

Untitled

By Ari Nakao

If it weren't for The Trickster, my initiation into middle school would have been undeniably as boring as a bowl of hair. But it wasn't! Let me explain...

My name is Mia Rider, and I'm a 12-year-old girl who enjoys talking with her friends and playing volleyball. Due to my father's work, I moved from New York to Florida, which has been a difficult adjustment for me. Although the first few weeks at Franklin Middle School went by smoothly, it has been hard for me to make friends, and I'm worried about getting "pranked." You see, someone is playing pranks and tricks on students and staff. On the first day of school, I witnessed my classmate Sophia pranked by an anonymous person who scribbled on her locker and stole some of her belongings. I now have learned that The "Trickster" is anonymous, and his or her identity is hidden and a mystery to solve. The Trickster comes to school early to set up pranks and traps before the teachers and students arrive. The Trickster has been wreaking havoc for everyone- no one is immune to an attack! For example, one day, everyone's favorite math teacher found all four tires of his beloved new Tesla deflated. He was so incredibly disappointed. Everyone knew it was the handiwork of The Trickster, as a bright red capital "T" was written on each tire with a Sharpie, leaving no doubt who the perpetrator was.

One day in spring, our ELA teacher asked us to write about a current "hot topic" in the school, so my group decided to unravel the mystery of The Trickster and stop the continuous barrage of annoyances. After some brainstorming, we thought of checking the

security cameras in the school. We were able to find some important evidence about The Trickster. From the security footage, we saw that The Trickster wears a black mask and tapes over the security cameras so no one can see the setup of the trick. A few days after we had started the project, I arrived at school and walked through the halls to my locker. I saw people milling about my locker, and I was very confused. Everyone was strangely staring at me like I was a monster. When I went to put my backpack in my locker, I was shocked to see that my locker was filled up with trash, and the door was marked inside with a bright red “T”, the tell-tale sign The Trickster was responsible. The smell of the trash was overwhelming, and everyone jumped back in disgust, their hands covering their noses. Furious, I stomped into ELA class, and I explained what had just happened, but everyone already knew, of course.

My ELA group immediately set off to Principal Ober’s office to provide a first-hand account of The Trickster’s ambush of another unsuspecting student. Had I been targeted specifically because I was leading my ELA group’s investigation of The Trickster, or was I just a random target? Our group suggested to the principal that she should interview every one of the student victims to gather additional information about The Trickster. The principal approved of our idea, so she started calling students to her office to discuss their experiences with The Trickster. The principal first met with our group to provide background on the issue. She shared confidential information that there were multiple tricksters around the school and that there would be a schoolwide assembly the next afternoon on this matter.

Fast forward to the assembly, and our group was invited to sit next to Principal Ober on the stage to explain the status of identifying The Trickster. The principal provided an overview of what damages The Trickster had inflicted, and she begged The Trickster to be honest and come forward. She waited...

A few minutes passed of dead silence, and a seventh grader, Sam Silverstone, stood up in front of the entire assembly and proclaimed: "I am The Trickster. I am no longer hidden." There was a unified, audible gasp of shock after his admission of guilt. Soon after, multiple people started standing up and, one at a time, admitting that he or she was The Trickster. The principal motioned each of The Tricksters to the front of the auditorium. All in all, there were 18 Tricksters. When it seemed as though the revelations of guilt had ceased, Violet Brown, a shy, quiet girl, boldly stood up and marched to the front of the auditorium. She seemed to project an air of authority, even though she did not stand out in the class in any sport or friend clique.

The students stared at Violet, and the principal, asked, "Are you The Trickster?" Violet sighed and responded, "Yes, I am one also. It's very difficult to be hidden in plain sight in Franklin Middle School." As she motioned very dramatically behind her, she added, "We don't fit into any of the cliques: we're not the popular girls or guys; we're not cheerleaders or jocks; we're not gamers or rich; and we aren't mall rats or goth. We're just....us. But we do want to fit in somehow and claim our own identity, so we created The Trickster...it's like a club to get the attention that we deserve at Franklin. I know we should not have done these tricks, but there was no other way for us to 'be cool' - it's just horrible to be hidden." The room went dead silent. You could hear a pin drop.

Mrs. Ober stepped in at this point, and everyone could tell she was trying to compose herself - not out of anger, but instead from sadness. "Thank you, Violet, from everyone here. That was very brave. I think all of us should just head back to our homerooms now and get ready for dismissal. We will take up this matter with those involved over Spring Break." And just like spring is a time of renewal and growth, after the break everyone walked back through the doorways and halls of Franklin with a new outlook of kindness and inclusivity. The unpopular kids were mixing with everyone, and the popular girls even admitted that the pressure to maintain their high "status" in school was intense. We all felt relief. Violet even got multiple gifts as thank-yous for being so brave.

You may be wondering if Violet ever got in trouble for tricking the students and teachers around the school. Exactly the opposite: Principal Ober forgave her and congratulated her for advocating for those who were previously known as... "hidden".