

For the first year, she and her big brother sat side by side every day as the yellow school bus wound through the roadside leaf piles and the mansions of the west side. When the older kids asked him questions they knew he couldn't answer, she cried on the front lawn wearing her tiny red rain boots and oversized purple backpack into the arms of her mother's soft fleece. Then summer came and went and Kindergarten turned into first grade. One Friday afternoon, she decided to get off at her classmate's house for a playdate leaving the spot next to him empty. She turned back and caught a glimpse of his blue eyes as they watched her leave him all alone. Without her there, he could not remind the driver it was his stop, so the bus glided right past their shingled house. Her brother rode silently all the way back to the sea of yellow, his round face pressed up against the glass, distantly watching his world go by. She came home and found out that their mother had been on the phone in a panic asking the school what they had done with her baby. So they assigned an adult wearing a lanyard and a nametag to sit with him. Then a month later, a white van labeled "carrying school children," came to pick him up each morning while she ran up the steps to sit with her new friends instead.