

Another Hannah

The anticipated email has arrived: the Math, Science, and Technology Summer Residential Governor's School's admission letter. The Math, Science, and Technology Summer Residential Governor's School Program is a Virginia state-wide competition where select students excelling in STEM are given a chance to spend one month at a Virginia college and experience a pseudo-college life. My mouse hovered over the email in dread. I held my breath and closed my eyes as if I were jumping into a pool. Then, opening my eyes once again, I saw the acceptance. My internal functions were accelerating, but they quickly began failing soon after. I, an introvert, would have to make friends within the first week before cliques form or spend one month outcasted.

Upon arrival, everyone exuded confidence and gave off an aura of intelligence. I went through the same application process, but compared to the other teenagers, I felt like a country bumpkin in the city. Still, I was determined to make a friend within the first week. Enter Hannah, the random girl who sat across from me at the dining table on the second day. We shared the same name, ethnicity, and age. We played the same sport and enjoyed the same hobbies and interests; so many 'sames.' Did I find my twin? During the month, we became inseparable. Every morning was a new debate about which K-pop idol was most attractive. Hearing her reasonings made me laugh till my stomach hurt. Every

afternoon was gaming sessions in our dorms or silently studying for the SATs in the lounge while 'How to Train Your Dragon,' her favorite movie, played in the background. Every evening we would be annoyed by the 9 PM curfew cutting our time together short; despite having spent the whole day together. Seeing us apart was as elusive as the Bigfoot. We were "The Hannahs." Our inseparability made people assume we had known each other long before the residency. When the residency was over, we bawled endlessly and embraced for five whole minutes. I did not want to let go.

Returning to my friends at home, I realized how much I had lowered my standards for what I define as "friend." My high school is competitive. Friends are academic rivals that occasionally manipulate friends to bring about their downfall. To me, this was an average teenage friendship. I was ignorant and thought all it took was similar hobbies and shared experiences to be a friend.

Hannah was my eye-opener. She once said, "I love our friendship. The empty silences aren't awkward, and I never feel pressured to fill the awkward silence with menial conversation." Our friendship became my new definition of a healthy teenage friendship. It is a relationship free of hidden motives, filled with interdependence and myriads of conversations; even the empty silence was comforting. I learned: that a healthy teenage relationship is stress relieving, not stress-inducing, just because you share similar experiences. Genuinely enjoying their company is the epitome of a healthy teenage relationship.