

# **Podium**

•  
**Resilience**

**Winter 2022**



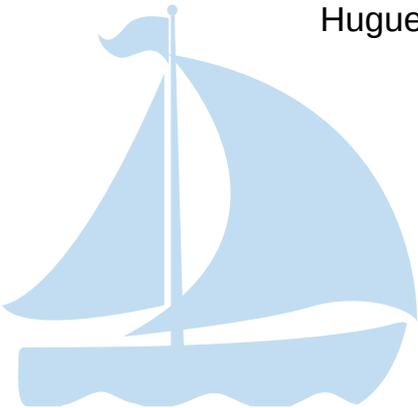
**“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, and what you believe shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish.”**

**– John Jakes**

You cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is developed by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort.

***Enjoy youth pieces from Podium partners at:***

River City MS with Next Up RVA  
Southside Metro Richmond Boys & Girls Club  
John Marshall High School  
George Wythe High School  
Armstrong High School  
Huguenot High School



# I Am an Overcomer

Stories and reflections on resilience.

Ex's and Oh's

Armorita W.

George Wythe HS

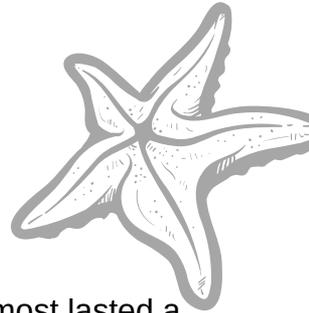


A time when I was at a low point and raised from it was my last relationship. It was a red flag from the beginning, but I ignored it. We ended up dating for about a year and a half. It was an on and off type of thing, but we were never broken up for more than a few days. He had girls trying to fight me and argue with me. Some were even my friends, but they stopped because they liked him. After so many failed times of us trying to work the relationship out, I finally realized that I deserve better. I don't need to be going into my senior year being depressed, crying, and stressed over someone who treats me like trash. I rose above all that, and I am still learning to love myself without having to depend on someone to give it to me.

**My First Relationship**

Milo D.

Huguenot HS



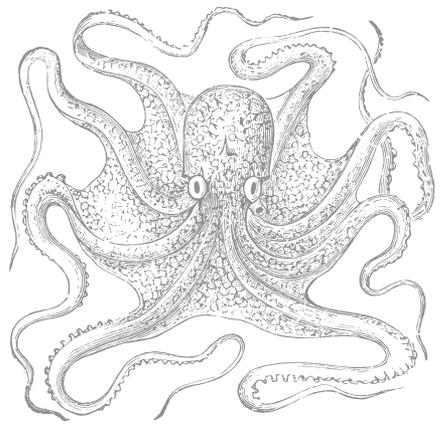
My first relationship was pleasant. We almost lasted a year, and to be honest, I still think about him once in a while. I started having trust issues with him when he no longer texted me normally. I hated how he lied to me, and over many nights, I cried myself to sleep because of him. It's been a few weeks since we last talked. I told him it was my birthday, and all he said was "Oh cool."

I said, "I know we haven't talked in a while. I just wanted to tell you." And those words hurt so much when he told me, "I've been talking to a different girl."



2

**Jealousy**  
**Jania M.**  
**George Wythe HS**

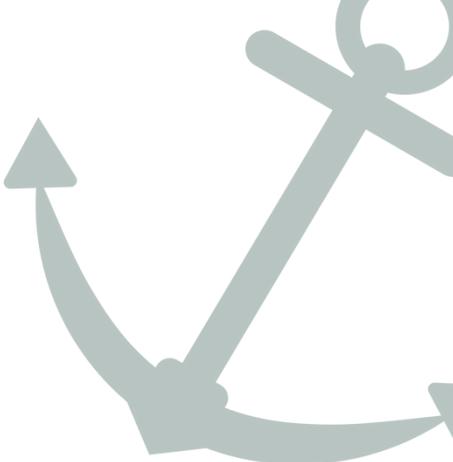


I feel so mad at myself for not rising above this, and I am so sad because I let people who talk about me get under my skin. Most of the time, it's not me; it's because girls and guys are jealous that I have something they do not. I swear, if I don't get over anything else, I will rise above this.

**Heartbreak**  
**Grace P.**  
**Huguenot HS**

Around a month ago, my friend and I had stopped talking to each other. I blocked them on everything because of something that I had done. Everything leading up to me blocking them was because I didn't know how to handle my own emotions. I couldn't process the things going on around me or what was going on in my own mind. They had gotten a girlfriend, and it shattered everything around me. To be completely honest, it's probably for the best that we aren't friends because what we had was toxic. It's better for me to be by myself rather than with them.





**To My Younger Self**  
**Shaniece G.**  
**George Wythe HS**

Ages 1-10 is when a girl needs her father most. I did not have mine because of the bad choices he made. My dad and I don't have the best bond because when I needed him, he wasn't there. He is out now and still isn't there. He has 7 kids, all of whom feel the same way. I wish I could have that father and daughter bond, but I can't.

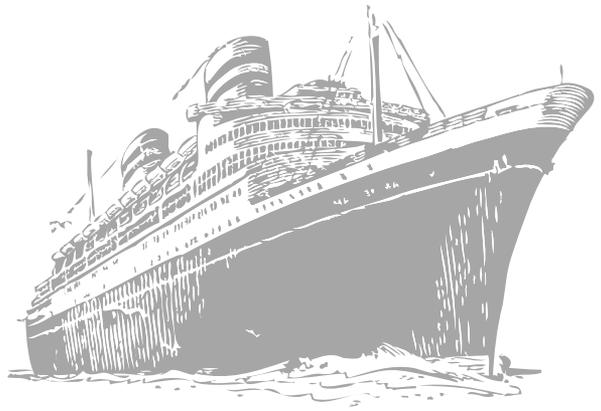
So, to the 1–10-year-old me, “Baby girl, you are so strong. You made it through the tough times. You are now graduating with honors, and you have been accepted to more than 7 colleges. I am so proud of you babes, never give up.”

**My Situations Inside**  
**Jania M.**  
**George Wythe HS**

I feel stuck in the middle and still mad and angry about all my problems, so it's so hard for me to rise above my situations. I am getting there though; it's just taking time. I promise I'm going to get there.



**Girl Love Boy**  
**Cassidy R.**  
**Armstrong HS**

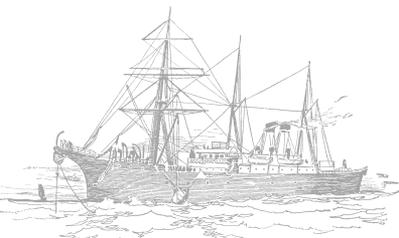


There was girl who was in love with a boy.  
The boy broke the girl's heart.  
The girl thought she didn't need the boy,  
but she wanted him.  
It was a cycle that she could not get out of,  
but she tried.

**It's Just Her Ego**  
**Amauri D.**  
**George Wythe HS**

I love my dad so much, but the people we love can also be poison to our souls. I wish I learned that sooner before I constantly fought for toxic people or people who weren't good for my mental health. My dad was one of them. I had to put me first and realize my self-worth. I had to fall back from him and love him from a distance. I was a daddy's girl, but I rose above and realized my self-worth and that he is the father, not me.

P.S. It wasn't my ego, Dad, it was my self-respect.



# **Affirmations**

## **Affirmations**

**Jada D.**

**Huguenot HS**

To take care of myself, I will do an exercise for my mind.

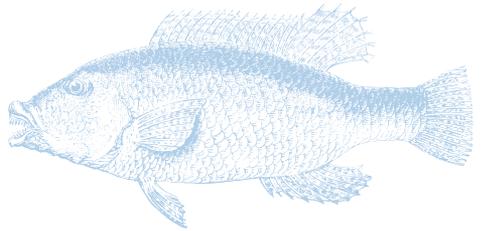
To take care of my body, I will wear what I want to feel confident.

To take care of my heart, I will not take any bad things said to me personally.

I love myself today because I spoke in confidence.

Today, I forgive myself for forgetting to do an assignment.

I am happy because I waited for this program for a couple of weeks.



## **Affirmations**

**Shiya B.**

**Huguenot HS**

I love myself because I did my best.

Today, I forgive myself for waking up late.

I am strong because I ignore all the negativity and focus on the positives in my life.



**TRY IT: Write your own self affirmations**

**Affirmations make you feel good about being you. Try writing a few of your own out below, and whenever you feel sad or blue, pull them out to remind you how awesome you truly are!**

I love myself because

---

---

I forgive myself because

---

---

Today, I am

---

---

Something good I did for myself is

---

---

My own affirmation:

---

---



# Youth of the Year

Enjoy inspiring essays and speeches completed by  
Boys and Girls Club students competing in the  
Youth of the Year competition.

## The Power of Freedom

Lael W.

Southside BGC

Good evening, everyone,

My name is Lael Washington, and I am a senior at the School of Tomorrow. What does the Boys and Girls Club mean to me? Freedom.

**Freedom to discover myself.** When I first walked into the club at the age of seven, I'm going to be honest, I was scared. It was something new, and new things and little kids usually don't mix too well. The thing that made the difference was the welcoming atmosphere that allowed me overcome childhood trauma and come out of my shell. The staff treated me as if I was their own child. The Boys and Girls Club became a safe space where could express myself. In the words of Endless Possibilities, the club became my escape, a place where I could safely run through the world and not look back.

**Freedom to develop myself.** I learned to both find my voice and to communicate the club's values by looking out for our younger members. Developing communication skills enabled me to be aware of the needs of others. I learned to speak to them or simply provide active listening without being judgmental. I took advantage of opportunities to participate in marathons, Black Lives Matter rallies, and diverse sports events. There were opportunities to participate in robotics, coding, and carpentry.





## The Power of Freedom (contd.)

I actually built a gaming PC from scratch. I also became part of initiatives that battle homelessness, distribute food boxes, and I even helped with recycling and beautification. I was also selected to attend the National Leadership Conference in Florida.

**Freedom to express myself.** Now, if all of this wasn't enough, most impressive for me was watching the club reinvent itself during the Pandemic. They stayed alive. Staff, through Zoom, made the effort to stay in contact with me and check on me in a time of uncertainty and isolation. I was encouraged to share my most intimate thoughts. This caused me to realize one of my passions: creating opportunities for the younger generation. I hope to give them more scholarship opportunities while also improving their school environment through an advocacy podcast called, B.I.N.G (Bullying Is Not a Game). We will advocate against bullying and talk about how to avoid and prevent things from escalating.

Thank you to the people around me, for supporting me just like the Boys and Girls Club on Bainbridge Street has. It has given the same opportunities to me that I wish to give to others. As I close, I will remind you that the Club continues to be an exceptional launching pad to imagine, do, and become. I am Lael Washington, President of the Keystone Club. Please remember to keep your freedom of expression. Thank you.



**Black Excellence**  
**Alanda M.**  
**Southside BGC**



“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any”. That is a quote by Alice Walker, the author of *The Color Purple*. That quote alone describes how the Boys and Girls Club has helped and provided me with guidance and a purpose. The club has helped me find myself, my passion, and my ability to use my voice to help other black youth find their own voices and confidence within themselves. Having a place that I can call home and where I feel secure means a lot to me.

Many young black girls don’t have any confidence about their hair, and I was one of those girls. I was not taught how to love my hair the way it was, to embrace it, or to be confident in it. I was told it was too hard to handle, and I always wondered if I would ever feel comfortable in my hair. Having conversations inside of the club with older and other young black girls helped me open my eyes and understand that I should love my hair, and myself, no matter what. Starting January 27, 2020, I started to love my hair. I did my very first twist out and realized how beautiful I looked. That was the first time I noticed how I started to be more open and carefree. Ever since then, I love wearing my beautiful brown puff or wearing twist outs that show my curls. I can say that was one of the best decisions I have ever made. The club helped me find myself and understand that I do not have to change my hair to fit society’s standards of having “nice hair” or not having my hair “all over the place.” I want black youth to understand that their hair is beautiful, and that it is their crown. Your hair is unique, and don’t let anyone take that away from you.



## Black Excellence (contd.)

If I had the opportunity to change anything about my life, I wouldn't. Otherwise, I would have never been able to say that I accomplished learning my voice and becoming confident in myself. The same way I have been taught to love myself by attending the club, I want to provide that same help for others who do not attend the club. The way the club has impacted my life reminds me every day that I am somebody and will continue to be somebody if I believe in myself and know that I am capable of anything I put my mind to. I want to thank the club for molding me into the beautiful young black woman that I am today. Because of you, I am black excellence.

### Who I Want To Be

Student writings on dreams and ambitions.

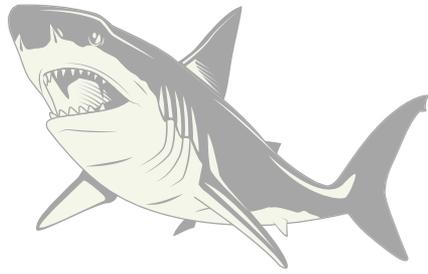
J'myra K.

John Marshall HS

A 17-year-old girl wanted to be a dance director and have her own dance studio, so she started looking online and found one for \$110 for rent or fully paid. So, she fully paid for it. The next day, she got the keys and started decorating and putting up signs. She named it "The Dance Myra." She uploaded applications on her website, and already, six kids had applied (three girls and three boys). The fee was \$10, and full membership was \$20. The next day they showed up with dance clothes and shoes ready to go. They did awesome and worked hard, so the dance director treated them to lunch for their hard work.



**Jamian H.**  
**Armstrong HS**



I was a kid. I am now a 15-years-old freshman at Armstrong. I am a secondary honor roll student as well as a sports, anime, and music lover. I want to be an NBA player like my favorite NBA player LeBron James.

**Miyah M.**  
**George Wythe HS**

I was a shy but loud little girl who didn't know who she really was. I was broken and cared more for other people than myself.

I am an outgoing, loud, amazing, strong, dependent, unpredictable young woman who has come a very long way.

I want to be an outgoing, strong, independent, loud, beautiful, bold, unpredictable, careful, loving woman who loves to be herself. Someone who is very unique and can't be broken. I want to be someone who isn't afraid to speak up and be adventurous.

**Kameron B.**  
**Armstrong HS**

I was hurt. I was broken.

I am healing, slowly but surely.

I want to be healed. I want to be myself, whoever that may be.



**Zakiya S.**  
**Armstrong HS**

I was a child who didn't know how to stand up for myself. I was a child who was always outgoing. Now, I am strong, shy, and I am private. I want to be a forensic scientist or homicide detective.

**Liam A.**  
**John Marshall HS**

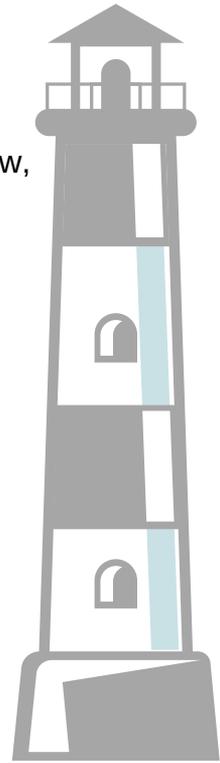
Who I was: kind, energetic, and social.  
Who I am now: bipolar, lazy, and antisocial.  
Who I want to be: energetic and smart.

**Kevion C.**  
**Armstrong HS**

I was this heartbroken, scared little boy who had just lost his father. I am a young man trying to pursue my career and attend college. I want to be a Southern University graduate, have a dog, and be a big YouTube star.

**Natalia P.**  
**John Marshall HS**

I am Natalia, a 16-year-old girl who attends John Marshall High School, and I am navigating adolescence. I was 15-year-old Natalia at Newberry High, a lot less mature and a lot less humble. I want to be Natalia, an even more mature and successful woman than before.



**Alana H.  
Armstrong HS**

I was an insecure person  
who took it out on people,  
but I learned to stop.  
I am a very nice person  
who is not insecure.  
I do not know who I want to be.



**Soliel M.  
John Marshall HS**

Who am I? My name is Soliel, and I'm 15 years old. I feel that I'm strong, growing, peaceful, finding peace, mature, and still learning.  
Who was I? A seed that was ready to grow into a flower.  
Who do I want to be? Healed, happy, at peace, powerful, nice, a bag chaser, and a fully grown flower.

**T'Quan W.  
Armstrong HS**

I was a young child who had his life ahead of him. Times were easy back then. I am a young adult making his way through a world which is going crazy. I am still fighting and won't quit. I want to be a successful businessman who can sit back and take care of his family while also making money in the process.

**Zion L.  
Armstrong HS**

I was a fat, short, and weird kid. I was very annoying and didn't have a lot of friends. I am now a calm, cool, and collected person. I am a class clown, but also a graduate with a 3.8 GPA. I want to be someone that people depend on, and someone who can live life easy.



# Loving Our Community

Enjoy pieces written by our Loving our Languages students at River City MS on advice they would give incoming students.

## Middle School Survival Guide

Alex R.

River City MS

1. Expect fights. Sometimes they can happen at least once a month.
2. DO NOT EAT THE SCHOOL FOOD. (Bring your own food if you can)
3. Bring headphones for music.
4. Pay attention in 8th grade math.
5. Some teachers can be really mean, so prepare for that.
6. Make a friend group of about 3-5 people.
7. Expect random bookbag checks.
8. You might get overwhelmed, so be kind to yourself.



## Middle School Survival Guide

Jailynn G.

River City MS

1. Don't talk to anyone or look at anyone.
2. Make friends with people who actually follow the rules and behave.
3. Don't be friends with people who get in trouble and get ISS.
4. Take classes that you really love, like art or music.
5. Sit at the round table because it will make you look cool.
6. Bring your own food because the food sucks.
7. Don't date! It's not worth it.



# **Let the Creative Juices Flow**

**Enjoy short stories and creative pieces from our talented youth!**

## **La Historia de un Sapo Que Lloro en el Rio (The Story of a Toad that Cries in the River)**

**Osman G.**

**George Wythe HS**

Era un sapo que lloraba todas las noches por el motivo que extrana su family. Porque una noche como estas ellos decidieron cross the street sol I can eat food in the swamp. Para poder me alimentarme y al regresar paso un camion y terminaron muertos. And that's why he stays in tears.

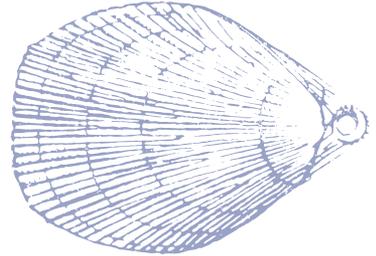
He was a toad who cried every night because his family missed him. One night, he decided to cross the street, so he can eat food in the swamp and be able to feed himself and his family. On the way back, a truck passed by, and they all ended up dead. That's why the toad stays in tears.

## **The Perfect Couple**

**Jahkirah A.**

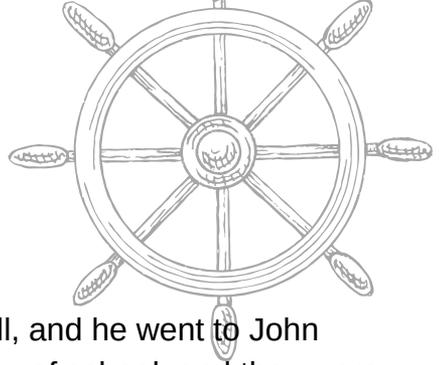
**Armstrong HS**

There was an old couple that lived in a nice, old house in a weird but quiet neighborhood. They always acted like everything was good in their relationship, but when they were alone in the house, they were always fighting and yelling at each other. Their life as a married couple was terrible. They were toxic, and they had to act like they were happy because everyone thought they were the happiest couple in the small town of Nashville. Everyone loved them because they made everyone's day, until one day, there was a fire...



## The Game

**Tyvell M.**  
**John Marshall HS**



There was a boy named Tyvell, and he went to John Carter High School. It was the last day of school, and they were all waiting for the bell to ring. When it finally rang, he and his friend Ron headed to the field to play football with friends they had from other schools. While playing a 7 on 7 game, Tyvell's team was up 28-7. Ron went for a routine touch down. The other team quit.

Then some girls came up to Tyvell and Ron and asked for their numbers, so they gave it to them. The next day, a random number texted Tyvell, but later on he found out that it was the girl. Her name was Tyanna. They clicked right away and talked for a month. Then, Tyanna told him how she felt, and Tyvell felt the same way.

Over the summer, Tyvell and his friend Ron made the football team. The first game they lost 7-14. The next game was at the park by their houses, so they walked there. When they got there, they stretched and won the game 21-0. They stayed at the park for a while and practiced, walking home afterwards. They walked behind a man they thought looked suspicious, but they didn't mind. Then, a black Audi drove past them. "BOOM BOOM!" They looked at each other, and then Tyvell looked down and realized he was bleeding. At that moment, he also realized he had left his phone at home. They ran to the dead man who was in front of them and called the police. It took a while, but they made it. The ambulance came and so did their parents. Tyvell cried in his mom's arms, and then the police took him in for questioning. He went to tell them what happened but couldn't find the words.

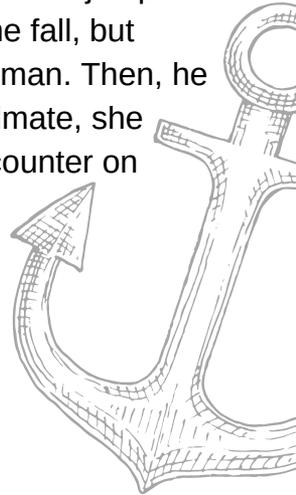


## **The Mystery Man**

**Shayana S. and Destiny M.**

**George Wythe HS**

Alex was being chased by a tiger in the trees when she reached a drop. Alex lives for the thrill, so she took the jump. She closed her eyes, expecting to be hurt from the fall, but instead, she was swooped up by this mysterious man. Then, he just vanished. Wondering if this could be her soulmate, she walked back to the homeless shelter with the encounter on her mind, heavily eager to meet this man again.



## **Villain Origin Story**

**Khylige S.**

**Armstrong HS**

A villain is someone who would sacrifice everyone but themselves for their own selfish goals. An anti-villain is someone who sacrifices themselves and as little people as they can to save the world or the people they care about.

My name is Fovos. I've been in poverty, watching my mom cry and people getting beaten to death. The world was always a dark place to me. I've learned to stick to myself, but the last straw was when one of the "heroes" killed my parents while throwing a car at a petty thief. All I got was a petty apology. From then on, I knew these super powered freaks were nothing more than police with privilege. I've started killing all 100,000 of those freaks since last year, and 1,000 remain to my knowledge. I formed a group to help me carry out the task. The only reason we have been able to kill them is because we became them. We spent 20 years making a serum which allowed us to obtain every power known to man. To us, without superheroes, the world would be a better place.



## **The Murderous Cop**

**Juanita R.**

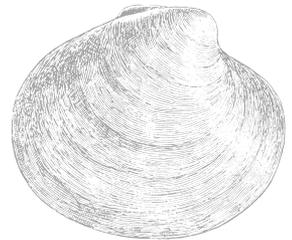
**John Marshall HS**

He is a police officer but also a murderer. They don't know that; they just know him as a police officer and a husband/father. His daughter passed away from cancer, so he became obsessed with finding a girl that looks like his daughter. Along the way, he started killing teenage girls and losing himself. He was also listening to his wife's and his police partner's suspicions. Since he is a police officer, he knows how to cover his tracks, but his wife is onto him, and he doesn't know. She followed him to an abandoned building where he was keeping a girl that looked like his daughter. The wife had seen the girl before in the missing pages around town. Her name was Zoe Mae, and she had brown curly hair and brown eyes. The last thing she was seen wearing was sweatpants and a crop top. Zoe's crop top was seen outside the abandoned building.

**Serenity**

**Ryan J.**

**George Wythe HS**



Per usual, Jordan and his friends went to the basketball court. Except this day was different because there was the new girl at the court. Most of the time, this wouldn't be any different than any other day, but Jordan's friend egged him on, as he was the only friend in the friend group without a girlfriend. As Jordan goes over to his soon to be girlfriend, his friend says she is already looking him up and down. As the conversation goes on, it's obvious she likes him. When the girl named Serenity leaves, she puts her number in his phone before her boyfriend can see. She hops in his car and gives Jordan a wink as they drive off.



## **The Hate-Love Game**

**Miyah M.**

**George Wythe HS**

October 28, 2019, in Paris, Virginia, a 24-year-old woman named Lily lives on Milley Road. She lives with her dog and works as a fiction editor. She loves her job because she loves books, but the biggest reason she loves her job is Colby. Colby is a fiction editor too, but they are sworn enemies because they are up for the same job position in their companies' merger. They argue everyday like kids, but she has a huge secret. She has a big crush on him, and nobody knows except for Lily and her best friend. She's been working there for 4 ½ years and he for 3 ½ years. Everyone in the office knows about their rival. She pretends to hate him, but she doesn't. The reason she likes him is because he is cute, tall, and has blue eyes and nice hair. He is kind and respectful.

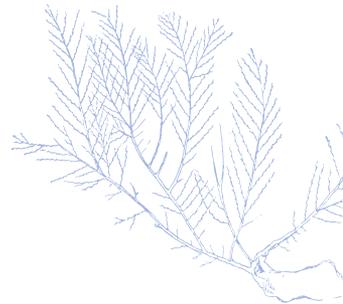
The next day, she overhears him talking about her, so she waits till he gets off the phone and confronts him. She asks why he was talking about her. He says it was because she is so beautiful. She is so shocked and confused by what he just said, so she asks him to repeat himself, to make sure she isn't dreaming. He repeats himself and pulls her in for a kiss. She pushes him off her...

## **Reality with a Twist**

**Yesly V.**

**River City MS**

When I was seven, I lived in a big house that had a big forest just beyond my backyard. Every day I would go into it and play for hours. I made a tent in the middle of the forest, but in order to get there, I would go through a pond full of goldfish, which you can simply jump over. After that, I went past different flowers with butterflies of all sorts. Then I could just walk and find the tent. One day, I was in the tent playing and heard a loud noise. I saw an extremely big shadow. I thought it was a bear, so I went out, and all I saw was my neighbor's dog. It had followed me to my tent.



**Diablo**  
**Adrian W.**  
**Armstrong HS**



Born and raised in the slums, Diablo has always been alone since birth. He is a notorious rebel assassin who makes his money by bounty contracts. Diablo is from planet Hydra and is a Volcan-Scorpion, which means he has volcanic powers. He learned to control them by developing focus to destroy the world. He was bent on revenge and wanted to kill the revolution general. He has white hair, a scar over his right eye, and tattoos that automatically appear when he unlocks a new power. He proceeds to help the helpless but plans to end the world after he kills the general with a move he calls the “Volcanic Diablo Eruption.”

**Siobhan’s Backstory**  
**Shavon B.**  
**Armstrong HS**



Siobhan is 17 years old, 5 foot 8 inches, with brown hair, pink eyes, and extremely sharp teeth. Siobhan was not always evil. She was a normal girl until she was kidnapped by a stranger (who isn’t important). By the time she was 17, she developed powers. She could control plants and animals, and she could heal herself. She ended up killing her kidnapper after three years of captivity. When she made her way home, she found out nobody was worried or even noticed she was missing. This left her feeling hurt. She also developed Stockholm Syndrome. Later that day, she went back to her kidnapper’s home and revived him by hugging him in tears. She stayed with him because he was the only one that cared for her.



**Follow us @PodiumRVA**

