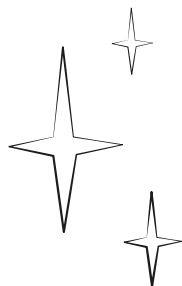




THE NEW KID

Anne Schraff



MEET THE



Paige

Age: 12

Favorite Insect: morpho peleides (blue morpho butterfly)

Hobby: collecting Prancing Pony figurines

Favorite Food: mochi ice cream

Best Quality: is supportive

CHARACTERS



Orion

Age: 12 (maybe)

Hometown: “far away”

Hidden Talent: solving unsolvable math problems

Favorite Planet: Kepler 438b

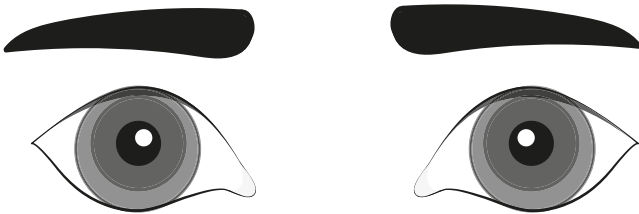
Best Quality: is kind

NEW KID

“Coco!” Paige Morgan ran up to her best friend. “I just saw a new kid. He’s in sixth grade too. Looks like he’s in our class.”

“Did he seem nice?” Coco Lamar asked.

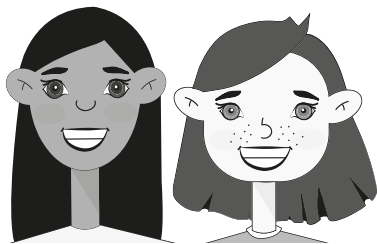
“Not sure,” Paige said. “He was with his mom. I did see that he has green eyes. The color is amazing. I’ve never seen anything like it. His name is Orion Wells. Cool, huh?”



“I hope he’s friendly,” Coco said. “That’s all I care about. Some kids are mean here.”

Paige had just turned 12. Coco had been 12 for a few weeks.

The girls had been friends since they were two. Paige was an only child. She and Coco were like sisters.



♡ Best ♡
Friends
Forever

“Look,” Paige whispered. “Here he comes.” She gripped Coco’s arm.

“Ouch!” Coco said. “You’re hurting me.”

“Sorry,” Paige said. “I’m nervous.”

“He’s just a boy,” Coco said, laughing.

“But he’s strange,” Paige said.

“All boys are strange,” Coco said. “Even my baby brother.”

The new boy walked up. “Hi,” Coco said. “Welcome to our school! I guess you’ll be in our class. I’m Coco. This is Paige.”



“Hello,” the boy said. “My name is Orion.”

Orion didn’t smile. But he seemed nice. He had black, curly hair. His skin was tan.

“Our teacher is Ms. Nesbit,” Coco said. “You’ll like her. She’s tough but fair.”

Coco was a much better talker than Paige. She could talk to anyone. Paige was shy, especially with strangers.

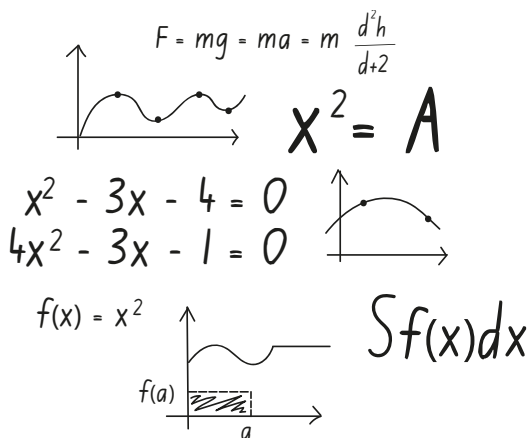
“Where are you from?” Coco asked.

Orion stared off into the distance. “I’m from far away.”

Coco and Paige looked at each other.

Paige shrugged. “So,” she said. “The seat next to me is empty. Want to sit there?”

Orion took the seat. He pulled out his cell phone and started tapping. It looked like he was doing math. Coco noticed it too. The girls exchanged another look.



Coco tapped Orion's shoulder. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"This is a math app," he said. "I like calculus. It's so fun."

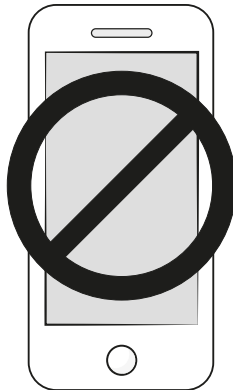
Coco sat back and texted Paige. "Math? Fun? Is he from outer space?"

2

THE INSULT

Chills ran up Paige's spine. *Outer space?* she thought. *That can't be. Can it?*

A moment later, Ms. Nesbit walked in. Instantly, everyone put away their phones. Ms. Nesbit was a great teacher. Kids loved her. They also knew to follow her rules.

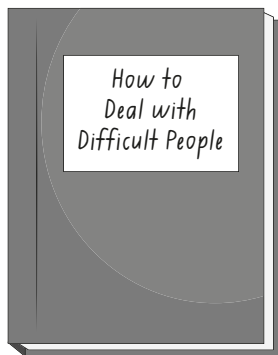


*No phones
allowed!*



“Class,” Ms. Nesbit said cheerfully. “Let’s welcome our new student. His name is Orion Wells. His family just moved to town. Orion, we are so happy to have you here.”

The class clapped. Ms. Nesbit had trained them well. Yet she was not successful with every student.



Flynn Morris rarely followed the rules. His grades weren’t good. He was a bully too.

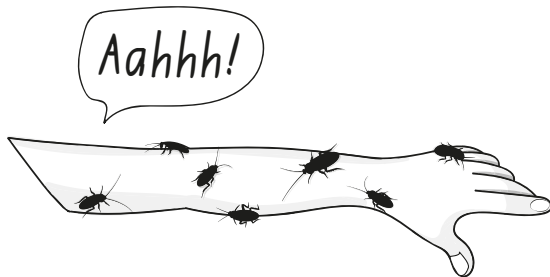
“Orion?” Flynn said quietly. “What kind of name is that? And look! His eyes are so weird.” Some boys near him giggled.

Paige was close enough to hear Flynn. She didn't think Orion heard him. Flynn was too far away. Still, Orion turned around. The boy looked right at Flynn.

"Ah!" Flynn cried. "What's going on? My skin is itchy!"

Ms. Nesbit looked annoyed. Flynn was always causing problems. "Flynn Morris! Behave yourself."

"The new kid looked at me funny. Now I'm itchy all over. It feels like bugs are crawling on my skin." Flynn wiggled around in his desk.



“Stop being silly, Flynn!” Ms. Nesbit snapped. “Sit still and be quiet.”

Orion just sat there. He looked down at his books.

It was lunchtime. Paige grabbed Coco. “Did you see what happened this morning?”

“Yeah,” Coco said. “Flynn went off about something. Ms. Nesbit shut him down. That happens every day.”

“No,” Paige said. “Flynn called Orion weird. I heard it. Orion did too. He must have good ears. Anyway, then he stared at Flynn.”



“So?” Coco asked.

“Orion’s eyes glowed. I saw them. It was amazing. He glared at Flynn. Then Flynn got all itchy. I’ve never seen anything like it.” Paige shook her head. “Did Orion do something to him?”

“That’s silly,” Coco said. “Orion just overheard Flynn. Then he glared at him. Flynn is a bully, but he’s also a baby. He freaked out. The kid can dish it out. But he can’t take it himself.”

“But Coco,” Paige said. “Orion’s eyes . . . changed. They glowed!”

Coco sighed. “Come on, Paige. You’ve been watching too many scary movies. Orion’s eyes are just a cool green color. You said so yourself. That doesn’t mean they have powers.”

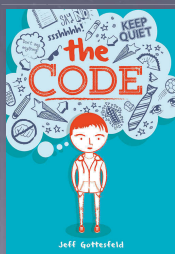


“I guess,” Paige said. But she wasn’t convinced.

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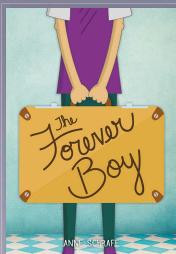
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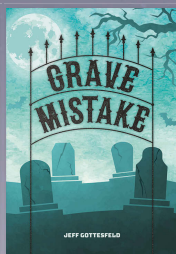
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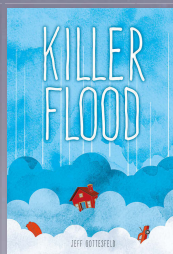
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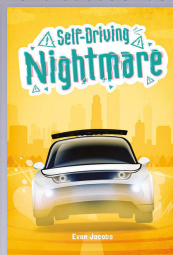
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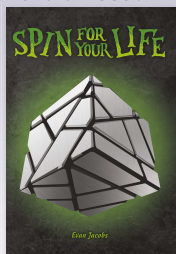
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THE NEW KID



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Just look at his eyes.
Is he an alien?



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