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## Buddies

At my old school, everyone is required to have a “buddy”. A “buddy” is an older or younger student in the school that you see every month or two for a community building activity. The age of your buddy depends on your grade and what class your class is partnered with. If you are in an older grade than you would have a younger buddy, vice versa. In my case, I was the younger buddy so I got an older buddy.

I was in 4-5th grade and my buddy was an 8th grader. My buddy was very talkative. It seems like she never stopped talking to the people around her. When the teacher would clap their hands for our attention, she would try to look like a role model and look at me to see if I stopped talking. I would have to start talking in order to stop. I was such an introvert. I had a known status in my old school but it wasn't for being talkative. I'm like a ghost talking to new people. To my classmates, I was welcomed in every friend group and hung out with everyone. There was no way to classify me in a group, if you would I would most likely be with the guys.

The first time I met my buddy, it was slightly awkward but also extremely awkward. I can't tell if she felt awkward or I was just extremely awkward. We said hi and she would ask me to repeat myself since I was speaking so quietly. Honestly I really wasn't, everyone else was being too loud. Everytime she said that, I would want to crawl in a hole and just stay there. It just made me feel more awkward. I was never talkative to her so when she wasn't trying to get to know me, we sat in silence or she talked to her classmates around her.

As the school year went on, this was the year where our buddy schedule matched so well with our schedule that we spent so much time together. It wasn't common for this to happen. Even though we met more often than other classes, I still didn't talk to her. You would think meeting someone often would make you feel more comfortable with the person, I guess it doesn't work like that in my case. I continued to be awkward and watch her talk to her friends since I looked like I didn't put any effort in talking to her. What was I supposed to say? Oh how's high school applications? Did I mention I'm not a good conversationalist. I suck at starting conversations.

At the end of the year, my whole school would go out to a grassy park and play outdoor games all day, Play Day. It would be a two hour drive there and back. The school makes you partner up with your buddy class to conserve space on the bus. So in my perspective, I had to sit with my buddy for four hours today in an enclosed space. I really couldn't. I had to sit in the window seat so there was no possible escape since there was a window on one side and my buddy on the other. She definitely took advantage of the situation and talked to me most of the bus ride.

I won't say I was uncomfortable since we did meet up the whole year. It was new. I already realized there was no way out so I kind of had to talk. We talked most of the bus ride and when we weren't talking, I would look out the window hoping she would stop talking to me. Not in a rude way, just so the feeling in my stomach would go away. I was a nervous, awkward wreck. I would say we had good conversations. It was mostly a get-to-know someone conversation, you know? The drive back to school was quiet. She fell asleep when the bus started moving. I sat in my little corner enjoying the view the window had to offer me.

### **Artist Statement**

I felt like Noah really spoke about his social life and the restrictions of his social life. His advantages in being social is being able to speak multiple languages. Restrictions would be being colored and picking what he wanted to be identified as. It could have also been an advantage, depending on how you think about it. I wanted to write about my social life. It's practically nonexistent but there's a reason why it's nowhere to be found. Noah was forced to find his identity in ways I could not relate. He had to figure out what group he wanted to be associated with and stick with it. For example, he had to pick who to play with in the recess yard. He was put in a white kids classroom but played with the black/ colored kids during recess. He realized he didn't want to be in the white kids class and switched his class after many warnings from his counselor. This really lingered with me since he didn't want to be associated as a white kid. Feeding into the idea that in his black community, he was privileged, therefore different. He knew having a white dad didn't mean he had to live as a white person. He grew up so engulfed by his black culture that being white was just in his genes. Noah's writing style was very humorous. He wrote it to make you feel less pity for him. He didn't want you to cry or feel bad for him. It was to educate and tell his story. My story wasn't humorous, it was more embarrassing and a realization on why I don't have many real friends. I guess it could be funny on how you interpret it. I didn't want you to laugh but I can see why you would. I wanted to write something relatable. To really connect with the reader since we all probably had an awkward encounter that made you step out of your comfort zone. I decided to explain the general basics of my culture [my old school] in the first paragraph since you wouldn't get it if I didn't. As the story goes on, I reveal more about what you need to know about the culture. Our cultures brings us through different experiences. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. My culture definitely shaped me. If I didn't spend 9 years at my old school, I would not be the person I am today. Culture gives us experiences and experiences teach us.