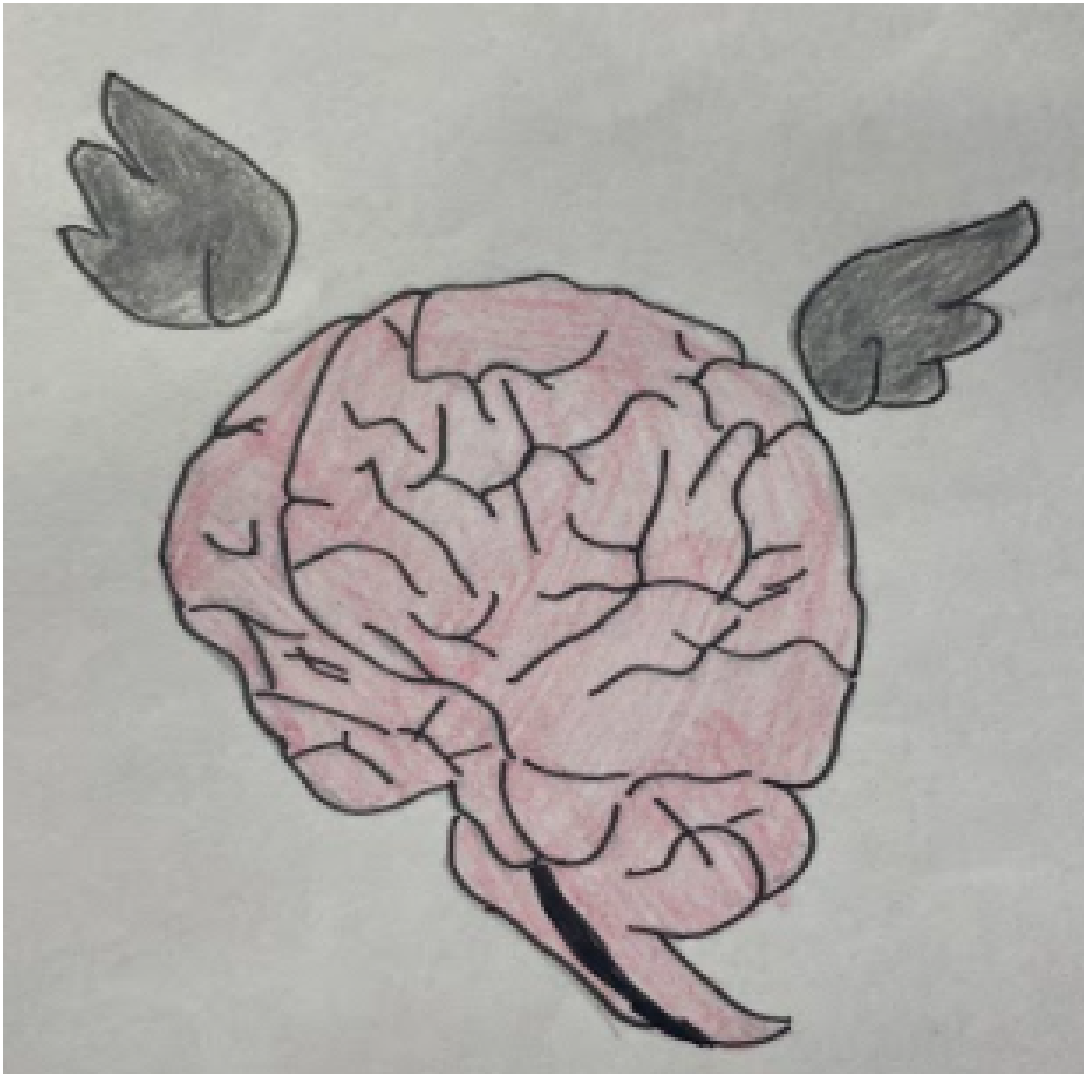


MIND FLIES



Introduction:

The Stories of Life

If we are being honest when it comes to introduction, we have no clue where to begin. We thought about reading others' vignettes, but we've come up with something different. Over the years, a pandemic spread. We were virtual for a little over a year. A lot of different things happened to people over that year. Some people developed depression, lost loved ones, others just haven't felt themselves, plus a lot of people have broken relationships. Covid affected a lot of people: we either couldn't see loved ones or couldn't keep the relationship because of their mental or physical health.

With these vignettes we all took what we've experienced or felt and turned it into something fictional or more interesting to read. Some people used this project to hide what they are going through and express it in a hidden way. Some share the same thoughts and feelings, and others think and feel things that they can't quite explain yet.

During and before Covid, people of color faced racist bias from police and others in their communities.

For some examples: George Floyd was murdered by a white policeman who knelt on his neck, Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed by a white man for running through his neighborhood, and Breonna Taylor's home was broken into by police. She was shot and killed laying in her bed because they thought she was someone else. As a result of all this violence, riots took place all over the United States, including in Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Chicago, Louisville, Georgia, and Atlanta. These events truly traumatized us as a community.

As you can see, this left a big impact not just on us but on the world. Things became more difficult. It caused people to experience things they never thought could happen. People became jobless, homeless, unemployment rates went up. "Tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty" said The World Health Organization in 2020. On the other hand, some crime has declined but shooting and killing rates are up, especially in Philadelphia. During the time of the pandemic, we also lost great basketball legends Kobe Bryant and Giana Bryant; we still haven't seen any justice.

"The Stories of Life" means our magazine is based on writers' stories. This introduction is not to catch your attention, it's more so to inform you how something so little can leave a big impact. Think about it like this: if you have been locked away for a year and a half and then get reopened to the world again, we have to readjust. It's life all over again. There are certain things you can't do now that you did before, but we are getting through it together.

THIS IS OUR STORY.

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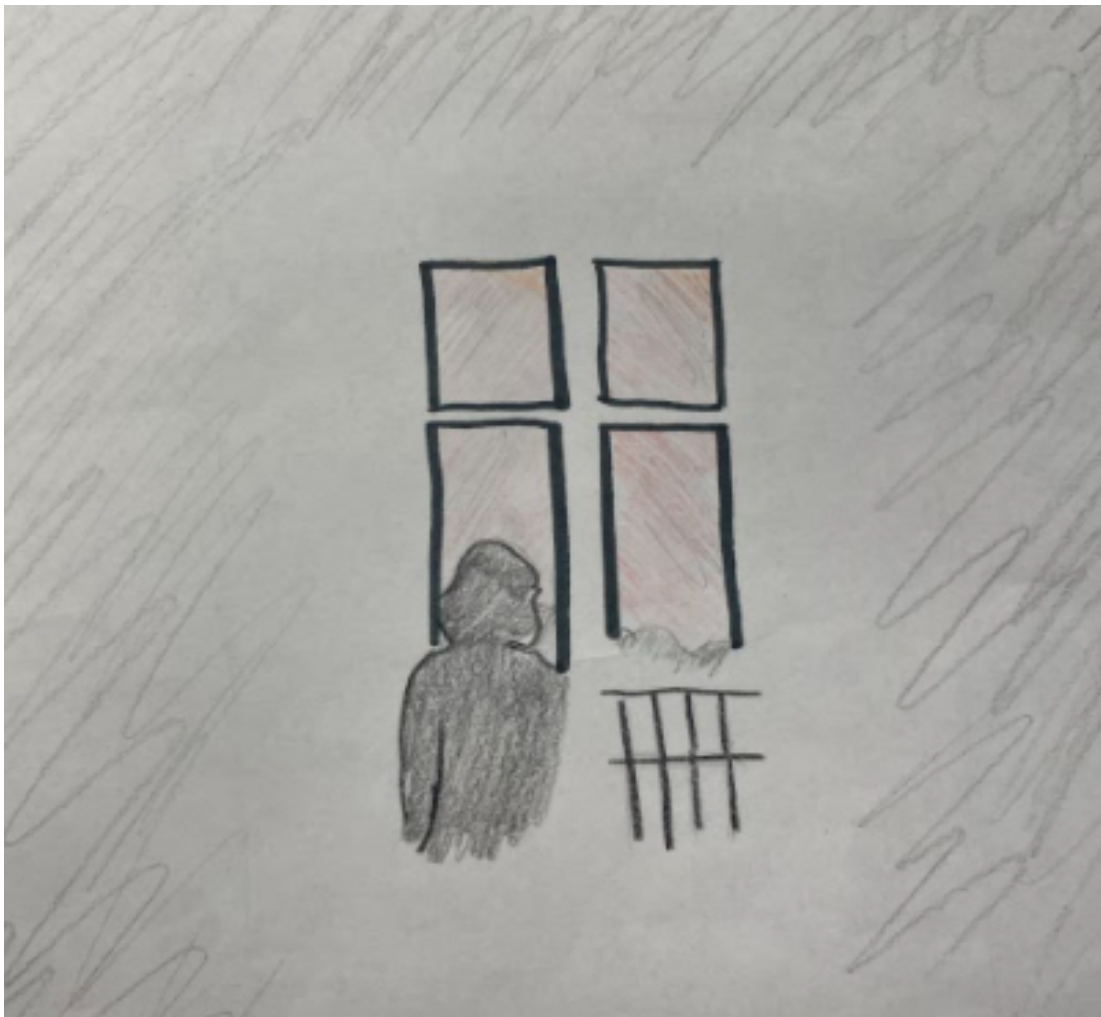
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Everyday Life

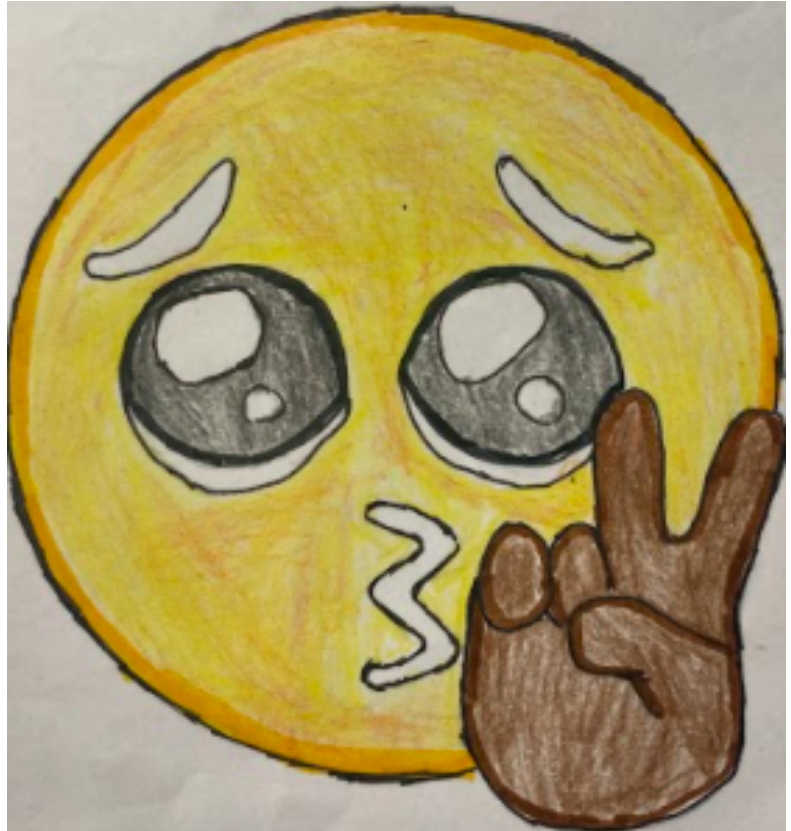


HIGH SCHOOL EQUALS MIXED EMOTIONS

By Sianni R.

Author Bio

Sianni R. is a person who loves food and animals. She wants to be a veterinarian in the future.



.....

Honestly, school sucks. I mean think about it, you go to a huge rectangular building with people you probably don't wanna deal with for eight hours or less. Doing work, tests, and maybe even projects for a grade that could affect you for the rest of your life. Okay maybe I'm exaggerating, but you get the point. Or maybe you like the thought of that, so you honestly don't care and like people. So congrats, you're okay with school life. Sure, many people don't like it or hate it even, and some people love it or just like it for the people there.

Even though school is very challenging, it can also be a lot of fun when you get the hang of it. The people can be a lot of fun too, if you pick your friends wisely.

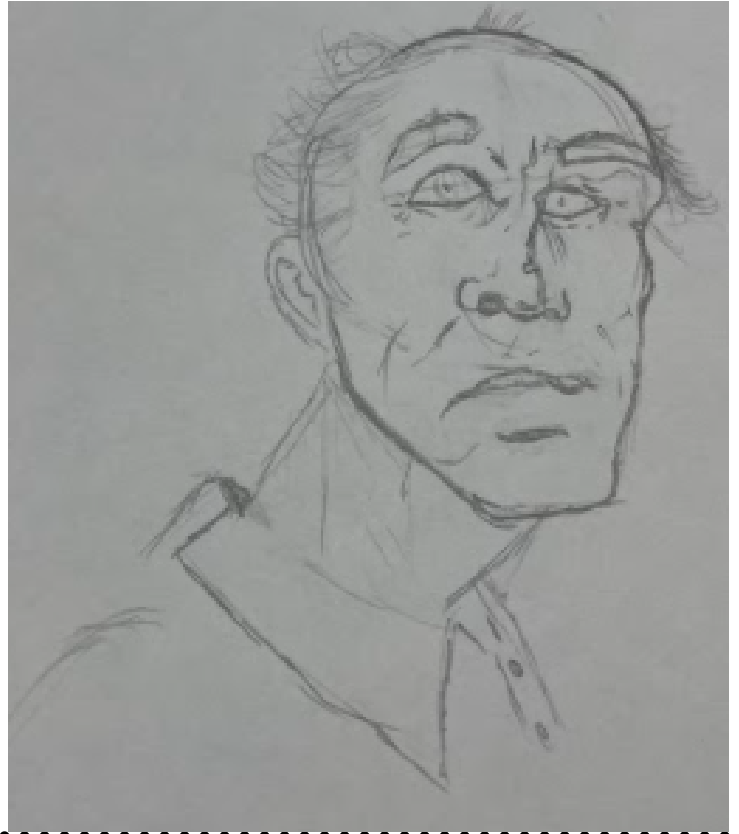
You can go on trips and hang out with your friends during them. I mean, you are old enough to walk on your own without being watched by a teacher . . at least I think so. Not to mention, if you have cool teachers or even a cool principal you'll get to do fun things. For example, you can have after-school activities or even have spirit week and get to do things outside of your school if it is big enough for that. You might even have special dances or celebrate holidays before you leave school like dressing up for Halloween and playing secret Santa etc. Overall, school is complicated with having a bunch of work to finish up and hoping to not fail, with having fun in the midst of it.

CREEPY MAN

By Khair G.

Author Bio

Khair G. was born and raised in Philly. He loves photography and cooking different types of foods. He is very diligent and chill.



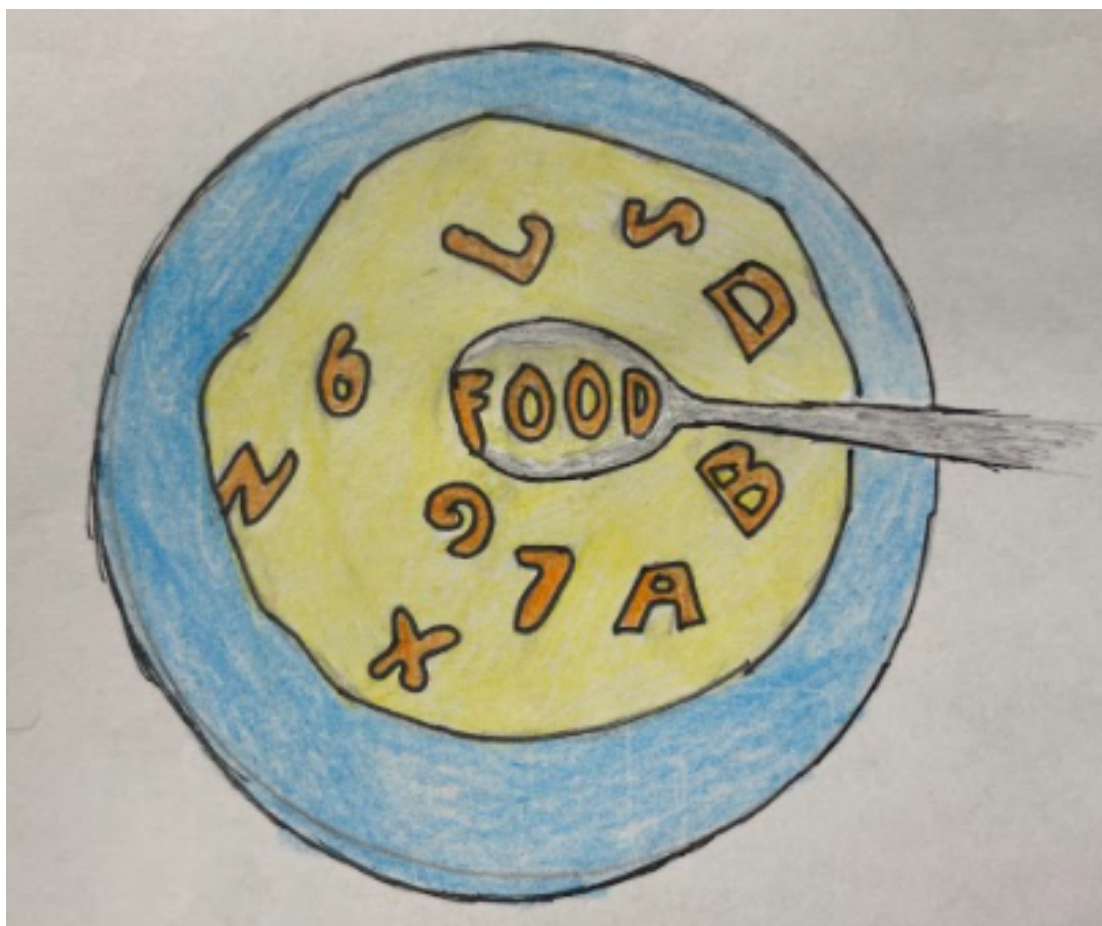
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Okay, this is it, the bus is finally here. Now I can be on my way to school. I'm so glad it's here. That old man is mad creepy, but he's always telling me some intellectual things like to stay in school, don't give up on my dreams like he once did, and to try harder than ever because there will always be something ready to drag you down at any moment. So one day I decided to start bringing him food and like \$10 every day of the week even weekends when I wasn't going anywhere. I always told him to not spend it on anything unnecessary because I believed he could turn his life around. He started to save all the money I gave him to get him some new clothes from the Walmart down the street and everything he saved up from everybody that gave him money, he was able to get a room in the Roosevelt Inn.

After maybe two to three months I stopped seeing him completely, I was hoping he was all right because he usually came to the bus stop a few times to talk but then it was like he vanished.

Then one day, I was going to chill with the guys. He stopped me while I was walking and I didn't even notice him. He had a haircut, fresh clean clothes, and a portfolio with some papers of some sort in his hand. Then he told me he had an interview for a full-time job at ALDI. It was enough to make a grown man cry. He came a long way from being dead broke and sleeping at a bus stop, to having clean clothes every day, money, and a full-time job. After that day I started seeing him a lot less again, so maybe he was taking his job seriously and I was proud of him because he took the advice and ran with it, and now look at where he's at. Two years later I saw him at the bus stop, but he looked different and almost didn't recognize him at first, it was like he was a completely different person. He wanted to thank me for everything I did for him and for listening to his talks because it helped him. After all, he gave up his dream because he didn't think that he would get to where he was at and now he is an IT Project Manager for ALDI in Aurora, Illinois and he makes \$88,907 per year. He just flew back to Philly to tell me the news.

FOOD



BORGER

By Zachary C.

Author Bio

Zachary C. is a tired, tall man. The end.



.....

You were taking a walk down the street when you were interrupted by a gurgling sound, as if an angry dog were growling at you. It was so loud, I bet that dude who walked past you heard it. Along with this strange sound coming from your body you also feel quite empty. So empty that someone might assume that you're completely hollow from the inside. You need something to fill that emptiness; you need to feed; you are hungry. Luckily you find your average, run-of-the-mill, 3-star diner that sells burgers for a good price. This diner was known as "The Burger Diner." Besides its strange name and the building that looks like it hasn't been cleaned in years, you go in because the prices are good. You walk in and find out that the place was practically empty besides a few staff members.

You can feel how run down the diner is, as if you were staring at a stinky mold-ridden sandwich. You take back your thoughts of this place being a 3-star diner. While ignoring the lack of any other customers besides yourself; you place your order, “One down-to-earth burger please.”

As your food is being prepared, you take a seat at one of the tables, and wait. You waited so long that your hunger is starting to take over. You want your food now! It isn't ready yet. You feel so empty and weak. Your head starts to feel numb and woozy. “This must be what true starvation feels like,” you think. You're hungry, so very hungry.

Everything feels fuzzy and you start to black out. Suddenly before you could die of lack of food, the waitress places your food on your table.

“Enjoy your down-to-earth burger, sir,” says the waitress before she walks away to tend to other customers (but there were none).

Finally, your food has arrived, now sitting in front of you.

You are saved and will no longer be hungry. Oh, this burger, you can feel the heat of the patty radiating onto you, and its grease gleaning in light. A medium to well done high-quality beef. Not too big nor too small, just right for you. The burger buns seemed to have been made in the diner itself, with the right amount of flour, sugar, eggs, yeast, and butter; smacked down together to create such a plumb tasty burger bun. Each sesame seed looks to be placed by hand. The cheese, a mixture of cheddar, Swiss, and blue cheese: the three main building blocks of cheese on a burger. All melted to perfection.

You imagine how creamy and warm it would taste, and how the succulent cheese will simply melt in your mouth. Don't forget about the toppings of lettuce, tomatoes, and onions, with a pickle to the side all seeming to be grown fresh off the basket. Even the added (applewood smoked) bacon looks like it was prepared by Gordon Ramsay himself, or you know... any gourmet chef. And finally, a side of fries (even though you didn't ask for any). But these fries look so crisp, and perfectly tinted with just the right amount of salt. You'll find no soggy, floppy fries here. The burger, right here, begging to be eaten, begging to satisfy your hunger. You pick up said burger, open your drooling mouth for the first bite.

Suddenly your lifetime burger experience is interrupted by some stranger who asks you one thing you'll remember for the rest of your life, "Are you going to finish your Borger?"

FOOD

By Christina W.

Author Bio

Christina W. likes to
play video games,
hangout with friends,
and to sleep in.



.....

You exhale. You're tired, sore, and hungry. Very, very hungry. You just got off of work and have been walking the streets near City Hall for about..20 minutes now. You've been looking for somewhere to eat but have been having no such luck with that task. Everything is closed. "It is Christmas eve," you think. Why you decided to go in today is beyond you. Something 'bout extra pay? You don't know. What you do know though, is that you're very hungry. Your stomach agrees with you it seems, as it's been rumbling and grumbling all down the strip and it hurts. You feel like passing out but you don't, sadly. You start to think that working for nine+ hours is one of the worst ideas you've ever had. But extra pay is extra pay.

You groan. You don't know how much longer you can go. Not only are you cold; you're hungry and sore too. Add onto the fact that you're also tired, you must look like a walking corpse to a passerby. The God you don't believe in seems to be shining down upon you tonight though. As you turn the corner and look up; you see it. The bright sign illuminates your face as you stop. A 7-eleven...your savior, it seems. You smile widely; you must look crazy to anyone passing you but you can't care. Food is the only thing on your mind as you enter the convenience store. The smell of constantly brewing coffee fills your lungs and you can't help but smile. You start to go-'round and mentally praise your boss for having paid you upfront after you put in your extra hours. You buy a wide range of snacks and a few drinks; the thirst you feel caught up to you at this moment. You don't dare to forget to get some of the crappy gas station food that they sell. After paying the cashier and thanking him for your change, you leave. You head down the rest of the strip and find a seating area for a restaurant that is closed. You sit down happily and unbox the subpar 7-eleven pizza and smile as you take your first bite.

Perfect.

Transportation



FIRST TIME TAKING THE BUS

By Talia B-Y.

Author Bio

Talia B-Y. likes to dance and hang out with her friends.



.....

It was the middle of my 7th-grade year, I turned 13 years old. I went to an afterschool program at my school, it was called aftercare. The school I went to had a before and aftercare program, I always went to aftercare though.

My school was big, well it still is. The school went from K-8 but now it goes from K-12. The 7th and 8th graders were with the high schoolers. So when I took the bus I was with a bunch of high school students. It was kind of scary at first but later on in the school year I got used to it and I made some high school friends.

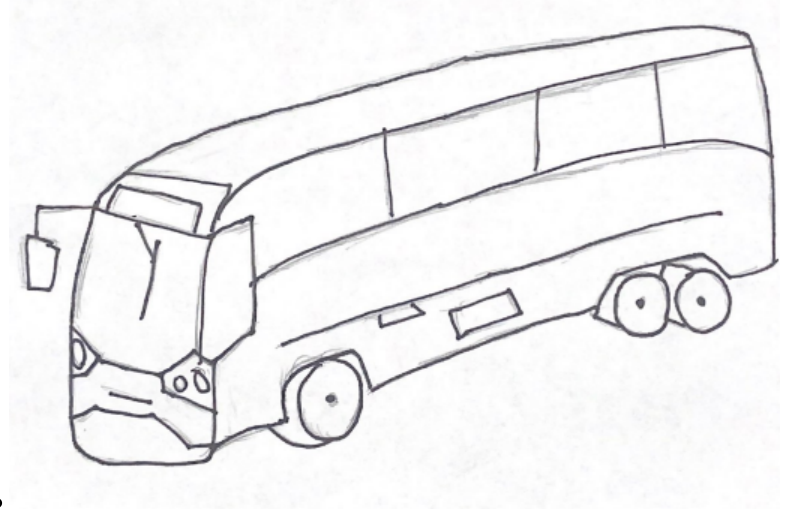
TAKING THE BUS FOR THE FIRST TIME

By Samani G.

Author Bio

Samani G. is a comedian, outgoing and humble. She wants to help and better the world by being a nurse.

.....



I heard many stories about catching the bus, but I never actually experienced it myself. It was a hot summer day and I was just exploring. I wanted to know what it would be like to catch the bus. There were a lot of people catching the same bus as me, some people smelled of dogs and there were a lot of old people. The bus was loud and cold. My not paying attention caused me to miss my stop, and the man wouldn't let me off. When I tried to get off, he hit me and came to find out he wasn't the original bus driver. It was a robbery in process. Yes, my first time on the bus turned out to be a crime. I panicked. I grabbed my phone and quietly and sneakily called the cops. I couldn't even tell them what bus I was on or where I was because I didn't know I had to read the street signs to them every time we passed on and in less than 2 minutes they found us. So, my first experience catching a bus? It was scary. I would never do it again ever.

BUS

By Simone J.

Author Bio

Simone J. is a creative writer. She enjoys collecting records and listening to them.



.....

Six o'clock in the morning, sleeping. My mother walked into my room to wake me up for school. She's excited for my first day of middle school. I'm still sleepy and complaining about not going. I give my mother reasons to not go to school but she proceeds to drag me out of bed. I sighed and got out of bed and went straight to the shower.

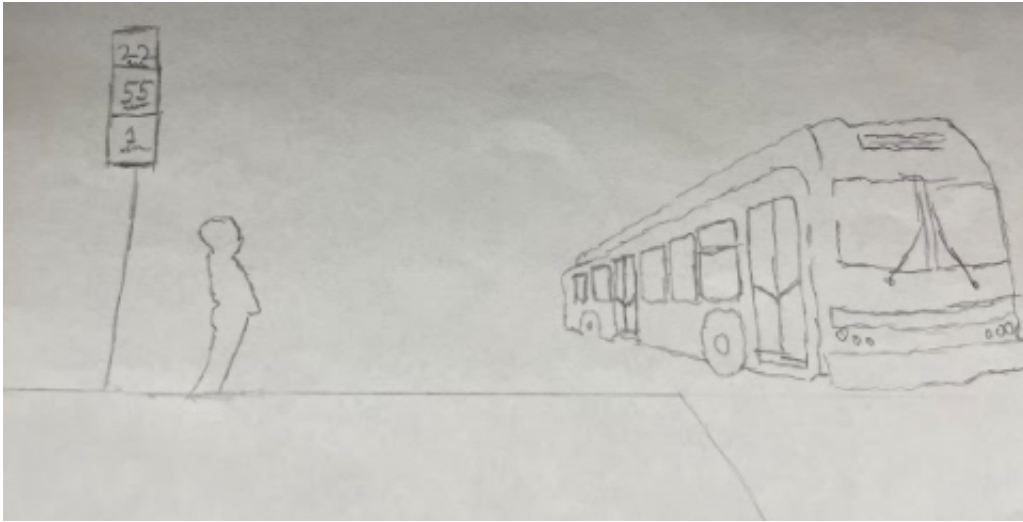
The shower is nice and hot and steamy, just how I like it; it calms my nerves. I contemplated how my day would look and thought, "What if kids make fun of me? Does my outfit look good enough?"

My head is overflowing with thoughts. Just standing there with tons of smooth soap slathered all over my body, I snap out my thoughts and rise of my body with the nice hot and steamy water.

After my shower, I hopped out and dried my body off with a soft towel. Then after I do everything else I rush out the door nervously, I think to myself "what if I miss the bus or if I'm late?" My mind is all over the place. This is my first time riding the SEPTA bus in Philly.

BUS BROTHERS

By Colin F.



Author Bio

Colin F. likes to play basketball. He also enjoys cooking. He's very good on dirt bikes, too.

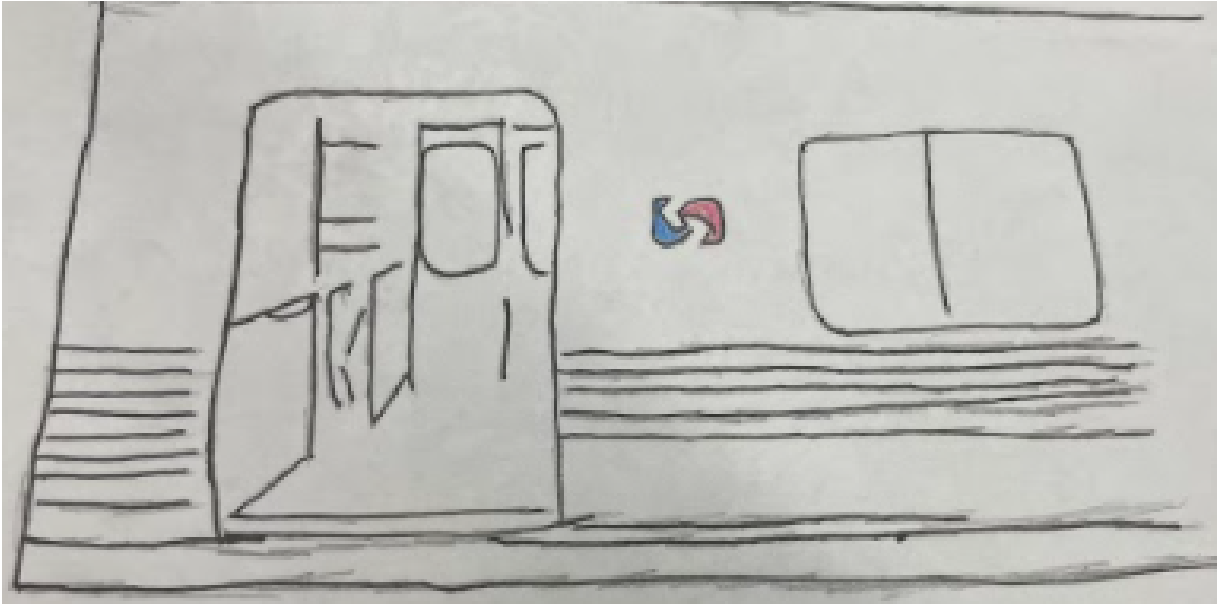
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One day long ago, There was a quiet little boy from a small neighborhood called Roxborough. That little boy's name is Scott. He was only 10 years old. He was ready to get the bus for the first time with his big brother. So, the little brother wanted to go to the bike rideout and in order for us to get home we had to take the 9, 32, or 27 bus. Scott was okay with doing it with his bigger brother. They go to the rideout having a good time, and it's getting close to having to go home. Their mother calls them. She is asking where they were because their mom didn't know they went to the city for a pedal bike rideout.

The big brother then says, “at the playground.” But mother didn't expect anything because she didn't think they were in the city. She thought they were at the playground. After that, the two brothers made their way to the bus stop. Little do they know something unexpected is about to happen. As they are about to get on the bus the big brothers phone rings. It's their mother! He answered and she yelled where are you and he told her the truth and mother was mad. She was waiting at their bus stop for them. When they got off the bus stop she told them they are grounded and they can't go on bikes for a month. That was the first time taking SEPTA.

My First Time on the Train

By M'kiyah M.



Author Bio

M'kiyah M. is hard working, stupendous and very adept at her fields.

.....

My first time on the train was kind of a scary experience. The first time I got on the train I was getting on the Market-Frankford line, and I was on my way to Rolling Thunder with some friends. We got on the train at 52nd and Market St. The train was silver, with blue seats and some railings so people who were standing could hold on. As I zoomed through the streets of Philadelphia, I saw all different kinds of people, I saw stores and birds soaring throughout the skies. One of my friends started to mention a girl sitting across from us, she was wearing her school uniform a dark blue button up and a blue plaid skirt.

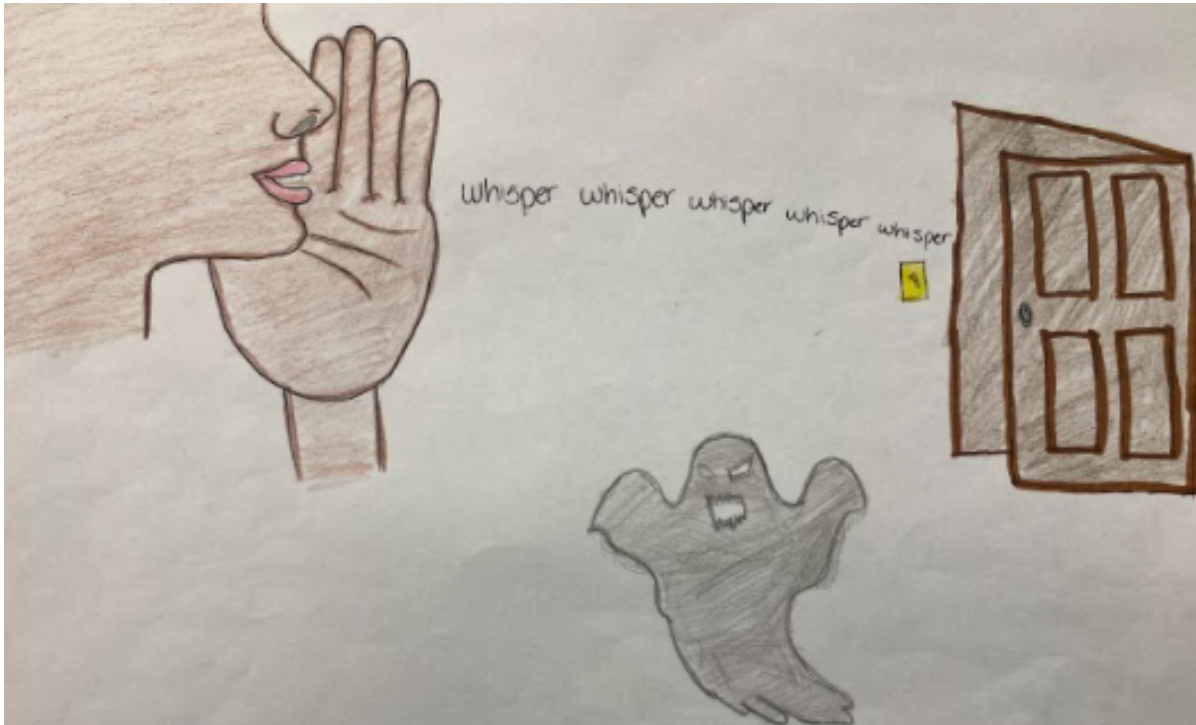
She seemed scared, like she'd just seen a ghost or something, so we went over and asked if everything was okay. She replied, "No, a man is following me. He's been recording and following me since I left school. I thought he just might be going the same way, but then he started recording, I think he is trying to see where I live." To be honest, looking at the man we were scared as well. He was creepy looking, he was very tall, maybe 6'5. He was dark skinned and was wearing all black, so without hesitation we called the cops. They met us at Tioga station and arrested the man. We walked the girl home and got back on the train to Rolling Thunder, and that was my first on the Market-Frankford line.

Fantasy



WHISPERS

By Emma S.



Author Bio

Emma S. is from Northeast Philly. She is into crystals, astrology, and chakra energy. She is outgoing and always has a positive attitude .

.....

I started to toss and turn in my queen-sized bed with like 5 fuzzy blankets. I tried to get comfortable, but it took like a good 15 minutes. My room has to be at a certain temperature to sleep in because I can get nose bleeds. It has to be just right, not too cold or not too hot. I got up to turn off my light because I like sleeping in the pitch-black dark. The room was so quiet I could hear the sound of my clock ticking and the wind outside calling my name. It was so dark I could not even see my hands. It was like being in a grave.

I heard this very deep voice whispering “help” as I felt the breath of a human breathing down my neck. I started to get chills which ran all up and down my body like I was a treadmill. When I got up to see what it was, I sprinted over to my light switch. It was like something was pulling me back. Whatever it was, it grabbed my hand and was pulling me. I was strong enough to push them off, but it was really scary. I ran to the light switch and turned it on, even though when I touched the black switch it was cold and I got chills down my spine. It was like having a brain freeze after eating something really cold. Although I was scared and feared for my life, I went to lay back in bed because I felt like whoever or whatever it was could not stand light and I fell back to sleep. Before that, I turned my light on and I finally found my remote that had been missing for weeks so I turned the TV on.

THE FAMILY ACROSS THE STREET

By Jalen S.



Author Bio

Jalen S. likes to play video games with friends and watch horror movies.

.....

The eyes of a family pierce my soul from across the street. They only just recently moved into that house. A husband in his early 40s, bald and has a built body, wife in her late 30s with blonde long hair, and their two children. One is a guy who looks to be the same age as me. I'm 18. I heard that it was haunted, and it has been abandoned for years. The house was beat up, the door was hanging on the hinges, the windows were boarded up, the chimney was broken in half, and the house itself looked like it had been burned at one point.

They were still looking at me, so I went inside my house and looked out the window. They were just standing there, all four of them, looking at me, piercing my soul. I stood there thinking if something will end up happening to me, so I call the neighbors next to me and tell them the situation. They told me they don't see anyone across the street, they said it was an empty house that no one has lived in for years. At that moment, my heart rate shot through the roof. I couldn't believe what was happening. I'm asking myself, why me? Why can only I see them? Are they playing some sort of dirty prank?

So I decided to take it upon myself to go over to that broken-down house, but they were still just standing there. I walked up to them and asked them what their problem was and there was no response. It's like they were just in my imagination. I tried to touch the husband's arm, but he moved out of the way and looked me straight in the eyes. My heart was racing, so I ran back home and slammed the door shut, and called the cops. The cops soon got here, but they didn't believe anything I said, and they only told me to lay off the drugs, but I told them that I've never done drugs before, so how is this happening? I then started to hear voices that sounded like my mom. She started to shake me, yelling that it was time for school. It turns out I just had a very strange nightmare that felt too real.

MY STRANGE NEIGHBOR

By Sanai M.



Author Bio

Sanai M. is an iced coffee addict who enjoys reading books and listening to music.

.....

He's so strange. Looking out my bedroom window on the third floor of my tall white house with yellow curtains so bright you'd hurt your eyes just by looking, I see my strange neighbor, Mr. Mandle. He was just taking his daily stroll down our block with his black cane, black dog with only one limb, and black umbrella. You can never get a good glimpse of Mr. Mandle because he's always wearing soulless wool turtlenecks and dark khaki pants. His hair is shiny and slicked back like usual, and his skin is whiter than the pages of my sketch book.

There was a time my friend Sarah and I accidentally spotted him at the Cheesecake Factory without his umbrella, what an uneasy sight that was. It must have been a dream, considering his teeth were as sharp as knives and his eye bags were longer than the Grand Canyon.

I see him walking around the end of our street back towards his house. As the sidewalk cracks behind every step he takes, my spine shivers as if someone is taking a rusty screw and gliding it down my back. Mr. Mandle shoots his dead cold eyes up at me peeking through my bright sunny curtains and I squeal, not knowing what to do. My god my god my god my god. This is worse than that time in 5th grade when my crush Peter caught me shoving an anonymous love note in the side pocket of his Avengers bookbag. I shuffle to the side of my window praying he thinks his cold eyes were just deceiving him. I slowly rise back to the corner of my curtain to take a peek... he's gone.

THE FIRST TIME I CAUGHT THE BUS

By Marquis U.



Author Bio

Marqus U. is a football player, boxer and comedian. He is very compassionate and cares about his fellow Saul students. He is very excited for the future due to the fact that he has so many extraordinary plans for his life. He is motivated due to the loss of his mother at the age of twelve.

.....

The first time taking the bus was kinda crazy. There were a lot of things going on that day. Let me start from the beginning. I woke up that day feeling kinda weird. I woke up feeling stronger than I felt when I had broken the sink in the bathroom just by leaning on it. I got yelled at by my mom because it was a new sink.

I thought the sink broke because the workers did a bad job on it, but the sink was sturdy last night so what made it break now? After that, I went to my room to get dressed. When I tried to close the door I crushed the handle. I was mad and confused about what was going on with me. My mom knew what was happening, and she just never said anything.

I knew my family was a superhero family, but I thought I was never supposed to get powers. When I got ready, my body started to look different. I felt and looked strong.

My arms were like superman-type arms and my body was like Captain America's body, super cut and a little bulky. After that weird morning, I went to go catch the bus but it started to feel weird out. It was strong thunder and rain outside. When I walked to the bus stop, the thunder got stronger. The only time I saw this is when my dad had fought that one villain and he killed him but this thunder was similar to that day.

When I had walked to the bus stop, the thunder got louder and crazy. The rain came down heavier than before. I knew something was wrong once the bus came. I got on it, but there was nobody else on it, which was strange. The bus driver started to go. That's when something broke through the roof. It was a person covered in lightning and thunder with white eyes looking at me. He looked just like me, but just different. He looked stronger than me and had better powers than me. His spirit animal was a lightning and thunder dragon just like me, but mine was a mix of fire and lightning and thunder dragon. He grabbed me and told me that I was going to get my powers and that I will never be able to have them again.

His voice sounded just like mine. My mom looked from the window and saw everything going on. She came to help and then she realized what was going on. She looked like a ghost when she saw who it was.

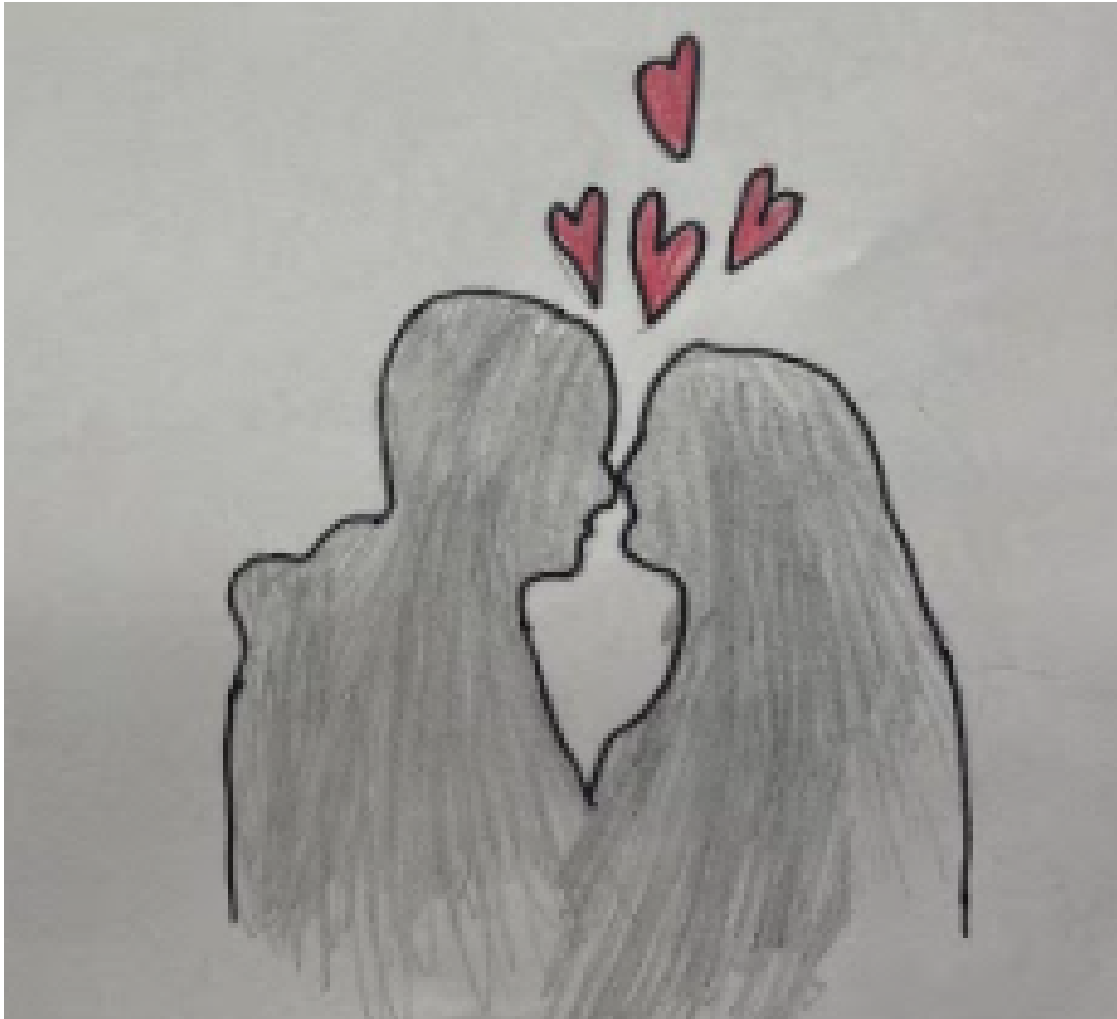
The person dropped me and gasped, "Mother it's been so long."

She said, "It can't be..."

He replied, "But it is. The gods raised me and now look at me." I asked my mother who that was and she said he was my twin.

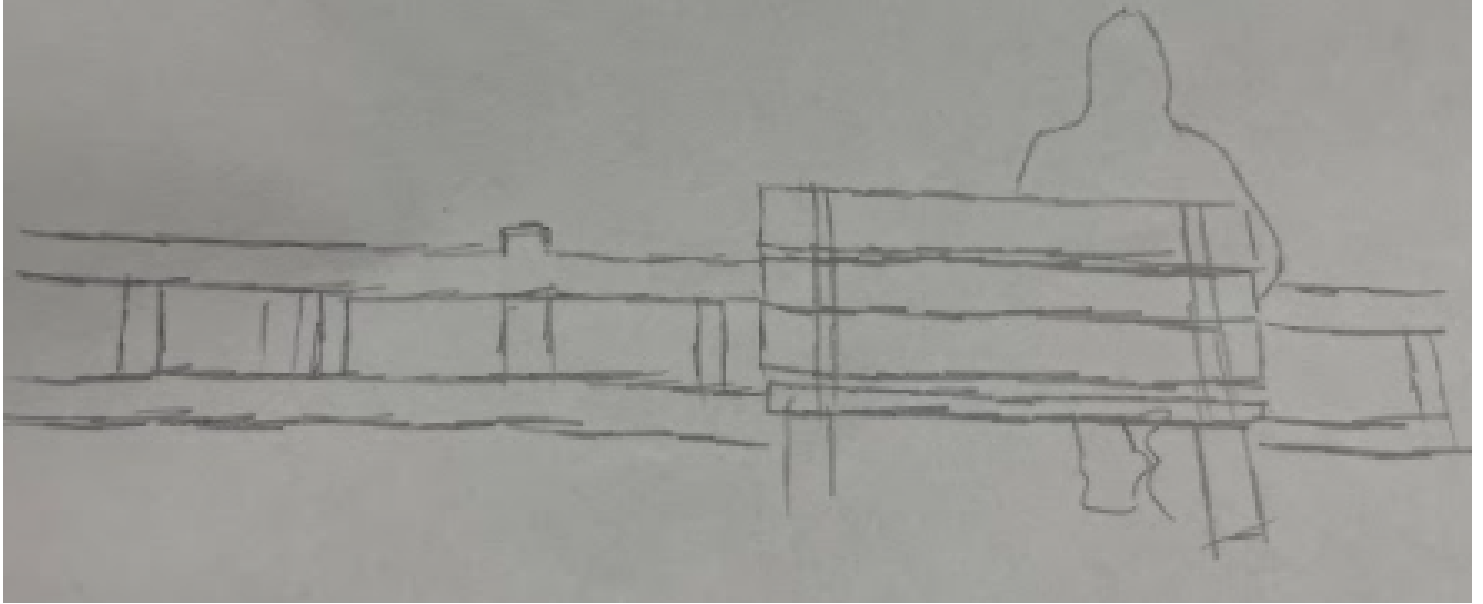
To be continued...

Intimate



WHY

By Chanell G.



Author Bio

Chanell G. enjoys reading everyday life books because she enjoys the humor and it teaches her things. She enjoys being outdoors, even more so when it's cold.

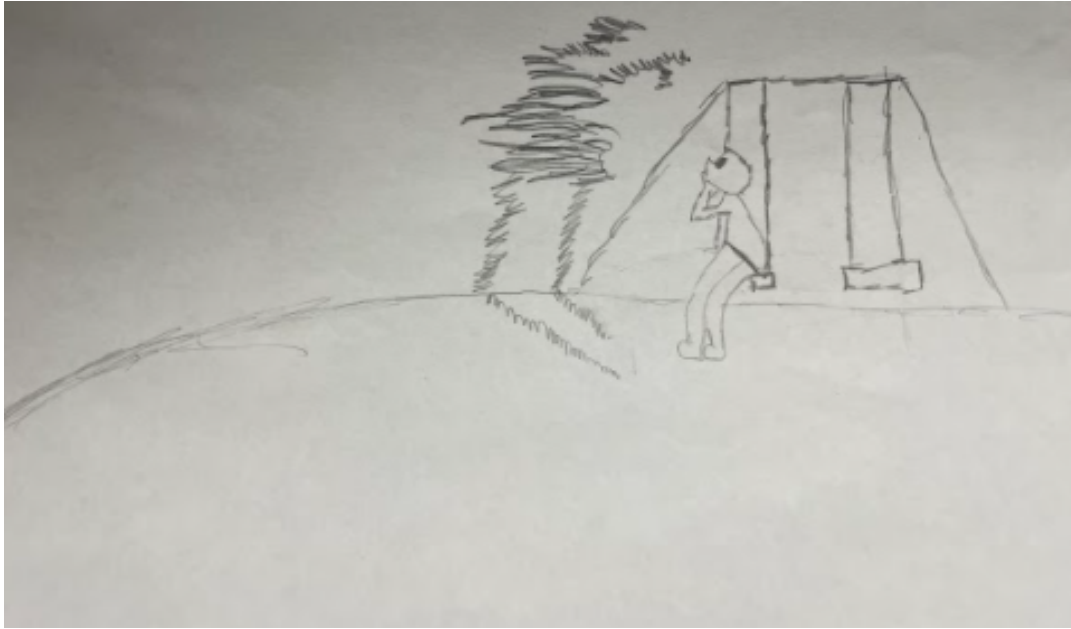
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I always wondered why people left me for no reason and did not have the guts to tell me if I had done something wrong. They never tell me anything, they just get up and leave like it's nothing. I hate that with a passion. So many people come into my life and then after making many memories and getting attached they decide that they want to leave me.

But I learned something from those times. I learned that if people want to leave, we can't do anything about it except let them go. You can't beg them to stay, if they want to leave that's up to them. Life is short, you shouldn't spend all of it begging for people to not leave you. It's okay to be sad about it, but you can't blame yourself for everything. It was their choice and you can't ruin your life for them because you're going to regret it. Maybe it was good that they left. Maybe they left before things got bad, or maybe they had to leave. Sometimes we will never know why people we love leave us. We have to live our life, not ruin it.

IN MY MIND

By Kara H.



Author Bio

Kara H. loves to write and hangout with friends.

She loves being alone and in her own world.

.....

I closed my eyes; there was a big swing I was always scared of. I closed my eyes to look at the monsters in my mind laughing at me. They're all different sizes, but you can't see what they look like. Kinda like a dark figure you'll see in a corner of a very dark room. All surrounding me just laughing. I'm crying. I can't control it. I'm getting on the swing. Everyone is looking at me. I feel it. I don't know if I want to go on the swing. I feel uncomfortable with everything now. One of the monsters I saw came up to me and told me to not go on the swing. Should I listen to him or not?

I turned the corner to more monsters, and they started to follow me. I started to run and they did too, chasing me down the street like they were going to eat me. I screamed at them to stop and that I'm scared but they continued. What if I'm just dreaming? I turned around another corner and another to at least lose them a little. This small monster came up to me, and it's funny because they look like me. Short with brown hair and green eyes. I look like the kind you'll see as the "nerd" because of my glasses. At least that's what they say at school. My freckles covered up my face everywhere. He also has the same scratch that's on my left knee from when I was playing soccer. It's like looking at the mirror and seeing you. I don't think he can talk. He raised his fingers to be quiet and to follow him. I don't know why but I feel safe around someone that looks like me.

It feels like we have been walking around for hours. It's very dark though, a dark rainy day. I looked up and there were lines of people watching us. All of their heads turned to us. I started to freak out. The little monster grabbed my hand, told me it's going to be okay and held me until the people disappeared. Now that I'm looking more into "Earth" it doesn't look like Earth. It's kinda grey looking. Everyone looks at you no matter what they are doing. Nothing seems interesting, like I'm lost. This place makes you feel drained. I feel like I'm sick and my head is killing me. I don't like people. I have never liked people. This place makes me hate it more. I asked them where we are they look at me like I'm now dumb. They said, "Where else would we be?" I walked away embarrassed.

We walked to this very long alleyway. It's very long with brick walls on both sides squashing you while you walk. It's as dark as the sky looks when midnight hits. The type of alleyway you wouldn't want to go through at night. As you get to the end vines cover the end and lead you out. The little monster told me to open my eyes.

A BOY COMING OUT TO HIS PARENTS AS GAY

By Phyana L.



Author Bio

Phyana L. loves to choreograph, dance and spend time with her family and friends.

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Here I am, scared and nervous, to do something that should be simple. Not wanting my parents to disown me or treat me differently. I'm so tired of pretending to be someone I am not. I stand here in my room, within these four blue walls with detailed paintings I drew.

Contemplating what I should do in this situation, will I feel better about myself or feel the same? I don't know. I walk down the narrow hallway to my parents' room slowly. The paisley room, filled with laughter. As I enter the aged room, I stand there staring at them. They're now concerned. I gather the courage to blurt out, "I am gay". They stare back at me in shock. I can read the utter disgust on my father's face but my mother is not so much upset, just shocked. Say something, say something; what are they thinking? I turn around to walk out of the now confused room.

I hear my mother call for me, "Cory, come back here." I turn around fearful of what they might say. My mother says, "Cory, we love you and I won't look at you differently, but I need some time to process this." I was pleased to hear this but my father still hasn't said anything, hopefully, he will come around.

Black Sheep



ALL YOU DO IS STOP AND STARE

by Noelyz G.

Author Bio

Noelyz G. is a Puerto Rican and Colombian writer. She likes the colors purple and green. She also likes aliens and listening to music.



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He looks around while fidgeting nervously. Not knowing what to do, picking on his four fingers desperately, he sits waiting to be told where to go next. Coming through the office squeaky door was a tall and big lady looking at him with the biggest smile on her face. She starts walking to him all excited because he's new and she's excited to teach him all about Earth and the awesome things you could do there. A breeze of overwhelm and sentimental feelings brush over him and he starts tearing up. This lady was trying to comfort him while she walked him to the next place. He walked in and saw a bunch of different walking creatures.

They were yelling, running, and all looking at each other as if they were terrified of him walking by them. Then when they got to the front of the room, the lady introduced him to a few creatures.

“Why is he crying?” “Is he new here?” “Stop crying, it's weird.” they all said, mocking him. He felt embarrassed so he quickly wiped his tears away.

“This is Solo, guys. He is new here so please make him feel welcomed,” this lady said. The creatures looked annoyed and it made Solo feel like a burden. He tried to smile at people but they just looked away and laughed. They looked at him as if he was some kind of monster.

“Sit?” he asked this big group of short-haired creatures that were yelling at each other for some sphere green thing that was bouncing everywhere. They looked at him and laughed.

“No,” one of them said while putting their bag on the empty chair. Solo walked away thinking of all of the alien friends that he had back at home. His old purple with blue stripes planet, that had beautiful bodies of water that people went to visit and took beautiful pictures of. The place where everyone knew each other and where neighbors shared their dinner, a place of love. A place that he loved with his soul, he missed his family and his old friends that stayed behind. He missed feeling important. And as he sat on the floor he stopped and stared at every single creature, laughing at him because nobody talked to him and being happy with each other he thought,

“I want to go home.”

THE QUESTIONABLE ONE

by Jocelyn E.



Author Bio

Jocelyn E. loves art and trying new things and anything that has to do with animals.

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My mom has four kids: Bridget, Ashton, Camille, and Sydney. Bridget is 19, Ashton is 10, Camille is 17, and Sydney is 13. I'm Camille, the one that looks so different from everyone else. Ever since I was little, my family pointed out how I barely look like any of my siblings. I never took that as a big deal because I knew that sometimes siblings didn't always look alike.

They would even say that I was adopted because I didn't really look like my dad either. But I just took that as a joke because that's all my family ever did. But as I got older I got wiser, I understood what people meant by certain things, and got more curious. This made me want to sneak around and find more information about myself and "my dad". I always knew I was my mom's child because there is a picture of her holding me in the hospital when I was born. I know this because I have two birthmarks, one on my foot and a small one on my cheek. And in the picture I could see my birthmarks. But my dad on the other hand, I don't know about. I grew up calling him my dad, but was he?

When I was little there were always small rumors about how my mom liked my dad's best friend before my dad and how they dated before my mom and dad got married. I would also hear them arguing at night, but I never knew what it was ever about. One day I overheard my dad say "that's not my child" in one of their arguments. I automatically thought they were talking about me because I looked so different from everyone else and the fact that I was the least close to him out of my siblings.

That's when I barged into the room and started crying.

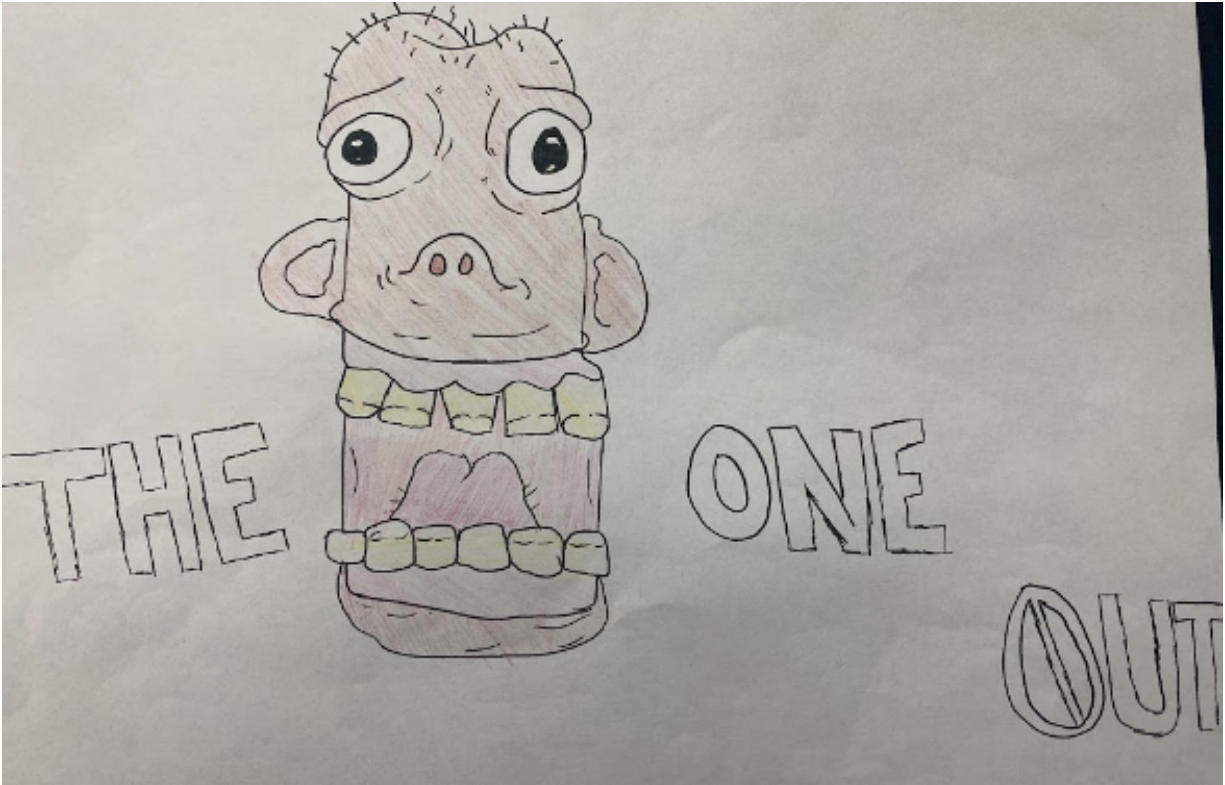
I slowly asked, "Who are you talking about? Son't lie to me because I know who it is."

I cried again. When I calmed down, my mom and my "dad" talked to me. My mom then said, "I'm sorry, honey. I didn't want you to hear that. I promise you we were going to tell you but not at this point of your life, you have too much to worry about-".

I stopped her in the middle of her sentence and said, "I think knowing whose child I am is way more important than school, college, or sports". She then continued what she was saying and told me that my dad was "my dad's" best friend, Jared. It all made sense. I didn't realize how much I looked like him until now. He would always come over for Sunday Football nights and when I would talk to him we would always have so much in common. Not only that, but now I see a resemblance between us. Everything about my family and the rumors added up. My life was a lie but I eventually got over it and moved on... five years later. I'm not saying that it doesn't bug me and make me mad from time to time, but not as much now that I know the truth.

The Odd One Out

By Christian G.



Author Bio

Christian G. plays baseball and basketball. He is a food scientist and loves to cook. He is positive, delightful and intelligent.

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My family is the ideal famous family. I mean, they're all gorgeous. I mean, everyone but me. I kind of look like one of those ugly fish with human teeth forced to breed with a pteranodon. If you saw me in a family photo you would think I'm adopted, or they were in a third world country feeding the needy. I kinda look like King Kong punched me in the face and my jaw is forever broken.

My family likes to go out to fancy restaurants and dress up nice. When I go with them, I kind of feel like a foreign exchange student. All the other rich folks stare at me. When I look in a mirror my reflection face crunches up and turns. It frowns so hard it, looks like it's so painful it's hard to even think. My long loose curls that look like old rusty springs stretch out to the point where they can't remember how it used to feel to be tight.

I'm not sad about it though, I like the way I look. I'm happy with being me, and my mom likes to tell me I'm still pretty in my way. I can draw the most prepossessing art. Someone once said, "Your art makes Leonardo da Vinci and Salvador Dali's work look like chicken scratch." That's all I need. My art is my true beauty. My art is me, I am my art. My art has been in art shows next to the greats. People paid me thousands of dollars for my art, which means I'm worth thousands.

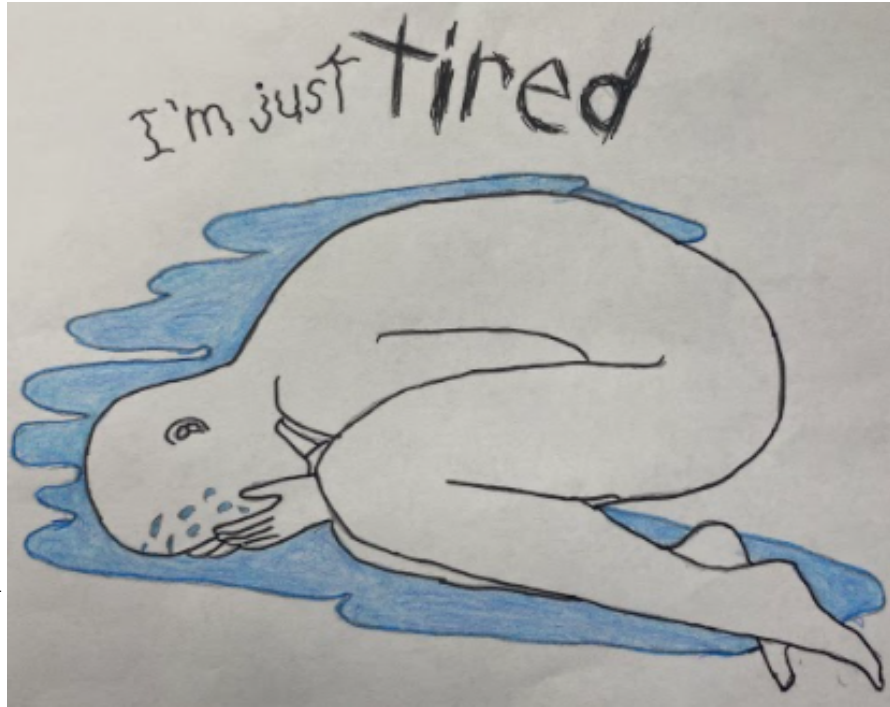
Adjusting Back To Reality

by Giana D.

Author Bio

Giana D. is virtuous,
intelligent and tranquil.

She has a bright future
for her and she is excited
to see it bloom.



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Stress. Anxiety. Lack of sleep. Drained. Feeling like somebody's pulling each limb with something new to do or make time for. Something new to make a priority for on top of other things you've been putting off. My mind is a tornado spinning with thoughts. Overflowing and losing track of all things going on.

"I'll do it tonight after work." I'm tired. Mentally, physically in all aspects of life. We won't speak about the loneliness and the depression I'm feeling. Trying to hide all the pressure I'm under the only way I know how, sleeping. Sleeping everywhere I go, class, the bus, the lunchroom, car rides. It's the only thing that feels right. I can't resist the comfort of my bed. My vision getting blurry as my eye start to slowly shut.

My head falling like a feather as I nod off. I'm constantly catching my head. It's been two months and I still use the excuse of my body adjusting back to reality. My mom is starting to notice.

She questions pregnancy but of course I brush her off. "Im just tired". I don't blame her for not wanting her daughter to follow in her footsteps getting pregnant at the young age of 18. Her words replay in my head. "I want you to be better than me, Analia. Do good and finish school, do the things I never did. Never depend on a man." Her only words of advice are so simple but have so much meaning.

The disappointment of my mother would devastate me.

Thank you for reading!

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