

A True Friend

By Bryson D.

Boom! The fire erupts from the depths of our house turning the peeling forest green wallpaper into black crumbly ash. My dad bursts through the door and yanks my thread bare sheets from my chilled body. He breaks the window and tears the screen while shoving me through. The aching screams of my mother assure me that she won't make it. I try to go back in but the flames deter my arm from going any further, the pain is getting worse, I just...have...to...momma.

Thud! , my head bangs on the cedar wood of the head board as I shoot up from my nightmare, but then I remember it *was* real. Seventh grade starts in a few hours, but I already dread seeing the old people from my school that makes fun of me. I know they don't understand why I'm traumatized, because I never told them. When I lost my mom in sixth grade, I just wanted the world with in a state with nobody except for me in it. Ever since then, I have gotten made fun of because I have no friends.

"I guess I'll eat breakfast now dad,"

"Ray, aren't you excited for seventh grade?"

I kind of just shrugged. I used to love breakfast, when my mom made it at least, but now when I toss the charred bacon into my mouth it tastes bitter and flavorless.

The ride to school made me want to die when I took my first glance at the building, but I managed to get out of the bulky silver truck, and outside of the school as people chanted,

"Ray, Ray, go away, nobody likes you anyways!"

The laughing kept getting louder and louder and I just wanted to run away! I burst through the door and dashed into a bathroom stall and started whimpering which turned into salty tears streaming down my swollen eyes and red splotchy cheeks. My throat is burning, but I choked back my tears and clutched the lock, so I could venture back into reality.

"Oh, no!"

This day just keeps getting worse, the bell rang and I'm already late on my first day. I peered through the entry way and scouted an empty row in the back where I sat. The only different thing was a new boy. I could already tell that he would tag along with the other kids who push me down because I have nobody to help me back up. My new homeroom teacher, with a snotty attitude, scolded me because I was late, but to make matters worse, she already assigned a group project! It is like a sports team, I was always last to be chosen because people fled to their friends who murmur under their breaths about who will get *stuck* with me. The frantic search kept going but to my surprise, I felt a gentle tap on my shoulder. Of course it just had to be the new boy who I already despised. He's clearly oblivious to his

surroundings though, because there are more people who need a partner. Why in the world would he come to me, the kid slouched over in the back corner.

“Hi, I’m Raphael, what’s your name?”

“Ray,” I mumble.

I glance at his deep blue eyes that seemingly glistened with excitement. I don’t want to know him because I’m not used to having nice attention from my peers. He can’t replace the hole in my heart from momma, so what’s the point anyways?

He suggested that we do our project over Earth’s compositional layers, because the project was over stuff we had already learned, which I actually had interest in! I guess it is possible that I could make a friend and enjoy it. It took two days to finish our diagram, but it looked awesome! For once in the past year, I might actually have found some I can trust.

What, I...I got a one hundred on my project?! I guess since I had a partner that actually wanted to have a good time, I had fun, too! I feel like I’m keeping the true me under a lock and key, though. I just can’t find a way to break the seal of loneliness, which I have gotten used to. Maybe this is for the better, I finally have someone who I can talk to and hang out with. This bond is not worth breaking like I thought it would be, I have to tell Raphael my story!

It’s been two weeks and now I feel like I did before the fire! I don’t feel so lonely, and my Momma’s soul will rest in peace because she knows my emptiness is now overflowing with joy and happiness.