

“After the Movie”

Second Place Winner!

By: Tesia Hennessy, Age 15, South Carolina, USA

Description: A teen is frustrated that their parent doesn't accept them despite all they've done to try to conform.

Genre: Dramatic

I do work hard. Maybe not in the way you think, but I work hard. I work hard to be utterly ordinary. I work hard to get good grades, but to not be the top of my class. I work hard to be funny, but to not be known as “the funny friend.” I work hard to be sporty, but not too sporty, to be artsy but not too artsy, to be quirky but to make sure that my quirks are normal.

For example, I like yellow, the least liked color. I know everything there is to know about The Lord of the Rings, but only because - your words, not mine - I “went through a phase in middle school.

I wear normal clothes. Do my hair in a normal way. Have a normal sleeping schedule, have normal reactions - I laugh the appropriate amount at sit-coms. I cry the appropriate amount at dramas. I'm scared the appropriate amount at horrors, and I'm thrilled the appropriate amount at thrillers. I've calculated every move, gesture, emotion, facial expression, every minute detail to the “perfect normal” because all you ever wanted was a normal kid, but it's just not enough.

Because when we're at the movies, and it's too loud, I can't leave because “it's loud for everyone.” And I can't buy candy with my own money because “it's unfair” even though everyone else is eating popcorn that you bought for them, but I can't stand the texture of popcorn.

I'm sick of being normal for you. I am sick. At least, you think I'm sick.

And maybe I am, but I'm not going to pretend I'm normal anymore.

I'm tired of sacrificing my identity just to make your life a little more comfortable.

1-minute cut • approx. 118 spoken words