had been dreaming of this day since my sister Sophia went to her first prom four years earlier. I was going with my best friends. My family did not come since they were busy. I got ready with all of my friends at my aunt's house.

I got food at Applebee's and took pictures. It was like being a millionaire with no cares in the world.

Later on, we decided to go to prom which was at The Sanz. As we all strolled in it was beautiful. The setting was with a fake moon and gold and white balloons. The lights were so bright like a toddler smile on Christmas after getting a pile of presents. They played Spanish and Jamaican music and pop songs. I was eating sushi, then went to dance with my friends. My friends and I were having fun. Almost every ten minutes we kept saying, "This is the best time ever!" We barely talked at the beginning mostly we just danced. It was so weird at first. I was sweating like a runner in a 4k race. Then out of nowhere we were filled with energy to dance.

About thirty minutes passed before I sat down to take a break.

All of a sudden, Rashida exclaimed in a worried tone, "Someone is spreading a crazy rumor about you. It's that you kissed Chinnor, your ex, at school even though he got a girlfriend."

I was baffled and shocked. I felt like I wanted to die. Chinnor was my ex from sixth grade. We dated for 4 months. We broke up because I wasn't ready for a relationship. *Who would do this to me?*

I was so embarrassed that I ran into the bathroom and stayed in for ten minutes and freaked out. I kept on looking in the mirror and just crying and pacing around. *I felt like I had to choose between saving my myself or my family from dying. Maybe if I sneak out no one will notice. NO, but then I would ruin my first prom. I'm gonna to collect myself and face the rumor.*

Immediately when I finally came out and sat down, Chinnor approached.

"You heard about the rumor right my girlfriend doesn't believe it, but others do," he blurted out.

He parted with a little worried walk and I sat alone.

Then Haley came over explaining she found out who was spreading the rumor. "Attoria you won't believe this, but it was Angelina who was spreading the rumor. I found out since Hayley came and told me Angelina had just told her the rumor." It was Angelina, my friend who is fake.

I should go over there and smash her head to the wall. I didn't do anything to her, and she has the nerve to spread lies.

I went over to confront her she was over at the sushi bar sitting down.

I demanded all serious and mad, "Why are you spreading rumors about me and Chinnor. You're mad fake. Keep my name out your mouth unless you wanna fight. I'm not dealing with your stuff anymore."

She replied with an annoyed expression "Whatever, we are not friends anymore."

Despite not wanting to fight, I wanted to bump her big head into the sushi bar and shove that breadsticks down her throat since she wants to speak lies.

I decided to let her know the truth "We were never really friends, no one wanted you in the group, but I let you in if I didn't then you wouldn't really have any friends."

I walked away to go with my real friends. They warned Angelina to go away. They gazed at her like she was a nasty cold that wouldn't go away. *If they didn't tell her to go away, I would've got expelled and Angelina's nose would've been as red as the dress on her body.*

The rest of the night we had the best time ever dancing and laughing. But every now and then my thoughts always went back to that rumor. *Never again will I ever try to help someone like Angelina or fake people again.*

I felt so hurt about what Angelina did but then I remembered how fake friends come and go but real friends are forever. Ever since then I know depending on fake friends is not worth it. Prom night was a night I would never forget. Now everyone knows the rumor was a lie since I told everyone Angelina was a liar. My friendship with Chinnor stayed the same. We both were victims of a rumor. We are still friends to this day. While Angelina and I don't talk anymore.

Then out of nowhere I had the worst thought ever. *We have all the same classes together. OH NO, we sit together every class and we can't move seats anymore. What am I gonna do? God please help me! Well if I survived prom night, I can survive anything that happens next.*

Later on, that night before going to bed I wondered *what would've happened if I never became Angelina's friend. Maybe prom night wouldn't have been this drama filled. I never would've had to think of hurting a girl.*

LESHAWN

JAMES HARDENS

It was New Year's Day and moved with my dad in and I lived in Texas. I was not really feeling the vibe over there and people were also nice and come from New York.

I wasn't used to that yet, so I wasn't always in the mood to say hi to everyone a lot.

After a few hours my dad called me to his room to my surprise it was Rockets game tickets I thought they were fake for second. Then I looked close and they were real. I ran and jumped all over the house. I took everything I had that was James harden my shoes wasn't there yet so I had to wear my Yeezus but I got my rockets shirts. I ran to the shower because my dad told me the game was in a three hours we got ready. Then we were finally on our way my dad

I had took my little brother with us so it was trouble getting him ready was starting running late I thought I was going to die if we did get the car any slower finally my dad got my brother already. In my head I thought I was dying slowly because my dad had to stop when we on the highway to get something, so I started yelling at him.

Over time I started to think that wasn't going to go so I said, " Can we go were going to be late pass" he responded with " wait you don't rush me we will make it there" I thought to myself why did you come back dad acting like was die then we got back on the road. I know we were late started to think that my dad forgot that we are going to the game but when got there at the 1 half but the second quarter so I know I was going to meet harden so I thought and thought well watching the game in my seat I was having a good time but my mind was rushing harden I just to meet him the team was heading to the tunnel I called harden and look at me but didn't say anything but they were losing so I understood the reason why he didn't answer. A few minutes later the team came out harden looked at me and I went crazy it's like you got all the gifts you want and your birthday was the next day and you got even more gifts. The game went on the rockets was up by like 14 points with a little a bit of time left.

When the game was over I started looked for harden for him to sign my shoes and I saw I yelled his name and headed over to my shoes and signed them and ever since that day I didn't wear them.



LESHAWN



MIKOLO

MIKOLO

SIDES

Emily and I were both thirteen going to Richard R. Green Middle school, a three-story building on 215 and Barners which was broken down into three schools. She came to the school at the end of six grade and started dating my cousin. At the time, I didn't understand what she saw in him, so we weren't friends until seventh through eighth grade when I really got to talk to her and notice she likes some of the things I do and we had so much in common.

Emily was a dark skin around five feet and two inches mostly seen in braids. She had a long and dark backstory from what she told me, she no longer had a father figure in her life, she cut lines and never really had anyone to talk to about the things going on in her life. Sam was a light skin curly hair Puerto Rican who came from DR and was friends with mostly everyone.

After we became close, I started to realize that she was a pathological liar, who lied even for the smallest things such as the things she owns and who her family members were, not to mention the amount of money she claims she has. But I still saw her as my bestie. However, Sam was the type of guy that never really dated anyone, but he playfully played around with girls. Although it wasn't very professional and was done without consent.

On a normal day, in math where the crooked AC froze the room and instead of learning there was talking and shouting. The footsteps of the Dean approached and asked Sam to step out. It didn't seem like anything until Emily got up and went too. It was then I knew it had to be something to do between both Emily and Sam. I had no clue what was occurring because Emily and I weren't as close, you could even say we stop being friends. To demonstrate we both kind of stop hanging out, to the point we no longer had time for each other and started hanging out with other people suddenly it turned into a "Hi" and "Bye" friendship. It felt like we were strangers.

From the look on Sam's face when he entered back the room, we could all tell there was news. Word traveled fast around the room, about how Emily could have ruined Sam's life by saying he touched her without her permission. when he walked her home, which was believable because they walked home together after school almost every day because they lived very close to each other. Sam was also the type to have roaming hands.

Emily claims she told her mother not to press charges to make it seem like it's not a big deal, to get back in everyone's good graces.

I guess because she knew no one would choose her side over Sam because Sam was favored by many. But would her mom seriously not press charges? My mom would never stand for something like that but then again, I would never lie in the first place. I thought to myself.

At the end of the school day I watched the clock waiting for my first period class to end. Thoughts skipped through my head about the whole situation, I felt as though I needed to pick a side. *On one hand, Emily was always the type to lie but I didn't believe that she would go that low as making such falsehood that could affect her as well as Sam. On the contrary, Sam lead her on with all the flirting and walking her home after everything he knew she felt about him. Sam reaction to what happened was calm and he seemed at peace he never even tried to explain his part but instead pointed finger at Emily saying it was all folktales. However, Emily dealt with the consequences.*

This spread like wildfire throughout the eighth-grade wing. In less than a week, she had no friends, she started hanging with the teachers and staying up for lunch.

A few weeks before school ended, our mentor had a pizza party to say her final goodbyes, Emily came. She sat in the corner as tears flowed down her face. I felt bad and pulled her in the hallway to have a quick chat.

We both leaned on the wall as we sunk to the floor. I didn't know what to say. I think she could see it on my face the way I was trying to formulate the right words to say, but we both know there were no right words.

"Are you ok?" I mumble. The words felt as though they were stuck in my throat

"I'm fine," she replied. Then she took a deep breath. "I'm tired of this school and the people in it. I just wanna go home."

When I finally turned my head to face her it was as though something took over my body as I saw the empty, emotionless on her face and in her eyes. It told me the story I needed to know -- she was tired of crying and having no one.

I had to ask the question that's been digging in my soul for days. "No more lies. Did he really touch you?"

I think she was surprised I asked so confidently because the look on her face told me she wasn't ready to be asked that question. She looked down and dug into the palm of her hand until it turned red. Then she looked at me and my heart fell to the ground by her stare.

"Do you think I would lie like that?" she said.

I got up and opened my hand to help her up. I knew I wasn't going to answer her question, so I avoided it. *I didn't believe her, but she never really gave me reasons to. But I knew at that moment I was on her side because I don't believe any female would make something so terrifying up just to gain attention. I felt as though Emily was the victim in the situation.*

Everyone stopped being friends with her but me, we were only friends because I felt bad seeing her cry and no one being there for her. Not to sound fake, but it's true.

One month and exactly 2 days of being friends and others started talking to her again and soon everyone wanted to be friends with her, because she had friends again, she dropped me like it was nothing to go to the same fake friends that left her. But for some reason I was hoping she would choose me over them. **GUESS I WAS WRONG!**

I realized not everyone you call friends is going to be there for you and not everyone is going to be there like you was for them. But even though sometimes the truth may never come to see the light, believe in what you think is right.

TYQUAISHA

UNTITLED

It was a boring morning, and me and my best friend Nyjhae walked in school going to first period, as I walked to class I felt like today wasn't going to be a good day at all, when we get in the classroom I sit next to my friends and start doing my classwork. A couple of minutes go by and it was time to go so everybody started to pack up their stuff and leave the classroom.

As I walked out of the classroom, I was approached by my friend Destiny sister Shaniya and her other friends Angie and Najaiya.

"I heard that you wanted to fight me" Shaniya said sarcastically

I could hear her friends laughing and telling her what to say to me because they saw I was getting angry, but at this point I got upset and I started to flip out.... I started to take my bag and jacket off to get ready to fight but as soon as I dropped my stuff, one of my favorite teachers, Ms. Lee got in front of me to try to stop me from swinging on her. When she stood in front of me, my friend's sister tried to charge towards me. I tried to swing before she could, but I ended up hitting Ms. Lee. Then, school safety started to run towards us.

"Get off me" I yelled at the top of my lungs

I was trying so hard to get to her but Ms. Lee, school safety, and the Principal was blocking my way and holding me down, that just made me even more mad.

I started to punch the wall and crying because I couldn't get to her and I felt like her and her friends were trying to make fun of me and get me madder so I just felt like punching any and everything I saw.

In a very soft voice Ms. Lee said, "Just calm down and take some deep breaths."

"No, I can't I still want to fight I don't care about nothing" I said trying to fight my tears

"Okay, just come in my office and take a seat and wait till your father comes"

As I waited in the office hours, go past and I'm not even mad anymore I'm just tired at this point and I want to go home.

A few hours later my dad finally comes to pick me up and he is so mad at me, as we are leaving, he still hasn't said a word to me it was a long and quiet walk home it was so awkward I was scared to say anything, as we walk in the house that's when things go left he started to yell at me about fighting because he says I know better and not to let people get under my skin all the time because he knows when I'm angry there is no calming me down. He screams at me for a whole hour, or that's what it felt like to me but then he tells me to go in my room and not come out only if I have to use the bathroom and to get something to eat.

I stomped to my room and slammed the door, why am I getting in trouble if she started with me first, I thought to myself.

"It's not fair I hate everything" I screamed from the top of my lungs

"Be quiet, nobody wants to hear it" my dad said in an angry voice

For the rest of the night my dad didn't speak a word to me about the situation he just left it alone. I did feel bad that I hit Ms. Lee but it wasn't like I meant to hit her and like I said she started with me so why am I the only one who got suspended I kept thinking to myself. It was nighttime and I facetimed my best friend and I told her what happened of course she was laughing at me, after I got off the phone with her, I took a shower and turned on Netflix

I was suspended for two days and for those two days I was bored out of my mind, my dad had left me in the house and there was nothing to do but think about what happened and I learned that it's not always good to react to what people say so quickly because there's always consequences.



TYQUAISHA



JOSE

JOSE

THE PEN

One cold winter morning I was on my way to school. I was in seventh grade. I don't know why, but I had a bad feeling. I was heated. It was a gloomy cloudy day. I thought maybe it was because I might've woken up on the wrong side of bed but later, I would find out that was not the case. I finally got to class and sat down next to no one. My head was hurting, my dad and I were arguing before I had left for school.

I was thinking to myself "I should've just stayed home," I say to myself. I felt like coming to school that day was a mistake.

A few minutes later I get a sharp pain in my stomach. This day had already been stressful enough. My body was hurting. I could barely open my eyes because of how I tired I was. "This day cannot get any worse," I said to myself. It was only the first period and I wanted to go home.

Soon, second period came. It was science class. I always hated science, so I just sat by myself in the back doing my work.

Time eventually passed by and second period was almost over. I saw a pen thrown at me out of nowhere. The pen flew right across my face and hit the wall.

"Who did that!?" I said out loud.

I was so mad that I hit the table and the class became quiet. I look across the room and a kid named Steven was laughing while looking at me. I barely knew him, probably only seen him only twice that year but I automatically assumed it was him. As a result of anger

I screamed again, "Why would you throw that?!"

I got no answer back. Eventually I picked up the pen and I throw it straight back at Steven. The only difference was that this time it actually hit him. I saw anger in his face.

He got up and said, "I'm going to kill you!"

At this point the whole class was looking. I got up with my fist balled and muscles tightened, ready to fight. He walked toward me and the class is screaming "fight, fight, fight!". He was twice my size, but I felt no fear. I swung so did he I struck him in the face he hit me in the ribs. Right before I was about to swing again I feel a hand on my arms. One hand on both arms. I turn around and it was my close friend Mohammed. By the time I turn around, Steven puts me in a headlock and stabs me three times in the head with a

pen. I was confused. I think to myself what happened. I felt a lot of pain in my head. I touched my head with my hand and saw blood. I was rushed to the clinic by my teacher.

She says "Oh my God! I can't believe he did that"

In a sad tone. I tell the doctors "I feel tired, I feel heavy pain in my head."

They clean my head of the pen ink and I was rushed to the hospital. Fortunately I did not need stitches or staples.

My dad calmed down from being angry. "Why did he stab you?" he says.

I reply, "I threw a pen at him and he got very angry and did it".

Eventually we went home. The kid ended up getting suspended for 4 months. I was okay but to this day I get mini headaches on the scar. Steven and I are friends now. So are me and Mohammed. I was traumatized for a month or two, but it wore off. Ever since then I never threw a pen or pencil at anyone ever again.

JONATHAN

UNTITLED

My mom came in my room and told me that my uncle was going to move in. I acted like I was happy but deep inside I was just really mad that I wanted to punch the wall because I knew this meant I had to share my room with him, and I don't like my mom side of family. I thought to myself that why he'd had to come and not stay where he's at.

When my uncle arrived, me and my family went to the airport to pick him up. When I first saw him. I had to struggle to hold in my laughter. I looked him up and down and noticed his dirty t-shirt, his ripped hoodie, and pants that were too small. I wanted to ask my mom what kind of life he had in Mexico. After we greeted each other, we took a cab home. We got home and me and my uncle was talking all they then we were playing video games then days pass we got to know each other's then we gave each other our trust

But then this day came when he lost my trust.

That day I brought my girl Erika to my house for my parents to meet her, but no one was home. Only my uncle was home alone, so I introduced my girl to him.

Me my girl was chilling but you know I needed my privacy so I told my uncle to leave the living room so the he left. I was with my girl we was watching a movie and then I went to the kitchen to get some snacks and when I came back I saw my uncle talking to my girl and he was kind of flirting with her and I didn't like it. My girl told me she felt uncomfortable so then she told me she was leaving the house. I dropped her off at her house but I got mad at my uncle for doing that.

When I got back home I started cursing him out. But he was try hit me, but he could not he tried to swing at me but I like move out of the way and he missed and just hit air.

I was telling him that I did not like the way he was acting when my girl was here and I told him that "it's not my fault you cant treat a girl good as I can!" and stormed out of the room. Before I left I saw that he started getting even more mad at me.

Later that night he told my mom lies about me leaving the house without permission so I really got mad at him. I told him I did not want to hear about him and I yelled at him,

"You were never my uncle!"

I spoke to my mom about the problem I had with my uncle, but she did not believe me so I told my girlfriend to come so she can talk to my mom about it. I did this because i hoped she can believe me so then after when my girl told my mom she really got mad and had a conversation with him but he did not care so then after that my girl broke up with me so then later I had another girl and I told my uncle and he had asked for her Instagram and I actually gave it to him.

So then he started texting her and that so I was like, "Why u texting my girl for?"

When I found out he was telling her that I was cheating on her when that wasn't true but she didn't believe me so I was like whatever and just left her.

Then my mom found out about this she was at him and this time she told him he wanted him out the house. One reason is because he never paid for grocery or paid his bill phone. My mom always paid for his things and he never paid the rent too so we kicked him out.

JONATHAN



NEVAEH

NEVAEH

THE GAME WINNER

I woke up overly excited this morning. Today had to be one of the biggest days of the year. This is the day I've been waiting for. It was the last game of the season. If we won we would make it to the playoffs. I was in my senior year in middle school and I wanted to go out with one more championship so we had to win this game.

A few hours later I was in school now. I didn't know how to feel because the team we were going to play were really good. Honestly I had mixed emotions. Lots of things were going on in my mind. Will we win, are we even good enough to beat them. We might lose because they are way too good for us.

After a long school day of stressing about the game it was about that time to step on the court. My adrenaline was in the sky but I was ready for anything. Before the game our coach gave us a speech, "I'm proud of you guys. We've come a long way. You guys have grown from teammates to brothers and that's

why we are here today. I'll be happy with any outcome as long as we try our asses off. So let's get out there and destroy them. Nevaeh Lead it." Now we had to say our chant. I Start, "We are family on 3, we are falcons on 6!" Now we all say together, "1, 2, 3, We are family, 4, 5, 6, we are falcons!"

The game starts and we have a hard time scoring. We were trying very hard but could not make a good play to save our lives. Minutes later it was almost half-time and we were down by five. By halftime we were nine. Our coach was now not as proud as he was before the game. He told us we need to do better than this. I was now annoyed at my coach. Come on bruh you were just saying you didn't care about the fuckin' outcome.

Now the second half started and I was angry. We needed to show our coach we were better than he thought. We were on fire and fighting back into the game. As the clock was ticking down I look over and see that there's only a little over a minute left. The other team started wasting time on the clock. They finally shot and my heart was pounding because I thought he would hit it. HE MISSED! The ball rolled out of bounds and now there was 15 seconds on the

clock. My coach called a timeout and sets up a play we didn't know how to do very well. Nobody said anything because he was already mad enough and if we told him we didn't know it, he would kill us.

We went back on the court and I started bringing the ball up the court. "10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3..." I shoot the ball and it felt like everything was going in slow motion. "2,1..." THE BALL WENT IN! I can't believe my eyes. I just made the clutchest shot of my life!

After the game I talked about the shot for a few weeks straight. I will never forget how clutch I can be when tension is high.

BRUCE

THE VISIT TO BARCLAY'S

I enter this huge gigantic mall in Brooklyn called Barclays Center Mall. I was alone with my mother because she trusted me not to say a word to my big brother. It was my brothers' birthday and he was turning fourteen! He was always talking about how needed this game Minecraft. My mom was also getting him clothes and other boring stuff.

After buying the boring stuff we entered Gamestop . In my head I was thinking, *I never thought there could be so many things inside a store that a kid could want!*

Obviously I wandered off to look around as my mother faded from sight. I wasn't scared because I'm always doing this in other stores, when my mother was ready to leave, she would just call my name and we would just leave, so I knew I was going to be ok. After minutes of searching I found something I really liked, it was a Pikachu plush toy. I rushed to find my mom to beg her to buy it for me, but next I know my mom is literally not in sight

I dropped the doll of at random shelf forgetting why I even had it in the first place, walked out of the claustrophobic store but bigger to me in my eyes. Out of the store into the hallway there was a BIG TRAF-FIC OF PEOPLE right in front of

me. I looked back into the store and screamed out mom....no answer but only the chatter of people fading in the background. After minutes of standing in this loud hallway I finally decided to place myself and become one with the crowd.

After a few minutes on what felt like hours I lost hope. I just kept wandering around and then stopped, sat down on the floor, and started crying

I don't know for how long I was crying for, but I soon realized that a lady with black pants and a blue shirt with a tag on the left of it which read NYPD Security was approaching me.

She said with soft voice "Hi - are you okay?"

At first I didn't feel like saying anything to her but I was sad and had no other choice but to tell her the condition I was in. In that case I sat up and spoke with my eyes red from the tears and my voice scratchy from crying "I can't find my mom and I was looking for her but could not find her," I said.

I knew that I did not have a choice whether or not to go with her. She looked okay and she had a heartwarming smile.

While looking up at her again she spoke with her soft voice, "When did you last see your mother?"

"GAMESTOP!!!!!!!" I shouted out.

She offered her hand to me. At first, I didn't know what she wanted me to do, but then it clicked. She grabbed my hand and we started to walk down the hallway

We pass Wendy's so I know we are at the food stand then we entered a small room smelled like sweat. I covered my nose.

"Sit down sweetheart," she said.

Following her order, I sat down in a folded chair. She gave me a cup of apple juice. I drank it then started feeling tired. I started to scratch my eyes because they still felt sore from crying

I closed my eyes until they stayed permanently closed like a cuckoo clock closing its hole slowly.

I awakened to a jab touching my shoulder, I looked up and it was my mom! I start crying while she picked me up.

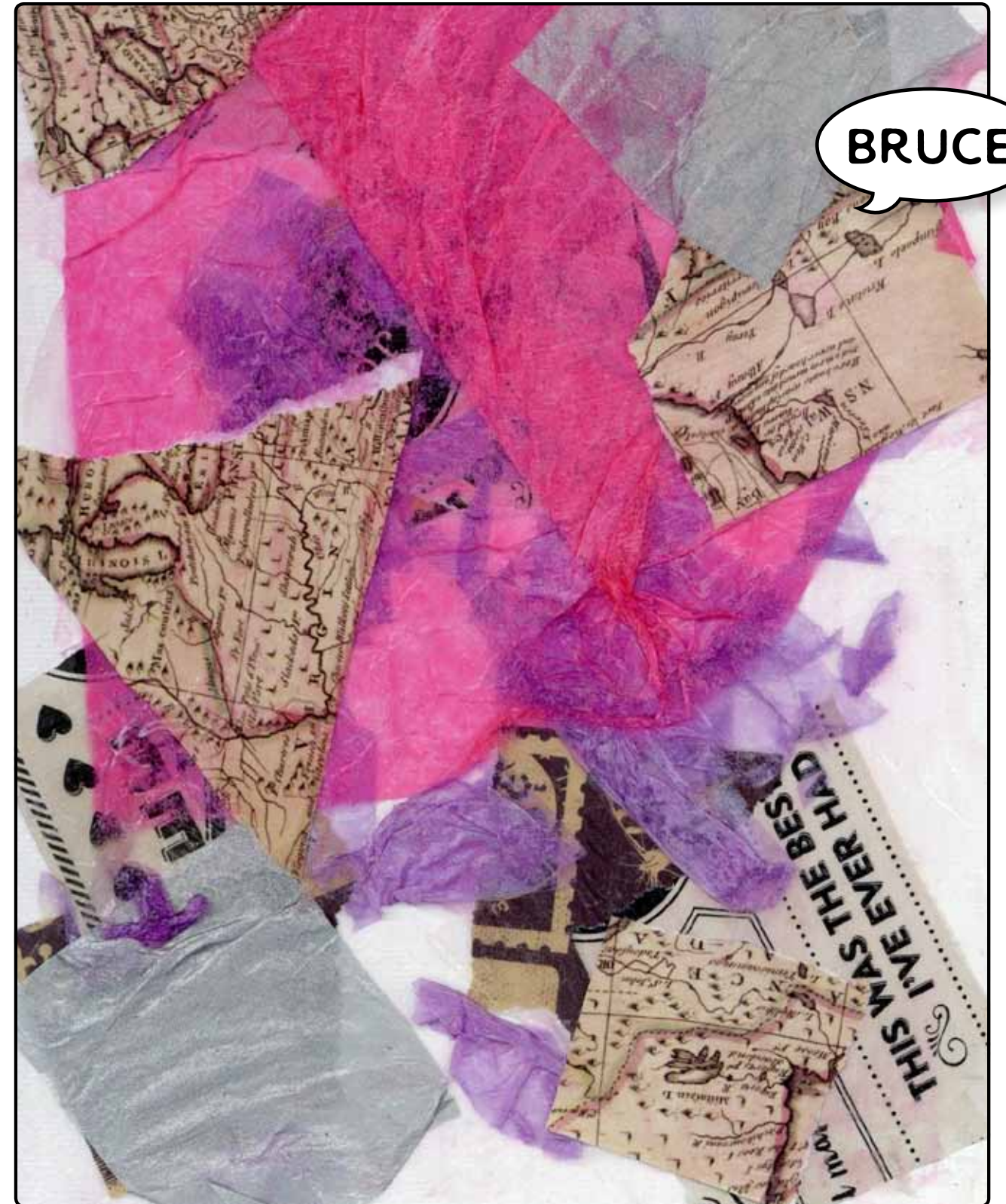
She spoke to me in Spanish and said, "Mijo, te estaba buscando a donde fuiste,"

"Nowhere I was looking for you."

I was laughing crying and didn't know what to feel. My mother just kept kissing my cheeks. She grabbed my hand and next thing I know it we are out of the mall and into the train heading home. I said to myself that I would never wander off in a mall until I come to age.

Now I'm 14 years old and I enter a mall and feel very comfortable. I still think about what happened to five years ago, but I just laugh every time I think about it.

BRUCE





KATAY

KATAY

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

It was June 19th, 2016 a very sunny day in NYC. I was getting ready to attend my 5th grade graduation and prom at school. But all I was worried about was game 7 of the NBA finals. Later that day nervous like never before That series was filled with tons of drama and noise. The Golden State Warriors arguably had the greatest season with a 73-9 season record. I just hated them because they were just so good, and I didn't want to see anyone do good or beat LeBron and Kyrie. The GSW had already done that the year prior and were getting ready to do it again. By storming their way to the NBA finals, but LeBron James was determined to have a date with Warriors once again. And bring the first NBA title to the city of Cleveland but the Warriors were not going to hand it to the Cavs so easily they had to earn it. And the Warriors were determined to repeat as champs and cap the greatest season by any team in sports history.

A couple days before prom and graduation. I saw my friends looking at me like I had just robbed the bank and approached them.

My friend Jayden had hollered at me and said, "Yo the Cinderella story is over the Cavs are losing tonight."

And in my head, I just knew he was right and all the GSW bandwagons. LeBron had let me down like never before but I still had hope. Then suddenly I had a sudden flash-

back of what my dad had told me the night before "the Cavs are losing this series their losing 3-1 heading back to Oracle is a wrap with a face of disbelief." even though he was betting for the Cavs, he was just scared of the Warriors like everyone else who was rooting for the Cavs or any other NBA franchise.

As I thought all the backlash from these bandwagons was over my friend Prince approached me alongside and said, "what happened last night? we came to Cleveland and won. Now we need one more game to repeat as champs".

Laughing and pushing me while they talked their ish. Even though they told me the same ish earlier that day. But I just kept it cool.

Additionally, as I was in the hallway walking I seen my friend Andre with him saying to me "Yo Katay It don't really matter just believe that anything could happen".

I didn't really believe anything about what he just said I was in my own world. but I knew he had a point.

So that whole day at school my friends I were just debating about basketball as if we owned a talk show and were getting paid for it. But then my friend said something very out of order. "Steph Curry is way better than LeBron."

That sentence just triggered me to the way I lost it. But of course, the bandwagons had agreed to such a hoax.

Later that evening I was at home getting ready to tune in into the highly anticipated game 5. Just moving around anxiously because I just thought that the series was over my team is down 3-1 heading back to

Oracle there is just no need for me to waste my energy and argue. But the Cavs proved me wrong by winning game 5 even though The Warriors lost key players due to suspension. Giving me a legit reason to still argue with big games from LeBron James and Kyrie Irving and huge response heading back to Cleveland. The Cavs were determined and weren't going to go down without a dog fight even though they were in such a huge hole. And damn sure were not going to lose there last game at the Quicken Loans Arena just like the year prior and didn't disappoint. With a huge victory and forced a winner take all game 7 the 2 best words in sports. Which made me look at myself in the mirror and tell myself "anything is possible." The very next day at school I was just pumped and couldn't control myself and the Cavs hadn't even won yet. So yet imagine how I would feel if they had won. Just 24hrs before prom and graduation and also game 7. as I was walking to school all I was doing was smiling just thinking about what I would say to those bandwagons and just see such misery in their face. then I suddenly had seen someone running when they had seen me approaching the school. and I knew it was someone familiar it was my friend Jayden the president of all the bandwagons. so I just ran him down "what happened now we beat ya twice tied now huh? And I know you seen that block that LeBron gave your so-called favorite player laughing my tail off before letting those words out my mouth". "Alright ya came back I will give you props but you know ya not winning game 7 at the Oracle." this time I believed the Cavs were going to win at the Oracle

because momentum had shifted towards their side and you have the best player in the world by your side you could go against that. Suddenly out of no where my friend Andre was just letting Jayden have it about the finals and I enjoyed every minute of it. because he didn't have his buddies to back him up my other bandwagon friends but It was just tons of them. most of them didn't come to school because they didn't want to hear my mouth or any of the Cavs fans. and it was a great day for the people rooting for the Cavs and bad for the warriors fans.later that day I was at home getting ready for prom and graduation the next day and was testing what outfit I should wear Debating with my mom"just wear this white suit to graduation it looks good." But I didn't agree I wanted to were my suit to prom.so finally it was the day i been waiting for.Me and my family were getting ready to attend my graduation and I had prom later that day.as I walked into a very Hostile environment I seen all my friends and their families and everyone was looking tight.but they was just chatting their lives away and I knew what they was talking about.

As I approached them they first thing they said was"yo katay you watching the game tonight."

I then responded with a irritated "yes." furthermore we started our graduation ceremony and It felt good to graduate and it was a success and prom to everyone pulled through we danced laughed and was just having

a great time. But know it was game 7 I was just sitting in my house walking around anxiously as if I was waiting for my lottery results. It was high action and affection through 3 long hard fought quarters.by both teams but the 4th quarter determined who would be champs. 2 teams fighting their lives away to be champs with LeBron's chase down to Kevin loves stellar defense on the reigning mvp Steph curry and kyries big shot the Cleveland Cavs were NBA champs. and was the first time in NBA history to come back 3-1 in the finals with all the noise and criticism they still got it done which taught me that never doubt or lose faith because anything possible.

The next day I went to school just so happy to the point I couldn't control my I cussed at everyone who was against the Cavs and clowned them even teachers. I even watched the game on the smartboard to mock my friends and they was just so sad and angry. and trust me I made them reminisce and enjoyed every last second of it. It was time for us to just chill and hang out through our last together because we were heading to middle school.

That stellar series taught me that anything is possible If you put your mind to It.



PERIOD 6

PERIOD 6



MONAY

THE CRUSH

It all started when I was in 8th grade. The month was February. It was cold and snow was falling down from the sky. I just recently broke up with my ex-boyfriend three months ago and it ended on a bad note. Me and my ex have been on and off for a while and we went through hell and back with each other. But I was getting over him for good, so everything was okay in my life. I got things in order how I wanted it to be.

My grades were good, I was cool with teachers and my life outside was in check as well and I was very happy. Of course, he was still trying to apologize to me so I could come back to him, but I wasn't falling for that.

Until 5th period, which was lunch, one of my friends came up to me and said, "Come with me to your ex-boyfriend's table."

"Okay," I said.

As I was walking over to his table, I was kind of thinking to myself, *Why did he want me to come over there? Did I do something wrong?*

When I got over to his table, I tapped his shoulder he turned around and I asked, "Why did you want me to come here?"

"I wanted to know if you want to get back together with me," he said.

My heart dropped and I was flabbergasted and didn't know what to do. So I thought about it for a sec and said "I'll think about it."

He was okay with my answer, but I still liked my crush which I thought to myself, *This is kind of bad*, but I kept my head held high and I just took that thought out of my head because it was upsetting me and I went on with my day.

The next day I came into the lunchroom and I saw my crush. I was deciding if I should talk to him or not. *I should go talk to him, but I have a feeling if my ex comes in the lunchroom, he's going to get mad at me.* But guess what I did. I TALKED TO HIM LIKE AN IDIOT.

I went over to my crush's table and sat next to him and he said "Sup."

"Hi! you look bored. You wanna talk for a bit?" I said.

"Sure, not a problem," he said.

My heart was beating so fast and I was so nervous. While I was talking to my crush, my ex came into the lunchroom. When I saw his face it was blood red. His lips were poked out and his fist was balled up and it looked like he wanted to punch my crush in the face. But lucky he didn't because he probably thought it was the wrong thing to do, which it was.

I kept talking to my crush for about a good fifteen minutes and for one second I looked over to the table where my friends were sitting and one of them looked at me with the most disgusting face EVER! I wanted to know why she was looking at me like that, so I told my crush hold on for a second.

"Okay," he said.

I walked over to my friends' table with anger and I said, "Why were you looking at me like that?"

"You know why," she said.

But I literally had no idea what she was talking about at this point until my best friend serena said, "Your ex is basically mad because you guys are trying to get back together but you're still talking to your crush and he doesn't like that."

"oh my god." I said shocked.

Once I heard that, I turned to my ex and said, "I'm so sorry I didn't mean to hurt you or make you mad on purpose."

As he stood up from the table he walked away gloomily.

Later on that day, I was feeling guilty because I hurt my ex and I didn't want to do that. But when I got home from school he texted me on Snapchat and said, "I know that I didn't say anything about my feelings but just to let you know that I forgive you."

That text made me so happy and my guiltiness and worries went away.

I texted back and said, "Thank you I really appreciate it," with so much relief.

The next day me and my ex were talking things out to actually see if we could get back together.

"So, what can we do to get this relationship back on track?" my ex said.

"We can spend more time together and talk everyday so we can build a connection again," I said.

"That sounds perfect to me my love," he said.

I was blushing so hard my cheeks were so red, but I couldn't stop smiling.

The weeks and days passed as we were slowly getting back to our relationship. The nights were warm when I was around him, getting to

MONAY



know how he really is now. It's been so long since we really had a long late-night talk and I really missed him and the connection we had.

Our relationship was going fine for about a month. Until one day me and my ex were arguing about my pants and how they were "too long" for my legs and it ended up into a big argument.

"Well I don't know what you gonna do if you don't want to trust me and how I care about what you wear outside," he said.

"Then just leave me alone then," I said angrily.

"So, what. You're mad now?" he said.

"Yes, I'm mad and honestly just leave me alone like I said before,"

"Okay then. I'll leave you alone forever then. How about that?" he said angrily while yelling a bit.

"FINE!!" I said yelling.

He stormed out of my room and left my house. My mom was asking me a whole lot of questions, but I didn't answer because I was just mad at the fact that he just left, and he didn't even try to make me feel better he just...left. After that thought, I started to cry alone in my room while the lights were off.

The next day came and I went to school with a sad expression on my face. I didn't want to talk to anybody, but my friends cheered me up and I felt somewhat better. My ex just walked past me and didn't say anything. When he did that, I knew...we were done.... for good.

After that specific day of me and my ex's break up, I didn't talk to my ex or my crush because I didn't want to deal with boys anymore. I wanted to stay focused on my schoolwork and have everything in order like I had it before. And I did exactly that.

"Then I'll just leave you alone forever then. How about that?"

that quote right there shows you just to let love find you and PLEASE DON'T go back with your ex you are making a terrible mistake. What stays in the past is in the past we move forward for a reason.



MAKYLA



ALAYSIA



ALAYSIA

9-1-1

"Shyanne and Kayla, please come to me," I said in a calm voice.

"LEAVE ME ALONE!" Kayla screamed with tears running down her face, running to her room.

"Sissy, what happened to Zoe?" Shyanne asked in confusion.

"Go eat your food, Shyanne," I said calmly while putting her in a chair.

I hate babysitting, I thought to myself.

You may be wondering, why I'm babysitting these two children? Well they are my two little sisters, Shyanne and Kayla. I'm babysitting because Zoe, the baby, was sent to the hospital. Here's why she was sent.

In early March 2018, I was at my grandma's house, in the Bronx. I was in my old room, playing on my computer. My mom was in my grandmother's room doing her hair getting ready to leave, so we can go back home in Queens. My sisters, Kayla and Shyanne, were in my grandmother's room, in time-out for breaking a Galileo liquid thermometer my grandmother bought. I kept playing my game, until I heard Zoe coughing. I thought she would stop but she didn't, so I went to check on her. I see my mom patting her back, while Zoe was throwing up.

"It's okay Mama, let it all out," my mother said with a worried tone.

I stood there watching what was going on, hoping I could help. She gave Zoe CPR, she was still coughing and throwing up. She tasted her breath and wiped it off with a tissue.

"She tastes like gasoline," my mom said in a questioning tone, "Alaysia go smell that cup she was drinking from."

It smelt like gasoline from the glass my other two sisters broke. I smelt it again to make sure I was right.

"Mommy it smells like the glass Kayla and Shyanne broke," I said with a shaky voice.

"Alaysia call 9-1-1," my mother screeched as Zoe's face started turning red.

I ran to get her phone and called 9-1-1 in a hurry.

"This 9-1-1 what is the emergency," said the operator.

"My sister is choking on gasoline," I said crying uncontrollably.

"Can you tell me how she got to the cup?"

"She thought it was water, so she drank from it not knowing what it was."

"How old is your sister?"

"She's 2 years old."

"Where is your address?"

"3534 Apple Street."

"Apartment or house."

"A house."

"Okay FDNY is only 1 minute away."

"Thank you so much."

I hung up and ran to my mother telling her they were only a minute away. She started crying still trying to help her breath. She started throwing up everywhere. Then, I heard the sirens coming to us. I ran downstairs to go open the door for them.

"Show me the trouble little girl," one of the medics told me.

"They're upstairs, follow me," I said a little wobbly.

I took them upstairs showing them where Zoe and Mom were. They took out this red giant first aid kid. They checked her and tried helping her cough it. She started throwing up some more, it was orange and clear. They took Zoe and my mother to the hospital. But before Mommy left, she told me to watch the kids. I turned around seeing Kayla crying and Shyanne nowhere to be found. I looked at Kayla and she ran away slamming the door behind her.

"Kayla, please come out of the room," I said in a shaky tone.

"Leave me alone," Kayla said from the other side of the door.

"Please."

"I SAID NO."

She kicked the door, hard. Shyanne came up to me making grabby hands at me showing that she wanted to get picked up. I picked her up and brought her in my room so she can take a nap.

BRENDA

THE BATHROOM

It was close to the afternoon. I was leaning on a bookshelf while sitting on the alphabetic carpet. Kids were sitting beside me, sitting in front of me looking at the teacher, criss-crossed, patiently listening to what she was saying. I was minding my own business. All of a sudden, the teacher stops and focuses me.

"Brenda, can you go tell the kids in the bathroom to get out, please?" she asked.

I looked back at the bathroom. The bathrooms in the school were in classrooms, sometimes shared with the classroom next door. I realized I was the closest to the bathroom *That's why I was called on first.* I was confused by what she wanted me to do. I nodded and walked to the bathroom door, looked at the knob.....

I was nervous. I guess I just didn't know there were kids in the bathroom.

I looked back at my teacher, she was just teaching the class with a book in her hand. I opened the door a bit and saw the kids she wanted out of the bathroom. I froze.

Uhh, what am I supposed to say?? Um..... they seemed scary. My position was the same. Oh, come on... Do something!

"Excuse me... The teacher wants you guys to leave the bathroom." I politely said.

They didn't recognize me. I groaned, staring at them with a bare face. I left the bathroom and told the teacher they wouldn't come out. *Maybe if I say they would listen, I can sit back down.* thinking I wouldn't have to ask them again. She didn't bother to acknowledge that I was not capable of raising my voice.

She told me again, "Can you tell them to leave the bathroom."

Already I wanted to just sit on the carpet with the rest of the class and not deal with the bathroom problem. I walked back. I was annoyed. I opened the bathroom door again, yet again I still didn't have the guts to tell these kids to leave, they were scary to me. One of them grabbed my arm and I was dragged in. Almost having myself get trapped inside the bathroom, one of the girls with braids closed the door. I was next to the sink that doesn't work properly, I stood there. *What do I do now? I can't do anything, I'm locked in... with these people!* The way they talked was just all in whispers.

I didn't say a word, hearing them giggle, talking about dares. *What do I do now? There's no way I can go back out to class, they'd stop me.* I turned around to face the other door that leads to another classroom. *I'll be in more trouble if it seemed like I tried to skip class by going into a completely different classroom while their busy.* My decisions were cut short.

Next thing I knew, I was pushed into a stall with a girl. The chatter became quiet. The girl tried to lean in forward and kiss me!

I backed away and told her in a whisper, "Stay quiet, and do nothing."

I was surprised that she did what I told her to do, but I was for sure frightened by what these kids wanted to do in the bathroom the whole time.

Eventually I heard yelling.

A woman's voice on the other side of the door, in the classroom, "Alright everyone outside the bathroom now!"

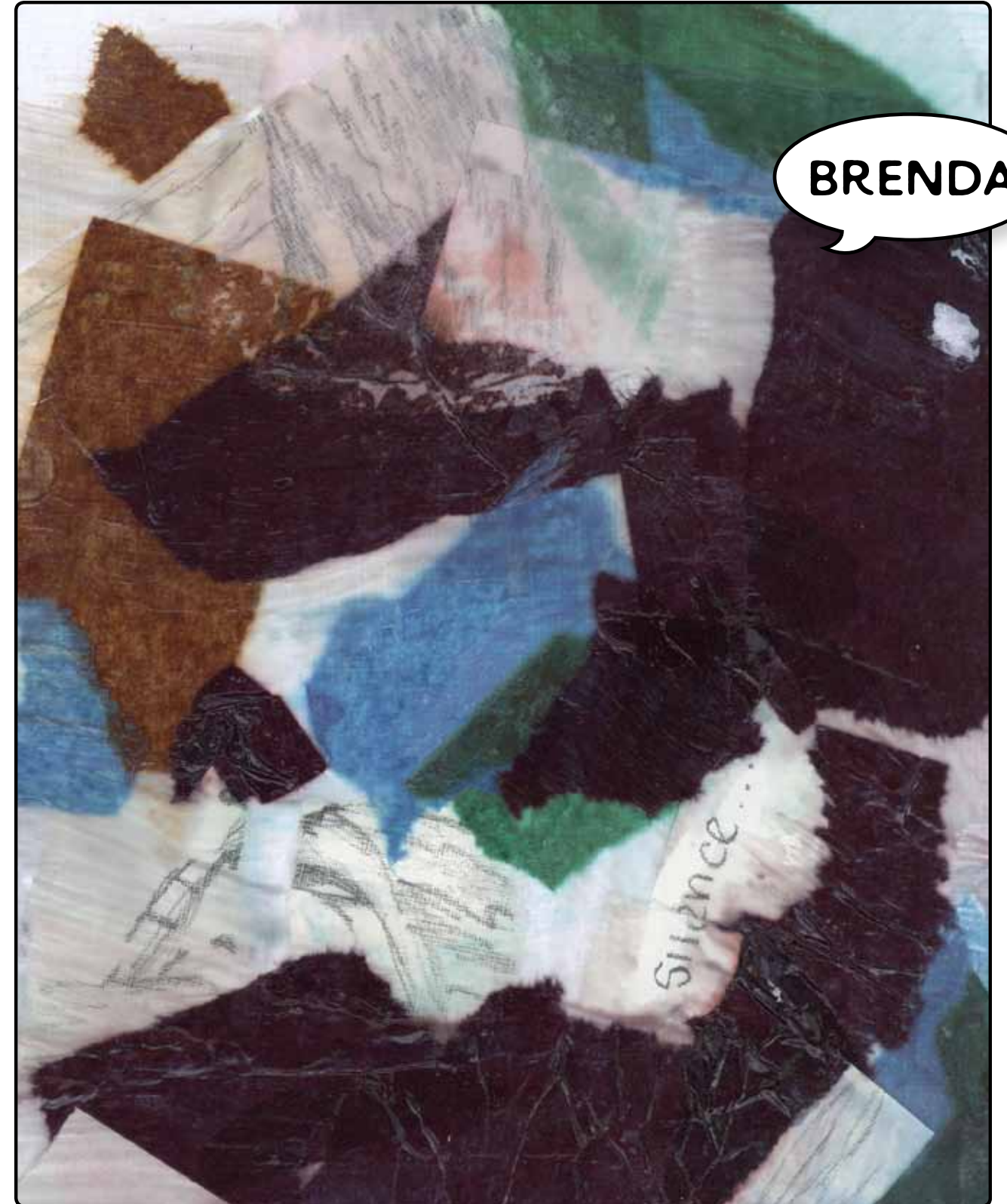
We left the stalls and walked outside the bathroom and stood in a line like as if we were in the military. My heart was racing as we were getting yelled at by a staff.

"If the teacher tells you to do something, you do it. It is unbelievable! She doesn't have to repeat herself for you guys to leave the bathroom." She sighed and had final chats with the teacher and left the classroom.

The kids were finally outside the bathroom, just like what the teacher wanted in the beginning. I was saved by the staff member in a rude way but luckily, I was out. I looked at the teacher. *I hope you understand that I didn't want to be with them, and I was dragged into their mess, but did you really can't just tell them yourself instead of calling on me in the first place.* Which is what I wanted to explain to the teacher, but I kept to myself. I was disappointed, I crossed my arms and sat back on the carpet. *Next time I shouldn't have to deal with things on my own or at all.*

I looked at the clock, it was almost time the day ends. I stare to what was outside the window the trees and buildings shining bright by the sun's light. *Can't wait to go home.*

BRENDA





FANTA

FANTA

UNTITLED

It was one sunny day and it was our last subject before we go home. Me and my friends were so excited because our teacher was going to announce what groups we were going to be in for our senior trip and because it was our first senior trip. Anyways, we finish our lesson and it was ten minutes left in class and our teacher started announcing our groups and me and my friends were separated. It was two of us in each group so I was still happy because I was with two of my close friends. They had to do groups because it was too much of us and they didn't want it to be chaos and have kids running around everywhere and to get lost. We were going to an amusement park in Connecticut called Lake Compound.

We all talking about all the rides we were going to go on and I have never been on a roller coaster before so I was excited to go on a roller coaster for the first time, it was finally dismissal time and me and my friends got ready and left we were walking to the park because we would go to the park or our friends house to hang out usually after school.

When we got to the park, we dropped our bookbags beside us and went on the swings then we played tag me, Taniya, Jayla, and Aaliyah get tired of running so we went to go sit down while the others continue playing.

"We have to wake up so early tomorrow they said if you get there late the bus will leave". Taniya said

"Ok let's wake up early then meet up together so we could go together," Jayla said.

"Yea let's all meet up in the morning and go together," I said.

"I can't wait for tomorrow" Aaliyah said.

We continue talking about tomorrow then we went to go start playing with the others. It was getting late, so we all went home.

When I got home I took a shower ate then watched TV and used my phone. Then I was trying to go to sleep because I had to wake up around five so I could get ready and leave because we had to be there around six. I was so eager for the trip because it was our first senior trip because we were in 5th grade, it took a while for me to fall asleep, but I slept.

Then I woke up went to take a shower and brush my teeth, etc. When I was ready and dressed, my bag was packed with everything that I was going to bring. Then I called my friends so we could meet up and go together because we all live around each other.

We met up and went to school together we were standing outside waiting for others to come because if it passed a certain time and they didn't come to the bus will leave because we had to be at the amusement park at a specific time. We were all waiting outside since it was pretty early and the schools were closed, the weather was good outside it was hot.

Most people started arriving and we went on the bus because we had to start leaving, me and all my friends

were sitting in the back talking eating, and some were sleeping. The bus ride was pretty long, but we got there, and we had to slit and go to our groups we were with one of our fifth-grade teachers we were waiting on the line so we could enter the park.

We finally reached the front and we entered the park when we got in it smelled like cotton candy, popcorn, and etc. We started walking around the park and I saw this ride that I wanted to get on. I begged my friends to come on the ride with me because I didn't want to go on there by myself.

"Fanta you sure you want to go on this ride? It looks kind of scary," they said.

"Pleaseeee if you go on this ride with me, I will go with you on any rides you want to go on." I said.

Alikai wasn't trying to come with us on the line so Taniya decided to come with me on the line.

"Fine. I'll go on the ride with you, but whatever ride I want to get on you better come with me," she said.

"Okay," I said.

We were waiting in line for our turn. Then, it was finally our turn and we chose where we wanted to sit at. Me, and Taniya chose to sit around the middle. Then the workers came around and buckled us up and the workers were getting ready to start the ride so then the ride started and it was fun until it was going down I looked down and I realized that we were so far up so my heart started pounding then the ride kept going up and down and turning. I felt like I was going to pass out and throw up, every time I opened my eyes, I felt like I was going to fall.

I kept screaming "Get Me Off!" My friend was just screaming because she was scared. Then the ride finally stopped and we got off and started walking around the park. I was like, "I'm never going on a roller coaster again."

Then my friends were like I was exaggerating it and it wasn't that bad. Then we were still walking around waiting because everyone else in our group wanted to go on different rides than my friend saw. The ride she wanted to get on. We were waiting on line then

I said, "I'm not going on that ride I'll just wait on line with you."

"Just come on this ride with me it's not worse than the ride we first went on and you said that you will go on any ride that I wanted to go on if I went on that ride with you ". She said

I really didn't want to go on that ride but I was just gonna go on it because she went on that ride with me and I did say that if she went on the ride with me that I will go on any ride she wanted to go on .

The three of us ended up going on the and the others in our group that wanted to go on that ride too we went to and the workers came and buckled us up, I already knew what to expect so the ride was about to begin and my heart was racing because I was scared.

The ride begins and I had my eyes closed because if I had my eyes open, I thought that I'll fall. The ride kept swinging from side to side I was getting dizzy and I felt like I was going to pass out.

The ride finally ended, and I was so relieved because I was so ready to get off the ride. We got

off everyone started going on the rides they wanted to because the teachers were around so we me and my three friends were walking over everywhere we got on some rides we wanted to go on and we had a fun time.

We had to get in our regular groups because we were meeting up with the other groups so we could eat. We were all eating and me and all my friends were just talking about all the rides and things we did so far. Then we went to our regular groups and we were getting on more rides because it was 30 minutes till we all had to leave so we were constantly getting on more rides playing games and winning prizes.

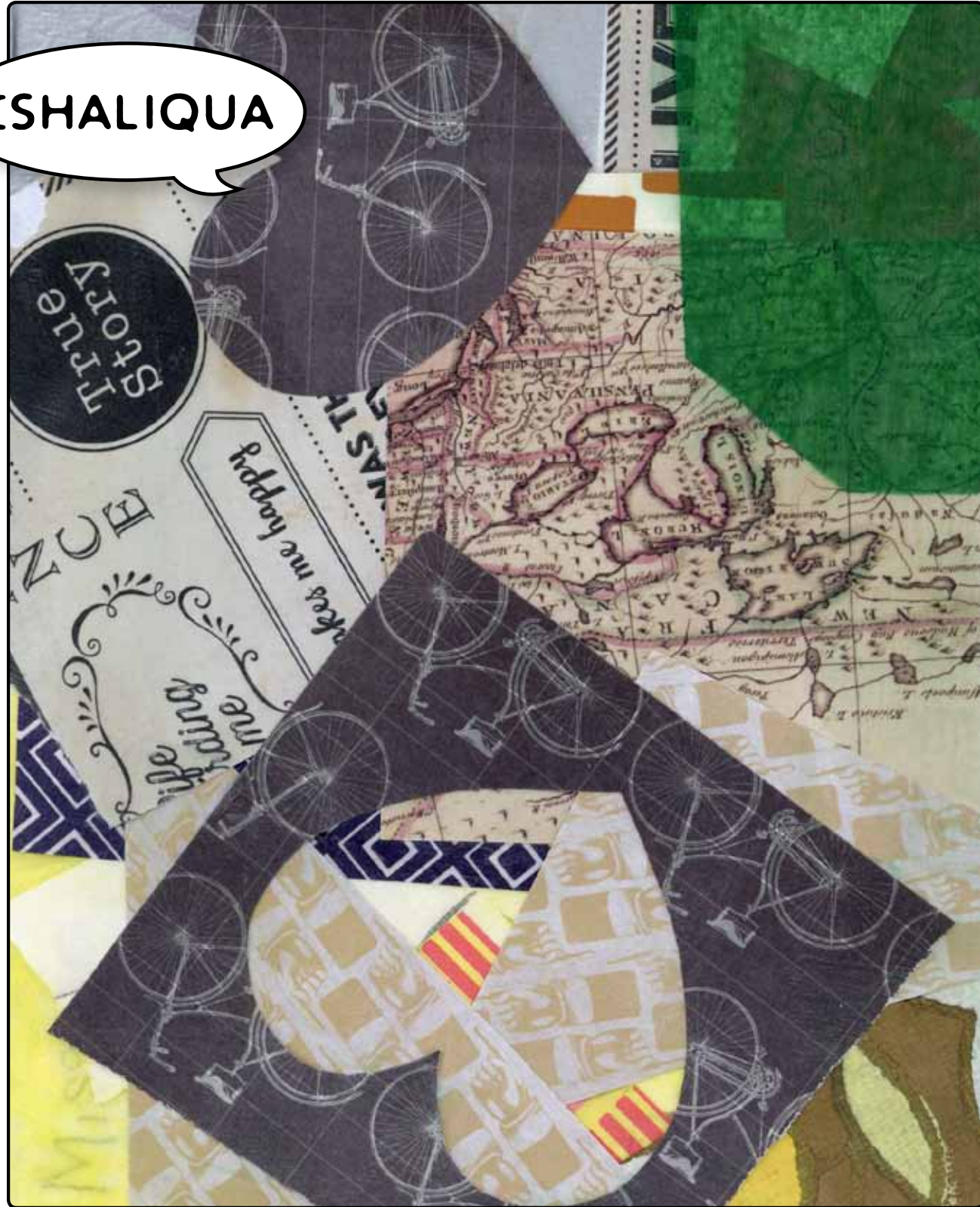
Unfortunately, it was time to go and we all had to meet up with the others so we can go on the bus and go home. We got on the bus and everyone was just talking about what crazy rides they went on and the different types of prizes we won, people were using their phones, eating, and etc. it was like a few minutes on the bus ride and many people were sleep I was extremely exhausted so I fell asleep .

Were in the bus for like a 1 hour we finally got to the school and we all woke up and got off so we could go home. Me and friends were walking home and we were telling each other of experiences and how much fun we had.

Overall I had a great time I liked the people that I was with I didn't actually thought I would go on a roller coaster again but after the second and third time I went on one I started to get used to it and it started getting fun.



ISHALIQUA



ISHALIQUA

THE TIME I LOST MY DIARY

On December 22, 2003, I met my best friend and future diary. We did everything together; cooked, went to the movies, watched football games, he would even sit with me when I went to get my hair and nails done, even though he hated it.

The thing that I loved most about my father was that I could tell him everything and he would give me advice or talk me out of dumb stuff. I also loved that when I would come home from school, he would be sitting in his recliner watching a football game.

The next day he was gone though. That's when I realized what the expression "You don't realize how good you got it until it is gone," meant. Let me tell you how it happened:

One afternoon, I was in the library minding my own business, when my mother had to ruin my day it her bad luck.

I had to step outside to answer the phone. She was so hysterical that I couldn't understand her, so I was like, "Mom chill and tell me what happened."

She then exclaimed, "THE NEIGHBOR JUST TOLD ME THAT JUSTIN JUST DIED, I'M ON MY WAY HOME NOW."

She was there in about 10 minutes. We checked to see if he was home, but he wasn't. We had just got in the house the cops came to the house with my dad's ID they announced that he was deceased. At first, I thought it was a joke, so I yelled, "This is a joke, right? Well you can stop, this is not funny!"

"I'm sorry but it's not a joke. My sincere condolences to you both."

I was so provoked; I went into my room and slammed my door so hard that the walls shook. Officer Aponte took my mother to identify the body. We prayed that it wasn't my dad, but it was. I went and locked myself in my room for the remainder of the week.

A week passed and we started arranging the funeral. We decided on a gold and white theme. My father knew many people, so there was at least a hundred people his funeral.

After the funeral I decided not to go to school because I couldn't handle all the stress.

My mother suggested, "You should go back to school, it might help you get over your father."

"Okay mother, I'll try." *You going to wish that you didn't send me to school, watch and see.* "I'm not going back to school until after the funeral"

"Okay fine whatever"

The day of the funeral, it was a sad but beautiful day. The church was so big it looked like a castle. The church had a high ceiling and it had just so happened to be white and gold just like our theme. My father had on a white tuxedo and a gold chain with the matching ring.

"Ishaliqua, would you like to read the obituary?" she asked, hoping I would say yes.

"Yes, mom I would love to," I said not meaningfully. *Are you trying to ruin me?*

After the funeral was over, we went out to eat. I had shrimp and broccoli with pork fried rice from a Chinese all-you can eat restaurant.

The following day I had to go to school, since I had told my mom that I would try. It wasn't that bad. I thought it could be better, though. I learned something important: that even though something happens you have to continue with your life.

NYJHAE

CAN I START OVER

Everything was going good as usual. I came home from school and made my two bowls of cereal, when the bell rang three times

"Who is it?"

"Jaleel"

The door slowly opened, heavy footsteps approaching my way. Jaleel came in with river flowing tears coming down his eyes.

"What's wrong?" my mother asked

I knew something was wrong because I could hear the hurt in his voice.

"Moody died."

I laughed and said, "Stop playing!" but I knew he wasn't joking.

Though moody had cancer I never imagined that she would die. Everything in me wanted to cry but for some reason I couldn't shed a tear out my eye.

Today is the day of Moody's funeral and I still hadn't shed a tear since I heard she has passed. Walking into the funeral I suddenly felt butterflies in my stomach. The whole room felt depressed. I didn't even get to the casket but one glance of her made me so sad. I started to get angry that she was gone, I wasn't ready for her to leave.

All I can think in my head was all the hurtful things I said in the past, all I wanted to do was take everything back. I miss the times when I would come home from school and show her my awards from my assembly at school, I only did it to hear her tell my mom, "She so smart, she makes me so proud."

Hearing that made me so happy and I didn't realize it until now.

After she passed my grades went down extremely. I stopped caring for school and didn't care for others. Nothing felt the same, I felt alone inside.

"You really getting out of hand now, you think it's cute to be out here fighting but it's not!" my mother yelled.

"You don't understand -- you never listen," I replied back.

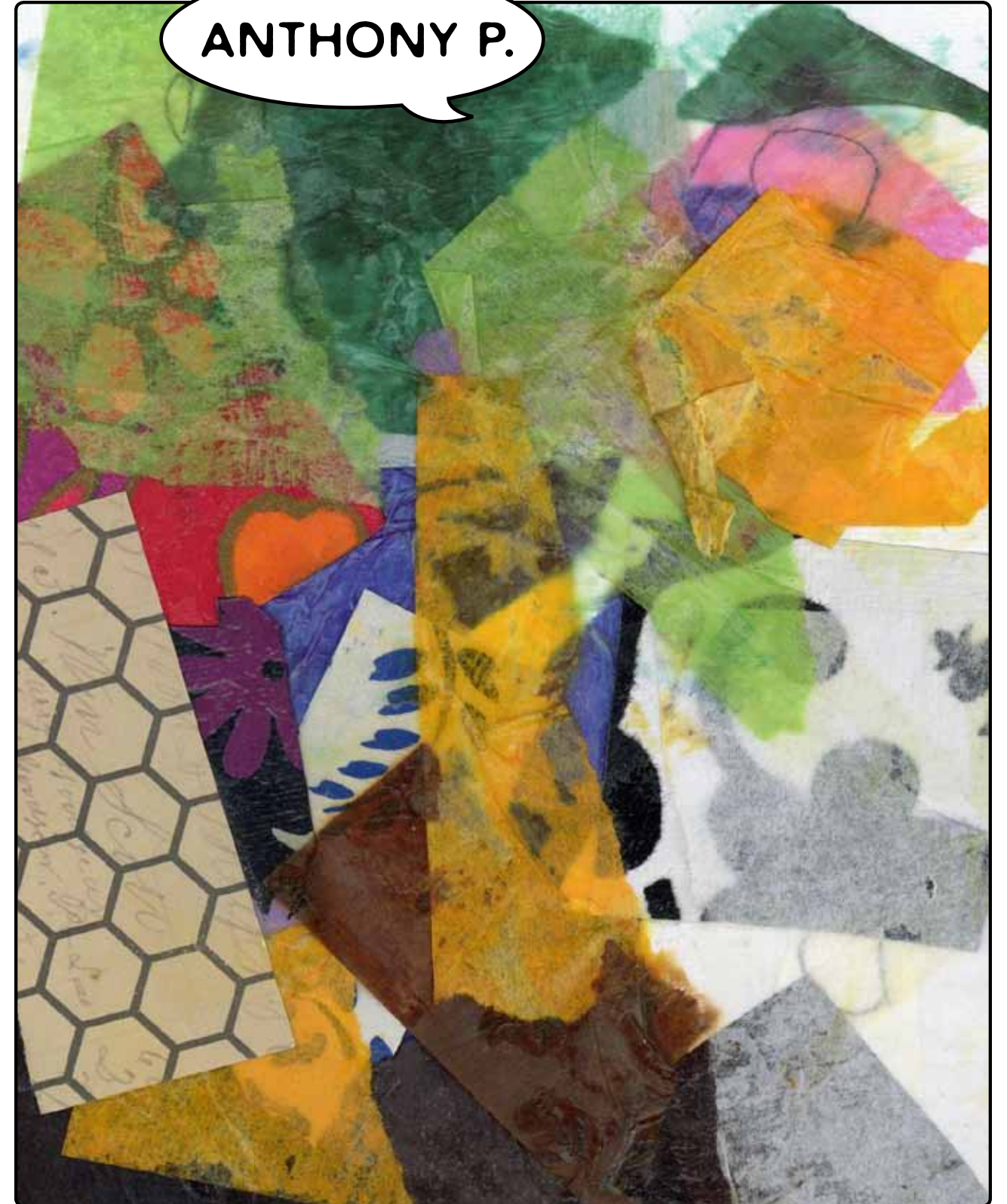
I never asked to talk to my mother I just assumed she wouldn't listen because we don't really have talks.

Eventually I broke down in tears expressing how I felt. My aunt Keasha spoke to me and told me her feelings, I kind of felt a little better because I cried. I felt so relieved and distressed.

On the verge of going to summer school, I suddenly wanted to change my ways and get my act right. And I did. Not only did my aunt's death show me pain, but it showed me how to pick myself up when I fall. I had to stop depending on people to come save me when I didn't need to be saved.

These past three years taught me when life gives you something, you cherish it. No matter if it's family or an item. When it's given to you, you must guard it with everything in you because the moment its gone you'll never get it again. I learned the hard way and I wish I could start over.

ANTHONY P.



VICTOR

I AM LOST

"Hasta la tarde / See you later" I said to my mom when I left the house to go to school.

Was a normal day, in some class was very difficult because I didn't speak any English, but my partners (now my friends) helped me to do the classwork.

When the school day was over, I walked with a friend to the bus stop, but he had to take another bus. When I walked to the bus stop I looked at the sky and it looked dark if it was raining,

"Tengo suerte de traer mi sombrilla / I'm lucky because I have my umbrella" I said.

I was listening to music and I felt a drop of water in my arm but I didn't care.

Then started to rain...

The rain was getting stronger by the minute and I took out my umbrella, I laughed and said, "Oh my god..."

My umbrella was broken.

I decided to run to a fuel station that is near to another bus stop. In the fuel station I could cover myself and my backpack from the rain.

I was so bored waiting 10 minutes for the bus and when finally, I saw the bus approaching to bus stop. I took the bus and took a seat and I relaxed.

Some minutes later I saw that I did a mistake... I took the wrong bus. I was nervous because I do not know the city and I was sure that I was so far away from the school and home.

I got off the bus and looked around me. I was definitely lost.

I tried so many times looking for my location on Google maps, but I did not know why I couldn't. Then I realized that my phone had no signal. The better idea I had was walking some blocks.

I saw some persons and I asked to a woman "Hi! Do you speak English?"

"Yes, can I help you?" she replied while looking puzzle to saw me soaked with water.

I explained my situation to her and I asked again, "Sabes donde esta la calle Grand Concourse? / You know where Grand Concourse street is?"

She told me I was 10 blocks away, I thanked her and left to try to find my home.

The rain stopped and I do not care anymore if my classwork if got wet. I just wanted find my home.

When I walked to the direction that the woman told me, in my mind I repeated many times "Y si me pierdo de nuevo? / If I get lost again?" I tried to use my phone again and this time the signal worked.

Then I looked for my home address and when I found the direction the expression of my face was like: "o". I was so far away from my home, I had to walk 15 minutes to get there. At that moment I felt very unsure of myself and every minute I looked at the cellphone to see the right way. Then after a few minutes of walking I saw some streets that I know.

When I got home, I was very, very wet and my mom asked me what had happened. I told her about my story, and we laughed at what happened to me.

This taught me that I have to pay attention to where I am and where I go. Now I always pay attention to where I am and where I go.



VICTOR



EMILY

EMILY

PICTURES

"You've seen people do it and you should try it maybe it could help." He told me.

"I don't know, that seems kind of stupid."

"Try it first then judge it."

"What would I take pictures of?"

"Flowers." *He knows that I love flowers, roses specifically. But I didn't want to take pictures of that.*

"What would I use anyway?"

"Your phone camera, a lot of photographers use their phones so you can too."

I've seen people use photography to express how they feel. My boyfriend decided to tell me to give it a try. So, I wanted to try using it as a coping mechanism. Throughout middle school I fell into some depression, being depressed is constantly being sad, unhappy, tired, unwanted, it's a horrible feeling and no one should go through that. I had no type of way of knowing how to get better until he brought up this idea. It was very hard to get inspiration, inspiration is what I was looking for, so I tried taking pictures out my window.

This is so stupid, why am I doing this. I decided to do it out my window because out my window you get a perfect view of the sky and its beautiful sunsets and of plane passing by, so I tried out my window. The sky would sometimes go from blue to purple to pink, to a white and they all blend together, and it would just take my breath away. The beautiful sky always brought some sort of life into me, makes me feel alive almost. But it failed completely, I threw my phone on my bed and slammed down onto my bed. I wanted to give up because it seemed completely stupid, but I decided to give it another try.

"This is stupid. It didn't work."

"Capture a picture that shows how your feeling. How are you feeling today?" My boyfriend asked.

"The same as every other day, dark, unhappy and sad."

"Well take something you think that is dark and put it to use."

Something dark? Oh, my curtains are pretty dark and maybe I can make it work. Another fail. So, then I started to get frustrated and wanted to give up but, I didn't.

I spent hours trying to figure out what I was doing wrong, a way I could get better. I tried other things around me, and it failed again. *Maybe I should try a different location. But where? The park? The mall?* I tried somewhere close to me, so to the park I went. At first it was really hard trying to find something to capture my moment.

All these different parts and finally one part stood out to me. It was a flower garden of these beautiful flowers, the way that the flowers bloomed and the way the colors blended together from pink to purple it was just breathe taking.

I took my position and got close to the ground to get a better angle. Then I got that perfect spot and I snap that one photo. I instantly fell in love with it. I tried some more to get used to it. I continued to try different places around me to cope with my depression.

As middle ended, I continued to keep taking pictures to help me. Taking pictures has improved my mood every single day. I realized that it changed me and made me want to keep continuing to do it, for everyone who struggles with depression don't give up, keep trying, it gets better, maybe you can try using photography to cope.

Now I raised my hand and snapped more pictures like it's my passion.

YARELY

LEAVING LOS ANGELES

June 26, 2015 was the day I was leaving Los Angeles to come to New York. Me, my mother, two sisters and brother were the only ones coming to New York. We came to New York because my mother has a lot of family here and barely any family in L.A. I was upset and excited at the same time. I was upset because I was going to miss my father, other family members, friends, and all the places I used to be at. I was afraid something bad would happen while we were on the plane. I was also excited to be in a new place, experience different things, and to meet new people. It was going to be the first time feeling the snow, looking at different beaches, going to see The Statue of Liberty, going to Times Square, and much more things.

During that day all I could think about is leaving L.A, I was mostly upset the whole day. Few hours later before heading to the airport, me and my older siblings went to my father's job to see him and my uncle and say goodbye. As we got there, I felt myself already starting to cry. Tears came down my eyes. As I was hugging my father, me and my older siblings started crying even more.

A few minutes later it was time for us to head back to my aunt's house to get our luggage and go to the airport.

Before going back to the car my father told me and my siblings, "It's going to be okay, I will see you guys again one day."

"I will stay in contact with you guys all the time, I love you so much." Have a nice flight. Get there safe I will

call you guys as soon as you get to New York."

We got to my aunt's house and got all of our luggage. I told my mother, "I don't want to go. I want to stay."

She said, "It's going to be okay we will come back to visit again."

We went inside the car and while my uncle was driving me, my mother, and siblings to the airport, I looked out the window and saw all the palm trees, and cities and I started crying again. I was very emotional the whole ride.

It took us about 45 minutes to get to the airport. The whole time I just thought about all the memories of my father, older siblings, and me. I remembered all the times he made me feel better when I was upset, or when he would pick me up from school and take me, and my siblings to eat and go to the park after. All that went through my head on the way there.

As soon as we got to the airport and were ready to go upstairs were, we had to pass through, we started saying goodbye to my two uncles and aunt who drove us there. I remember my aunt telling me and siblings, "I love you guys so much we will go to New York to visit you guys one day."

After that we waited for, we can enter the plane. Two minutes later we went inside the plane put our bags away, sat down and waited. I hugged my mother and she told, "everything's going to be fine."

As the plane started moving, I thought about all the nice things New York was going to have. I was excited to meet my family members from New York. I was going to meet all my cousins, aunts, and uncles.

We were on the plane for about 6 hours and all I thought about was when I was going to see my father. I fell asleep for a few hours, and when I woke up, we were about to land. I was very excited.

It was June 27, 2015 around 7:30 when I landed in New York. My mother, and siblings, and I were waiting for my aunt and uncle to pick us up from the airport, I looked outside the windows and it looked so different from L.A. My aunt and uncle came it was the first time meeting them, they were very nice as my uncle was saying hi to my siblings my aunt asked me, "Are you okay?"

I smiled and said, "Yes."

We went inside the car and were in there for 40 minutes to get to the Bronx. I was very excited to meet my other family members. My mother was just having a conversation with my uncle and aunt on the way to my other aunt's house who lives in the Bronx. I looked outside the car window and saw different things I was ready to go experience all the things New York has.

My aunt asked us, "Where would you guys like to go?"

Me and my siblings said, "We would like to go to Time Square".

My mother told me and my siblings about Time Square once, so we wanted to go to Time Square.

When I got to my aunt's house, I was very nervous to meet everyone, when me, and my mother, and siblings came inside everyone said "Welcome," I saw all my cousins, uncles, and aunts. That was when I found my best friend, which was my cousin Elizabeth. I knew me and my cousin were going to be so close, because she was the first person who came up to me and said "hi", gave me a hug, and asked me play with her. I was very happy because I met my other family members. These past 4 years I experienced so many things. I saw things I thought I would never see.

IRIANA



SAVANNA

SAVANNA

SNAKES DON'T ALWAYS HISS

I've learned not to trust anyone. This all started when I met my ex best friend, K.D. She was new to the school. She was in the class 702 and I was in the class 703 in the school Bronx Writing Academy. When I first saw her, she was alone and very quiet.

I was shy at first, but in gym class, I would shoot the basketball by myself. One day we just ended up speaking because of that. When I first actually spoke to her, she was so nice, and we were always laughing. From there on we just got closer and I told her everything she told me everything. Before I used to be very social and have a lot of friends, after this happened that all changed.

This all started during the 8th grade year. My Ex best friend started being cool with the people I had problems with.

After school I said to her, "So this is what we are doing now?"

She responded with "Yes".

I thought to myself, *I wouldn't do that to her because I am a loyal friend what made her do that to me?*

Another time where I noticed she was changing on me was the day 4 girls from my old school had a fight. It was me her and a group of boys. We had stuck around after the fight was over and the whole block cleared out. We got into a conversation I don't remember how it started K.D said, "I have no friends".

I wasn't offended because this was the second time, she had shown me we weren't really cool anymore.

The reason why we fell out/our bond broke was over two petty reasons. The first was over a boy. The second reason was because she disagreed with the fact that I am not a fighter.

A few months back, I had got into a fight with a girl I'm going to call her M.D for other reasons. Because K.D was cool with me she chose not to talk to M.D. One day M.D had started a problem me and K.D. So, we went to the dean K.D called her cousin to make sure that we were safe. The dean sent me back downstairs I don't know what happened after between K.D and the dean. After school we went downstairs and saw K. D's cousin, she's about 20. They were getting ready to confront M.D.

K.D had said, "I'm planning on putting my hands on her. Do you want to?"

I said, "no."

The moment I said that her facial expression changed, and she told me, "If you're not going to then leave."

I walked away with a friend of mine.

A week later is when our friendship went down the drain/our bond broke. I went to all my classes and in between transitioning I tried to hug her. She moved away with a smirk on her face and said, "I don't do those," and started laughing.

I wondered, *What did she mean by that? What did I do?*

That day at lunch we went to the courtyard and I tried speaking to her. She then went on to say, "We aren't best friends anymore because I feel some type of way that you didn't want to fight for me and people have been telling me you've been talking about me behind my back."

I told her "It doesn't matter to me."

The whole time in my head I was thinking, *I knew this was coming I'm not surprised that this is the way things turned out.*

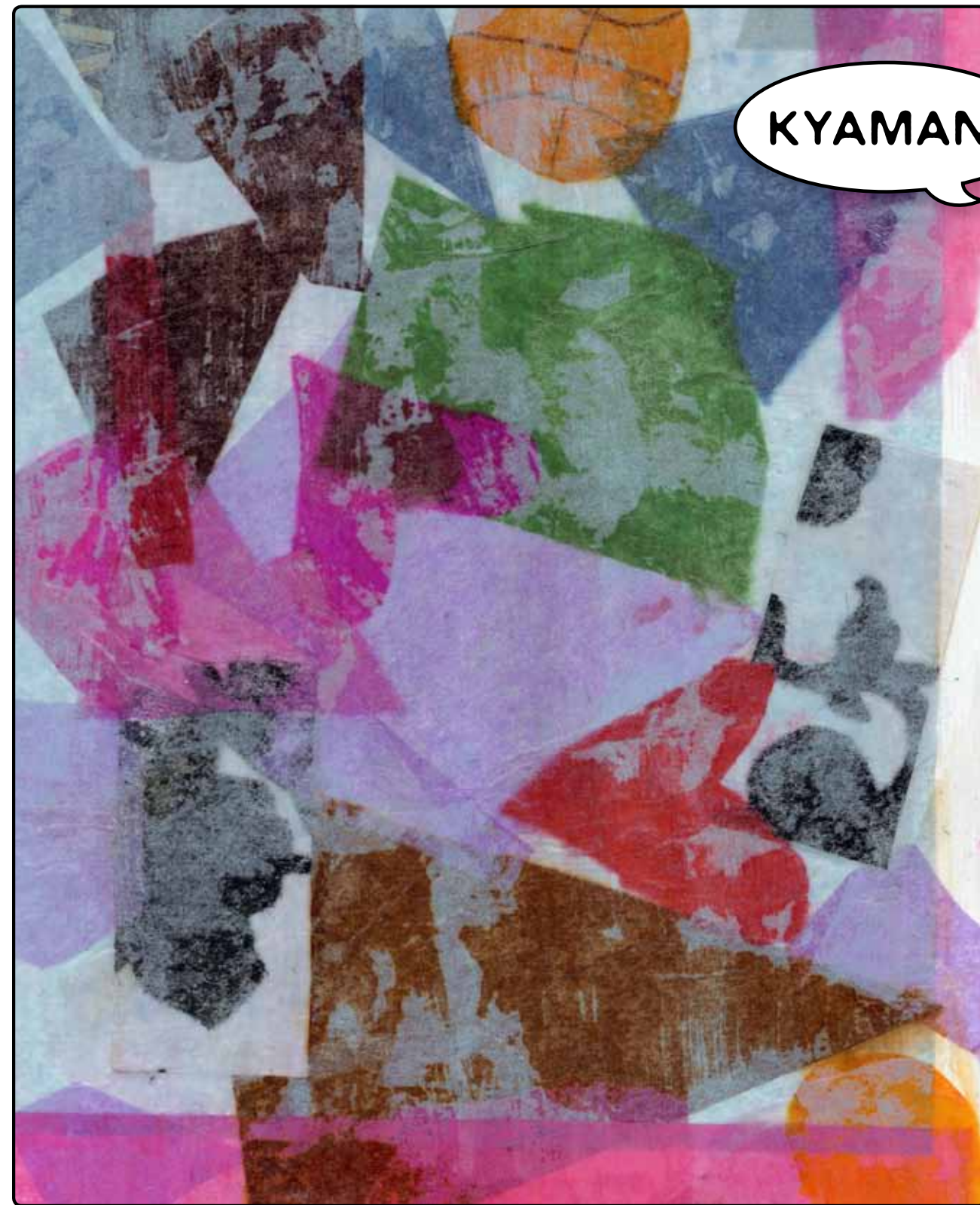
From then on, we never spoke again everyone was shocked after that my movements/life changed a lot.

I learned never to trust anyone. Why? Because I went from being most liked to most hated in a matter of just my 8th grade school year. I think to myself over and over again, every time in a new setting. Don't put faith or depend on anyone else in sticking around or keeping your secret.

I stand out because I don't care about having friends at this point I know nobody is permanent and if they decide to ride with you it isn't always real.w



MALLEIK



KYAMANI



NAJAE

NAJAE

SLICED

When I was younger, and I was living in Harlem me and my brother met this boy named Charles. Me and my brother was basically brothers with him. We had been friends through all of elementary. We were in elementary for four years together. The boy Charles had gotten into some beef with some boys up the block called Lamén. He got into some beef with them because he posted a picture on Instagram and Facebook jacking their block. Charles didn't know he had the boys that he had beef with on social media.

One day the boys called Charles phone saying they saw him on social media jacking their block. Charles started going crazy on the phone.

Charles was like, "Yo word to my mother ya guys straight punks."

The boys on the phone were like, "Watch when I see you, punk."

Then Charles hung up the phone.

Three or four days later, Charles went to the store on the block he had beef with. Charles had come out of the store and the boys were like, "Oh there go that punk right there."

Charles looked back and noticed that it was the boys that he had been arguing over the phone with. Charles turned around and started running home. The boys started to chase him. Charles ran down the hill and ran into a cut around the corner.

The boys yelled out to Charles, "Yea you better run and watch when I catch you, punk."

Charles continued running home.

A week later Charles hung out with five of his "friends". They went to the basketball court that was on the boys' block. Charles saw the boys again and this time one of the boys had a blade. Charles started to put his hands up to fight because he thought his friends had his back. Charles looked back and his so-called friends were gone. They had run on Charles because they were scared.

Charles turned back around, and the boys sliced him from his ear to

his bottom lip. Charles fell and the boys ran off because the cops came.

Charles was rushed to the hospital. His mom's crying. Charles had to get stitches and had to stay in the hospital for a week.

Charles move to a different place and swore to never be part of a gang again.

MARCUS

THE 47TH PRECINCT

I said screw it and hopped off the bike and try to run then some tall fat light skinned police officers came and tackled me right as I was about to run inside my building...

One hot summer night I was with my guys. I was young I was only 14 years old. My boys and I were chilling on the block and a fight broke out a little bit down from where we were sitting on our bikes.

We all road over to see what was going on. Once we got there me and my friends were all sitting on our bikes watching. Then some old white man from my neighborhood called Lue decided to break up the fight.

Out of nowhere we heard sirens and we all decide to leave. We all rode up the block and the police drove around the corner mad fast and tried to hop out and grab my friend. My friend pushed the door closed and we all dipped up the hill.

We tried going down a different hill and the police were at the bottom, so we all split up. I went down a different hill from the rest of everybody.

So now I'm just cruising down the street but right as I thought I was safe the undercover cops rolled up on me. I just started riding away mad quick. While I was riding, I looked back and saw mad cop cars behind me and one car heading my direction.

I said, "Screw it!" and hopped off the bike and tried to run.

Then some tall fat light skinned police officers came and tackled me right as I was about to run inside my building. Now all the older homies from my neighborhood and from and my building are looking out their windows.

The police put me in their cop car and closed the door. While I was sitting in the car with the door closed the police officers were talking. I was looking around and there had to be at least 40 police officers around. After about twenty minutes, they decided to take me to the 47th precinct.

While I was in the precinct, I was just sitting there thinking, *What did I do to be here?* I was just sitting there thinking how much it hurt. It felt like I scraped my wrists and that police car smelled like straight sweat mixed with Febreze.

Then they asked for my information to contact my parents. They finally contacted my mom, but she was at work the whole time so it took like a good two hours for my mom to get there.

When my mom finally got there, she was talking to the police to see what happened and why I was in there. They told her that I assaulted a girl and had taken her bike. But the bike I was riding had belonged to my sister's best friend who was in my house with my sister. I told them that's how I got the bike.

After this was all cleared up, my mom got me and her a Uber home. Finally, my Uber came, and my mom took me home. The whole time I was scared. I thought in my mom was going to kill me. But when we got home, my mother spoke to me about the situation.

After all this what I had learned was to not run from police and to watch what you borrow from people.



MARCUS

KIARA

FOREVER IN MY HEART

June 23rd I was shopping with my mother and sister. While I was shopping my phone started to ring. I looked and I saw it was my father. I figured he was just calling to bother me, so I answered.

"Hello" I say

"BJ got shot"

I stood silently. Then I started to ask questions like, "Is he okay?" "Where did he get shot?"

My dad didn't have any answers for me. All he told me was that he was on his way there and he would call me back when he got there. So, I just waited for my dad to call me back, hoping he'll put BJ on the phone and hoping they would tell me everything would be okay.

Ten minutes went by and my phone starts ringing.

"....." He's quiet

"Hellooo?"

"BJ is dead!!" were the words that came out of my father's mouth.

My phone dropped and tears started to run down my face. I had no words. All I kept thinking was *this isn't real BJ isn't dead*. It felt like my heart was ripped out of my chest. I didn't think this was a deadly situation.

A few seconds later my mom walked out of the fitting room, rushed to me, and asked me

"What's wrong?"

I couldn't speak I just wanted her to hold me.

"BJ is dead" I said with a crack in my voice.

The day of the funeral

"I'm really not ready to see BJ in the casket"

My sister Tanya took me and my niece's hands and took us up to the front to see him. I just stared at him. He looked so different and pale. I got closer and touched him. His hand was so cold, and I couldn't handle it, so I started to cry. My sister then took me out of the funeral home to calm me down and get some air.

It was all still unbelievable. I've been to a couple of funerals, but this was my first time feeling anything, my first time I felt empty inside. I couldn't help but question *God. Why BJ? Out of all people, why him? I know Kim is going through it right now*, I thought to myself. If I felt horrible, I knew my sister was feeling much worse.

I went back inside of the funeral home and sat in my seat. I started to cry again when I saw the video of him playing. When I heard the pastor say something about him being young my heart just fell apart because he didn't deserve this and me and my family didn't deserve this pain we still carry in our hearts till this day.

It's a pain that will never go away. He was only 18 years old and had so much to live for. BJ was such a good person everyone loved him, and I mean everyone. BJ was the type of person you'd want to be around. He was always full of energy. Most of the time he'll be dancing or saying something funny. He could make anyone laugh. His personality and soul were just so pure and unique.

I remember the last time I saw him was January 13 2018 and I

remember our conversation. BJ always called me auntie even though he was older than me. He was the only one that called me auntie.

"Hey auntie!" he said as he walked in the door and gave me a big hug.

I just smiled and hugged him back.

After we sang happy birthday to my niece Cassidy, he was standing next to me and saw me looking in my phone

"You have a boyfriend? You better not!" BJ said as he took my phone out of my hand. I stood up instantly and took my phone back and laughed.

"I'll beat him up"

"I don't have a boyfriend!"

"You better not" BJ said.

That was our last conversation.

The last time I went to go see BJ was on the 16th last month. When I stood next to his grave, I wanted to cry but my father and sister were there, so I held it in and stood strong. But I felt that pain in my chest. It isn't fair that he had his life taken away. Anytime I think of him or see a picture of him I get chills because it's still unbelievable.

I believe BJ could've been saved if it was the right doctor. He could've been saved if they got there sooner. This is one of the reasons why I want to become a doctor when I grow up. I want to be able to save lives. One day I'll be able to say, "I saved someone's life today."

I know if BJ was here today, he would be proud of me and I'll continue to make him proud and he'll be looking down at me smiling.

"Spread positive vibes today -- don't let any negative energy bring you down."

BJ's words.

PERIOD 7

PERIOD 7



MELANY

THE BIGGER PICTURE

My mother and father had been fighting for my custody for some time. After my mother won the court case, my mother and I were finally at peace. After a long two years I gladly no longer had to see my father.

My mother would consistently work, which left me feeling very lonely.

"Why does she always have to work?" I'd ask myself.

These confusing feelings not only left sadness but anger in my little mind.

When I was nine, I started to get very sharp pains in my stomach, but they were never to the point that I couldn't handle it.

One night, I couldn't sleep because the sharp pains had come back and they were unbearable.

"They hurt so bad that I can't sleep," I told my mom.

She immediately had the idea to rush me to the emergency room.

After hours of testing, the doctors had told my mother and I that I had appendicitis. They continued to tell us that my appendix was inflamed and needed to be removed or it could rupture. My mother and I were both very scared because I had never had surgery before. My mom would pace back and forth in my room with an anxious look on her face.

Minutes before surgery the doctors were rolling me on a stretcher on my way to the operating room. My mother was holding my hand the whole time. I was trembling with fear. All I could think about everything that could go wrong. I thought about not waking up and never seeing my loved ones again.

My mom continuously tried to calm me down. "Everything will be okay," she repeated.

I didn't notice my mom actually start to cry until we got to a certain set of double doors and they told my mother she couldn't go any further.

I was now alone, even more scared than I was before. I felt like a lost puppy without my mom. I was now in the operating room with bright lights and people with masks and gloves on staring down at me. The surgeon injected me with several fluids then told me to count backwards from one hundred. I started at one hundred but once I got to ninety-eight everything went blank.

When I woke up, the first thing I saw was my mother standing at the foot of my bed.

She asked, "How do you feel?" trying to stay calm.

No matter how much she tried to hide it, I could see in her eyes it looked like she had been waiting anxiously forever.

For the next month, my mom didn't even mention work while I was in recovery. There wasn't a second where she didn't come in and ask, "How are you feeling?" My mom would spend as much time with me as she could. She'd cook for me and even carry me up five flights of stairs.

I now saw the bigger picture. Not only was my mother my sole provider, but she did whatever she thought was best for me without hesitation. My mother is my savior and I'd be nowhere without her. Now at fourteen years old, I'd do anything to make my mother proud. My plans are to go to a private college and attempt at a psychology or pre-med degree so I could be a certified surgeon or psychiatrist. I owe everything to my mother, and I will not stop working hard until I have given this woman the world and more.

MELANY

TYRIQ



TYRIQ

FOOD DRIVE EVENT

One day, I was getting ready to go out for an event. It was an exciting day for me. When people first see me, they think I'm a troublemaker or bad influence but inside I'm a cool, caring, funny person. It was my mom, her friends, some kids, my uncle, my dad, and myself.

When we were on our way to make the trays of food, I was excited and then I fell asleep. We were all talking, cooking, and preparing. When we got to the spot for preparing, we started cooking and getting the food ready for the homeless. When everyone was done cooking and preparing the trays, we had no idea it was over one hundred trays.

My mom is a caring person when it came to her kids and also my father. They are when it comes to us like when we are going somewhere. They either tell us no or get the exact location because they don't want to lose any kids.

When we were getting ready, I was dancing quietly because I was happy to do this event. Before we went to hand off the food, it was cold at the time so we also packed gloves, scarves, and hats. We listened to music on the way to make another stop and I started falling asleep once again.

Time went by and I had to carry two big bags. After we left, time went by and it was the most exciting part, handing the food out. I can smell the rice, green beans, and chicken in the trunk from the back seat I was in. It was like my nose was in heaven. In my head I said, *they are going to love this.*

The first person we saw was a lady in the middle of the street, crying with a sign. It was like I almost felt what she was going through. My uncle and my dad managed their way to her and get her out of traffic. She left with the food and under the highway to eat and I can see the excitement in her. Her mood changed quickly.

We left to go to different parts of Jersey and continue our day. We arrived at a school or church looking place to see a lot of homeless people there. I thought to myself, *damn that's a lot of people!*

We got out and started handing out the food and accessories. We forgot what they said. Time was going by so fast and I was excited.

It was now nighttime and we got back from Jersey to Time Square I think to find more people. I remember having a conversation with a kid before he became my friend named Kuron. We became friends pretty quickly. We started to talk about things that I forgot about. We now have a pretty close friendship and I even go to his house sometimes.

I remember making a stop to a guy going into the train station and I guess he brought his friends because he came back up with more people. When they arrived at the car, we started handing out the food. Then they started to swarm the car and we ran out of food. I said to myself *if I don't do right in school, I will end up like this.* I also thought to myself, *they were really that hungry.* It got to the point where one guy stole from his friend and my uncle had to put him in his place. And no not fighting.

After that day, I had a whole new perspective on the world. That day really opened my eyes.

RICHARD

THE FINALS

My team was on the yellow school bus going to a finals game at a school in Brooklyn, and it was 11 people on the bus and the time was 10:00. I was wearing a black Nike shirt with sweatpants and kyries on. On top of that, I had a blue Adidas sweater on.

On the bus, my coach which was a female who was into the sport basketball and who played in high school. On the school bus, we were playing Lil Tjay to hype us up for the game. My teammates and I were dancing from the middle of the bus.

As time went by, I realized that there was already a team at the school. When we got off of the bus, I realized that I did not know the other basketball team's name.

When we got into the school's gym, it was smelling as if the gym was just sprayed with a type of air spray. But the worst part was that we couldn't even practice a little bit.

As I was changing in the bathroom into my red basketball jersey and black shorts, my jersey number was number 4. Before I got on the basketball court, my coach which was wearing Jordan Sevens with a red and black leather jacket and black jeans, huddled me and teammates up and told us that whatever we do we have to win this game and most importantly play with pride and confidence even though we got to the school late.

As I stepped on the court, I saw that the other kids on the other team were much taller than my starting five. The other team was wearing black and white jerseys. I was put in as a point guard for my team which meant I had to take care of the ball and look for my teammates who were open. I told my coach that I wanted to observe what the other team's strategy was then go on to the court with the right mindset, but it was not the right place to tell my coach what I wanted, I just had to do what she asked.

When I got passed the ball, I was not expecting it to go to me because my other teammate had his hands out to catch the ball, but I still caught the ball and the ball felt rough. As I dribbled down the court, I fumbled the ball because the other player on the other team was playing hard defense on me. The other team got the ball and he scored a layup. I got the ball again, but this time I dribbled down the court and passed the ball to my teammate who shot a mid-range shot and made the shot, so the score was 2-2.

In my head I realized that there were six players on the court for the other team. I rushed to the coach to address the situation and then the coach called out that there were six players on the court. As the other team get the ball, they dribbled down the court.

Then out of the blue the point guard sprinted to the three-point line and tried to get a contact foul but doesn't get it but still makes the three. His coach was yelling at him for not following the play and said that if he does it again, he's getting subbed out. The player who made the three

was screaming. I still made the three coach so already there is tension in the air with him and his coach.

My teammate gets the ball dishes it to me and I see my center open. I passed him the ball and then he made the layup. Score is 4-2, they got the ball and shot the three and make it. Score is 4-5. Then I got the ball, passed it to my teammate, and he missed the shot, but my other teammate puts it back up score is 6-5.

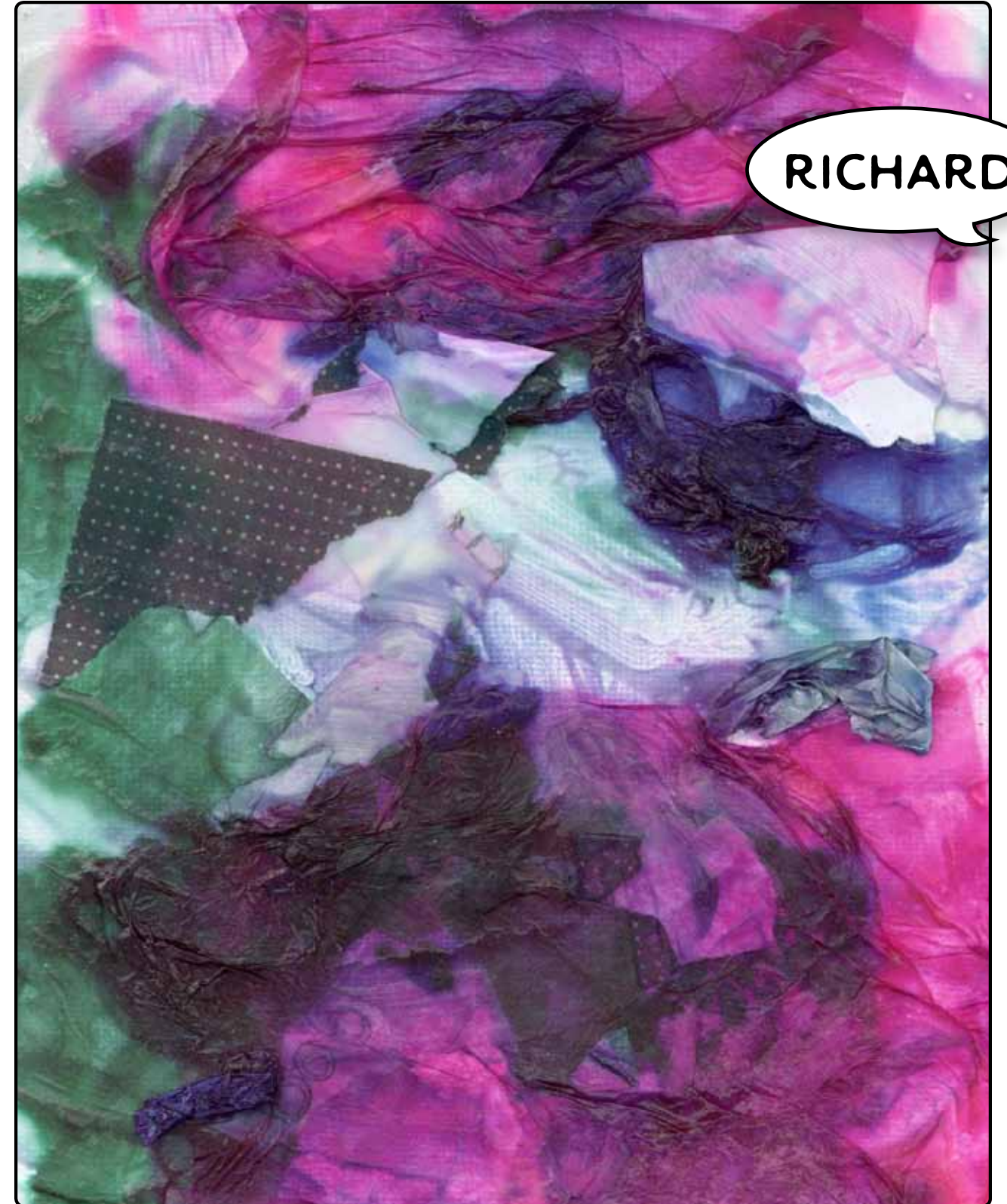
It was the second quarter, and, in the gym, they were playing music from a Bluetooth speaker which the speaker was a black color. My team was up by one. I got subbed in. As I got the ball, I was jogging down the court while dribbling the ball. Then my shoes were untied so I stumbled and smacked the floor.

All I heard was, "Ohhhh" from the from the bleachers.

The referee called a travel and he gave the ball to the other team. I got subbed out to tie my shoe and I grabbed myself a Gatorade and it had a tasted like cherries from a tree mixed with a little bit of water.

As I was on the bench, my team scored all the way to 13 and the other team had 17. I got subbed in at the 3rd quarter to bring up the score for my team. As I got the ball, I quickly walked with the ball while dribbling the ball at the same time and passed it to my teammate and he passes it to my other teammate, and he dribbled into the paint for a layup but missed the layup.

The other team got the ball and I played hard defense on the other guard and I stole the ball and make the layup. Score was 15-17. The other team got the ball and went down the



RICHARD

court and made a shot so now the score is 15-19.

I got the ball again and run as fast as I can and pop a three and made the shot and my team mates on the sideline were screaming because they were so proud of me for making the shot. As the other guard on the other team tried to pass the ball to his team mate my teammate catches the ball and makes the layup know the score is 20-19.

It was the fourth quarter and I ran to the bathroom to use the toilet and I run into my close friend from elementary. I gave him and hug and I gave him my Snapchat so we could stay in contact with him and say hopefully I see him on the court.

After I finish using the bathroom, I go back in the gym and go to the sideline and see that there is 11 seconds left in the game and score is 20-22. My team is down by 2. My coach calls a timeout and tells my team mates to look for me open and pass me the ball to shoot a three to win or a mid-range or a layup to tie the game.

I got the ball and pass it to my other teammate, and he sees me open passes me the ball and I make the shot cushion!!! It goes in.

My whole team ran on the court and hugged me. The other team walks off the court shocked that I made the shot. As we continued celebrating, I went to my friend on the other team and said, "Good game," and showed him good sportsmanship.

After we finished celebrating, my whole team including my coach, shook the other team's hands and waited to get out trophy. My coach got it and raised it and we all screamed "Yeah!"

After that they called my name for most improved player and my team clapped for me as I received my award. I sat down and watched as my other teammate got most valuable player and I clapped for him and he is very proud.

"You did a good job today," my coach said.

We were on the bus going back to the Bronx and we were all bragging about how much points we scored. Before we got off the bus in front of our middle school which was named MS 129 my coach said, "That this was only the beginning for all of us."



TERRON

CHANGING MY MIND

My life wasn't the best because when I was younger I felt like I wasn't going to be successful in life. So that's when I thought, *I should become a youtube.* Youtube came to my mind because I wanted to make a name for myself. In the future I want to live in Los Angeles with my own dream house there. The reason why I want to build my house there is because half of my family lives there and all my favorite youtubers live there too. I just want to travel all around the world and now that I'm older I know right from wrong. I thought of being an actor

but I make beats and send them to rappers and singers. I'm into music because of my brother, he got himself a piano and he was editing some beats his friend did and once he was showing me the keys to a piano, I got more into it. That's when I got myself a laptop because I knew I was talented. Acting is not in the family, but I want to be an actor in life because I'm into all the Marvel movies and all the superpower things. But I don't know where to start acting, but acting is in my mind right now. But I want to be successful in life so I can help other people succeed in life because you only live once and it's good to achieve your goal.



ANTHONY S.

ANTHONY S.

MY MUSIC LIFE

Music was a big part of my life. I was ten years old in the fifth grade, going to PS.76 in the Bronx. It was the day that my school was enrolling 5th grade students to band. It was after school, so I ran home from school because I was so excited to finally have an instrument. My mom and I went to my school at 3:00 pm, since I was to pick an instrument after school, meaning it would take a while for me to choose my instrument, since the school was packed with students.

I was filled with a lot of excitement walking to school. There was such a long line just to choose an instrument, but I thought to myself, *This is going to be worth it.* I was so excited that I couldn't keep still while I was in the line, jumping around.

By the time it was my turn to pick an instrument, I noticed that most of the instruments were already taken.

My mom told me, "I don't think you're going to get an instrument."

The only two instruments left were the clarinet and the flute. The obvious choice to me was the clarinet because it was the only instrument that I've ever heard of at the time.

They presented the flute and I opened the case to a sparkling clarinet, that shone like a diamond.

My favorite childhood cartoon, *Spongebob Squarepants*, was a show that I would always watch after school. My favorite character was Squidward. His clarinet was a big part of what he was, and it was something he enjoyed doing. I related to him so much for that, and it made me believe that I was him.

About three years had passed and I was still playing music in the 8th grade. My teacher wasn't the type to encourage the band to play but I felt different. Music was something I had always wanted to do because it was something I grew up with. From my uncle teaching me how to play the drums to me even singing songs that my mom would play at home when she was cooking food for me and my sister, I've always loved music. Even my sister began loving music as much as I did. I would always think to myself, *I know that I'm going to be a famous musician.*

Time passed and my teacher was even more discouraging. She didn't seem to really care if the band played music or not, making me lose interest in playing my instrument. She would have some sort of vibe that would show how she felt. The whole class noticed it. She would even stop the entire class from playing just to keep it silent. It made me feel down that she didn't care much that it led me to believe that music was a waste of my time.

The end of 8th grade came, and it was finally summer. I felt free from music and was happy that I didn't have to play anymore. If I were to play, I would have ended up going to a summer camp for music. All my friends that were still playing music did end up in that camp, but I didn't worry about it. I would always think to myself, *I finally have time to worry about other things and enjoy my summer.*

Summer was coming to an end and I felt the need to play music again. I found out that everyone that went to that camp was going to the same school, Celia Cruz. I knew that if I were in that camp, I would also be in that school. It gave me a sense of loneliness knowing that I wasn't going to know anyone in my school.

I was going to go to a school that wouldn't have been any benefit to me in the end, so I ended up transferring. I wanted to go to Celia Cruz, but I knew it was too late for that. I couldn't audition because I didn't have an instrument since they were too expensive, and auditions were done, so I didn't have a choice but to go to another school. I really wanted to pick up music so instead of begging for another chance, I did something else. I went on to Spotify and searched up my favorite artist, Frank Sinatra, and found a playlist of different artists and songs that were similar to music I would listen to. I began drifting off into my thoughts as I listened to 50's rock.

I would imagine myself in a dark room with the music playing in the background and see different notes of the music surrounding me. My favorite song at the time, "Blue Velvet" by Bobby Vinton, was another imagination. I would sit on my bed and imagine myself in the position of a musician for the song. I would be in a jazz club with many performances by different musicians and an audience of over 500 people. I can see Bobby Vinton standing in the center of the stage with other musicians behind him. I was one of those musicians with a guitar in my hand, playing every note right. There were even ladies on the side helping out with the song. The crowd went crazy when they heard Bobby Vinton's voice like we were at a concert. Bobby would sing the song and it went, "She wore blue velvet. Bluer than velvet was the night." The song would finish, and the applause would come in, giving me a sense of happiness, then I would be back in my bed, cracking a huge smile.

I then figured that I was lucky enough to even have an instrument. I made new friends, talked to the old ones all the time, and just became joyful altogether.

JALEN

THE LOST BOY OF MANHATTAN

I always love going out to the city; It gives me comfortability and just makes me happy. I love seeing the tall buildings, sidewalks full of people, and the streets full of different cars;

But let me tell you the day I got lost in Manhattan!

One day; my mom took my little sister and I to Manhattan in our grey Toyota minivan. I was so excited about the fact that I was about to go to Manhattan to shop, I was full of joy. My eyes were wide open, smiling like a baby getting a new toy, and jumping all over the place.

Once we got to Manhattan my mom had to park the car in a corner of a street,

"Jalen looked at the street name and the area," My mom said.

"Why mommy?"

"Because I don't want you getting lost in Manhattan," my mom said.

"Okay."

As we walked around, I could see all the food vans selling drinks and hotdogs and all the business men and

women, and I could see all the tall buildings. *I don't get it; How can people build all these tall buildings? Aren't they scared of the height?*

Finally, my mom took me and my little sister inside a shoe store. As we walked inside all I could see many people holding shoe boxes. My mom took my hand and my sister's hand. As soon as we go inside, I let go of my mom's hands and started looking around. My mom had called me so she can hold my hand while walking out of the store. I ran out of the store. As I started looking around I saw my mom. I ran towards them.

"Mommy wait for me," I said.

"Hey who are you little boy?" a woman said, confused.

It was a woman with her daughter who had the same color clothes as my mom and sister.

I was more scared than ever. I didn't know what to do. It was like being lost in space except I couldn't breathe, and I was surrounded by strangers. My first instinct was to start crying and just run. *Oh my god, where are they? Why is this happening to me? If I run it would be easier for me to find my mom and then we can just go home.* I ran across the street not caring if a car hit me until a lady stopped me.

"Are you okay?," she worried.

"I can't find my mommy," me crying.

"Alright come with me. "I'll help you find your mom."

"What is her name? Do you remember?"

"No I just really miss her."

She grabbed my hand and started walking with me from block to block. Finally, I heard a voice, *Mommy?* I turned around and it was her! I was so happy! I let go of the lady and just ran to my mom. I just didn't know what to do, all I knew was to hug her.

"I'm so sorry mommy I should've held your hand the whole time."

"It's okay just please don't let go of me again" she said, smiling.

While we were in the car, we exchanged small talk and then my mom started telling me to be careful when we aren't in places we don't know that much. That was the day I realized to be careful when I'm alone cause anything can happen especially get lost.

JALEN





LISSETTE

LISSETTE

SCARY BUT NECESSARY

My mother was experiencing a lot of chest pain during the month of February. I ended up going with her to the emergency room in Jacobi on a Thursday. They did a lot of studies on her that day, but they weren't able to find anything. We were asked to stay for the night for extra studies.

That night, they found out that she was born with only two valves. It was a miracle. Everyone is born with three, while my mom was born with two. This wasn't letting her blood circulate and if they didn't fix this, an artery would burst. This meant she would need surgery and it was urgent before she got any symptoms, now that she hasn't had any except the chest pain.

After one, of her appointments they informed us about how her recovery would go. We got home and between us was nothing but silence until it was broken by...

"I'm not getting the surgery," she said calmly as if it was nothing big.

"What? Why?" I said confused.

"The recovery would take too long. I won't be able to take care of you and siblings without having to worry if you guys are eating or not." she said with sadness in her eyes.

I didn't know exactly what to say I stood there in silence as I thought about what she said. The only thought in my head was that I

wanted my mom forever and I knew so did my family, so we all convinced her.

"You have me and Thania to help with the younger ones," I said, trying to make her feel better about the situation.

"You're not alone. I'll stay home with the kids while you're at the hospital and when your husband has work so they're not alone. And I'll cook food make sure they eat," my aunt said, trying to give a solution to her worries.

"Everything will be okay at home. The only thing you need to worry about is getting better," my dad said, assuring her that it was okay to get the surgery.

My sister and I made a compromise where we would each spend a night or two at the hospital with her so she wouldn't be alone.

We didn't want her to get overwhelmed and think we were forcing her to get the surgery, so we gave her some time to think about it.

We went to another appointment to make sure she was okay to go into surgery. They were translating to her all of the things that could happen throughout the surgery. I couldn't help but get nervous and scared. I felt this unexplainable feeling in my stomach and then out of nowhere I felt myself crying on my mom's shoulder. The only thoughts that came to my head was not wanting to see her in pain or just lying down being able to go nowhere, but I had to listen to what my dad said to her and believe everything was going to be okay.

Days passed and before I knew it were getting ready one afternoon to take her to get her surgery. They took her away to get prepared for the surgery and as I see them roll her away in the bed I cried and ran to hug her. We left that night since we weren't going to be able to see her right away, but they informed us that by tomorrow she would be able to have visitors.

As I walked into her room the next day, I noticed she wasn't happy.

"How are you feeling?" I asked her.

"I'm in a lot of pain right now that's all. Will you take me to the bathroom?" she asked me.

I didn't answer. I just helped her off her bed and grabbed her hand and took her to the bathroom. I noticed her scar and as she washed her hands. She pulled up her gown.

"Why are you pulling it up?" I asked curious.

"I don't want to see it. It looks horrible." she said disgusted.

My family and I let her know how much we love her and love her scar. It's been a few months after her surgery. She started to do little things to help her do things to get back to the way she was before. Yes, she is still insecure about her scar, but my family and I understand it will take time. She knows she has our support through every step of the way.

KEYCHAUN

MY FIRST BASKETBALL GAME

When I was in 7th grade I had my first basketball AAU game I was only 13 years old 5'2 inches. I was the shortest on the court against people that were 6'4. It was my first game of the season and as soon as I enter the away gym, I had butterflies in my stomach. I was the starting point guard (aka the captain of my team) which meant I had to set the pace and tone of the game. The way I would play have impact the way all my other teammates played. I quickly made the first shot and I was a little happy but then the next couple of shots I was missing which made me feel very wack. After I missed my last shot coach called timeout.

"Keychaun man you have to stop playing nervous. I understand there are people on the court that's taller than you but that don't mean you gotta fold," Coach said.

"Alright coach. I am a little nervous"

After the timeout was over, I got back in the game I took coach's advice. I made a couple of shots back to back. I ended the game off with 12 points even though I could have scored more.

The next day we had practice. Coach made me work under pressure because he said that was my weakness. So, we were playing a scrimmage and I was not stopped by any of my teammates.

Then coach pulled me to the side. "I like how you played today. Now, we have another game coming up against the school downstairs from us, so I really want to do a lot of the pick and rolls you was pulling off," he explained.

I replied, "Okay, Coach. But we need the big men to work hard in the paint. I don't need to do everything on my own."

After practice was over, we had a game three days later and I wasn't as nervous as I was during the AAU game I played in. During this game, I was starting point guard once again, but not only was I starting point guard, but I also had to pick my starting five. This was hard for me to choose because my teammates were all good. It was a hard decision for me to choose but I really wanted to win. I picked a decent starting five and we started off winning which my coach was happy about, and then we kind of fell off.

Coach called timeout and said, "Keychaun run the pick and roll with the Bigman, and on defense run three up top and the two bigs down bottom. We will watch the lead spark up."

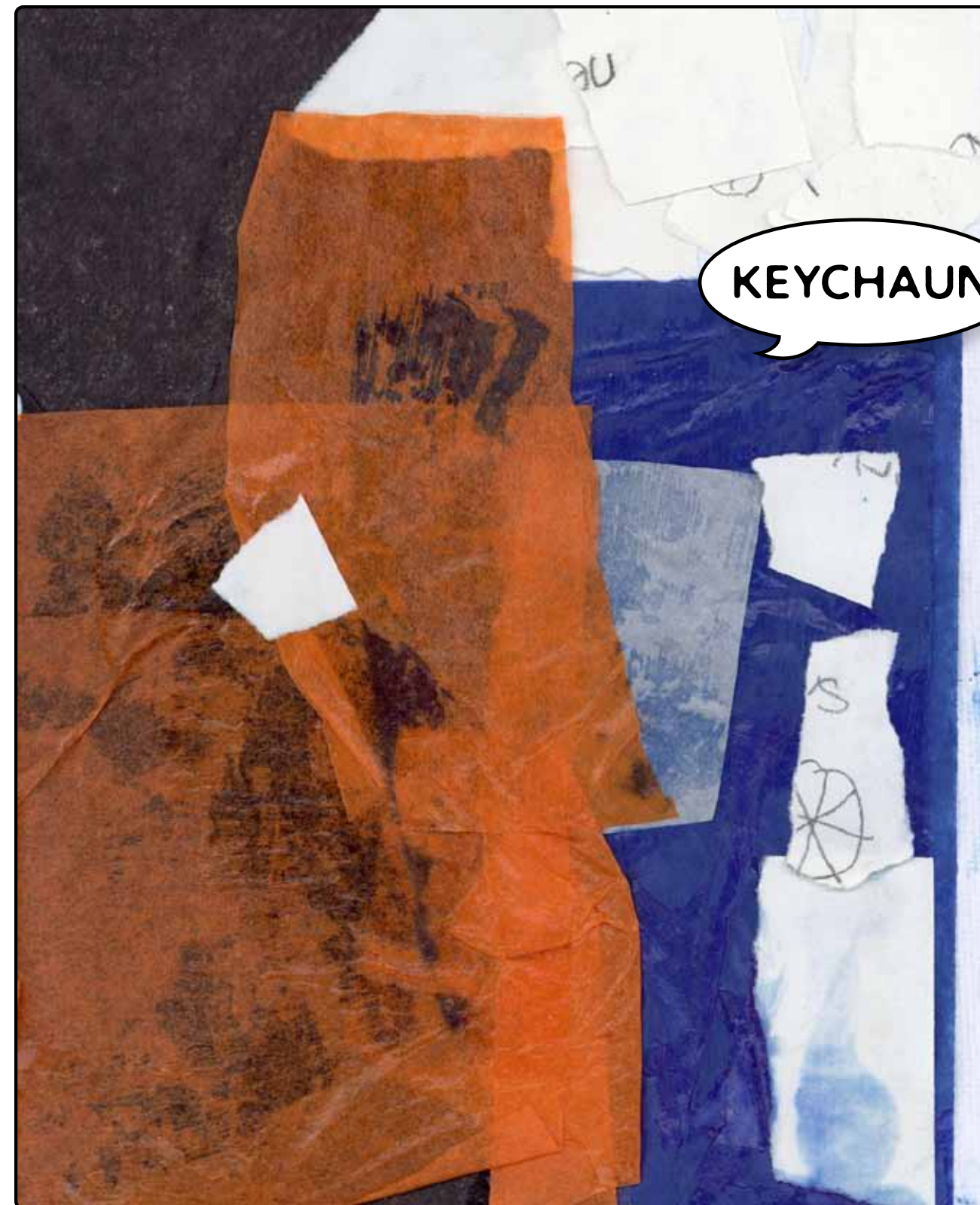
I explained, "I need the two bigs to lock up everything in the paint and let the guards work up top on defense because it should be no reason why if we playing three on top and two down bottom the bigs is on the top of the key"

During the game as soon we started, I was happy that we had a lot of people from my school to cheer for me. As I took the ball down the court, I was thinking to myself, *They can't guard me. I am going to blow right past them and score.*

After I tried scoring, I got foul and I had to shoot two free throws. While I was shooting the first one, I had butterflies in my stomach so when I shot it. I made it. My school audience was screaming my name. I was so hype! so then I began shooting the next free throw and I didn't have butterflies this time because I began blocking out what my teammates would say to me if I didn't make a shot.

As I was shooting the last free throw shot, the crowd was cheering for me, so I really had to make the shot because the crowd encouraged me to make the shot. I made it all as the crowd pleased me to. Then the crowd got even louder than it ever did before. After those free throw shots, I ran back down and played great defense along with my teammates. There was a turnover involved and I was on a fastbreak with my duo partner and I wanted to be nice and let him shine so I passed the ball and let him score. Then coach sat me down the next dead ball I sat down for the rest of the last quarter and my team won.

After those two games I have learned to never be nervous and play how I choose to play, and my team manage to win the last game of the season.



ANGELEEN

HOLDING ON THAT STRENGTH

It was like a sharp pain hit the bottom right of my stomach. I couldn't move, couldn't do anything. I didn't know what to do. All I knew was that my stomach was turning inside out. I thought, *What's wrong with me? What's happening?* Worst part is that it's happening during Christmas. I went home and went to bed. *Sleep? What's that?* I kept waking up every 20 minutes before I actually feel asleep around 3 am.

My mom made me breakfast but I couldn't eat it without having the urge to throw up.

"What's wrong?" my mom asked.

I replied with, "My stomach has been hurting since last night."

She gave me a worried and decided that we go to the emergency room.

The waiting process didn't take long considering it was Christmas so there weren't many people. After the doctor asked me the usual questions and gave me medicine the doctors came to the fact that it might just be a stomach virus, so they gave me antibiotics and sent me home

The stomach pains were com-

ing and going so I had to go to the hospital AGAIN and unfortunately had to spend New Year's in a hospital bed but the doctors diagnosed me with a appendicitis, But they couldn't remove it due to some other medical issues that were going on.

In January that's when everything started to go downhill. I was in three different hospitals doing tests like MRI scans, drainages, and pelvic CT scans. I wasn't able to go to school under those circumstances and that worried me because I wanted to pass the 6th grade.

After the doctors did the tests and they sent me home until they found the results. They sent me home with an IV drip and I had to give myself medication so that I wouldn't have to stay in the hospital anymore. It was difficult having that needle in my arm 24/7, but luckily, I was able to go back to school, but I had to be careful with carrying things with my left arm. At times, I would think, *I just want to rip this stupid needle out of my arm already.*

Finally, after two weeks, the doctors removed the IV drip from my arm. During those two weeks I went through this process of trying to heal from everything. I was drinking healthy juices to get my blood flow working properly it tasted like. One of my mom's relatives did a praying ritual for me by "talking to god." A bunch of my family members came for support but I had to stand the entire time which made me pass out. I was so relived those two weeks were over of weirdness.

It was FINALLY time for surgery It was March 20 of 2017. I walked in the operating room scared but ready for

this nightmare to finally be over. All the waiting process led to this. The doctors prepared me for what was going to happen in the procedure.

As I lay down on that icy cold bed, the bright light, beaming in my face, I could feel the laughing gas mask putting me to sleep. and of course, I was laughing hysterically as I felt myself drifting into a three-hour sleep and all my worries would finally be over. I remember telling myself, *You can do this, You'll be fine.*

Three hours later I woke up, dizzy. The doctors told me the surgery was a success. They wheeled me downstairs once I was ready to go home. They had patched me up with bandages. I got the medicine I needed and went home with a sense of relief that this was OVER. The scars that I have prove that anything is possible with time and healing if your positive and just work on yourself.



ANGELEEN

JASON

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

It was the first day of my vacation with me and my family were all getting packed up because we all knew that the next day was going to be a busy day which was the same day we were leaving. I packed up all my summer clothes and summer shoes and a separate bag for my PS4. My suitcase was already heavy enough now I got a heavy ps4 with cords in it and nobody would hold it for me. After I'm done with everything I go to sleep because I already had to wake up in the morning to get a haircut cause u already know that I have to look crispy.

First things first it's the morning I'm grumpy because I like being woken up, but I go to the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth and head to the barber because I wanted to be the first one there. Once I get there I dap up the barber I just tell him lemme get the usual cause me thinking he would know what I meant but I'm guessing his brain wasn't fully functioning so he gives me the worst haircut ever he gave me the baldy I told him yo what is this I aint ask for this he said "oh my bad I got confused sorry" I was so tight but at the same time it was just water I just thought to myself it is going to be hot in Dominican republic so he probably just gave me a favor so I just dap him up and get going. I'm on my home with the walk of shame with my hoodie on ain't wanting no one to see me like this I was already sweating bullets, but it was worth not getting caught with the clean bean. Once I get home I take a shower get all the leftover hair I hope in the shower rinse up hop out had to be quick I had to hurry because our flight leaves soon I aint want to be late I look around the house to see if I left

anything or if I need something else it looks like I got everything I need for now. We get in the car I was so packed, and I hate being squished on to each other feeling the skin of the person next to me especially when there sweaty and we go on our way to the airport the one and only JetBlue. As we in the car my mom gives me some bread so I can go exchange it in the airport in Dr I tell her *imma miss u ma thxs I love u* as we almost arrive, I'm just chillin playing my music. We get to the airport I was ready for my vacation my mom sheds tears and screams imma miss u as I say it back and head on. After we say all our greetings we have to wait on a huge line like that line was very huge I did not want to stay on my feet waiting for that long cause my feet was going to hurt so I drop my suitcase down and start sitting down. After a while they finally call us up after three years I'm just saying *finally*. After a while now it's been at least an hour this airport process is very long, and I hate it so much cause my feet hurt but I just put up with it and stop acting like a girl. After we got checked and got scanned, we only need one more thing now and it's to wait calmly till they call our flight. After waiting so long waiting my stomach starts rumbling, I was starving so I go to the chip aisle and got me some Doritos and an ice-cold Pepsi. I go back to my seat and charge my phone cause I ain't want my phone to be dead on the plane. Finally they call us up for our flight I ain't going to lie I was nervous cause I haven't been on a plane since I was a lil kid and I barely remember how it was like and me I be watching video videos off plane crashing and all that and I totally ain't want that to happen. We finally make it to our plane I find my seat I was hoping they didn't put me with no ransoms next to me but let's just say I called it I had they middle seat I was next to my cousin and some elderly woman she had the window seat to which isn't fair cause I knew she wasn't going to look

out she was probably going to close it anyway. I start getting mad because this process takes so long so we wait for like 30 minutes and finally just finally the planes moves, and I heard "flight blah blah blah it's starting to take off please but ur seat belts on" the. The flight attendants start going around to check it to see if it was right enough it we then flight took off. As soon as the flight takes off, I hear a scream I look back it was my cousin screaming I ain't blame her because we haven't been on a plane in a while. the plane is finally in the air we get to moving I'm just chilling on my phone when I see no service on my phone I'm like oooo at that point I felt like crying but then I see a paper in front of the seat with something that had to do with Wi-Fi I open it and lucky it gave me the Wi-Fi but guess what u actually had to pay in my head I was like *wtf is this u deadass* but I keep calm a few minute later pass they start passing food I got me some chips ahoy with a juice box after I buss that down I just wait for the plane to arrive I was so bored so I gts u till we get there. And finally they time I been waiting for we finally get there while they plane was going down I did not know what happened to my ears it felt like my ears just popped my grandma said "don't worry it normal" so I just calmed down. After the flight land everyone thanks god they flight went well so the first thing I grabbed was my ps4 make sure nothing happens to it and hop off that airplane. Now we need to get our suitcases from that machine we get there and we get everyone's suitcase but for some reason mine was not coming

So my grandpa talks to someone in the airport and after a while after investigating it seems that my suitcase was left one the plane so we had to wait again and finally here come my gigantic suitcase case and head our way we go through the long process again and we stopped at a machine now this machine changes money like I had money from USA and it changed it to

Dominican Republic money so after we done with that we head out and we meet up with one of the workers that worked there he was an officer call Miguel it seemed like he knew my family and then later one I ask my aunt who that she say "that's your uncle " oh I say to myself *damn I haven't been here In a while I forgot my own uncle* we step outside and goddamn it was hella hot remind u it was night time I did not understand why it was so hot at night but it was so hot I thought I couldn't breathe. So we get to his car that was parked right outside his job we pack up everything in the car I stay with my ps4 cause I didn't want nothing to happen to it and here we go again it was so hot and we was smushed in the car I didn't want to get mad cause I knew everyone was feeling the same way so I roll the window down and I smell that Dominican smell it smelled so great I was happy to be there. So we get to the home the home looked beautiful I tell my grandma good job because she was the one that made this with the people she paid money to make it and it look very good so once I get there I went to my room put my stuff down and relax it was already late she we just chill and wait for the food to come the one my grandpa got for us he come back with some chicken plantains all of that we ate it was so good but I was tired all I wanted to do was hit the bed and got to sleep but first I take a shower in that hot shower and brush my teeth and go to sleep and I'm not going to lie it was hot and I didn't have an ac or fan yet so it took me a while to go to sleep but in a while that's what I do. The next day after that rough day I take a shower in that hot shower and brush my teeth and think about life I go out sauce and see my grandma awake I give her my blessing and then she gives me my breakfast she made me a salami sandwich I never tasted one so I take a bite and that shit tasted so good I had to ask for another but I couldn't cause other people had to eat so she gives

me my coffee I say thanks and go set up my ps4 so I could hope on some 2k I set everything up the only problem was that my tv was on the wall so that meant I had to go back a little because it was going to hurt my neck but there was no problem with it I just liked playing close up. I didn't have to worry about playing for a short time cause my grandma basically owned the property, so I called play 'til my hands fall off. Later on that day I start feeling hungry so I go to a place called the Sirena which was a supermarket I go there I was so surprised right the prices I little bag of kisses was like 100 which in DR was nothing but I was straight cause I had like 5000 on me at the moment so I go and shop once we get home I'm lit I got me a box pizza the kisses and ice cream first thing I ate was the pizza I got while it's getting ready I try to finish my game then I hear my grandma say it's ready so get up get my food cause I was type hungry so I go to the porch and enjoy my food. Meanwhile I go to my room and I see my uncle Ronny there fixing an ac the we had in the closet this whole time, so he was fixing it I'm just praying that he makes it work cause it way to hot. Finally, the ac turns on the cold air blast me when it first hit it felt so good(pause) I just said to myself oh yea I am going to sleep good tonight. A few weeks later go by of me just chillin when I should be outside but as long as I wasn't bothering no one I was fine. It was officially time to go school has started To be honest I was ready to go I miss the Bronx I miss the bacon egg and cheese my chopped cheese and my fellow bx energy and most importantly my mom. So we pack up and get in the car and go to the airport but of course that day at had to rain with thunder storms so I was just confused on how we was going to do this once we arrive there we wait I put my suitcase down and sit on it how everyone was sitting on the seat I wait and chill on my phone but it was odd we actually stayed there and

waited for 2 hours after that I just see my grandma's face she went to investigate her face was so serious it looked like she was going on a mission. I am not going to lie if we got on the ride I didn't want to get on cause I didn't want nothing happening to the plane god forbid but my grandma wanted to leave to because she had to take care of business back home and remind u today was the first day of school. After we walk around it's been like another 2hrs we been doing this I didn't wanna complain cause my grandma already had enough on her plate and I didn't want to piss her off even more, so I just put up with it. So, my grandma tries to see what's going on, so she just thinks something happened. So after a while we keep walking but then she steps up to a counter and ask was going on until this man came from behind us and said that our flight was canceled I could just see my grandma's face turning red of the anger I felt bad and upset and she felt scammed because she already spent tons of money so they was basically just taking money from her without her realizing so they pretty much took advantage of her. Its 5.00AM we been walking for hours she calls our uncle I just mind my business. After she calls my uncle to come pick us up how the flight was canceled and had to wait for two weeks so we all drive home in tears just waiting to go back to the house to go to sleep. Once we get there, we had to unpack everything but that was after I took a nap. When I woke up, I realized and said to myself that we couldn't even go nowhere for fun because we didn't have money we only had for some food and water. 2 weeks past I was scheduled to leave today but thank god this time we didn't unpack everything the first time our flight was delayed. So, once we in the plane I just relax and say to myself *finally I'm going home I can finally start my 7th grade year and most especially see my mom.*



DANIELLE

DANIELLE

TRIP TO INDIANA

I haven't seen my brother in three years and my siblings, and I miss all the good times we had. He moved to Indiana to find a good job with his kids. His name is Patrick. We all planned a trip to finally see him and I couldn't wait.

I was impatient. We started at 5:00 in the morning. We were eager and everything. *Can't wait! Can't wait! Can't wait!* I thought.

We brushed our teeth and took a shower. After we were all done, we checked to see if we packed everything then we called an Uber. We waited about 5 minutes for the Uber to come.

"The Uber is here!" yelled my brother.

I couldn't wait.

My brother's name is Justin and my little sister's name is Bretney.

We went downstairs and put our stuff in the trunk and got in the car. It took us 26 minutes to get there. Finally, we arrived at the bus terminal and took our bags out.

"Thank you." I said.

We went inside and Justin checked out our tickets. We waited about 15 minutes then we went downstairs to where all the buses were. We got downstairs and found out what bus we were supposed to be on. The bus driver checked our tickets and we got on the bus. Some other lady put our bags on the bus. About 5 minutes later, the bus finally took off. I was so thrilled that I got to see my brother after three years.

The bus ride was 18 hours long, so I put in my headphones then fell asleep. It was so uncomfortable to sleep because the seats were hard as a rock. It felt very uncomfortable, but I still fell asleep.

We arrived in Cincinnati and we were about to take the other bus to Indiana. Then the bus driver asked for our tickets. We showed her our tickets then she asked for our IDs. We all froze because we didn't know we needed an ID, so we called my older brother and told him we can't get on the bus without our IDs.

"The driver said we can't get on the bus without our IDs." I said.

"Alright, I'm going to call Krystal so she can come pick you guys up alright, just go inside," my brother said.

He called Krystal to pick us up and she did. However, it took 2 hours because she had work. Later, she texted that she was outside

"I am outside." said Krystal.

We rushed outside and put our stuff in the trunk and we left. I was so exhausted. Finally we were in her car and we were driving to Indiana which was also 2 hours away. I fell asleep while we were in the car because I was so hungry and sleepy.

Suddenly I woke up and we were 5 minutes away. Immediately I sat up so fast and smiled. All I thought about was his reaction. *Would he be surprised? How does he look now?*

We finally got there, and we started taking our bags and went inside. We got inside and I saw him! I was so delighted, I ran and gave him a hug and didn't let go for a while. In addition, we ate, talked and had a lot of fun.

BRIAN

UNTITLED

When I was younger, mainly during my elementary years, I performed really well in school. I even ended up on the honor roll. I would start off the year with a few goals, a positive attitude, great energy, and would focus on 2 things all year. Summer and of course, 5th-grade graduation. School was never my favorite, but I knew that I needed to get through it. Anyway, I started second grade the same as all of my 3 years of school before. I planned on getting the year done and over with. However, my plans didn't go how I wanted them to go.

As summer came to an end, I prepared myself for the next 10 dreadful months of school. I did not want the summer to end at all! I wished school would just fade out of existence. But still, on September 6th, 2011, I started my first day of 2nd grade. I remember it being good in the beginning. My birthday was coming up only a couple of weeks after. I was back at school with my friends. I was enjoying recess and all the school lunch that I missed over the summer. It wasn't so bad. It was only a few months before that would all go south.

After a while, I started to change. At first, it was only minor changes but as time went on everything progressed excessively. My attitude became awful. I was starting to come out very disrespectfully towards others, including staff from my school and other students. For this reason, I would receive detention. That didn't stop me though. I only continued to grow worse. I would push the buttons of anyone I felt like and would push limits as far as I could. I was constantly getting in trouble and penalized. And still, none of this stopped me. It was only a short matter of time before I would become a bully to the other kids in my school. I would tease and pick on anyone I chose just because I felt like it. My school would eventually get tired of my behavioral issues and suspend me for some time. And even that didn't stop me. I would just come back and do it all over again. On some days I would spend my time in the Principal's office. I had to be kept away from the other kids because they saw me as a disturbance. It soon got to the point when I was labeled as "the worst kid in the school". At the time I didn't really care much. I stopped doing my schoolwork and started getting low scores on almost everything. Soon though, it would all catch up to me.

As the school year was closing in, my mother would break the news to me that I would have to repeat the grade. When I heard this for the first time, I was shocked, in disbelief, embarrassed, disappointed in myself,

and extremely upset. I couldn't believe that I would need to do the second grade all over again. All my friends would leave me behind. I didn't want to be in a class with kids younger than me. I couldn't change the past though. After finally understanding why I needed to repeat the grade, I realized I had to change my ways and straighten myself out. I promised myself that I wouldn't make those mistakes again and I would try my best from then on.

The next school year I went back to being the student that teachers and kids liked and appreciated. I completed all of my work and improved my behavior. After I had finally made it past the second grade. 3 years later I proudly walked out of that school with a diploma in my hand.

I don't know why or what caused me to act the way I did but regardless I continued to work hard and try my best in middle school. It wasn't easy and I did screw up some more, but I got through it just how I did before. These types of things only make me wiser and more confident in myself when it comes to school as they should. Every screw up I make I take as a lesson now and grow from it. I've made it to high school and the only 2 things that still remain on my mind are summer and 12th-grade graduation. I definitely don't plan on repeating another grade. I know I'll make it.

BRIAN





SHYMEL

SHYMEL

UNTITLED

It was a rainy Wednesday and I had a big disagreement with my mom, and this is crazy. Usually I just go through my day a normal Wednesday. I would go to class and everything and I went to Accelerated Academy.

I was going to leave the building and go to football practice. Then I was finishing up football practice and after went out with my friends. I had forgotten about my phone being off, but I had pulled it out then I turned on my phone and I see I had a bunch of missed calls from my mom.

I was finishing up with my friends and looked at my phone and it was about 8:30pm and I picked up my phone and my mom was screaming on the phone.

I was on the bus going home then I had gotten home and my mom was sitting on the couch with this look on her face.

She was very angry and then she had said, 'Where were you, young man?'

I had just looked because I was very scared to say something to my mom. Then I was like 'I went after practice to eat out with my friends.'

She was like, 'Why you didn't let me know where you were at?'

Then I said, 'I should not always have to let you know where I'm at all the time'.

Then she was very angry staring at me like she was going to explode into a burst of rage at me. Then I got very angry and I stormed off on her.

I shut the room door and sat on my bed. I was very angry at my mom.

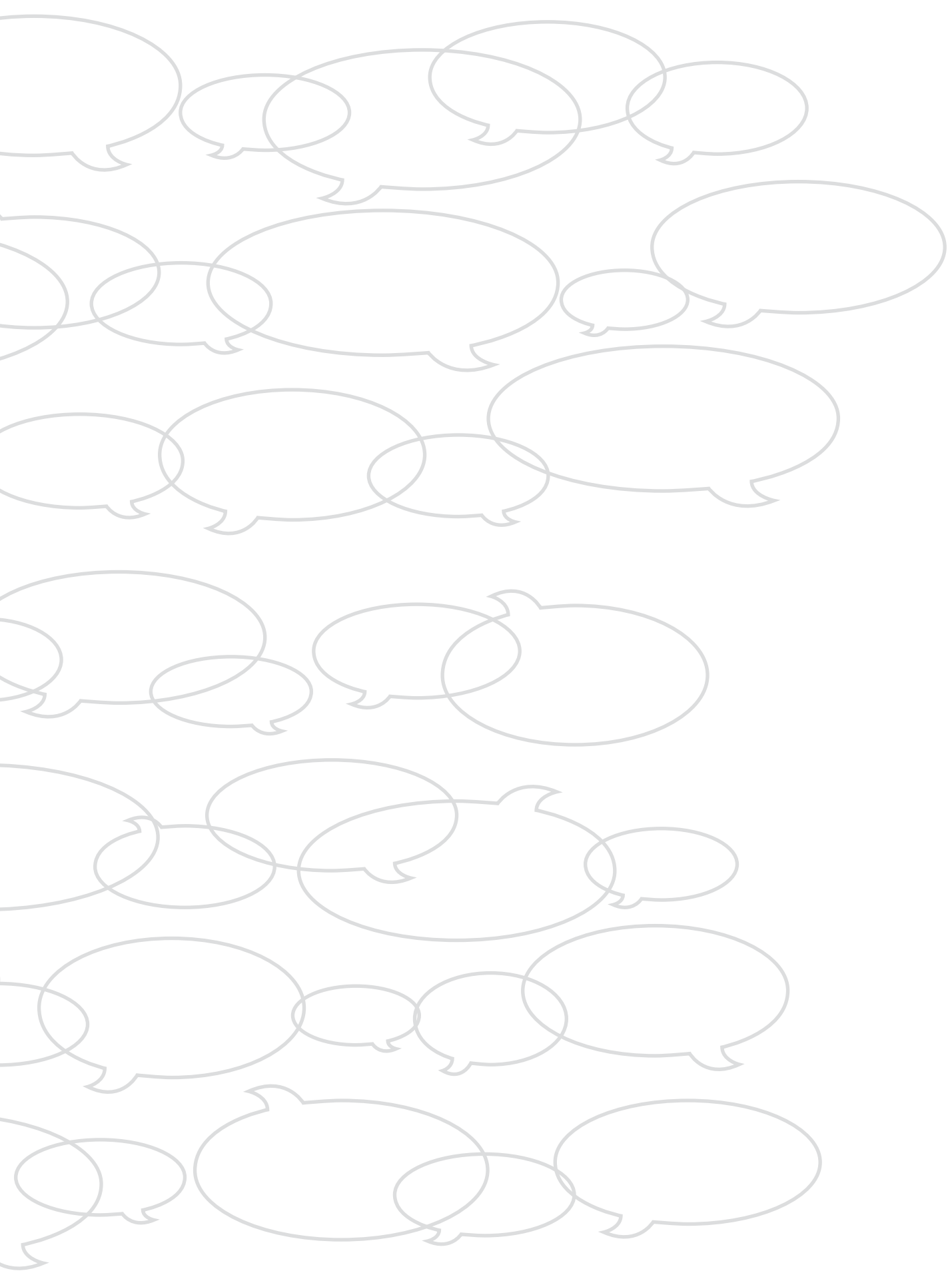
I took off my stuff I went to the bathroom, took a shower. I was very relaxed after the shower because I didn't have to hear my mom screaming at me about coming in the house at 9:00 and saying that you should not be outside doing all this nonsense and saying how important it is to let your parents know where you are at all times because you don't know what will happen to you. I went to sleep thinking about what I did last night. I saw what I did wrong.

I woke up the next morning. I had pulled out my clothes for the next day and I was in the shower and I was preparing for the next day. I went in the living room and ate my breakfast and then I went to my mom. She was in her room preparing for work.

I said, 'I'm sorry, Mom, for last night. I know what I had done wrong and it will not happen again. And I know I need to be more responsible for my actions because you did not know where I was at.'

My mom said, 'It is okay. You just need to let me know where you are at.'

Next, I went to school and I had a good rest of the day.



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*. Paul lives in Manhattan with his family. He can be found online at paulgriffinstories.com.

ABOUT BEHIND THE BOOK

Behind the Book brings authors and their books into classrooms to build literacy skills and create 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 Common Core Learning Standards.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

WRITING

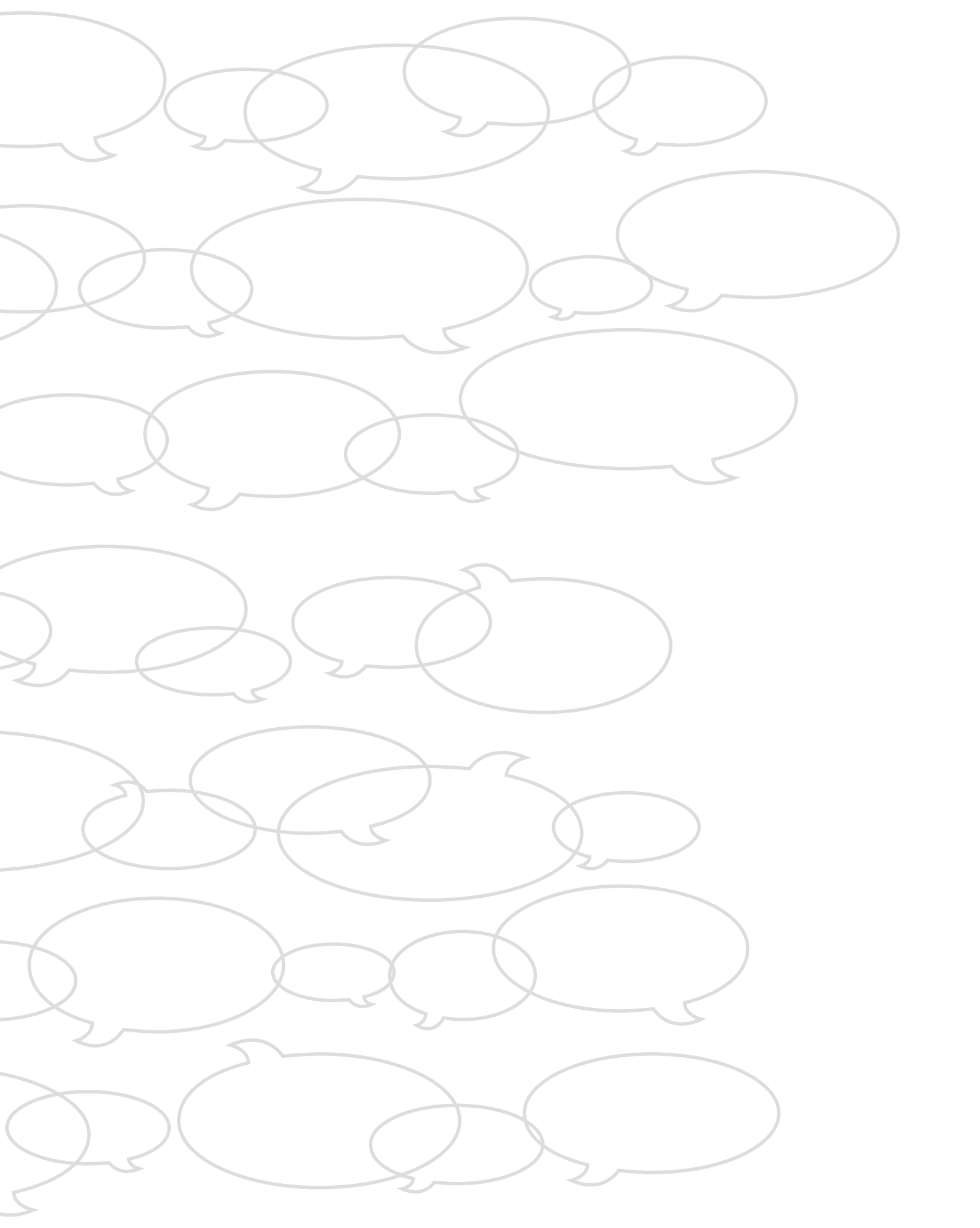
- W.9-10.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
- W.9-10.5** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

READING

- RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- RL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- RL.9-10.5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



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