

Name: Megan Ngo

Age: 12

## Missing Pieces:

Ms. Lane was reading a book when the door to her office swung open. Four sullen faced students trudged in.

She didn't let their glumness faze her positivity. "Welcome to the Counselor's Office!" she squealed. "I'm the counselor. How may I help you?" "Mrs. Hanson told us to see you," one boy grumbled. "She wants you to make us connect."

Ms. Lane scanned the group. She knew who everyone was. The Queen Bee, the Science Kid, the Sports Jock, and the Silent Guy. Of course, those weren't their actual titles, but with more than a thousand students in the school, it was difficult to know everyone's name.

"Let's get started then!" She chirped. "Now sit down." She ushered them to a circular table sitting in the corner of the office.

"What now?" Queen Bee asked after they were all sitting down.

"Now," Ms. Lane responded calmly, "you connect."

The students shared a glance with each other. "Listen lady," Sports Jock said, "I understand what you're trying to do, but it won't work. When Mrs. Hanson assigned us to work together on this science project for the science fair, we couldn't agree on anything! There is no way you can make us work together!" The rest of them nodded their heads.

"But you're agreeing on something now," Ms. Lane stated.

They stopped nodding.

Ms. Lane got up and grabbed a black drawstring bag that was sitting on her bookshelf. Smiling, she plopped the bag down onto the table. "This is a bag of puzzle pieces. There are four puzzles in this bag. It's your job to sort and complete them."

They looked at her in disbelief. "You want us to complete puzzles?" Science Kid said.

Ms. Lane nodded. "However long it takes. Then, when you're finished and become good teammates, I can pat myself on the back and give myself a jelly donut."

Moaning and grumbling, the students got to work. At first, conversation was nonexistent. But after an hour, she began to hear voices of confusion. "Where is it?"

"I bet he stole it!"

"Is everything okay?" Ms. Lane inquired.

Queen Bee stood up. "There are pieces missing!" On the table were three completed puzzles depicting a single color each. Blue, green, and yellow. Sure enough, each puzzle had exactly one missing piece.

Ms. Lane sighed. "Did you at least try to find them?"

The students nodded their heads vigorously in response.

"You still have one puzzle to go," she said. "Maybe the pieces will turn up later."

She watched as the students returned to the last puzzle. Whether they realized it or not, they were working as a team. Queen Bee and Science Kid worked on the border, while Silent Guy and Sports Jock looked for the other missing pieces.

Half an hour later, Science Kid let out a cry of anguish. "What's wrong?!" Ms. Lane yelped.

"The red one is missing a piece too!" Queen Bee said.

Ms. Lane sighed. "Guess I'll have to find new puzzles." Then, she jumbled up the puzzles and scooped the pieces back into the black drawstring bag.

The way the students' eyes widened in surprise was comical. "Hey!" Sports Jock said.

"You're free to leave," Ms. Lane said.

Science Kid looked at the clock. "We've been here for nearly two hours! Science class is already over and we don't have anything done for the fair! I really wanted to win!"

Queen Bee looked thoughtful. "You know what? We should meet at the library after school and work on it there."

"Remember," Ms. Lane said. "There is no I..."

"Please. Don't." Sports Jock begged.

"In TEAM!" Ms. Lane continued.

The kids groaned. "Just remember to work together, and you'll do great," She

added. "Because anything's possible when you-"

"Let's get out of here," Science Kid said.

His teammates nodded and he pushed the door open to leave. "Have a great day!" Ms. Lane sang as they left.

One week later, Ms. Lane opened up the weekly newspaper. The headline read: SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS. On the front page was a picture of Queen Bee, Science Kid, Sports Jock, and Silent Guy, all grinning as they held a first place trophy. Ms. Lane's eyes twinkled.

She opened the drawer to her desk. Inside, sat four puzzle pieces in red, blue, yellow, and green. Smiling, she patted herself on her back and bit into a jelly donut.