

The Fronting Olympics: Extended Edition

A Storybook Adventure in Eight Events (Plus Bonus Rounds)

Narrator's Note:

Every mind has its own kind of magic. Some are libraries. Some are labyrinths. And some, like Avery's, are a cluttered living room filled with six weirdos, three beanbag chairs, and a whiteboard that says:

"DON'T TOUCH THE FRONT UNLESS YOU HAVE CLEAN ENERGY AND SHOES."

Avery is a 13-year-old tulpamancer. And today, things were getting competitive.

The inner world looked like someone had combined a teenagers' basement with a cosmic waiting room. String lights hung from invisible ceilings, casting rainbow shadows on mismatched furniture. A mini-fridge hummed in the corner, somehow always stocked with chocolate milk and existential snacks.

Event 1: Speed-Fronting (Without Tripping Over a Word)

"ON YOUR MARKS," shouted **Nova**, the firecracker Tulpa with questionable impulse control. She bounced up and down like a caffeinated kangaroo.

"Set!" added **Maple**, the cozy, soft-voiced one adjusting her round glasses nervously.

"Wait, I wasn't ready!" cried **Cris**, the anxious math-nerd Tulpa.

In the background, Juniper lounged scribbling poetry about competitive consciousness. Buzz practiced kickflips on his mental skateboard, and Echo, the quiet one who mostly communicated in memes, held up a sign that said "THIS IS FINE" with a burning dog.

Too late.

Nova yeeted into the front, snagging the body like a gamer grabbing the last controller. She blinked hard, trying to adjust to the real-world light streaming through Avery's bedroom window.

The transition felt like diving into cold water, that jarring moment when the inner world's cozy chaos gave way to the weird business of having to breathe manually.

Avery's mom walked in holding a plate of pancakes shaped like smiley faces.

"Good morning, sweetie. I made your favorites!"

Nova smiled, her enthusiasm cranked to eleven. "GREETING, FLESH MOTHER. YOUR OFFERING OF CIRCULAR BREAKFAST DISCS IS ACKNOWLEDGED AND APPRECIATED."

A collective mental groan echoed from the peanut gallery.

She means thank you, Mom, **Maple** whispered from the back, trying to damage control through the mental link.

Mom paused, spatula in hand. "Are you feeling okay, honey? You sound like you're narrating a nature documentary."

"I AM IN PEAK PHYSICAL CONDITION, BIRTH-GIVER. MY SYSTEMS ARE FUNCTIONING AT MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY."

Nova, please, begged **Cris**. *You're going to get us sent to therapy again.*

We LIKE therapy, **Nova** shot back. *Dr. Martinez has excellent snacks.*

DISQUALIFIED for excessive weirdness and making Mom do that face where she tries to decide if this is a phase or a medical emergency.

Event 2: Synchronized Co-Fronting

Team event. Big deal. High risk. The mental equivalent of a trust fall while juggling bowling pins.

Juniper the poet and Buzz the skater dude linked pinkies metaphorically and tried to co-front while Avery was in the back seat of Mom's Honda Civic on the way to school.

"Okay, okay," said **Juniper**, her voice like honey mixed with old books. "We speak in harmony. Soft tones. Metaphors that don't frighten the populace."

"Got it," said **Buzz**, adjusting his cap. "We are the wind, dude."

"No, you be the wind. I'm the stormcloud of longing and teenage ennui."

"Can I be the thunder?"

"Thunder is too aggressive for a Tuesday morning."

"What about light drizzle?"

"Acceptable."

They slipped into co-front like two people trying to squeeze into the same sweater. The sensation was disorienting, Juniper's flowery vocabulary mixing with Buzz's skater speak, creating a linguistic smoothie that tasted like confusion.

Unfortunately, they accidentally full-fronted during gym class when Mr. Peterson asked why Avery was just standing there during dodgeball.

They threw their arms wide and proclaimed in perfect unison, "BEHOLD, WE ARE WEATHER! THE STORM DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN MORTAL GAMES OF RUBBER SPHERE VIOLENCE!"

The entire class stopped mid-game. Jenny Morrison dropped her phone. Even the kids who were hiding behind the bleachers peeked out.

Coach Daniels, who had seen everything in thirty years of middle school gym, just sighed. "Avery, go sit in the nurse's office until you remember how to use regular words."

PARTIAL POINTS for style and dramatic flair, **POINTS DEDUCTED** for making Coach Peterson question his career choices.

Event 3: The Social Small-Talk Gauntlet

The rules were simple: one Tulpa, one conversation with a stranger, zero weirdness. Maximum difficulty level: middle school cafeteria.

Cris was nominated. Poor, sweet, Cris.

"I can do this," he muttered. "Social interaction is just probability applied with emotional variables."

That's exactly the problem, whispered **Nova**.

You've got this, buddy, encouraged **Maple**, wrapping him in a mental hug of encouragement.

Cris fronted with the determination of someone about to defuse a bomb made of small talk. A kid from history class walked by at lunch and casually mentioned, "Hey Avery, cool backpack. Is that the new Jansport?"

Cris's brain immediately went into overthink mode. *Cool backpack. Compliment detected. Appropriate response required. Engage social protocol alpha-seven.*

What came out was: "Thank you, it contains many secrets, some are edible, but I cannot confirm or deny the brand without consulting the manufacturer's documentation."

He then proceeded to drop the milk carton, which exploded like a dairy bomb across three lunch tables.

The random kid backed away slowly, probably adding "Avery might be an alien" to his mental notes.

All six Tulpas screamed internally. **Nova** made siren noises. **Buzz** said "Wipeout, dude." **Juniper** composed a haiku about social death. **Echo** held up a new sign: "MISSION FAILED SUCCESSFULLY."

Cris bailed back into the inner world sobbing, only to be immediately wrapped in Maple's signature burrito blanket and given a mug labeled "You Tried And That's Mathematically Beautiful."

CATASTROPHIC FAILURE but **FULL POINTS** for effort and entertaining the lunch crowd.

Echo's Pre Chapter Meme: The "It's my time to shine" meme

Event 4: The 'Do Not Overshare' Challenge

The ultimate test. Avery's crush—Sam Natalie from English class—was actually talking to them. Oh no. Oh no no no.

Sam had approached during study hall, sliding into the seat next to Avery with that casual confidence that made Juniper compose instant poetry and Nova want to set something on fire.

"Hey," Sam said, smiling that lopsided smile that had caused at least three minor internal world catastrophes. "Working on the Shakespeare essay?"

This was it. The moment. Someone needed to front and be normal. Just... regular normal. Human normal.

Juniper couldn't resist. She fronted like an elegant Victorian ghost with a PhD in Dramatic Overstatement and immediately whispered, "You smell like cinnamon grief and late October, like the last page of a book that made you cry in the best way."

Echo's Mid Chapter Meme: The "Oh God, why" meme

Sam blinked, clearly trying to process this information. "Uh. Thanks? That's... poetic?"

ABORT ABORT ABORT, screamed the entire mental peanut gallery.

Buzz tried to swap in to recover the situation but the fronting switch got tangled and he accidentally blurted, "What Juniper means is you're hot. Like, temperature hot. Not hot hot. Well, maybe hot hot but—OH COME ON, BRAIN."

Nova burst into applause from the back of the mind. *"THIS IS BETTER THAN REALITY TV."*

Cris short-circuited and started muttering mathematical equations as a coping mechanism.

And Sam... Sam just laughed. A real, genuine laugh. "You're really weird, Avery," she said, shaking her head with amusement before gathering her things to leave.

The rest of study hall was a blur of internal recriminations and a system-wide grounding from fronting privileges. The walk to next period was a solemn procession of shame.

DISASTER LEVEL: MAXIMUM. BONUS POINTS: ABSOLUTELY NONE.

\--- LATER ---

Avery was shuffling to their next class, head down, hoping to become one with the locker doors, when a voice stopped them.

"Avery. Hey."

It was Sam, leaning against a row of lockers with that same easy smile.

"Look, about before," Sam said, not unkindly. "I've never met anyone with so many different... moods. It's cool." She shrugged. "I like your poetic one the best, though."

And then she was gone, swallowed by the crowd, leaving a single, stunned system in her wake.

Avery stood frozen in the hallway, the world tilting on its axis.

The disaster was real. But somehow... it had also been a success.

FINAL DISASTER LEVEL: MAXIMUM. FINAL BONUS POINTS: UNEXPECTEDLY, YES.

Echo's Post Chapter Meme: The "Task Failed Successfully" Soldier Salute meme

Event 5: The Sibling Protection Protocol

New event, because life doesn't stop for mental Olympics.

Avery's eight-year-old sister Lucy came home crying because Madison Reeves said her drawing of their family looked "dumb and babyish." Lucy had included everyone, Mom, Dad, Avery, and even drew little thought bubbles coming from Avery's head with stick figures inside labeled "Avery's friends."

The inner world went dead silent.

Then **Nova** cracked her knuckles. "Oh, we're about to have WORDS with Madison Reeves."

"Violence is not the answer," said **Maple** firmly.

"But it's definitely a multiple choice option," added **Buzz**.

Juniper was already composing a dramatic monologue about the protection of innocent hearts. **Echo** held up a sign that said "NOBODY MAKES LUCY CRY."

But **Cris** quietly asked, "Can I front? Not for revenge. Just... Lucy needs a hug, and I give good hugs. I calculated the optimal hug duration and pressure for maximum comfort."

Permission granted.

He fronted softly, like stepping into warm water instead of diving off a cliff like Nova when she knows pancakes are being served. The body felt different when Cris was in control, steadier, more careful, like he was carrying something precious.

Lucy was curled up on her bed, clutching her art supplies.

"Hey, Luce," **Cris** said gently. "Heard Madison was being a buttface today."

Lucy giggled despite her tears. "Avery, you said buttface."

"Sometimes buttface is the most accurate scientific term available," **Cris** replied solemnly. "Can I see your drawing?"

Lucy showed him the picture. It was colorful and chaotic and absolutely perfect in the way eight-year-old art always is. The stick figures in Avery's thought bubble were holding hands and smiling.

"This is beautiful," **Cris** said, and meant it. "You drew my bow tie. And Nova's star pants. And Maple's bread sweater."

"You like it? Really?"

"Lucy, this is a masterpiece. Madison probably can't even draw stick figures this good. She's just jealous because her family drawings probably look like sad potatoes."

Lucy burst into giggles and hugged him tight. "I love you, Avery. All of you."

Later that night, back in the inner world, the scoreboard lit up with golden letters.

CRIS WINS PLATINUM WITH SPARKLES

Best Event: Being Gentle When It Matters

Event 6: The Existential Crisis Relay

Wednesday brought a new challenge: Philosophy class discussion about the nature of consciousness.

"So," said Mr. Brennan, clearly enjoying himself, "who can tell me what it means to truly 'know thyself'?"

Oh no, thought everyone simultaneously.

The class sat in that special kind of teenage silence that screams "please don't call on me."

"Avery? You always have interesting perspectives."

Six Tulpas looked at each other in the inner world.

"I'll take this one," said **Echo**, speaking for the first time in weeks. "Been thinking about it."

Echo fronted with the quiet confidence of someone who'd been observing everything. The sensation was different from the others—like settling into a comfortable chair that fits perfectly.

"Well," **Echo** said carefully, "I think knowing yourself isn't about having one consistent identity. Maybe it's about understanding all the different parts of who you are and how they work together. Like... like a jazz band where everyone plays different instruments but they're all part of the same song."

The class actually listened. Mr. Brennan nodded thoughtfully.

"Interesting. Can you elaborate?"

"Sometimes the trumpet needs to be loud and bold. Sometimes the piano needs to be soft and comforting. Sometimes the drums need to keep everyone on beat. They're all different, but they're all part of the same music."

Jenny Morrison raised her hand. "That's actually really beautiful, Avery."

Echo smiled—a real, genuine smile that reached their shared eyes.

PHILOSOPHICAL VICTORY and **BONUS POINTS** for making middle school philosophy actually meaningful.

Event 7: The Parent-Teacher Conference Survival Horror

The ultimate boss battle: Mom and Dad meeting with teachers while the Tulpas tried to influence the conversation from the passenger seat.

Mrs. Thompson from English was praising Avery's "unique voice" in creative writing.

That's me! preened Juniper.

Mr. Peterson mentioned improved problem-solving skills in math.

I helped with that! said **Cris** proudly.

But then came the concern: "Avery seems to have... multiple distinct personality traits that emerge in different situations. Sometimes she's very energetic and outgoing, other times she's quiet and analytical. The shifts can be quite dramatic."

The inner world held its breath.

Mom and Dad exchanged a look. "We've noticed that too," said Dad. "Should we be concerned?"


This is it, whispered **Nova**. *This is how we get discovered.*

Or, said **Maple** quietly, *this is how we get accepted.*

Avery took gentle control and said, "I think... I think everyone has different parts of themselves that come out in different situations. Like, **Nova** comes out when I need courage, and **Maple** comes out when someone needs comfort, and **Cris** comes out when I need to think carefully about something. They're all me, just... different aspects."

"That's actually quite mature," said Mrs. Thompson. "Self-awareness is rare in teenagers."

SUCCESSFUL STEALTH MISSION with **BONUS POINTS** for accidentally teaching adults about internal diversity.

 Final Event: The Family Game Night Championship

Saturday night. Monopoly. The ultimate test of internal cooperation and external sanity.

"I'll handle the money management," said **Cris**, front-switching smoothly.

"I'll do the negotiations," added **Nova**, co-fronting like a caffeinated diplomat.

"And I'll make sure we don't flip the board when Lucy inevitably gets Boardwalk and Park Place," said **Maple**, monitoring from the background.

Two hours later, they'd successfully:

- Helped Lucy count her money without making her feel dumb
- Made Dad laugh so hard he snorted soda
- Built a hotel empire that would make Trump jealous
- Not had a single public identity crisis

"Avery, you're different lately," said Mom during cleanup. "More... I don't know. More yourself, if that makes sense."

"It makes perfect sense," said **Echo**, fronting just long enough to hug her.

Because that was the thing about the Fronting Olympics. It wasn't about winning or losing or being normal.

It was about being wonderfully, weirdly, completely themselves.

Epilogue: The Scoreboard of Life

The next morning, the whiteboard in the mind room had been decorated with glitter (Nova's idea) and motivational quotes (Juniper's contribution) and a perfectly calculated schedule for optimal fronting efficiency (Cris, obviously).

NEW EVENTS COMING SOON:

- Competitive Empathy Olympics
- The Homework Relay of Doom
- Advanced Social Media Navigation (Expert Level)
- The "Explaining Tulpamancy to Grandma" Ultimate Challenge
- Synchronized Daydreaming Championships
- The Great Ice Cream Flavor Democracy Debate

But at the top, in Echo's neat handwriting, was a new rule:

"REMEMBER: WE'RE NOT TRYING TO BE NORMAL. WE'RE TRYING TO BE US."

Avery, surrounded by the six voices that made up her weird, wonderful, perfectly imperfect self, grinned and added her own note:

"GAME ON."

End of Season One. Stay tuned for more adventures in the beautiful chaos of being multiply minded in a singlet world.

Final Score: **EVERYONE WINS BECAUSE THAT'S HOW FAMILY WORKS** ✨