

G. Griffith  
Prof. Svay  
FIQWS - Outsider Narrative  
9/5/22

## **After All, What's Family For?**

I was in third grade. Eight years old and a huge ball of energy, I was unstoppable. At my school, we had lunch first and then recess after. There was a girl with multiple airborne allergies, so there was a separate lunch table for her. Every day, she would sit at this table with all the popular girls, and I would sit at the edge just so I could feel included. I never thought of myself as an outsider because I was blinded by my desperation and need for friends. One day while listening in on the popular girls' conversation during lunch, I heard something about a "family" they created. Anytime I would ask, they would dismiss me and try to talk more privately. Nevertheless, I persisted. In my constant nagging, they finally told me in recess that they made a family where each girl had a specific role. The leader of the group was the mom, another girl was her daughter, etc. As a kid, I loved role-playing and making up scenarios to escape the real world. I was that little girl who would read hundreds of books and pretend that I was the main character living my dream life. I was beyond excited that we would be able to play pretend family in school, and I could play with more people than just my little sister. The problem, however, is that *we* were not playing family. *They* were playing family. It seems as though I just couldn't grasp that I wasn't wanted.

Naturally, I asked for a role, *Maybe I can be your other daughter? Maybe your niece?* I was told no, and that they already made their family in a group chat, and that I couldn't just join. I begged and pleaded and finally, I was given a role. I was so happy when they were all discussing who I should be, and I could feel myself getting anxious while I waited. This group of girls proceeded to tell me that I could be the *dead cousin*. Let's get this straight. I, a breathing,

living, and thriving human being was chosen to be the *dead cousin*. Not even a family friend, an aunt, a great uncle, or even an actual living cousin. I should've known something was wrong when they couldn't stop laughing. And that's what hurt the most, the realization that I wasn't even significant enough to be seen by them, that I wasn't real to them. I wasn't even alive. A crucial part of who I am, my bluntness and desire to make people laugh, stems from the soul-crushing loneliness of my past. I was never good enough, but if I said something completely out of pocket and people laughed, I felt included. I felt wanted. And that became who I was, even though I've owned it now. Sometimes I wonder who I could've been if I was Gabby from the start. Maybe I wouldn't have to go by GG.

I stopped playing family with them. If I couldn't pick up on social cues before, I could definitely pick up on the blatant disrespect that was projected on me. Of course, I still tried to be part of that friend group because I so desperately wanted friends, but I was much more aware of how I was viewed by other people. That's how I wound up in friendships that were insanely toxic just because I couldn't realize that my need for friends or my need to be wanted was killing me. I suffered for years because I couldn't learn how to be okay being by myself. And that wasn't anyone else's problem but *mine*. Eventually, I finally learned to be alone. There's always been comfort in isolation for me, but I learned to be okay not having a best friend or being someone's "favorite person." And believe me, it wasn't easy. This little narrative doesn't cover half of the things I've been through, but it does cover how much I've grown as a person. I previously shared in Narrative Medicine over the summer that going by the name "GG" has allowed me to reclaim my identity and heal from my past, which it has. In being able to finally start healing and addressing my own mental health problems, life has never been better for me. I found someone who loves me for me, and I love him more than anything for that. Moral of the story, you don't

have to forgive anyone from your past. Hell, you could still be friends with them now, I know I am. But you do have to pick your head up and make the best of what life throws at you. I've been in extremely dark places where my life meant nothing to me, but I've made it out. Being an outsider doesn't always have to be a negative. It can allow you to grow as a person and wisely choose who you want beside you in life. I don't know if my story is going to make whoever is reading this feel something, but I hope it allows you to change your perspective on the complex oddities that are humans.