

1st Place, Prose, Grades 7-9

Average--Eliora Estrin

I'm just an average person. I have an average height, average hair, average everything. I am just like a single raindrop in a thunderstorm. There is nothing special about me. Just like a raindrop, no one cares about me. They only care about the thunderstorm altogether. My best friend, on the other hand, Lucy (Lu for short), is like a streak of lightning across a pitch-black sky. In other words, very noticeable, unlike me. She is *my* light, *my* lightning.

The one person who is unlike me or my best friend is Blake. They are unlike anything in a rainstorm, just like the rainbow that comes out after the thunderstorm is over, always lights up the room whenever they walk in, so stunningly beautiful.

But, like everyone else, I am just a raindrop to them. Unnoticeable. Unimportant.

I don't mind being an average person. It's really not that bad. I just want one person to notice me.

Blake.

"Sam? Earth to Sam?" I suddenly snap back into reality when I hear Lu's voice.

"Yup, I'm here, I'm here. Totally heard you that whole time," I say, dazed and trying not to let it seem like I wasn't listening, which I totally was.

"So, as I was saying..." Lu's voice faded out again as I went back into replaying what I would say to Blake today.

'Ok, so you're going to walk up to them and say, "Hey, I like your outfit today!" No, no, no, that's too obvious. How about, "Want to hang out at recess later?" No, they wouldn't want to anyway. Ugh, why is this so hard?!?'

My thoughts get interrupted again as the school bell, which is as loud as a huge gong being hit, rings.

"Come on, Sam!" Lu says, frustrated. "We can't be late *again!*" Me and Lu quickly hurry into the big school where we are greeted by a huge mob of people running to their classes. I step into it unknowingly.

I quickly choose something I'm going to say when I see Blake and run over my lines in my head.

'This is what you're supposed to do, Sam. When you walk up to them, say, "Hey, how are you?", then wait for a response. I think that's good so far... Then ask, "Want to eat lunch with me and Lucy today?" Yes, that's good, then I won't have to be alone with them. Ok, I'll just wing it from there. I should be fine, right? Oh no, now I'm overthinking this...'

The mob of people is so big today. I keep getting stepped on. I'm one of the smallest people in 7th grade, so I quickly squeeze through the middle schoolers to get to my homeroom.

'Ok, you can do this. You have to confront Blake at some point.'

I step into my classroom and am surprised because I see Blake sitting down in their chair, and I didn't expect them to be there by now. They are usually pretty late to class. I assume that I made a fool of myself when I stepped in because Lu slightly taps me, indicating that I'm staring. I quickly turn away. My hands already feel damp with sweat.

I step farther in the classroom that is as loud as the mob of people outside of it, and I sit down in my seat. I'm the one person that nobody notices is sitting there. I watch longingly as Lu walks to the other side of the room. I can hear her gossiping to her "other" friends. What are they talking about? Me? I don't know.

I keep running over lines in my head. After what seems like forever, I slowly stand up and start walking over to where Blake is talking with their friends. They look so good today.

I walk one step closer, then another step, another, another, until I am halfway across the room, halfway to Blake.

"I can't do this..." I mutter quietly to myself. I turn around and hastily walk to my desk just as the class begins. "I'll definitely talk to them next class."

In no time the first class of the day is over. My next class is halfway across the school. My next class is with Blake. In my next class I sit next to Blake. In my next class I'll talk to them. Hopefully.

I quickly hurry across the school with my heart beating out of my chest and my hands still sweating. I step into the classroom. The chair that is next to mine is empty. Blake is not here yet.

I still have some time. I keep running over my lines as I take slow and steady steps to my chair, wanting to stall a little for time.

After a little while, I stealthily look over to the spot next to mine, and sure enough, Blake is sitting there, quietly doodling in their notebook, waiting for the class to start.

"I have to talk to them," I mutter to myself, thinking that no one would hear me.

"What?" someone says. I almost jump up from my seat. It was Blake. They never notice me. No one ever notices me.

I see them staring straight at me. Oh no, oh no, oh no, what do I say? They are still staring straight at me with a blank expression. The room around me slowly dissolves into nothing, and it's just me and Blake there, no one else. I want it to be like this forever, just us. But no, it can't.

“Oh, sorry, nothing,” I quietly say and break the silence. The little bubble that was around us pops, bringing me back to reality. There are so many butterflies in my stomach, I think I might explode. ‘You can do it,’ I say to myself reassuringly.

“Actually I just wanted to ask how you were doing?”

“Oh, thanks for asking!” Blake says enthusiastically. “I’m actually doing pretty good today! How about you?”

“I’m ok, thanks!” I say as my heart stops beating so quickly. “I was just wondering if you wanted to come eat lunch with me and Lucy today?”

“Sure, that would be great!” Blake says without another thought.

I’m so overjoyed, practically jumping up and down. “Ok, great! See you then!”

As the class ends, I get up from my seat and take one step, another step, another, into my new life, my life that finally has Blake in it.

Maybe I’m not so average after all.

Eliora Estrin is in 7th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. She likes playing flute, drawing, doing any type of art, and reading.