# GOOD DIFFERENT

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## The first time

I broke down
in front of anyone
was in the middle of the evil place:
Walmart.

All the people
and noise
pricked inside my head
like a hundred shirt tags.

It was a Saturday
and the aisles were crowded,
people yelled,
the overhead music crackled,
some smell like sour milk spilled
through the air and turned my stomach,
and Mom wanted me to decide
on a new pair of jeans
from the millions of racks.

All of a sudden
the whole store—
screaming kids
and stiff AC air—
was folding in on me,
like too-tight hugs from strangers.

I ran,
locked myself
in one of the changing stalls.
Mom banged on the door
but I balled up on the dirty
tile floor
and cried
and hyperventilated
till my head stopped spinning

and my eyes dried
enough for me to see.

When I opened the door,
Mom pulled me out
of the store,
ditching our groceries
by a mannequin
in reds, whites, and blues.

Once we got in the van,
she locked the doors.
She let me cry.
She opened the glove compartment
and gave me a pack of cookies.
"I always keep some goodies aside
for a bad day,"
she said.

But when I calmed down,
Mom said,
"Selah Godfrey,
never ever cry
in the middle of a store.

Always hold it in
till you make it back to the car."

That became
the first rule
for my list
on how to be
a Normal person.

# For Mrs. V's Homework Assignment on Why I Like Pebblecreek Academy

by Selah Godfrey

Why do I like Pebblecreek?
It's a silly question. Of course
I like Pebblecreek. I just *do*.

I like the sound of the whole class reciting
the same jingle, or singing the same song, together.

I like learning words like "ubiquitous" and "omniscient"
that always surprise non-Pebblecreek adults.

I like the way my best friend Noelle wiggles her eyebrows
in that goofy Noelle way and makes me laugh
when we're in class or on cleanup duty.

I like that the stairwells always smell like Pebblecreek stairwells
and the classrooms always smell like Pebblecreek classrooms.

I like that I've been in the same school building
every year of school and know where all the rooms are.

At Pebblecreek, there's a way for doing everything:
raise your hand to speak in class
electronics off and put away
no makeup
lunches and jackets on the shelf
in your assigned spot
just outside the classroom.

Even though lots of kids complain
about all our rules, I like
that I don't have to think about
what to wear
and know what I'm
supposed to do.