

Teen Zine



Summer 2015 

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Professor McGonagall Pretending to be
Professor Snape (back cover) - Gecko

I spent four years studying black magic with Talon Scarletwound, one of the best sorcerers in the world. He used to tell me, "Mace, never add too much scorpion spleen to an Invisibility Potion, or your skin will turn bright orange." I never found out if that was true or not, because from then on I triple checked the amount of scorpion I added. After that I went on to work for Horace the Horrible. He truly lived up to his name. I was with him for less than a year, and moved on to learn from Viktor Vayne. He was my favorite out of the three. It was he that taught me to never stop questing for power. Viktor was the best black magic sorcerer of the century, and it was because he never stopped becoming stronger. It was if each day, his talents doubled. He could hypnotize an elephant, knew more than three million curses by heart, and was also very talented with love potions. He had a new woman on his arm each day for the five years I was with him. When I finally left, I decided I would do everything I could to be as powerful as Viktor.

Now, as I sit here, staring down at this book, the book I had to fight an enormous, fire breathing dragon with poison dripping claws to get, I see I've found just what I need. It's called a Silver Mink. Legend has it that this creature will grant your greatest wish if you can find it. The book goes on to say that the creature has never been seen, and there are several doubts about its existence. But if it didn't exist, then why write about it? It's got to be out there.

The candlelight is beginning to hurt my eyes. I slam the heavy book closed, and snuff out the candle, which has been reduced to a small white nub, wax dripping from the sides.

Looking out my dirty window, which I meant to clean today, I see a crescent moon, which means I'm not up as late as yesterday. Too bad, really. It had been a beautiful sunrise, all the colors of the morning mixed together in the sky of the new day.

Dragging my staff behind me, I manage to make it up the winding staircase, which creaks each time I take a step. This castle is centuries old, and honestly, I haven't done a very good job at keeping it clean. Cobwebs line the walls as I ascend the third stair case. When I bought this castle, I knew it was going to be a lot of work. In fact, I wasn't going to buy it, but the realtor, an annoying little gnome, was practically begging me to take it off his hands. It's not a horrible place to live. I mean, it's dirty, a few tarantulas have made a nest in the West Tower, and a few of the rooms still have a faint smell of gremlin dung for some reason, but I really can't complain.

Oh, yes. I should probably disinfect that shoulder wound the dragon graciously gave me before the poison works its way to my heart. Let's just hope I've got the antidote.

Finally, made it up the stairs. Now if I can just drag my exhausted, zombie-like body to the potion cabinet, I can finally get to bed.

The cabinet creaks as I open it. Different colored bottles and jars, not one of them the same size line the shelves. Now where is the Cyclops Mucus? For Merlin's sake, I didn't realize this hurt so much. It feels like there's a vampire digging his fangs into my shoulder! Aha! Found it.

I coat my fingers with the purple sludge and pull down my black cloak, revealing the large scratches that are oozing green. As soon as the mucus touches my skin, relief flows through me. It's not until after I put the small, curved bottle back into the cabinet that it occurs to me that I just willingly rubbed snot on my shoulder.

* * * *

Well, as gross as it was, that Cyclops Mucus seems to have healed the dragon wound. Now I can get back to more important things. Finding the Silver Mink. But how? I must have read that book four times last night, cover to cover. All it says is that it's never been seen, and that there is no proof of its existence. But if it grants your greatest wish, then I've got to have it.

Maybe if I just read it one more time...

The large book, which is about four times bigger than the *Encyclopedia of Wizardry*, is still on my desk, where I left it. Before opening the enormous book once again, I allow my hand to glide over the cover for a minute. It's bound with Hydra skin, one of the rarest and most valuable things in the world. Something about this book is very odd. For one thing, it has no title. In fact, there's nothing on the cover at all. No indication of who wrote it, or why.

But no matter. It's not the writer of the book that made me risk my life for it, but what's written inside the book itself. Too bad it's all for naught if it doesn't tell me how to find the Mink.

I read the page over and over. I've nearly memorized it by now. But nothing, not one word helps me. Why write about the creature if there's so much debate over its existence? That's why it's *got* to be out there. Somewhere.

There's one more thing that's peculiar about this book. Some of the letters are capitalized when they don't need to be. Not just the first letter of the words, but scattered all around the page, randomly. And only on this page. Why? It's almost as if...

That's it! It's a clue! How could I have been so simple-minded?

Cautiously, yet anxiously at the same time, I tear out the page, careful not to rip any of the words. Then I begin to fold it, making sharp creases across the page, until all the capital letters can be seen clearly. And just like I thought they would, the letters start to form words. I fold and fold to the point where I feel like I'm a master of origami rather than magic.

Finally, the answer:

MINK CAN ONLY BE SUMMONED AT THE TOP OF THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN, WHEN BLACK MAGIC COMBINES WITH LIGHT

Light magic? Why on Earth would someone need something so weak? All it does is grow flowers, and give you the ability to talk to animals, things like that. Why waste time conversing with a squirrel when you can be battling an ogre?

Well, if it says I need light magic, I'd better find some. Now, I bet if I go out into those woods near the castle, I could find a unicorn and get it up to the mountains. No, no, that's too big. I need something smaller, something that I can easily catch and control.

Looks like I'm going fairy hunting...

The Mob's Daughter – by Gecko

Chapter 1

"Are we there yet?" my sister Saffron whined.

"Almost," my mom called from the passenger seat.

"Where are we going, anyway?" I asked from the backseat. I had been sprawled across the backseat of our full-size van for what felt like hours, just watching the sparse desert of Nevada roll by outside.

"It's a surprise, Tarin, just be patient," my mom said with suppressed glee.

"Are you sure this is right?" My dad asked in such a quiet whisper that I thought he hadn't spoken until my mom answered.

"Oh, don't be silly. Of course it is," mom said with a breezy wave of her hand.

"But I don't think..."

"Oh, come on now," my mom said, cutting him off. "Everything will be fine."

Four hours later. The sun was almost set below the horizon when we pulled into a park just off the shore of a lake. Which lake, I had no idea.

"Ok, everyone out!" My mom called from the front seat.

"Whatever." I called back, climbing out of the truck.

Once we were all outside, I saw how dark the lot really was. But I didn't have time for sightseeing, because not more than a minute after I was out of the car, I was tackled to the ground from behind. I thrashed, gravel flew everywhere while I struggled. Whomever was on top of me was bigger than I was and, by the way their breathing huffed in and out, it was definitely a guy.

"Man, you sure are strong for a girl," the guy huffed in my ear.

"Oh, I'm not even trying right now," I replied tersely.

"Well, how 'bout you show me how strong you really are," he breathed back.

"I will, just to please you."

"Oh, good. I love to be pleased."

At that moment, I kicked my foot to the side – catching him in the ribs. He rolled to the side and I pounced. I came out from under him and sat on his chest. I pulled my hand back and punched him in the jaw. He brought his hands up to stop my punches, but I just hit harder until he threw me off balance. We went rolling across the lot, getting continually scratched by the gravel on the pavement.

We rolled about ten feet before I got the upper hand. I pinned him to the ground just outside of a circle of light coming from one of the only street lamps in the whole lot.

"I win," I spat at my attacker.

"Not quite," he replied. He stretched his head up toward mind. Instinctively, I leaned back. That was my mistake. He flipped me easily. "I told you that you hadn't won yet." I wiggled my hands and he loosened his grip just a fraction to watch me struggle. Now it was his turn to make a mistake. I ripped my hand from his grasp and punched him in the nose. With great satisfaction, I saw blood run from his nose. Bad news is that it ran onto my face, leaving hot sticky stripes on my face and big blobs on my shirt.

"Oh, man. Coms, you look awful!" called a man from behind us.

"You want to trade places?" he questioned the man. Or Coms questioned the man. Coms must have been his name. Weird. Oh well, what do I care?

"Didn't I tell you she was a fighter? And strong too." I twisted my head to see that my mom was the one who had spoken.

"She is very strong," commented the man.

"So, do we get our asking price, or not?" my mom questioned.

"That is not for me to determine. Coms, on the other hand, can answer that one."

"Wait, what asking price? What are you talking about?" I questioned.

Coms leaned in close to my face. I hadn't noticed before, but we were in the light of the street lamp. For the first time I got a good look at him. He had long, shaggy brown hair that dangled in his eyes. His eyes were like nothing I'd ever seen before, pine green in the middle, but slowly turned to an emerald color at the edges. "I'm sorry," he said. "So sorry." More blood dripped onto my face and he gently let go of my hand and wiped the blood away.

"What was that, Coms?" the middle-aged man asked.

"Nothing. But I have to admit they were telling the truth. She has so much untapped potential," he said. He was only four inches from my face. He leaned in even closer as other figures emerged from the

gloom around us. He shifted himself so I was protected under him. For some reason I felt safe with him protecting me from the strangers even though he had been trying to kill me only thirty seconds ago.

"Time to pay up," my mom called with a greedy glint in her eyes.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever," he said with a tired glance at my mom.

"Axel, pay the woman and escort them out of my territory."

"Yes, boss," Axel called, handing a briefcase to my mom.

"Coms, escort the newbie to the cars."

"Whatever. Just call off the goons. Seriously, do they need to be here?"

Coms got off of me and offered me his hand to help me up. I would have smacked him for thinking that we were now friends after he had just attacked me, but right now it was getting darker and those goons – as Coms had referred to them – were starting to freak me out. After we were both on our feet I remembered what was going on.

"Wait. What is this all about an asking price and newbie? I didn't sign up for this, whatever it is."

"You are right, my dear. You didn't sign up for anything. Your loving, caring parents sold you to me. Things are a lot simpler when you don't need to sign anything."

"What?!"

"I know, dear, it is a lot to take in, but Coms will explain it all to you."

"Wait, so I have to stay here, and I can't see them?"

"That's right. After today, it will be like you never existed."

"I at least get to say goodbye, right?"

"Fine, but make it quick. We are on a very tight schedule."

"Saffron, I'll miss you so much," I said, hugging my sister goodbye again for the fiftieth time.

"I'll miss you more. Why can't you come home with us?"

"I can't come home because mommy sold me."

"Why would mommy do that?"

"I don't know, sweetie. I honestly don't know."

"Hey dad," I said, giving him a hug, "I'll be fine."

"I know you will, sweetheart. You're a fighter like your mom. Your *real* mom."

"Thanks, dad. Stay strong for Saffron. Make sure she still has at least one picture of me, even if you have to smuggle it inside the house."

"I will. Just stay safe."

"Of course I will. You know I will."

"Ok. It's great to see all of these heartfelt goodbyes, but we really have to go," called my stepmom from the front of the car. Oh, did I forget to mention that the woman I call my "mom" is actually my stepmom? Whoops. Guess you know now. I said one last goodbye to my dad and Saffron, then squared my shoulders and walked up to my stepmom. "See, I told you that I would get rid of you," she said with an evil sneer.

"Oh, so this is the best plan you could come up with? I thought you were going to have me arrested for murder."

"I was, but that proved to be too hard – especially the part about providing a dead body."

That was it. I curled my fist and before she could say another word, I punched her square in the jaw. She crumpled like tin foil to the ground as I stood smirking over her. "You know, I've always wanted to do that," I said, as my dad walked up from behind. He picked up her body and placed it in the car.

"Hopefully, the car ride will be a little quieter now that she is taken care of," he said with a smile. I smiled back, unable to think of something to say. "Bye, Tarin."

"No, I'm not leaving without Tarin," Saffron cried. Tears were streaming down her face. God, she is only nine. How much do you have to hurt her?

"We have to go, Saffron," my father said firmly.

He dragged her away, kicking and screaming. I had Coms hold me back so I wouldn't run after the car. Once they were gone, Coms let me go and I sunk to my knees. I screamed bloody murder at the sky for what seemed like days. I was barely aware of cars pulling out of the lot. A light rain began to permeate my torn and bloodstained clothes, but I didn't care. I just kept crying. Eventually, I felt a warm jacket slip over my shoulders and a strong arm wrap me into a warm body. "Shh, it's alright. I'm here. I'll protect you now," Coms whispered in my ear.

"It's *not* alright. It will never *be* alright, Coms. She is only nine years old," I wailed, pounding my fists on his chest.

"Hey, lover boy, when you're done consoling your girlfriend, the boss wants you back at HQ pronto."

"Not funny, Zack. Don't make me come over there," Coms hissed violently.

"Ok, sorry. Just wanted to let you know. Anyway, if you get yelled at, it's not my fault." A car door slammed and an SUV squealed out of the lot, leaving me and Coms kneeling on the soaking pavement.

"Come on. We have to move now," Coms said, trying to lift me off of the pavement.

"No, I'm not moving," I said, trying to sound firm, but after all of my crying, my throat was parched and my voice was strangled.

"Fine, have it your way. You won't have to move an inch," Coms said. He reached down and scooped me up into his arms like I weighed nothing.

"What are you doing?" I asked weakly.

"I'm carrying you to the car, because you are exhausted and you have got to be in pain."

"And whose fault would it be that I am in pain," I questioned innocently. "And why is there blood dripping onto my hair?"

"I think you can answer both of those questions," Coms replied cordially.

"So does this mean we're friends," I asked.

"What do you think?" he asked back.

"I think we are," I countered.

"I think so, too," Coms agreed.



**Severus Snape in a Dress [and not too happy about it, either]
by Tatiana and Gecko**

As the tall man walked closer to the enormous castle that was Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, his expression showed no joy. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining above the castle towers, and a cool, refreshing breeze flowed through the man's shoulder-length, greasy black hair. But not even the warming sun could brighten his mood. His summer holiday had been mediocre, at best. *At least it was nice not to have to babysit hundreds of children, with their endless excuses and whiny little voices*, Professor Snape thought as he walked through the castle entrance. Now it was nearly time for the school year to resume, and that meant he had to clean his classroom, prepare everything for when the students arrived, then learn new names and faces, grade long essays that were never up to his expectations, and serve endless detentions with the students who always managed to cause trouble. This endless list of work that laid ahead of him only darkened his already sour mood. There was only one other thing that made him all the more dreary.

Once again, Severus Snape had been denied the Defense Against the Dark Arts position.

The school was quiet with only the Hogwarts staff inside of it. Snape tried his best to enjoy the silence, reminding himself that by this time tomorrow, the students would be back, and the peace would be lost until the end of the year. He took a deep breath, and reveled in the lack of noise. No chirping birds, no cricketing bugs, no –

"MROOOOORRWW!"

Snape jumped at the sound. The cat in front of him looked up and hissed, angrily. Just the Professor's luck, he'd step on her tail. This cat, Mrs. Norris, could almost always be seen lurking in the school's corridors. She belonged to Argus Filch, the caretaker. Her lantern-like eyes seemed to see everything that went on, and if a student was breaking the rules, she'd rush right to Filch, who'd make sure they were thoroughly punished for whatever they'd been doing. Yes, Mrs. Norris was like a one cat police force.

Snape sneered at the cat, then decided that he should keep moving, because where Mrs. Norris was, Filch couldn't be far behind.

"Mrs. Norris!"

Speak of the devil, Snape thought, as Filch scooped up his brown and gray colored cat. "Is the mean ol' Professor being mean to you already?" he said in a baby-like tone. His pale eyes looked at Snape. "She doesn't usually do that until later in the year."

"Hello, Argus," Professor Snape growled. "Not to start the year off on a bad note," Although it seemed too late for that, "but for the last time, I did not *kick* your cat last year, I *tripped* over her." *If she'd learn to stay out of my way, things like this would never happen. Stupid cat.*

"There you go again, blaming my sweet little cat just because you're bigger than she is." The gray-haired man growled. Filch's sneer transformed into a wicked smirk, and just by that Snape knew what was coming next. "But let's not fight so early in the day, Severus." His tone was lighter, but his eyes stayed a stormy gray. "Why can't we just have a normal, friendly conversation? For instance...Did you finally get the Dark Arts position?"

"You know very well that I –"

Filch didn't even let him finish his sentence. "Of course you didn't, you old dungeon bat. But did you hear about the new Dark Arts teacher? Name's Professor Quinlynn. Sounds like this'll be the teacher who sticks around for a while. You might be Potions Master forever, Severus."

And with that, Filch headed down the hall with his cat, and Snape walked down the gray dungeon steps towards the Potions room. He knew Filch would bring up the new teacher just to infuriate him. But he wasn't going to let it get to him. After all, he was a very talented Potions teacher. And so what if the new teacher was good? No Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher had ever lasted more than a year. Something always went wrong. For instance, three years ago, when Professor Quirrell held the position, it was revealed by Harry Potter and his friends that he was under the control of the Dark Lord, Lord Voldemort. This ultimately killed him at the end of the year. After him, there was Gilderoy Lockhart, who was probably the most idiotic, ill-suited man for the job in the history of Hogwarts. He was hit with his own Memory Charm at the end of the year, and therefore did not return. Finally, there was last year's Dark Arts teacher, Remus Lupin. Lupin was a very good professor, and many of the students loved his class. But he resigned at the end of the year because several of the students' parents found out that he was a werewolf. So, no matter what this new teacher was like, Snape reminded himself that he'd only have to deal with them for a year.

He opened the door to his classroom, but just as he did, Snape heard another voice. "Good morning, Severus." Professor McGonagall smiled, coming down the hall. She was in her usual emerald green robes, and had a happy expression. Albus Dumbledore, the Headmaster at Hogwarts, was at her side in a teal robe, and he also had an old grandfather's smile. His silver beard and hair shined a bit against the green lanterns on the dungeon walls.

"You're looking well," said the Transfiguration teacher.

"The same to you, Minerva," Snape replied, gentlemanly. Minerva McGonagall was one of the few people that Snape had developed a decent relationship with. She was his teacher back when he was a student. Now she was the head of the Gryffindor House, one of the four Houses at Hogwarts. Snape was the head of Slytherin, and the two of them always joked about how *their* House would win the House Cup at the end of the year.

Houses were how the students were organized. They were Sorted at the beginning of the year and their House was to be like their school family. There was Hufflepuff, which held most of the students who were loyal and timid. Ravenclaw was the House where many of the studious students were Sorted. Professor McGonagall's House, Gryffindor, had many students who were brave at heart. Finally, there was Slytherin, which housed the students who showed cunning, and a bit of disregard for the rules. If a student did something good, they would win points for their House. But act out, and points would be deducted. Whichever House had the most points at the end of the year won the House Cup.

"Have you heard about the new teacher?" asked Dumbledore, another person Snape respected.

Oh not this again, Snape grumbled in his head. *Is this all I'm going to hear about? The fact that someone else got the job I wanted...AGAIN?!*

"Yes, I believe Filch said something about that. Said that this may be the one that sticks around for a while."

"Yes, Professor Quinlynn is extremely talented with the Dark Arts. Almost as talented as you, Severus."

McGonagall grinned.

"How interest." Snape was trying his best to look interested. In reality, he couldn't care less about the new teacher. In fact, he was going to try his best to ignore the teacher whenever possible, and was hoping that this Professor Quinlynn would do the same to him. It was just simpler that way.

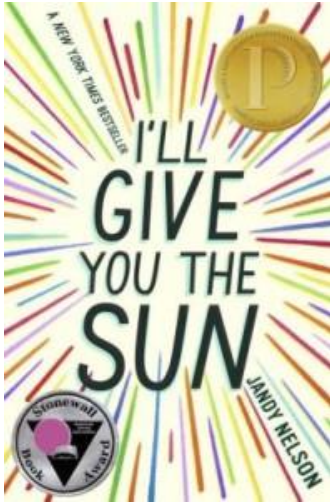
"Well," McGonagall began again, "we'll let you get to your work. I've still got to clean my room. Oh, and the teacher has just arrived if you'd like to get introduced. Room 3C."

They walked up the gray stairs, leaving him to unpack his teaching materials. But the new school year was the last thing on his mind now. *If this new teacher is, in Minerva's words, almost as talented as I am in the Dark Arts, then why were they chosen for the position instead of me? If I'm more skilled in the subject, why was I once again denied?* He dumped his things on the empty desk with a loud *"THUMP!"* Then again, Snape pondered, *Gilderoy Lockhart was one of the worst wizards I've ever had the displeasure of meeting, and even he had the position. Why, I bet this new teacher, this err...Professor Quinton or something, is nothing special. Everyone in this school seems to have their hopes high, but I bet this teacher makes a complete fool of themselves on the very first day of class. Perhaps I'll go see this new teacher just to see what a...No, no, no! I'm going to pretend they don't exist. I don't care if this teacher is a complete disaster, if they're a total success, or if they're a talking hippogriff with the first name of Robert! I will not make contact with this teacher unless there is a very, very, VERY good reason! I'll set myself on fire before I go meet this new teacher!*

If he'd only known more about the teacher, he might have changed his mind. If he'd only known about the crazy year that was in store for him, he might have gone to see Professor Quinlynn. But he didn't, and therefore, he pretended that everything was normal, and prepared his room for the students' arrival the next day.

[Note: If you liked this and haven't read or watched the Harry Potter books or movies, you should check them out! The Harry Potter universe was created by author J.K. Rowling.]

Read It and Rate It
Book reviews written by teens for teens



I'll Give You the Sun

by Jandy Nelson

Realistic Fiction

* * * * Stars (Amazing!)

I'll Give You the Sun, by Jandy Nelson, is the story of twins who were brought together by their love for art. When their mom passed away, it severed their close relationship and left them to grieve in their own ways. One twin gave up his love for art, while the other embraced it in hopes of commemorating their mother. I loved this book because it is a beautiful story

that illustrates the importance of family and how everything happens for a reason.

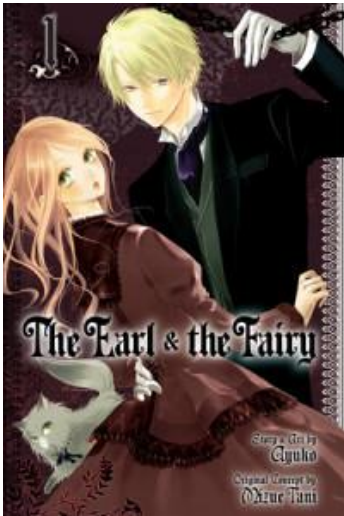
More than This

by Patrick Ness

Fantasy

* * * Stars (Pretty good)

More than This is about a boy who dies and ends up in his old hometown, but it's abandoned except for 2 other people who died from similar causes. They work together to find out where they are and what led them to this strange afterlife. I liked this book because it was very well-written, but I disliked the tone of the novel because it was rather dark and melancholic to me.



The Earl and the Fairy

Story and art by Ayuko

Fantasy

Manga

Supernatural

* * * * Stars (Great!)

The Earl and the Fairy is about Lydia Carlton, who is a fairy doctor, helping an Earl named Edgar Ashenbert. They go on adventures helping fairies and humans alike. I liked this book because it was very fantasy-like. It showed a fairy in the world doing stuff. There were many types of fairies and things like that interest me.

Pure Idiocy – by Samantha Andersen

Garnet

Being the new kid gets old really fast. One would think with so many times to practice I could finally get it down by now, but sadly I am no better at dealing with my most recent move than I was with my first.

So, here I am, standing alone at the bus stop with my bag slung over one shoulder, thinking of a million reasons why I shouldn't go to school today. I mean, we only moved in three days ago! I barely know my school's name, much less the neighborhood.

I sigh. My heart's beating fast and I have butterflies in my stomach. *Calm down, Felix! It's not like you haven't been through this before.* I try taking deep breaths. I read somewhere that deep breathing exercises help you maintain your stress level and clear your mind. I breathe in and hold my breath for twenty seconds before I release it, gasping for air. There was absolutely nothing relaxing about that!

I hear the bus screech around the corner before I see it driving towards me. My heart starts up again and I try to keep my breathing normal. The bus shrieks to a stop and the doors fly open.

"Why, hello there, young man!" The bus driver smiles to me. "My name is Mrs. Robinson, and I'll be your bus driver for the rest of the year," she introduces herself as if she is my waitress instead of my bus driver. "What's your name?" she asks as I climb into the seat behind her.

I look up and meet her brown eyes in the rearview mirror. "Felix," I reply, a little puzzled that the bus driver wants to know my name.

"I know everyone's name on this here bus," she states as if reading my mind. I was about to ask why when she answers before I can even spit out a letter. "So we don't have any hitch-hikers riding amongst us, taking advantage of free transportation."

My face must have been one of pure shock because Mrs. Robinson bursts out laughing. "I'm kiddin', Felix!" she exclaims, all the while picking up two more stops. I wait for the real reason as to why she needs to know my name, but the answer never comes.

=====

I step off the bus into a wave of kids talking, running, yelling, swearing, and a bunch of other things I don't wish to mention. I start to make my way over to the giant fountain in the center of the entrance so I can pull out my schedule, when I trip over my own feet and stumble into some of my new peers. They, of course, shove me off in a new direction and I end up spinning about, barely keeping my balance.

I eventually crash into someone, bringing him or her down with me as I hit the ground.

"I am so sorry! I didn't mean t-" I look to the girl lying next to me and my heart speeds up again. She is beautiful. I mean, absolutely stunning. Her long, honey blonde hair is draped over her face as well as the rest of her thin body, and her waist is so small any model would be jealous.

She sits up, brushes her hair out of her face, and looks at me with emerald green eyes and a scowl. "Watch where you're going, idiot! You are not the only one walking here." All of a sudden she became a lot less beautiful.

"Sorry, my mistake I-" I begin, but she cuts me off as she stands up.

"Yes, you *are* a mistake. Now why don't you do us both a favor and walk far away from me. Possibly trip in the fountain. That works also." She brushes herself off, readjusts her necklace, and struts away.

Well, I definitely found the Mean Queen. There is one in every school and usually I like to avoid her at all costs and *not* crash into her on my first day.

I sigh as I watch her disappear into the crowd. I grab my bag and sling it over my shoulder once more as I try to head over to the fountain again.

Succeeding, I sit on the fountain's edge while pulling out my schedule. First hour English with Miss White. I keep reading and find out later I have Math with Mr. Peacock. What's next? Physics with Professor Plum?

I stand up and head into the school which, predictably, is more crowded than outside. This district has a serious problem with overcrowding. The bell rings just as I make it inside. Well, so much for going to my locker. I have a feeling Miss White doesn't take to latecomers, even if they are new.

I start down a long hallway when I realize that I have no clue where I'm going. Why don't schools give out free maps like amusement parks do? Looking around, I try to find someone who could give me directions. I really hate asking people for things, especially directions, but it doesn't seem like I have any other choice, other than maybe wandering the halls for hours, probably missing all of my classes.

Scanning the hallway once more, I find a tall, slender guy strolling down the corridor. I cross to the other side to stop him when I am taken aback. This guy is as tall as a skyscraper! "Um-uh, c-could you give me directions to Miss White's class, please?" I stare up at him. Man, I get intimidated easily! Why couldn't I just go up and ask him for directions without having to stutter and shake?

"Yeah, sure, dude. Why don't you follow me? My class is just across the hall from hers," he responds, leading the way and taking me in the complete opposite direction from where I was going. "Name's Logan, by the way, Logan Richers." Logan offers me his hand and I shake it firmly, regaining my confidence.

"Felix Garnet," I reply, falling in step with him.

"So, Felix, this is your first day I take it?" He grins down at me.

"Ah, yeah. Just moved here three days ago and my mom decided today's the day I get to go to school!" I fake excitement and think about all the other things I could be doing now rather than walking along with some stranger to a class that I don't particularly want to go to.

"Why a Thursday, though? I mean, come on, you could've waited until at least Monday."

I give a half-hearted chuckle. "That's what I said to her! But she just told me it would be easier to get used to it here if I came as soon as possible. So now I get to continue to unpack boxes and boxes of junk with the added bonus of homework! Isn't my life just the best?"

"Hey, it could be worse. At least you don't have school, boxes, *and* a job," Logan responds, adjusting his backpack.

I look back up to him. "Oh, I'm sorry, you must never get a break." I can't even imagine juggling a job with school and still managing to have a social life.

"Oh, I don't have a job! I have sports to keep me occupied. Now a job with school, boxes *and* sports would just be impossible!" he starts to laugh as we near the end of the hallway. "So, that's Miss White's class. You have about—" Logan checks his watch, "2.8 minutes left until the bell rings. See ya around!" he waves as he disappears into the class across the hall.

I enter the room and it feels as if all eyes are on me. Probably because they are. I scan the class and smile nervously at the girl in the front row. She grins back and jumps up to me. "Hey! Are you the new student? Of course you are, what kind of dumb question is that? I meant to ask, what's your name? Mine's Annabelle Blu. How do you like it here so far?" I stare at her blankly. This girl talks so fast. How am I supposed to keep up?

"Um..." I think I heard her ask my name. "I'm Felix Garnet." If only I had known that that would send her off into another run-on conversation, I would have just smiled and ditched her.

"How long ago did you move? Where did you move from? Why did you move? What is your family like? Where do you live?" She keeps spitting out question after question so fast it's hard to tell when one ends and a new one begins.

"Annabelle, shut up! He can't understand a word you're saying. Remember to breathe and give him a chance to answer." A husky, brown-haired boy scolds the girl I now can confirm is Annabelle.

Annabelle pouts and says, "Sorry, Felix. Answer any question you want and I promise I won't interrupt you." She smiles as she waits for me to extinguish her curiosity.

I look back over to the fat kid and he shrugs. I decide to tell her where I previously lived. I know I'll be telling this story several times throughout the day so why not start now? "Well, I moved from—"

"HEY EVERYBODY!" a sandy-blond with the most obnoxious voice bursts into the room. "I just ran from the opposite side of the school to this classroom in under a minute. Might've killed the janitor on the way here, but hey, gotta make sacrifices for greatness."

I have never hated someone so fast in my entire life. I usually give everyone a chance to prove their worth, but there is something about this guy that I cannot stand, even if I never formally met him. "Who's that?" I ask Annabelle. Before she can answer the teacher walks in. She fits the description of Miss White perfectly. She is elderly, with white hair and everything she is wearing is the color of pure snow.

"Mr. Bridges, please calm yourself. The bell has rung three minutes ago," Miss White informs us in a shrill voice. It rang three minutes ago? Must have been when Annabelle was trying to earn the reward for fastest speaker.

"Mr. Bridges" sits down in the first open desk just as Annabelle and the fat boy take their seats. I am the only one left standing. Miss White tilts her head up to look at me better. "You must be Mr. Garnet. Take a seat next to Miss Viddy." She points to a young girl with the largest amount of hair I have ever seen.

I walk over to her and sit down. She gives me a disgusted look and goes back to texting on her phone. Miss White begins a lecture on some novel I haven't yet received and I start to daydream, a nasty habit of mine, I might add.

I think of Savannah, my 11-year old sister, who is starting her first year of middle school today. She definitely has it worse than me. I'm a sophomore, so I have had a year of high school already, but she has never even opened a locker before and now she has to get used to middle school as well as the new area.

My thoughts wander to Logan. Would he allow me to possibly eat lunch with him? I really don't feel like eating by myself, but what if we don't even have the same lunch together?

The bell rings and I skip through my other three classes when lunch arrives. I stare at the cafeteria doors until finally I shove them open and prepare to eat by myself. I make my way in line and buy my lunch only to walk out and find trouble.

"Yo! Are you the guy who was flirting with my girlfriend? What, why do I even need to ask? I know it was you!" Mr. Bridges comes charging up with about four other large guys who all look as if they would rather enjoy pounding me in the face. God, I really hate this guy. All I wanted to do was eat some lunch!

I dart my eyes back and forth as the guys form a half-circle around me. "I don't know anything!" I mentally face-palm. Not only did I sound like I was completely lying, but I also insulted myself a little because it is the wicked truth.

"Well, you obviously don't know anything if you were flirting with *my* Ira." He bulks up, trying to look intimidating. It works.

"So, Russel, what're you going to do with this nerd?" asks one of the boys surrounding me. Why do I have to get beat up? And on my first day, too! Plus I don't even know who his stupid girlfriend is or the guy who should be in place of me!

Russel smirks, "Ah, Mitch...I'm thinking we dump him in the fountain, or we- Oh, wait! I have the *perfect* idea...we take this nerd-"

"Russel! Leave him alone, he didn't hit on your girlfriend. No one did, actually, you're just being an overprotective jerk." A female voice cuts Russel off as the girl belonging to the voice steps up next to me, causing the other guys to back up a step.

"Hey, Becca, no need to be so sour about it. We were just giving-" Russel steps up to me and I figure out he is looking for my name.

"Felix." I reply meekly. I probably look as pale as a ghost and my lunch is no longer warm.

"-We were just giving Felix here a warm welcome to the neighborhood! Right, guys?" Russel's posse mumbles in agreement and Becca rolls her eyes.

"Just get lost, already. Felix, come with me." Becca pulls on my arm and leads me away from the others as they start to head to the other side of the cafeteria.

"Um, thanks for saving me back there, ah, Becca." I thank her, testing out her name.

She rolls her eyes, "Ugh. Please don't call me that. That's just some stupid tease Russel uses on me. It's Rebecca, Rebecca Koi." Miss Koi flashes me a smile as she leads me down the cafeteria to a table.

"Hey, Felix! Hope they didn't give you too much of a hard time." I look to see Logan, Annabelle, and the fat kid from first hour. My smile widens as I sit down. I have found my people!

"Not exactly the welcoming committee I was expecting, but, hey, better than nothing, am I right?" I reply as the others start to laugh. Looking towards the husky kid chomping down on a cheeseburger I say, "Um, by the way, I never got your name."

He looks up, confused at first, but then he chuckles and says, "Sorry, must've slipped my mind. I was never good at the whole 'introducing' part of a friendship."

I smile even harder if that's possible. Did I really make friends this easily? Huh, I guess practice does make perfect!

Logan smirks at the chubby kid, "Ah, Nick, you know you still didn't give him your name." Nick slaps himself in the face and mumbles, with hamburger in his mouth that his name is Nicholas Newman, but I should just call him Nick.

"Uh-oh, don't look now, but Miss Perfect is coming." Annabelle warns, staring towards the center of the cafeteria just as three girls walk in.

Rebecca turns her head in the same direction and sighs. "Why?" she whispers, and I look at her. I want to ask why what, but decide to drop it seeing as I just met her about five minutes ago.

I turn back to the three girls who have now made it to Russel and his crew. I begin to stare at a familiar blonde, when I remember she's the one I tripped this morning. My heart starts to beat again and I ask, "Who's that?"

They obviously know which one I am talking about, because Rebecca answers, "That is Ira Stark, Russel's girlfriend." And just when I thought I couldn't hate him any more. I look at Ira just as she slips under Russel's arm and kisses him. All of a sudden I am no longer hungry.

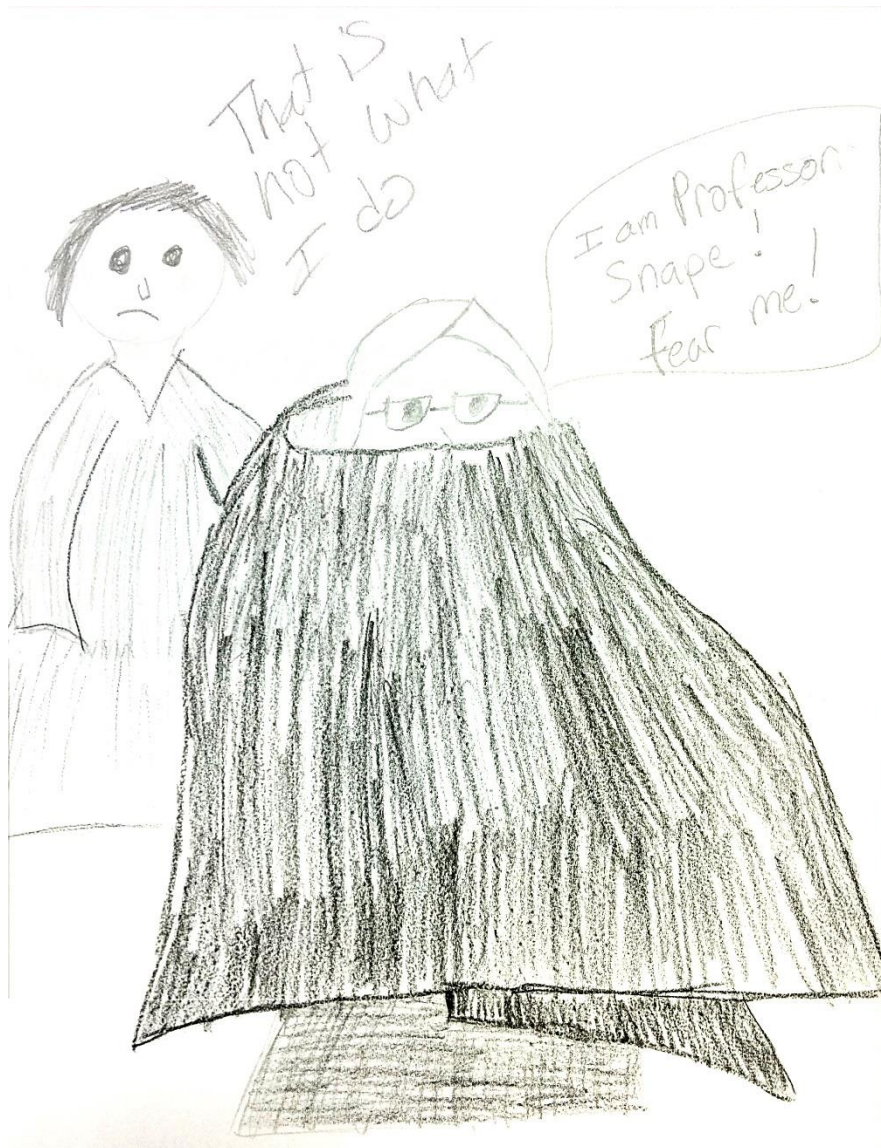
Logan is the first to look away and says to Rebecca, "Don't let her get to you. She's not worth it." Rebecca locks eyes with Logan and they share a knowing look.

“I know,” Rebecca replies. “It’s just...she was worth it, she’s just not Ira anymore. At least, not the Ira I knew.”

The bell rings, signaling the end of lunch, and we all stand up to leave.

“So, Felix, see ya here tomorrow?” Nick asks.

I smile in return, “Definitely.”



teen zine is:

Gecko, Taylor Bradley, Melanie Andersen, Samantha Andersen, and Tatiana.

Please join us at our next meeting!

Call the Information Desk

(847-669-5386 ext. 21) to attend.

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