

## Yuri

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*(Talking to his Father.)*

YURI: Look, Dad. I'm sorry. But you don't know what it's like! What if your boss walked into your office every morning and yelled at you through a bullhorn! That's what Mr. Morton does. Robert said *his* assistant principal doesn't use a bullhorn to get the kids into class. It's insulting! Then today, he comes on the intercom and says: "You people have been so good you get next Monday off." It's a national holiday! Every kid in America has Monday off from school. He must think we're morons! If he didn't treat us like dumb animals, maybe we wouldn't act like... *(Realising he has behaved badly.)* like dumb animals. *(Pause.)* I didn't actually *break* the bullhorn. I just hid it. Probably forever. I'm sorry.

# Brian

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*(Talking to his Grandmother.)*

BRIAN: How come you go around braggin' about me to all your friends, but then you say to me: "You gotta do better, you gotta do better." What do you want? Grades don't get any better than mine. I play sports. I go to...*sometimes* I go to church. Now Grandmomma, don't get on me about that. I go! Just not twelve times a week like you do. I got other things goin'. Friends. Plans. Stuff to do. *(Pause.)* Ah, Grandmomma, don't get that sad look. I'm not goin' down any wrong road. You taught me better than that. But how about braggin' about me to *me* sometime? All right?

# Roberto

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*(Talking to his best friend, Elena.)*

ROBERTO: Your Mom has to work? On Christmas Day? That's crazy! Nobody works on Christmas! Bus drivers, maybe. And taxi drivers. And, OK, the people who work in stores that never close — all right! So, lots of people work on Christmas! But your Mom shouldn't have to! Here's a plan. She tells the Hendrick's, "You're just gonna mess up your big ole house anyway opening all your presents. I'll come clean the next day." What do you think? Elena, don't look so sad. You won't be by yourself on Christmas. I'll think of something. Promise.

# Corey

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*(Talking to his friend.)*

COREY: You know your problem? You have no imagination. If it was up to you, every day of your life would be exactly the same. Not me! I'm an adventurer. You know what I'm gonna do? One day I'm not getting off at our subway stop. I'm gonna keep going. To the end of the line. Then catch another train, and another one, till I get where I wanna go. I'm sure I'll know it when I get there. I can see it. The greatest place on earth. *(Pause.)* It's gotta be out there somewhere. I sure haven't seen it around here. Have you?

## Alan

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*(Talking to his little sister, in front of a flower shop.)*

ALAN: I know this is the store. See, here's Mom's bus stop. She waits by here every day. These *are* beautiful flowers. She says, "Someday, I'll have the smell of a garden again in my house." We can give her that smell! We have money...a little. These yellow ones can't cost too much. *(He looks at the price.)* Seven dollars. Maybe these. They have much smaller blossoms. *(He looks at the price.)* Six dollars. Why do they cost so much! *(Speaking to the seller.)* Excuse me. Excuse me, sir. Our mother. She is lonely for her country, where they have many flowers. But we live here now. Your flowers could make her happy again. I have for four dollars. What can I buy?

## Cortez

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*(Talking to his Father on the first day of a new school.)*

CORTEZ: Poppa! Are you crazy! Put it away. Put the camera away! *(By CORTEZ's reaction, we know his Father has put the camera away.)* Dios Mio, Poppa! You wanna make me look stupid? You see any other kid's father here with a camera? *(Cutting his father off.)* I know, I know. *(Imitating his father.)* "Your uncle in Santa Domingo, your cousins in New York, your old grandpoppy in Santiago, they all want a picture of Cortez on the first day of new school!" What are you, loco? Look, we'll take one when I come home. With Momma. She'll put her arm around me, you'll say "Sonria [*Smile*]," it'll be beautiful. OK? Hey, where're ya goin'? The first bell hasn't rung. If you just wanna hang... I don't mind. *(Pause, as he looks at his new surroundings.)* I don't know anybody at this school. So...why do I care if you take a picture? OK. *(Smiling big.)* Photo op! *(The unseen father flashes the picture as CORTEZ smiles.)* Adios, Poppa. *(CORTEZ turns and walks toward his new school.)*

# Clint

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*(Talking to his best friend, David.)*

CLINT: You think it's tough to start eighth grade? Think back, David! Nothing could be worse than the first day of first grade! Picture this: My Mom bursts into tears, which makes me all weird and confused because I think: "Hey, I'm six. Shouldn't I be the one who's crying?" Then I walk by myself through this big front door. It looks like the entrance to another galaxy. And here comes Mrs. Walsh, our teacher. She trots us around, showing us the art table, and the sand table, and the picture of Charley Chipmunk on the wall. This chipmunk had the first grade rules in little bubbles, like in a comic book, coming out of its mouth. "I am Charley Chipmunk. I am courteous to others. I respect my classmates." While she's doing the grand tour, I keep raising my hand, but she never calls on me. OK, I only raised it this much *(He raises his hand to about rib level.)* but I was petrified! So I never tell her that I have to go to the bathroom! *(Pause.)* Use your imagination about what happened next! Come on, David. Eighth grade can't be any worse. We'll walk in together. Right up those ten thousand steps. It's no big deal. *(With a note of doubt.)* Right?

# Shane

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*(Talking to his new classmates.)*

SHANE: Tell you something interesting about me?  
*(Shrugs.)* Nothin' to say. I got a sister, two brothers, and I live in Crestwood. *(Shrugs again.)* I don't know. Maybe you should ask somebody else. No, hold up. There's one thing... Nobody I know can do it. Maybe I should make you guess. *(Laughs a little.)* Nah. Listen. I can ride down a whole city block on the back wheel of my bike. For real! You don't believe me? You should see me. I got skill. You start on the top of a hill. Then once you get goin' you pull up, and ride on one wheel all the way down. Takes balance. Endurance. I got all those things. Are those interesting?

# Jackie

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*(Young Jackie Robinson is talking to his brother Mac in 1930.)*

JACKIE: Mac, I hear what you and Momma say. *(Quoting his mother and brother.)* “Be patient. Good things will come to good people.” But some days I just can’t take it! Why, Mac? Why do I have to be stuck up in the balcony when I go to the movies? Why do I have to sit in the back of the bus, even when there’re plenty of empty seats up front? I wanna drink out of that water fountain, but I can’t, cause it’s got a sign on it sayin’ “Whites Only”? Why can’t I go to that nice, pretty school instead of mine? Who made the rule that said I’m worth less than a white kid? It hurts, Mac. Someday, I’m gonna change it. I don’t know how, but I’m not livin’ in a world like this all my life. I’m gonna change it.

## Jason

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*(JASON has just knocked over a vase. He is talking to his Mother.)*

JASON: Mom, it was an accident, I swear! I wasn't running! I was hurrying. And the table must have been sticking out in the hallway more than it usually does, cause I run — *hurry* past this vase every day and I've never broken it before! I'm sorry. Can I glue it back together? I'm great at puzzles! *(He looks at the million pieces.)* I guess not. Mom, it's my feet. They've got a life of their own. They're huge. Uncontrollable. Like an alien life form! You know the new boots you bought me last week? They don't fit anymore! And the new gloves, too. It's like my hands are three times too big for my arms. Maybe I should join the circus. People could pay money to see the kid with the weirdest body on earth. *(Using a ringmaster's voice.)* "Trips on his mother's table without noticing!" I'm really sorry, Mom. I'll do something to fix it. Promise.

# John

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*(JOHN is talking to his aunt's maid, Emma. It is the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, 1941.)*

JOHN: Where were you when you heard, Emma? I was just sittin' there, playin' Chinese checkers with Warren. Momma had just washed little sister's hair, and had her sittin' on a stool in front of the stove. She was combin', then Daddy says, "Hush up." He had his head up against the radio, close as it would go. Everything got quiet, 'cept for a voice talkin' 'bout a place that sounds almost magic — Pearl Harbor. "Bombing. They're bombing," Daddy said. I ran to the window. Those planes had to be flyin' over our house, 'cause Momma and Daddy seemed so scared. Little Ellen ran, too. She was cryin'. Then Momma says, "Get away from that window. You'll catch your death with wet hair." Then Momma just started combin' again. But it was different. Everything's different. What do you think's gonna happen? To the whole world?

## Chris

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*(Talking to his Father.)*

CHRIS: Dad, I like baseball. Really. I've played it since I was six. Remember? You called me your six-year-old slugger. Well, I'm twelve now, and I've just got other things I wanna do after school. No big deal. Dad, why are looking at me like that? I didn't ask if I could dye my hair blue, I just wanna quit the team. Don't look so disappointed. We can still play. You and me, on Saturdays. But no pickup games at the park, or with anybody, OK? I don't want to hear it anymore: "Move in everybody. Chris is up to bat. Easy out. Easy out." Please, Dad, I can't stay on the team. Don't make me.

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# Matt

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*(Talking to his friend.)*

MATT: You want to *stay* here? Not me. It's the worst thing I can think of! Being stuck in middle school for the rest of my life? What a nightmare! Picture this. I'm twenty-three. I've been trying to pass an algebra test for ten years, but every time I take it, I fail! And when my history project is due, I've lost it, for the twentieth time! I'm taller than everybody else. Hey, that might not be bad. Still, I bet no one would notice me. Finally I try to escape, but the doors are all locked! Sirens go off, and over the intercom I hear "Matt is trying to graduate. Matt is trying to graduate. Stop him! Capture him!" So I run and run until they corner me in the cafeteria. I pelt the principal with french fries. Then they make me sit in detention until I'm forty! No, I'm readin' for high school the minute they'll let me. Life's gotta be easier there.

## Conner

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*(Talking to his Mother.)*

CONNER: Mom. I gotta stay home today. See? Look at my eyes. They're all hazy-looking. *(Taking a step back.)* You don't have to feel me! I already took my temperature. It's bad. Really bad. You go ahead and go to work. I'll be fine — not *fine*, I'm sick! But you can leave. It's OK. Don't give me that look! It's your "I don't believe you look." I told you. I don't feel like going to school. *That* is the truth. Nobody will notice I'm absent, so what does it matter? If I fell off the earth it wouldn't matter to anybody in the whole school. Wait, Mom, are you calling the doctor? OK. OK. Where's my backpack?

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Ty

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*(He is talking to a former friend.)*

TY: You think I'm like a sheep or something? I don't walk off a cliff just because you tell me to. I got more brains in my head than that! What you gotta do right now is tell me where my sister is. She told me she'd meet me here, so where is she?! Did you lie to her? Did you tell her I was messin' around with you and your crew? If you did... Listen, I'm not hangin' with you any more. I'm out. My sister's out, too. We want something better than what you've got to offer. I'm not spending my life gettin' into trouble. You better tell me, now, where is she?! I'm not afraid of you. I'll call the police so quick you won't be able to run fast enough to get away.

## Alex

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*(Talking to his Father as they enter a museum exhibition.)*

ALEX: Dad, I told you, I'm not interested in this stuff! You're always doin' this. Draggin' me to museums to see a bunch of old things right in the middle of baseball on TV — *(He sees airplane.)* Wow! Is that Lindbergh's plane? The real plane that he flew across the ocean in? I bet it's a fake. *(Reading the airplane's name.)* "The Spirit of St. Louis." It is the real plane. But it's so small. Man, Lindbergh must have been one brave pilot. He flew all that way in something built like that? And he was the first! Incredible! Dad, you should've brought me here before. What kind of a Dad are you?

# Eddie

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*(Talking to his friend, Reuben.)*

EDDIE: I've got the greatest idea. What if we took over the White House. Not the whole place, just the thermostat. Think of the power! In the middle of some high-level negotiations between heads of state, we could turn the place into an igloo. They'd be calling the Secret Service for sweaters and scarves. Nobody could sign any treaties because their fingers would be frozen together. Or get this: It's summer. The President is having a fancy party for a million guests, and we pump the place to 110 degrees. "All points bulletin. Find the thermostat villains." Finally, we'd bust out and demand... *(EDDIE hasn't thought about this.)* something. What would we ask for? World peace? Uh, no more pollution? Wait. I got it. Year-round professional football! On demand! What, you don't think this'll work?

# Bernie

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*(Talking to his Father.)*

BERNIE: Dad, if you'd let me explain then you'll understand! See, I'm spending the night at David's house. There's gonna be a ring around the moon Friday night. It's an astronomical phenomenon! We get extra credit if we stay up late to see it. You can't see a once-in-a-lifetime thing like this by yourself! Don't look worried. I promise, we won't do any of the things we did last time. No bike riding after dark, no chemistry experiments in the kitchen. Just moon watching...with your binoculars. Please, can I borrow them, Dad, please???

# Jamal

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*(Talking to a kid who is looking to cause trouble at JAMAL's neighborhood park.)*

JAMAL: Why you wanna come in here and start somethin'? Walkin' in here, bumpin' into people when you walk past. What're you hopin' is gonna happen? That somebody's gonna take you on? Start a big fight? Make you feel big? Well, you must not know the rule. We only got one big rule on this playground, for all those little kids over there, and for us on the court. No disrespect. From anybody. We respect one another. And anybody who comes in here does the same. So you either play by our rule, or you're out. What's it gonna be?

# Glaston

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*A young storybook hero is talking to a reluctant dragon.)*

GLASTON: Tell me another story, Dragon. Of saints and battles, dragons and armor from the olden days! Weren't creatures like you quite plentiful then? Oh, the world must have been filled with thrills and surprises! Tell me! Didn't all the knights from distant lands come together for great tournaments to joust and wrestle? And didn't they wear suits of armor that sparkled in the sun? And didn't they — what? *(He listens, then repeats what the dragon has just told him.)* “Rip and bash themselves up just to prove who was the noblest?” Why, that makes them sound silly. Knights and saints aren't silly. They're heroes! You have it all wrong, Dragon. You've been living underground far too long. Your memory is bad. Let's try again, Dragon. Tell me another story. Dragon!