

What went down at the 4th of July Barbecue

By Alexa Polewarczyk

“OKAY, CLASS,” announced my new ELA teacher, Mrs. Doublechin. “I want you each to write about one important thing that happened to you this summer,” she said as she handed out composition books.

“What if you did nothing?” asked Jamal.

“Then write about that.”

“How am I supposed to—” he begins, but she cuts him off with a wave of her hand. Luckily, I’m not Jamal and I don’t have his problem—I know *exactly* what to write about.

It was a normal, beginning-of-July day. We were hanging out at our neighbor’s house. My little sister Mia and her best friend Gabby had just gotten out of the pool. My brother Jason, his friend Nick, and Nick’s brother Jaxson were having a Nerf gun fight. Me, my mom, and Mrs. Papadakis were hanging out on the chairs on the deck around the first half of the pool. She had just finished telling us about her love of flamingos—there’s apparently a flamingo festival in Leominster. And at that festival, there’s a contest for who can stand on your leg the longest—and she won!—when Bean, their adorable pitbull, bounded up the stairs.

“Can Bean swim?” I asked, jokingly.

“Well, sometimes, it feels like she has to save everyone, so sometimes she jumps in.”

I laughed, and Bean ran off the deck. The talk then moved on to other things, until we heard a loud SPLASH!!!! We turned around quickly, to see Bean thrashing around in the pool. We sat there for a second, trying to process what just happened, and that Bean had jumped *from the grass*, FOUR FEET UP, and scaled the wall of the pool!

Then, Mrs. Papadakis broke the silence. She leapt out of that chair like her butt was on fire and screamed to her husband, “DON!! DON, YOUR DOG!!!!”

But the dads took their time, so there was no other choice than to conduct the rescue ourselves.

“Riley! Go get her!” Mom yelled to me. So I leaned down to take off my shoe, then realized I didn’t have to do it. Mrs. Papadakis decided to take action. She flapped her arms, quite flamingo-ish, actually, and dived into the pool with an even bigger SPLASH!!!

By this time, I was laughing so hard I couldn’t stand, so I was flopped across the chair shaking with laughter. The dads had arrived just in time to see Mrs. Papadakis deposit Bean on the deck.

“Nobody look, I’m wearing white pants,” she said as she climbed out, dripping wet.

“I gotta run inside—I’m afraid I’m gonna pee!” Mom cried between laughter.

That made me laugh even harder, so hard that I was dangerously close to falling in myself. But hey—at least I wasn’t wearing white pants.

“Does anyone want to share their journal entries out loud?” Mrs. Doublechin asked once our given time was up.

My hand somehow lifted itself up—I swear, that thing has a mind of its own—and Mrs. Doublechin calls, “Riley? Would you like to share your story?”

I slowly got up with my notebook and walked to the whiteboard. Though I really do consider myself a storyteller, I’ve never told my stories to anyone outside my friend group and my family and neighbors, of course—never my whole class of a whopping seventeen people. So I gathered up all my courage and started talking.

“The title of my story is *What went down at the 4th of July barbecue.*”

And I started reading, like I was performing a piece on stage, as I also love to do. I often added parts like, “And *then* guess what?” and “You won’t believe what they said next,” and by the time I was done, the whole class was laughing. Jamal and Eric laughed so hard they fell out of their seats, much like me. It felt great making everybody happy and laughing just because of some words I scribbled down on paper. And that, my friends? Is the true purpose of being a storyteller.