

6PM  
Mahe submission

# My Life Looking Up

6:03

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Susan

8,800 words

**Summary:** End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.

no limitations before now

## CHAPTER ONE

"This is the first day of the rest of your life."

That's a saying on the poster on my cousin Jill's bedroom wall. She's a sophomore in high school and into yoga; so she knows what it all means.

I think people say that when they are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime or when they do something never done before. Well that's me, Hannah Richards, soon to be graduate of Parkwood School, ready to start the first day of the rest of my life.

Right now I am lying in bed staring at my alarm clock. It's an old fashioned clock that my great grandma Millie had. It's got a regular dial and it winds up, no battery or plug. When GG Millie died last year I asked Dad if I could have it. That made him not so sad.

"Tick, Tick, Tick". The sun is streaming through my bedroom window, and I am wide awake but I refuse to get up before the alarm rings. That's a teenage thing and I can't wait to be a teenager so I'm practicing. (like my Dad says)

"Tick, Tick, Tick". Just a little more till my alarm goes off at 7:00 AM. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, "RING". "Yes! I know it's going to ring, but I can't help screaming "Yes!"; as I jump from

**Comment [s1]:** I'm not sure you should start your story with a common expression. Come up with something unique. You could even start with "Right now I'm lying in bed..." etc

**Comment [s2]:** You can keep the semi-colon if you get rid of "so". Otherwise, change it to a comma. You need a complete sentence on both sides of a semi-colon. I love semi-colons! ☺

**Comment [s3]:** When you edit, go back and change to contractions throughout (for the most part) to make your language more conversational.

**Comment [s4]:** good

**Formatted:** Small caps

good voice

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

under my covers and dance out of my room and into the hallway. Surprisingly, I'm not tired at all. This is the day that is going to be the best ever.

"My gosh, Hannah, shut it, ~~it's~~ It's too early." ~~Mumbles-my~~ my brother Jack ~~mumbles,~~ ~~His~~ ~~his~~ eyes are half-half-closed, and he drags himself into the bathroom. I cut him off ~~as he heads for the bathroom,~~ ~~race in front and practically slam the door in his face.~~

"Hey, no fair, I was here first," ~~he yells, as I slam the door.~~ Mom, Mom!"

I laugh. Jack may be a head taller than me, but I'm too good at scooting in front and getting what I need without being seen.

As I look in the mirror, my mouth foaming from toothpaste, I say to my reflection, "the best day of the whole school year."

Better than the Friday before a holiday break.

Better than having a surprise assembly instead of a social studies test.

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Today is the ~~end~~ End of Of T the ~~year~~ Year field trip.

Not just any field trip, like to an inside, smelly museum, or the house built in the 1800's, where the people wear old time clothes and cook over a wood stove. ~~No, not so fun.~~

This is the field trip ~~we all have~~ we've all been waiting for since the start of ~~this~~ 5th grade. This is why I've been on my best behavior at school, did extra help for the teacher, and got tons of "good job" points.

The graduating 5th grade class of Parkwood School, of which I am a proud member, is going to the Big Kahuna Amusement Park. The best amusement park ever made, with all kinds of rides; scary rides, fund rides, even rides where you get so dizzy you throw up. YOLO!

Comment [s5]: Why, she won't be able to go if she wasn't good?

Comment [s6]: Doesn't really sound like the voice of a fifth-grader

you mean because Allison likes your sandwich?

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

I race back to my bedroom, almost knocking over my sisters Hailey and Jen on their way to breakfast. They share a room at the end of the hall. Hailey is in first grade, and Jen     , she's really Jennifer, but we all call her Jen     , is graduating from preschool next week. They are such a pain; they fight all the time. Mom and Dad think by sticking them together in one room, ~~they will!!~~ stop picking at each other and learn to get along. ~~They're such babies. I am~~ But I'm so over their whining. I'll be in middle school next year and ~~will have no time~~ won't have any time to break up their "raspberry fights", as Mom calls them.

Well, enough about them. I've got to get dressed and be ready for Amanda's ~~Mom-mom~~ to pick me up. We have to get to school by 7:30 so the bus can take up to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park. Just saying those words makes me giggle.

"Take a deep breath. Calm down, Hannah," I tell myself. I try that yoga breathing my cousin Jill showed me. Breathe in your nose; breathe out your mouth with a whistle sound, slowly, slowly. Hey, it's working. ✓

"Oh, wait, where's my pants? Like, I'm getting frantic. My new pants that Mom was supposed to hem! Oh, My, Gosh. Is that them? Great. The tag is still on. They have to be washed before you hem them, Mother." Says Hannah. She holds up the pants and the bottoms of the pant legs bunch on the floor. "And they're a short! Aagh!"

"Mom, how could you ~~??~~" Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. "You promised. You said you'd hem them so I could wear them on the trip." She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says "we'll have to talk about this later." "I can't be late."

Hannah goes through her drawers, throwing clothes on the floor to look for the right pants to wear. "Thank you, Thank you. Not the best pants, but they're clean. Well, at least you did my wash, Mother." Hannah quickly pulls on her leggings.

> whose is she who's she's talking to her mother? I think she's talking to herself but kind of confusing

Comment [s7]: Break this up into Hannah said, mom said. This is kind of confusing.

with point of view

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

"Breathe Hannah, Breathe." I check myself in my full length mirror. "Outfit. Check; No thanks to you, Mom. Hair, check. Am I ready to be whipped around by the biggest and scariest ride? Check, check, and check."

Hannah goes-rifles through her small back pack. "I'm carrying everything I need for today. I have my hairbrush, lip gloss". "Oh, my gosh, Mom." Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out two2 packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall. "Oh, my gosh, Mom." "I'm not a baby. That's right, Mom. Yeah, I know I've got to have tissues on me no matter what. You never know when you're going to need to blow your nose, or end up in a bathroom with no toilet paper," says Hannah with a sigh. "Is that all she thinks about? Yes," she says to her reflection in the full length mirror.

Deep breath. "I've got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. I know my phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best and I love pretending I'm a famous photographer. Totes." Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. "Now I'm just babbling."

Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. "Gotta go!" and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. "I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two", she says as she "sticks" the landing.

CHAPTER TWO

"Hey, hey, hey"; says Mom. "Where are you off to so early?"

Dad is reading the paper at the table, and I can hear him moaning about his baseball team.

"You're so right."; she-Mom says as she turns her head back to the kitchen. We both smile and roll our eyes. Mom told me she could care less about baseball stuff when we had one

be careful on interview  
how long it goes  
on - don't give  
want to love reads  
during a  
scene

Comment [s8]: Maybe cut down on how many times this is said.

★ Comment [s9]: Up to here, Hannah's getting ready, but nothing is really happening. I like the beginning with the clock, but honestly don't think you need the rest of it. She can flash back to wanting to wear something else by thinking about on the bus when she glances down at her clothing

Comment [s10]: You can really start the story here. Maybe the first line can be, "Today?" my mo screeches. Then Hannah answers.

Comment [s11]: Right about what?

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

of those Mother-Daughter times she likes to have. But she loves dad...blah, blah, blah. Really, during those talks, she's just picking my brain for info about my friends.

Comment [s12]: She thinks this, even though she's ten?

"Amanda's Mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late." ~~I blurt out in one breath.~~

"Oh, you mean it's today?" "Already?" "Ok, I'll get your lunch from the fridge." Her voice trails off as she heads back to the kitchen.

Comment [s13]: I'm confused as to where the last couple of paragraphs took place. Just go into the kitchen.

I follow her into the kitchen, and see Dad and Jack engrossed in yesterday's box scores.

Comment [s14]: Unnecessary-just state what's going on without saying "I see" or "and see" etc.

Hailey and Jen are eating breakfast ~~are and~~ fighting over the cereal box. As usual. "Let me see it." "Let go." "Mom, she won't let it go." I just shake my head. They poke at each other. I am so done with this.

Comment [s15]: Is this setup for something that's going to happen, her being sick of her family? Why is Hannah "so done with this"? What would she prefer? Try to draw a contrast so that we understand why it bothers her so much. It might annoy her, but to say she's done with this-I don't understand why. Is Hannah expected to watch the and deal with them on a regular basis? Does she have a friend whose life seems better because she doesn't have siblings?

"No, Mom, I don't need lunch. The school gives us a lunch ticket so we can eat at the Park." It was all on the paper they gave us. I put it on the fridge.

"You're not going to eat that greasy excuse for nourishment, Hannah," lectures Mom. "I already made your lunch. ~~I~~ Take it. It's your favorite wrap, sprouts and tofu."

Comment [s16]: Taking too long to answer her mother. Have her say that first. By the time I got here, I forgot why Hannah was saying that.

"Oh Mom, not today." ~~I~~ I mouth the words ~~say~~, under my breath.

she says them out loud - o thank

"What was that Hon?" ~~says Mom~~ Mom says, in a calmer voice. She hands me a bag.

her mother wouldn't have heard her

~~And~~ I put a few napkins in there too. Just in case."

Just in case what? My friends see my lunch and puke, too. ~~I~~ I never know what she means by ~~that~~; "Just in case."

Mom keeps smiling at me, ~~and it's~~ It's making me feel like I should ~~say something~~. ~~Is ask~~ if there's a booger hanging out my nose? ~~Just~~ then I hear the beep, beep. Saved by the car horn.

Comment [s17]: Watch usage of "just"

"See you." I ~~call back~~ yell, as I run down the front stairs.



MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

“Hannah, sweetie, what time will you be back?” Calls Mom still smiling at me.

Comment [s18]: Can you see your mother at this point?

“It’s on the school notice on the fridge.” I yell as I race down the front steps.

You’ve done a good job in setting this up so that we learn that Hannah is essentially tired of her family (or I think that’s what you’ve done). However, I think you need to start your story where the story actually starts. I’m guessing that’s either at the park itself, or on the bus ride there. I think you can work in the relationship with her parents and siblings into conversations she has with her friends (Can you believe my mother actually made me take this disgusting lunch AGAIN? “Just because” Then she imitates her mother. Then a story about her siblings to show how much they annoy her. She sees what the other girls are wearing and remembers that her mother’s too busy working to be able to hem her new pants, pants that are like all the other girls (if that’s what you’re going for). But this can all be woven into the action. Give it a try and see what happens with your story.

Thanks,

Susan

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Ed

**Summary:** End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes <sup>she</sup> can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.

- DON'T make any mechanical or grammar changes! FIRST get it all all down + capture the energy!

open any novel + see how dialogue works

CHAPTER ONE

"This is the first day of the rest of your life."

Fun energy!

That's a saying on the poster on my cousin Jill's bedroom wall. She's a sophomore in high school and into yoga, so she knows what it all means.

I think people say that when they are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime or when they do something <sup>anytime</sup> never done before. Well that's me, Hannah Richards, soon to be graduate of Parkwood School, ready to start the first day of the rest of my life.

Right now I am lying in bed staring at my alarm clock. It's an old fashioned clock that my great grandma Millie had. It's got a regular dial and it winds up, no battery or plug. When GG Millie died last year I asked Dad if I could have it. That made him not so sad.

warning! agents don't like the "winds up" opens!

"Tick, Tick, Tick". The sun is streaming through my bedroom window and I am wide awake but I refuse to get up before the alarm rings. That's a teenage thing and I can't wait to be a teenager so I'm practicing. (like my Dad says)

How does she know

"Tick, Tick, Tick". Just a little more till my alarm goes off at 7:00 am. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, "RING". "Yes! I know it's going to ring but I can't help screaming Yes!" as I jump from under

Is she saying this?

Is she saying this?

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- I wonder how much of this is relevant to the rest of the story, if it all takes place at an amusement park

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

my covers and dance out of my room and into the hallway. Surprisingly I'm not tired at all. This is the day that is going to be the best ever.

"My gosh, Hannah, shut it, it's too early!" Mumbles my brother Jack. His eyes are half-closed and he drags himself into the bathroom. I cut him off, race in front and practically slam the door in his face.

"Hey, no fair, I was here first. Mom, Mom!" I laugh. Jack <sup>might</sup> be a head taller than me but I'm too good at scooting in front and getting what I need without being seen.

As I look in the mirror, my mouth foaming from toothpaste, I say to my reflection, "the best day of the whole school year."

Better than the Friday before a holiday break.

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Today is the end of the year field trip.

Not just any field trip like to an inside, smelly museum, or <sup>some</sup> the house built in the 1800's, where the people wear old time clothes and cook over a wood stove. [No, not so fun.]

This is the field trip we all have been waiting for since the start of ~~this~~ 5th grade. This is why I've been on my best behavior at school, did extra help for the teacher and got tons of "good job" points.

The graduating 5th grade class of Parkwood School, of which I am a proud member, is going to the Big Kahuna Amusement Park. The best amusement park ever made, with all kinds of rides, scary rides, <sup>and</sup> fun rides, even rides where you get so dizzy you throw up. YOLO!



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Well, enough about them. I've got to get dressed and be ready for Amanda's Mom to pick me up. We have to get to school by 7:30 so the bus can take us to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park. Just saying those words makes me giggle.

"Take a deep breath. Calm down, Hannah," I tell myself. I try that yoga breathing my cousin Jill showed me. Breathe in your nose; breathe out your mouth with a whistle sound, slowly, slowly. Hey, it's working.

*italics* "Oh, wait, where's my pants? Like, I'm getting frantic. My new pants that Mom was supposed to hem! Oh, My, Gosh. Is that them. Great. The tag is still on. They have to be washed before you hem them, Mother." *Says Hannah*. She holds up the pants and the bottoms of the pant legs bunch on the floor. "And they're short! Aagh!" *I shew mother actually hem?*

"Mom, how could you?" Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. "You promised. You said you'd hem them so I could wear them on the trip." She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says "we'll have to talk about this later." "I can't be late."

Hannah goes through her drawers, throwing clothes on the floor to look for the right pants to wear. "Thank you, Thank you. Not the best pants, but they're clean. Well, at least you did my wash, Mother." Hannah quickly pulls on her leggings.

redo in 1st person

What Lapper had? Switch from 1st person to third person? loses energy

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Hannah goes through her small back pack. “I’m carrying everything I need for today. I have my hairbrush, lip gloss”. “Oh, my gosh, Mom.” Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out <sup>two</sup> packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall. “I’m not a baby. That’s right, Mom. Yeah, I know I’ve got to have tissues on me no matter what. You never know when you’re going to need to blow your nose, or end up in a bathroom with no toilet paper,” says Hannah with a sigh. “Is that all she thinks about? Yes,” she says to her reflection in the full length mirror.

Deep breath. “I’ve got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. I know my phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best and I love pretending I’m a famous photographer. Totes.” Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. “Now I’m just babbling.”

Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. “Gotta go!” and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. “I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two”, she says as she “sticks” the landing.

CHAPTER TWO

“Hey, hey, hey”, says Mom. “Where are you off to so early?”

Dad is reading the paper at the table and I can hear him moaning about his baseball team.

“You’re so right”, she says as she turns her head back to the kitchen. We both smile and roll our eyes. Mom told me she could care less about baseball stuff when we had one of those Mother-

back to 1st para

red as 1st para

get rid of the reflections

not

re

POV

mom

kitchen

it

during

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Daughter times she likes to have. But she loves dad... blah, blah, blah. Really, during those talks, she's just picking my brain for info about my friends.

"Amanda's Mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late," I blurt out in one breath.

"Oh, you mean it's today?" "Already?" "Ok, I'll get your lunch from the fridge." Her voice trails off as she heads back to the kitchen.

I follow her into the kitchen and see Dad and Jack engrossed in yesterday's box scores.

POV  
Hailey and Jen are eating breakfast <sup>and</sup> fighting over the cereal box. As usual. "Let me see it." "Let go." "Mom she won't let it go." I just shake my head. They poke at each other. I am so done with this.

"No, Mom, I don't need lunch. The school gives us a lunch ticket so we can eat at the Park." It was all on the paper they gave us. I put it on the fridge. *does she say this?*

"You're not going to eat that greasy excuse for nourishment, Hannah," lectures Mom. "I already made your lunch, take it. It's your favorite wrap, sprouts and tofu."

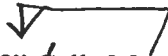
"Oh Mom, not today." I mouth the words.

"What was that Hon?" says Mom in a calmer voice. She hands me a bag. "And I put a few napkins in there too. Just in case."

Just in case what? My friends see my lunch and puke, too. I never know what she means by that. "Just in case."

Mom keeps smiling at me and it's making me feel like I should say something. Is there a booger hanging out my nose? Just then I hear the beep, beep. Saved by the car horn. "See you," I call back as I run down the front stairs.

**MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY**

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“It’s on the school notice on the fridge.”  I yell as I race down the front steps.

Jennifer S. Brown

*Summary: End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.*

CHAPTER ONE

"This is the first day of the rest of your life."

Comment [1]: Isn't it "Today is the first day...?"

That's a saying on the poster on my cousin Jill's bedroom wall. She's a sophomore in high school and into yoga, so she knows what it all means.

Comment [2]: What the statement means? Or life? Maybe a little clearer here.

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I think people say that when they are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime or when they do something never done before. Well that's me, Hannah Richards, soon to be graduate of Parkwood School, ready to start the first day of the rest of my life.

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Right now I am lying in bed staring at my alarm clock. It's an old fashioned clock that my great grandma Millie had. It's got a regular dial and it winds up, no battery or plug. When GG Millie died last year I asked Dad if I could have it. That made him not so sad.

Comment [3]: This feels a little unclear. I get what you mean, but I'm not sure it'll be clear for a younger audience. Maybe make it more positive or spell it out a little more: "That I wanted something of hers made him a little less sad" or "He was pleased I wanted a keepsake of hers."

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Comment [4]: Nice line!

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"Tick, tick, tick." The sun is streaming through my bedroom window and I am wide awake but I refuse to get up before the alarm rings. That's a teenage thing and I can't wait to be a teenager so I'm practicing (like my dad says) *not necessary*

"Tick, tick, tick." Just a little more till my alarm goes off at 7:00 a.m. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, RING."



MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

I know it's going to ring but I can't help screaming *Yes!*, as I jump up from under my covers and dance out of my room and into the hallway. Surprisingly I'm not tired at all. This is the day that is going to be the best ever.

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"Hey, no fair, I was here first. Mom, Mom!"

Comment [5]: An attribution tag will make this clearer.

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As I look in the mirror, my mouth foaming from toothpaste, I say to my reflection, "The best day of the whole school year."

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Comment [6]: Why does trading sandwiches prove they're switched from birth?

Today is the end-of-the-year field trip.

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Not just any field trip like to an inside, smelly museum or a house built in the 1800s, where the people wear old-time clothes and cook over a wood stove. No, not so fun.

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Comment [7]: More kid like? "So not fun!"

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Comment [8]: Cliché characters

Comment [9]: This is all pretty trite.

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"Take a deep breath. Calm down, Hannah," I tell myself. I try that yoga breathing my cousin Jill showed me. Breathe in your nose; breathe out your mouth with a whistle sound, slowly, slowly. Hey, it's working.

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Comment [10]: Where is this taking place? Is she talking to herself or her mother? Need to place this more definitively.

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Comment [11]: This dialogue doesn't feel realistic.

Comment [12]: You just switched from first person to third person.

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"Mom, how could you." Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. "You promised. You said you'd hem them so I could wear them on the trip." She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says, "We'll have to talk about this later. I can't be late."

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Hannah goes through her small back pack. "I'm carrying everything I need for today. I have my hairbrush, lip gloss."

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"Oh, my gosh, Mom." Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out two packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall. "I'm not a baby. That's right, Mom. Yeah, I know I've got to have tissues on me no matter what. You never know when you're going to need to blow your nose, or end up in a bathroom with no toilet paper," says Hannah with a sigh. "Is that all she thinks about? Yes," she says to her reflection in the full length mirror.

Deleted: 2

Comment [13]: I don't understand these conversations with herself (I get now that she's talking to herself). Doesn't feel real and none of this adds to the story. It really slows down your beginning.

Deep breath. "I've got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. I know my phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best and I love pretending I'm a famous photographer. Totes." Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. "Now I'm just babbling."

Comment [14]: Telling us so much! Show us!

Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. "Gotta go!" and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. "I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two," she says as she "sticks" the landing.

Comment [15]: This does not feel like something a kid would say to herself.

Deleted: .

CHAPTER TWO

"Hey, hey, hey," says Mom. "Where are you off to so early?"

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MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Dad is reading the paper at the table and I can hear him moaning about his baseball team.

"You're so right," she says as she turns her head back to the kitchen. We both smile and roll our eyes. Mom told me she couldn't care less about baseball stuff when we had one of those Mother-Daughter times she likes to have. But she loves Dad...blah, blah, blah. Really, during those talks, she's just picking my brain for info about my friends.

Comment [16]: About what?

Deleted: ,

Deleted: dad

"Amanda's mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late." I blurt it all out in one breath.

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"Oh, you mean it's today? Already? Ok, I'll get your lunch from the fridge." Her voice trails off as she heads back to the kitchen.

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I follow her into the kitchen and see Dad and Jack engrossed in yesterday's box scores.

Hailey and Jen are eating breakfast are fighting over the cereal box. As usual. "Let me see it." "Let go." "Mom she won't let it go." I just shake my head. They poke at each other. I am so done with this.

"No, Mom, I don't need lunch. The school gives us a lunch ticket so we can eat at the park." It was all on the paper they gave us. I put it on the fridge.

"You're not going to eat that greasy excuse for nourishment, Hannah," lectures Mom. "I already made your lunch, take it. It's your favorite wrap, sprouts, and tofu."

"Oh, Mom, not today." I mouth the words.

"What was that, hon?" says Mom in a calmer voice. She hands me a bag. "And I put a few napkins in there to. Just in case."

Just in case what? My friends see my lunch and puke, too. I never know what she means by that. "Just in case."

Deleted: ;

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Mom keeps smiling at me and it's making me feel like I should say something. Is there a booger hanging out my nose? Just then I hear the beep, beep. Saved by the car horn. "See you." I call back as I run down the front stairs.

"Hannah, sweetie, what time will you be back?" calls Mom still smiling at me.

Deleted: C

"It's on the school notice on the fridge," I yell as I race down the front steps.

Hi Lesley,

Let me start by saying that Hannah is spunky, likable character. A little silly, a little thoughtful, and very 5<sup>th</sup> grade appropriate.

I've read quite a bit of middle grade fiction as my daughter is a middle grade reader, so I'm familiar with the genre. Middle grade fiction can have fairly sophisticated stories, and this one is a little simple. My fear for this story is that there's nothing really at stake. Hannah's too short for some rides. But what is the driving force? Why would being too short make her question reality? There needs to be a stronger catalyst that not being tall enough for rides to push the story forward. "Girl is too short to ride amusement park rides and gets upset" isn't enough to capture a reader. I suggest looking at the logline of other middle grade books and thinking about what yours is (for instance, those on Kirkus's best MG fiction of last year: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/issue/best-of-2015/section/middle-grade/>). From there, you can shape your story.

A great deal of time is spent on the set-up. It has a chaotic feel to it as Hannah bounces all over the place, talking to herself, but nothing actually happens. I'm not sure what this adds to the story. You can get the facts in here later and get right to the action. Start with something more gripping than waking up and starting her day. Some of the writing is quite clever, but unfortunately we all have to kill our darlings sometimes. If you start with her friends, perhaps on the bus or even already at the park, we'll be more drawn into the story. It's easy enough to slip in the other necessary facts as you go (for instance, if Hannah throws out her sandwich because her mother always makes her healthy stuff or if she eats it reluctantly because her mom didn't want her eating the junk food, we not only get the detail about her mom being a health nut, but we also see whether Hannah is rebellious or a dutiful kid).

In the middle of this piece, you switch from first person to third person. Either is okay, but pick one and stick with it. Also, brush up on punctuation and capitalization. It may seem minor, but that stuff will matter to an editor.

Have fun rewriting this!

best,

Jennifer



JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

**Summary:** End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.

I was too short for many years.

question her reality?

CHAPTER ONE

"This is the first day of the rest of your life."

That's a saying on the poster on my cousin Jill's bedroom wall. She's a sophomore in high school and into yoga; so she knows what it all means.

Delete.

What? why?

I think people say that when they are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime or when they do something never done before. Well that's me, Hannah Richards, soon to be graduate of Parkwood School, ready to start the first day of the rest of my life.

Have Dad or Jack introduce Hannah in dialog

Right now I am lying in bed staring at my alarm clock. It's an old fashioned clock that my great grandma Millie had. It's got a regular dial and it winds up, no battery or plug. When GG Millie died last year I asked Dad if I could have it. That made him <sup>less</sup> not so sad.

"Tick, Tick, Tick". The sun is streaming through my bedroom window and I am wide awake but I refuse to get up before the alarm rings. <sup>My dad says I'm practicing</sup> ~~That's a teenage thing and I can't wait to be a teenager so I'm practicing. (like my Dad says)~~ ~~to be a teenager.~~

"Tick, Tick, Tick". Just a little more till my alarm goes off at 7:00 am. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, "RING". "Yes! I know it's going to ring but I can't help screaming Yes!, as I jump from under

JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

my covers and dance out of my room and into the hallway. Surprisingly I'm not tired at all. This is the day that is going to be the best ever.

age?  
older/younger  
they P  
in Julie

That's  
how you  
introduce  
her.

"My gosh, Hannah, shut it, it's too early." Mumbles my brother Jack. His eyes are half closed and he drags himself into the bathroom. I cut him off, race in front and practically slam the door in his face.

"Hey, no fair, I was here first. Mom, Mom". I laugh. Jack may be a head taller than me but I'm too good at scooting in front and getting what I need without being seen.

As I look in the mirror, my mouth foaming from toothpaste, I say to my reflection, "the best day of the whole school year."

Better than the Friday before a holiday break.

Better than having a surprise assembly instead of a social studies test.

Better than trading my leaky hummus and Gouda on sundried tomato wrap for Allison's homemade meatloaf sandwich. Oh, that's so good. (We must have been switched at birth.)

real  
kid

Today is the end of the year field trip.

Not just any field trip like to an inside, smelly museum or the house built in the 1800's, where the people wear old time clothes and cook over a wood stove. No, not so fun.

This is the field trip we all have been waiting for since the start of this 5th grade. This is why I've been on my best behavior at school, did extra help for the teacher and got tons of "good job" points.

The graduating 5th grade class of Parkwood School, of which I am a proud member, is going to the Big Kahuna Amusement Park. The best amusement park ever made, with all kinds of rides; scary rides, fun rides, even rides where you get so dizzy you throw up. YOLO!

too so court to  
mention  
like "en fleek"  
want stand the test  
of time.

JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

I race back to my bedroom almost knocking over my sisters Hailey and Jen on their way to breakfast. They share a room at the end of the hall. Hailey is in first grade and Jen, she's really Jennifer but we all call her Jen, is graduating from preschool next week. They are such a pain; they fight all the time. Mom and Dad think by sticking them together in one room they will stop picking at each other and learn to get along. They're such babies. I am so over their whining. I'll be in middle school next year and will have no time to break up their "raspberry fights", as Mom calls them.

We can assume.

Why?

Too many mentions of field trip and Big Kahuna

Well, enough about them. I've got to get dressed and be ready for Amanda's Mom to pick me up. We have to get to school by 7:30 so the bus can take up to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park. Just saying those words makes me giggle.

"Take a deep breath. Calm down, Hannah," I tell myself. I try that yoga breathing my cousin Jill showed me. Breathe in your nose; breathe out your mouth with a whistle sound, slowly, slowly. Hey, it's working.

"Oh, wait, where's my pants? Like, I'm getting frantic. My new pants that Mom was supposed to hem! Oh, My, Gosh. Is that them. Great. The tag is still on. They have to be washed before you hem them, Mother." Says Hannah. She holds up the pants and the bottoms of the pant legs bunch on the floor. "And they're a short! Aagh!"

are Mother vs Mom

"Mom, how could you?" Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. "You promised. You said you'd hem them so I could wear them on the trip." She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says, "we'll have to talk about this later." "I can't be late."

Different notes

Hannah goes through her drawers, throwing clothes on the floor to look for the right pants to wear. "Thank you, Thank you. Not the best pants, but they're clean. Well, at least you did my wash, Mother." Hannah quickly pulls on her leggings.

P.O. V. change!

JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

“Breathe Hannah, Breathe.” I check myself in my full length mirror. “Outfit. Check; No thanks to you, Mom. Hair, check. Am I ready to be whipped around by the biggest and scariest ride? Check, check, and check.”

*Why quotes?*  
Hannah goes through her small back pack. “I’m carrying everything I need for today. I have my hairbrush, lip gloss”. “Oh, my gosh, Mom.” Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out <sup>two</sup> packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall. “I’m not a baby. That’s right, Mom. Yeah, I know I’ve got to have tissues on me no matter what. You never know when you’re going to need to blow your nose, or end up in a bathroom with no toilet paper,” says Hannah with a sigh. “Is that all she thinks about? Yes,” she says to her <sup>fe</sup> reflection in the full length mirror.

*Cut.*

Deep breath. “I’ve got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. I know my phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best and I love pretending I’m a famous photographer. Totes.” Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. “Now I’m just babbling.”

*Delete* {  
Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. “Gotta go!” and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. “I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two”, she says as she “sticks” the landing.

CHAPTER TWO

“Hey, hey, hey”, says Mom. “Where are you off to so early?”

Dad is reading the paper at the table and I can hear him moaning about his baseball team. “You’re so right”, she says as she turns her head back to the kitchen. We both smile and roll our eyes. Mom told me she could care less about baseball stuff when we had one of those Mother-

*net*

JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Daughter times she likes to have. But she loves dad...blah, blah, blah. Really, during those talks, she's just picking my brain for info about my friends.

"Amanda's Mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late." I blurt out in one breath.

"Oh, you mean it's today?" "Already?" "Ok, I'll get your lunch from the fridge." Her voice trails off as she heads back to the kitchen.

I follow her into the kitchen and see Dad and Jack engrossed in yesterday's box scores.

Hailey and Jen are eating breakfast are fighting over the cereal box. As usual. "Let me see it." "Let go." "Mom she won't let it go." I just shake my head. They poke at each other. I am so done with this.

"No, Mom, I don't need lunch. The school gives us a lunch ticket so we can eat at the Park." It was all on the paper they gave us. I put it on the fridge.

"You're not going to eat that greasy excuse for nourishment, Hannah," lectures Mom. "I already made your lunch, take it. It's your favorite wrap, sprouts and tofu."

"Oh Mom, not today." I mouth the words.

"What was that Hon?" says Mom in a calmer voice. She hands me a bag. "And I put a few napkins in there to. Just in case."

Just in case what? My friends see my lunch and puke, too. I never know what she means by that; "Just in case."

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JULIE

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

"Hannah, ~~S~~<sup>S</sup>weetie, what time will you be back?" Calls Mom still smiling at me.

"It's on the school notice on the fridge." I yell as I race down the front steps.

ON THE BOTTOM OF PAGE THREE, YOU CHANGE POINT OF VIEW FROM FIRST PERSON SINGULAR TO THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR. BE CONSISTENT.

WHERE WOULD SHE STORE HER CELL PHONE AND A GOOD CAMERA WHEN SHE WENT ON STOMACH-LURCHING RIDES?

HAVE HER INTERACT MORE WITH DAD AND JACK - EVERYONE - AT HOME.

HAS CELL. CALL / TEXT BEST FRIEND.

I WRITE MIDDLE GRADE. I HAVE MIDDLE GRADERS AT HOME. I WANT TO EMPATHIZE WITH HANNAH.

DRAW THE READER IN WITH SCENES IN THE HOUSE AND AT THE AMUSEMENT PARK?  
INCLUDE DIALOGUE.

## MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

*Lesley*

*I'm probably not in a good position to critique a middle-grade novella, but I'm familiar with literary requirement. So, on to the comments—*

*There's probably nothing technically wrong with the writing, but I have some reservations.*

*The biggest stumbling block in early manuscripts is the real story begins way too late, the second or third chapter, to grab a reader's attention. Cuteness or quirky characters can't launch a plot. The plot has to do the heavy lifting. All the early family scenes and the awakening of a household seems pretty typical. The real story begins after this first chapter is over. All the action begins with the trip and the anticipation amongst her friends, probably on the bus. If you think in those terms, you'll see that this chapter isn't really necessary. Start with the plot already in motion. Maybe, you could begin the story on the bus or in the classroom before boarding the bus.*

*After all is said, this is your story and you'll write it the way you want to. It's the most difficult task for a writer is to demonstrate emotions and have the reader share in the emotions. It takes a master to accomplish this.*

*Good luck*

*Dave*

*You have a wonderful start  
Let the story take over—*

**Summary: End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.**

### CHAPTER ONE

"This is the first day of the rest of your life."

That's a saying on the poster on my cousin Jill's bedroom wall. She's a sophomore in high school and into yoga; so she knows what it all means.

I think people say that when they are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime or when they do something never done before. Well that's me, Hannah Richards, soon to be graduate of Parkwood (*Grammar*) School, ready to start the first day of the rest of my life.

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

*Clock*  
Right now I am lying in bed staring at my alarm clock. It's an old fashioned clock that my great grandma Millie had. It's got a regular dial and it winds up, no battery or plug. When GG Millie died last year I asked Dad if I could have it. That made him not so sad.

"Tick, Tick, Tick". The sun is streaming through my bedroom window and I am wide awake but I refuse to get up before the alarm rings. That's a teenage thing and I can't wait to be a teenager so I'm practicing. (like my Dad says)

"Tick, Tick, Tick". Just a little more till my alarm goes off at 7:00 am. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, "RING". "Yes! I know it's going to ring but I can't help screaming Yes!, as I jump from under my covers and dance out of my room and into the hallway. Surprisingly I'm not tired at all. This is the day that is going to be the best ever.

*Brother*  
"My gosh, Hannah, shut it, it's too early." Mumbles my brother Jack. His eyes are half closed and he drags himself into the bathroom. I cut him off, race in front and practically slam the door in his face.

*D*  
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MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

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MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

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*Pants* “Mom, how could you.” Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. “You promised. You said you’d hem them so I could wear them on the trip.” She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says “we’ll have to talk about this later.” “I can’t be late.”

*Tell students on p. 5* Hannah goes through her drawers, throwing clothes on the floor to look for the right pants to wear. “Thank you, Thank you. Not the best pants, but they’re clean. Well, at least you did my wash, Mother.” Hannah quickly pulls on her leggings.

“Breathe Hannah, Breathe.” I check myself in my full length mirror. “Outfit. Check; No thanks to you, Mom. Hair, check. Am I ready to be whipped around by the biggest and scariest ride? Check, check, and check.”

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*Camera* Deep breath. “I’ve got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. I know my phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best and I love pretending I’m a famous photographer. Totes.” Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. “Now I’m just babbling.”



## MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. "Gotta go!" and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. "I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two", she says as she "sticks" the landing.

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*START on the BUS* "Amanda's Mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late." I blurt out in one breath.

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**MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY**

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---

Jenn

## MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

*Summary: End of year 5th grade field trip to amusement park. Hannah has been looking forward to this trip forever. Gets to park and realizes can't go on any rides because she is too short. Realized she was short but that never stopped her from classroom success, friends, etc. Begins to question her reality, friendships, etc.*

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Commented [PHS IS1]: What is 'it'?

Commented [PHS IS2]: Would a 5<sup>th</sup> graders use this word?

Commented [PHS IS3]: Never start a story with an alarm clock or the character in bed starting their day.

## MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

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I race back to my bedroom almost knocking over my sisters Hailey and Jen on their way to breakfast. They share a room at the end of the hall. Hailey is in first grade and Jen, she's

Commented [PHS IS4]: Cute. You're story starts here. Everything before it is not needed.

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELLA: STORY BY LESLEY NIEMY

really Jennifer but we all call her Jen, is graduating from preschool next week. ~~They are such a pain.~~ They fight all the time. Mom and Dad think by sticking them together in one room they'll ~~will~~ stop picking at each other and learn to get along. They're such babies. I'm ~~am~~ so over their whining. I'll be in middle school next year and will have no time to break up their "raspberry fights", as Mom calls them.

Well, enough about them. I've got to get dressed and be ready for Amanda's Mom to pick me up. We have to get to school by 7:30 so the bus can take ~~us~~ to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park. Just saying those words makes me giggle.

"Take a deep breath. Calm down, Hannah," I tell myself. I try that yoga breathing my cousin Jill showed me. Breathe in your nose; breathe out your mouth with a whistle sound, slowly, slowly. Hey, it's working.

"Oh, wait, where's my pants? Like, I'm getting frantic. My new pants that Mom was supposed to hem! Oh, My, Gosh. Is that them? Great. The tag is still on. They have to be washed before you hem them, Mother." ~~Says Hannah I say. She~~ I hold up the pants and the bottoms of the pant legs bunch on the floor. "And they're a short! Aagh!"

"Mom, how could you?" Hannah hangs her head and shakes it back and forth. "You promised. You said you'd hem them so I could wear them on the trip." She looks in the mirror. Rolling her eyes, she says "we'll have to talk about this later. ~~I~~ I can't be late."

Hannah goes through her drawers, throwing clothes on the floor to look for ~~her favorite leggings~~ the right pants to wear. "Thank you, Thank you. Not the best pants for an amusement park, but they're clean. Well, at least you did my wash, Mother." Hannah ~~quickly~~ pulls on her leggings.

Commented [PHS IS5]: Where is she at this point? In the room?

Commented [PHS IS6]: You switched from first person to third person.

Commented [PHS IS7]: I'm confused.

Commented [PHS IS8]: What happened? Did the mother hem the pants too short? Or did they shrink in the wash? Or did the mother not hem them at all?

Commented [PHS IS9]: Who is she talking to? Is the mother in the room with her?

Commented [PHS IS10]: She calls her mother "Mother"? Not Mom?



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"Breathe Hannah, Breathe." I check myself in my full length mirror. "Outfit. Check; No thanks to you, Mom. Hair, check. Am I ready to be whipped around by the biggest and scariest ride? Check, check, and check."

Hannah rummages goes through her small back pack. "I have ~~in carrying~~ everything I need for today: ~~I have my hairbrush,~~ lip gloss." Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out 2 packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall. "Oh, my gosh, Mom." ~~Again, Hannah rolls her eyes as she takes out 2 packets of tissues her mom put in the backpack when they went to the mall.~~ "I'm not a baby. That's right, Mom. Yeah, I know I've got to have tissues on me no matter what. You never know when you're going to need to blow your nose, or end up in a bathroom with no toilet paper," says Hannah ~~says~~ with a sigh. "Is that all she thinks about? Yes," she says to her reflection in the full length mirror.

Deep breath. "I've got my cell phone and camera. All charged up. ~~Here now in~~ My phone has an awesome camera but my Christmas camera is the best. ~~and~~ I love pretending I'm a famous photographer. Totes." Hannah looks in the mirror again and shakes her head. "Now I'm just babbling."

Hannah checks the time on the alarm clock. "Gotta go!" and runs down the stairs, jumping the last three. "I am getting older. I used to only jump the last two", she says as she "sticks" the landing.

CHAPTER TWO

"Hey, hey, hey" ~~says~~ Mom ~~says~~. "Where are you off to so early?"

Dad is reading the paper at the table. ~~and I can hear him~~ He's moaning about his baseball team.

**Commented [PHS IS11]:** This is the third time she has looked in a mirror.

**Commented [PHS IS12]:** This makes her sound snooty and unlikeable.

**Commented [PHS IS13]:** Now she calls her Mom?

**Commented [PHS IS14]:** She's not very nice to her mother. You need the reader to like your main character and right now she isn't likable.

**Commented [PHS IS15]:** Again with the mirror.

**Commented [PHS IS16]:** Is she talking out loud to herself?

**Commented [PHS IS17]:** 5 times in the mirror

**Commented [PHS IS18]:** Who is she talking to? If the words are in quotes then she's saying it out loud. Maybe consider sticking with first person like you did in the first few paragraphs.

**Commented [PHS IS19]:** Is he actually moaning or does he actually say something?

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"You're so right," she says as she turns her head back to the kitchen.

We both smile and roll our eyes. Mom told me she could care less about baseball stuff when we had one of those ~~M~~other-~~D~~daughter times she likes to have. But she loves ~~d~~Dad...blah, blah, blah. Really, during those talks, she's just picking my brain for info about my friends.

Commented [PHS IS20]: What's her issue with her mother?

"Amanda's Mom is picking me up early so we can get to school on time because today is the 5th grade field trip to The Big Kahuna Amusement Park and I can't be late." I blurt out in one breath.

"Oh, ~~that's~~ you mean it's today?" "Already?" "Okay, I'll get your lunch from the fridge." Her voice trails off as she heads back to the kitchen.

Commented [PHS IS21]: When did she leave the kitchen?

I follow her into the kitchen, ~~and see~~ Dad and Jack ~~are~~ engrossed in yesterday's box scores.

Hailey and Jen are eating breakfast ~~and are~~ fighting over the cereal box. As usual.

"Let me see it."

"Let go."

"Mom, she won't let it go."

I just shake my head. They poke at each other. I'm ~~am~~ so done with this.

"No, Mom, I don't need lunch. The school gives us a lunch ticket so we can eat at the ~~P~~park." It was all on the paper they gave us. I put it on the fridge.

"You're not going to eat that greasy excuse for nourishment, Hannah," ~~lectures~~ Mom ~~says~~. "I already made your lunch, take it. It's your favorite wrap, sprouts and tofu."

"Oh. Mom, not today." I mouth the words.

Commented [PHS IS22]: Does this mean she doesn't say it out loud?

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“What was that, Hon?” ~~says Mom~~ ~~says in a calmer voice.~~ She hands me a bag. “And I put a few napkins in there too. Just in case.”

Just in case what? My friends see my lunch and puke, too. I never know what she means by ~~that~~: “Just in case.”

Mom keeps smiling at me, and it’s making me feel like I should say something. Is there a booger hanging out my nose? ~~Just then I hear the~~

~~Bleep, bBeep.~~

Saved by the car horn. “See you\_” I call back, as I run down the front stairs.

“Hannah, sweetie, what time will you be back?” ~~Calls Mom~~ ~~calls~~ ~~still smiling at me.~~

“It’s on the school notice on the fridge.” I yell as I race down the front steps.