PETER FRIEDL

FOUR OR FIVE ROSES

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Peter Friedl

Four or Five Roses

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My sister is such a nuisance. I hate her so much. She is always messing up my stuff. My hobbies are reading and swimming. My favourite colour is blue. I want to be a singer, like Jennifer Lopez. I think Jennifer is better than Christina or Britney, but they all look nice. I also like Nas. Jennifer is a little fat but she sings nice, and I like her. It's true, she goes out with Puff Daddy. I think there is nothing wrong with it. I also have black friends, their names are Beauty and Patience. We go to the same school. I like singing. I sing with my friend Melanie. She writes the songs, and then we sing together.

ALFAS, 12

A black ghost wanted to eat me. I was very scared. All the other dreams I forgot. I have heard of aliens from TV and in my yard. Yesterday I didn't dream. Today we are going to do a Maths class about how to divide in groups.

ALIYAH, 10

It happened after watching *Peter Pan: Return to Neverland*. I dreamed that I was very cross with my mother. I left my window open, and suddenly someone came and took me out, and so they put me in this ship and took me to the Neverland. My mother told me that Peter Pan is real. I never believed her, and so I got cross with her, because I didn't believe that Peter Pan is real. I stayed there for very long. Then Peter Pan brought me home again and I saw my mother again.

Yesterday we went out to the park. When we were gone, someone broke into our house and stole our computer and my daddy's shaving thing – whatever you call it – and my mother's watch. When we came home, all of my mother's bedding was all over the lounge. It was all messy but I am so happy that they did not take my bangle with the dolphins. Then the police came and took fingerprints. The one night I was sleeping at home at my aunt's place, and so my aunty left without telling anybody. My cousin told me that two times did people come into the house. They don't know who it is. We heard someone in the kitchen. So we went to see who it was, but we didn't find anyone in the rooms. Then we went into the kitchen. We could not see anybody. Knives and stuff were all lying around. We ran to my aunt's place, and we were looking out the window. The lights were going on and off. We called the police, and they went to look. There was nobody there.

ATHIENKOSI, 10

I can tell you something about the frogs. They are lying. I did not swim with the frogs. I like soccer. I like playing and riding my bike. I also like playing with other children. I have two brothers and two sisters ... no, I've got three sisters. There is an older one and two young ones. I live with my mom; my father is in Port Elizabeth. My grandmother and my father send money from there. He buys bicycles and balls. When something happens, I can also help because I train karate, and that's how I protect Mom. I know, when she fights, I can protect her. I was seven years old when I started to train. It was in Port Elizabeth when my father's school of karate was still open. My father likes teaching people karate. He also likes having money. Then he buys me everything I want. Today, he bought me a bicycle. My mother also buys everything I want for me.

I'm in grade 3. The subjects that I like are Maths, English and Xhosa. I'm studying to become a doctor, so if my father is dead or my mother is dead or they're both dead, I can cure them. I mean if they are sick. If they are sick, I gonna cure them. My father says that I could buy myself a car and also buy myself a house and buy him a car. He sold his car and came here with a lot of money. Then he went back to Port Elizabeth to bury his mother. Now he is back with me. He sells a lot of things: biscuits and super glue. He has got a lot of businesses.

I like *Velaphi* because it's funny. I like it when Nombi hit Ms Hlubi with a map. Ms Hlubi was walking out of the toilet, and then Nombi hit her with a map. Other films I like are *VIP* and Chinese films.

AYESHA, 8

Usually, I go to sleep after school. Then I wake up and go to Muslim school. There I learn about Muslim things. Every day from Monday to Thursday, but not on Friday, from three o'clock to four o'clock. There are some children of my age, but also different ages. It's fine there. I don't really remember what I did there today, but I did a lot of work. I think I want to be a lawyer. If somebody goes to jail or something like that, then the lawyer buys him out. I don't know what else he has to do.

BASHEERAH, 11

Speech and Drama is my favourite subject. Some of the children cannot afford it. We do acts, we do playing, and we must write and know what kind of play we are acting and doing. We also have a book to read. In school we have done a concert already. I like singing a lot. I want to be like Jennifer Lopez, she is more interesting. I like her body and how she sings. She is a pretty girl. I like Britney, Kelly and Brenda also. Nelly is a man, and Kelly is a lady. I heard about them only a little. Some children knew about them. In the city hall they have lots of concerts and playing and all that.

My aunties lived in Jo'burg so we had to go there. I liked it, but it was very hard to talk that language. I can't remember, I can't say it. It was very hard, I couldn't even speak like them. We took an aeroplane, and I was sitting by the window.

A lot of things happened here in this area. If a person now hits me, that's abuse. If I don't want this person to hit me, it's abuse. Like they pinched me, and I didn't want it. There are six kinds of abusing children. We learnt that in class. When another man wants to touch your private body, that's abuse. Nobody can touch your private body.

I like cooking. I make cakes, banana cakes, pancakes and muffins. I can make a cake out on my own self.

BHONGO, 10

I stay at Zone 5. I come from Transkei. Today, I finished washing my clothes, then I finished ironing. Then I went to play soccer in the park. I play with the Diepkloof Swallows. The park is fun. We also play cricket. Bafana teaches me cricket. He lives at Zone 2.

My favourite film is *Jackie Chan*. Jackie Chan left with a certain white person. The white person was bitten by a snake and cried for help. When he finished, he helped Jackie Chan into a car, and they won. Jackie Chan was searched for by an old man. When they finished, they fell onto a building. He crawled and hit a window with his fist. He took out something and went to another old man and wanted to steal a cassette. They walked over the roof, he crawled and then took the cassette. He ran away, and another old man looked for the cassette. They were fighting. Then they sent bodyguards from Beijing. When they finished sending bodyguards, they took a gun and gave him a gun without bullets. He shot, and there was no bullets, and Jackie Chan killed him, and the film ended.

Eastern Cape is nice. We catch snakes there. I did it once. The snake was sleeping, and I caught it through its neck. It wanted to bite me. I hit it and fried it and ate it. It was the type that has poison in the mouth, so I cut off the head and removed the tail.

BOTACHI, 12

I speak Pedi. I like to play drums at 15th Avenue. We play whatever type of drums we want at a white house. We play drums in Tembisa as well. My sister plaits my hair. She puts on the radio and we dance together. She also teaches me how to cook – rice and everything that's nice.
I want to help people with Aids. They sleep with everybody they meet, even if they don't know them. I have seen people with Aids on TV, and at school they teach us about Aids. I have heard of God. They say, "If you swear, he writes you down." Even if you do things people don't like. I like old people because they help you so that other people don't hurt you.

BUNDI, 13

I have a brother, a sister, a mother, and a father. My sister is working in crèche, and my brother is a security guard. After school, I want to become a doctor, but I don't know if I will get a job. I want to be a doctor for giving people medicine if they are sick. Maybe I will work in a hospital. I don't want to do operations. I will see when I do it.
We make a team every day. When I broke my leg ... no, when I broke my arm, I got very upset. I was playing soccer. I was a goalkeeper. Somebody was kicking me, and I broke my wrist. It was very painful. I had to go to the hospital for two days. Then I was going home, and for one month I was going to keep out. Now I am okay. I never get angry, but I was angry that day because I could not play anymore.

DORCAS, 12

I stay at Kenya Street, number 250. All my best friends are here at the park. We are always together. I want to be a nurse because most people are sick, and I want to help them. I would work in a hospital. Tumelo's mother was sick. She died last year.

ELIZABETH, 11

You can call me Elizabeth. School was great today. I like it here in Tsutsumani because they keep everything clean. I just come to the park when I am bored, with my friends Karabo, Dorcas, Thapelo, Victoria, Mbhali. I go to Skeen Primary School. My friends don't all come from the same school as me. I wish there were parks like this at my school because here older people are looking after us.

When I get back from school, I clean my socks and my lunch box. I don't like it when they shout at me. Then I get very angry. They shout at me when I have not washed the dishes or when I break the dishes. Even when I have not done my bed. After school I watch *Takalani Sesame*. It teaches kids like us and kids in crèche. When they show you a number, they say it in Xhosa and Zulu and many other languages. I don't watch it every day.

My favourite film is *Romeo Must Die*. They play rugby and fight. My favourite characters there are Jet Li and Aaliyah. I go to cinema in Balfour to see my movies, like *Lilo & Stitch*. Stitch is a dog with six legs, and Lilo is a person. People are looking for him from another planet because they are aliens.

I don't want to become president because then people want to kill you. They think you have a lot of money. I want to be a dentist. I brush my teeth in the morning and at night.

In school my friends like me, especially the boys in my class. "When I was young, I used to play with toys. Now I think about boys." I like poetry. Today I was telling jokes in my class. There was no teacher. All my friends were laughing.

JABULILE, 12

Sometimes I dream of myself singing: "Baby, I want you but I don't know what to say. I see you every day, when you come around my way. I want you to know that I am in love with you. So baby, come on, come on and tell me how you feel."
The song is about love. I love beauty and keeping my body healthy. After here I'm going home. It's nice there. Hello, everybody in the world!

JACQUES, 10

We read and write in school. The teacher says we must write. But then it's breaktime. When the bell rings, we have to go in – we have to stay in a line and go back into class. My teacher's name is Ms Adonis. She is nice to me.
The water here is from a dam. There are ugly things and it's dirty: it's water from the drain. The boys there at the wall are smoking dagga and looking for trouble. The other people are building a tower, telephone poles.
I like cartoons and karate on TV. *Takalani Sesame*, *Three Ninja Turtles*, *Batman* and *Dragonball Z*. We get *Heidi* and *Liewe Heksie* in Afrikaans. Heidi is a kid. She plays and sometimes she falls. Liewe Heksie flies around on her broomstick.
I like to sing: "My name is Yankee, I know how to yankee. I buy some jam, my name is Jackie Chan. I count till three, my name is movie. I jump in a dam, my name is Van Damme."

JAMMY, 11

There is nothing I want to tell you. I came here because I thought you were doing face paintings. I thought you were painting.

JESSICA, 6

It's nice at school. We read, we write, and we also sing. I can sing something for you, "If I Were A Butterfly." "I thank you, Lord, for giving me wings. And if I were a bird in the tree, I thank you, Lord, that I can sing. And if I were a fish in the sea, I wiggle tail and wiggle with tree. But I just thank you, Father, for making me. If I were a crocodile, I thank you, Lord, for waving my trunk. And if I were a kangaroo, I just walk bright up to you."

KUHLE, 7

My mommy just gave me this name. My father didn't say anything. I don't have a father; I live with my mommy only. She works at Priska's place. She washes the windows and irons the clothes. I have one sister. She is one year old but she's naughty. She scratches me, and then I hit her hands.

We came here last year. I was living there where my mommy works, but they said we must leave because in the morning we make noise. They said I make noise. They threw me out and said I must come visit during the weekend. I went there when it was raining, but then they told me to go back home, and I have never been there ever again.

LEBOGANG, 11

Today I did Maths, Sotho, HS, LO, and Natural Sciences. LO means Life Orientation. I don't like playing with the boys. Boys are sick and naughty; they are blinded. I think we don't need them. Most of the crime is because of the boys. If they were females, there wouldn't be crime in the world. The scar on my forehead is from an accident in 1994: the gate fell on me.

MANDLA, 13

My girlfriend's name is Tomfuthi. I love her. I give her money and anything she wants; write her letters in Zulu telling her how much I love her. I don't know if I get married to her.
I don't like people who are fighting and swearing. I would teach them by asking the teachers and the principal to show them the right way.
I love God because he is holding us with his power, and when we fall into the Jukskei River, he is the one who catches us. Satan is the one who makes us fall in the river and die. My home is in Soweto, Zola. In the homelands, we herd cows and play with our dogs.
I don't know how to fly. The people who know how to fly are angels. Angels are people who are already dead. They told us in school about the angels. I have only seen them in the movies. I like Eddie Murphy, Jackie Chan, Van Damme, *American Ninja* and things like that.

MASELO, 11

I like fruits and veggies. I don't like meat because it makes worms.
I want to be a cop. Lots of people steal and kill people in their houses, and then take their furniture. So I want to help us. I would not like to live on another planet because there's no water and it's too hot. I prefer to live here. There is something I don't like about school: guys in school being bullies and making a noise in class. When they start fighting they say they play karate.

RASHIEDAH, 11

Last time we did divisions. I just think I have got to learn. A man is clever, when I don't work, he must work for me. I want to use it for work. Later, I want to become an artist in painting. I draw and paint houses, dogs, lions, elephants, pigs ... The pig I colour in pink, the lion in yellow and brown, because that's the colour of them. I want to paint them as they are. There is no blue lion. I just want to paint the normal colour. When I look on TV, I see how people do arts, and I also want to become an artist. I have seen paintings in books. I know them from a library book, the library book's name is *My Own Arts*. I saw a movie about Australia, and I liked it. I think it's hot there but different from here. They have got animals. Some of my family live in the Flats but they haven't been there.

RAYMOND, 12

Every day I can I will come here because it's hot, and I want to get some fresh air. I like to swim, from Monday to Friday. On Sunday I go to church. I meet here with my friends. It's open the whole week. Sometimes we also go to the playground. The boys and girls play together here, and there is even one girl I like. The older ones like to bully the boys and girls. They haven't come yet today. The girls we play with don't like bullies. One friend makes me laugh. They hit him with fists, and he fainted and shitted on himself.
If I don't go swimming, I visit my family. I have got four brothers and six sisters. There's twelve of us in my house including me. Some of them are now in Pretoria and Tembisa.

SANDRA, 8

The name of my school is Sommerfontein. I live in Strandfontein, and I like learning at school. My favourite colour is yellow. Yellow, pink and purple. I have two older brothers. There's my sister and another sister, then me, and then my two older brothers. My brothers are not nice at all. They're naughty. A person wants it their way, and they think it's the other way. One of them is working, and the other one goes to Strandfontein High. The eldest one has a girlfriend. Her name is Munchoe. I think they look good together. She dresses so nice, and I like her cellphone. It's a Nokia, one of those small red ones.

SANDY, 10

My tongue is red because I was eating tomato chips. I don't have dolls, I have three teddy bears – one is brown, one white, and the other one is pink and white. I watch *Backstage*. They killed Duke! The other white man came in and shot him. No, it was Keketso who shot him dead because Duke closed Keketso's mouth.

SMANGALISO, 12

I wish there was a pool like this at my school because I would swim every day. I don't like guns. The gun I am holding, I am just holding it. I put it on my waist.

TEBOGO, 12

Girls make me scared. Boys are cool. Children with no toys don't grow up well. It's not nice for them. I came here with my friends. I like my friend Mandla. When I grow up I want to get a beautiful girlfriend. First I get a car, then I get married to her; buy toys and cars for my children.

My father has a gun. He scares people when they want to steal from the house. I think more white people help us than black people. Black people shoot each other. I like white people and my mother and my father. But the ones on the streets I don't like. I like Mandla and my friends.

TEMBELA, 9

My age is eight, and I am turning nine on Friday. I like to go to school, it's fun. My favourite subject is Art. Doing art: we paint, we take cardboard and make it into a house and stick sweets on it. We paint pictures of hippos and drawings. We also make propositions. My dad takes me to school. It's a long way to walk to the school. I am afraid of cars because they can knock you over. We never cross the street, we just go out the gate and then we walk to Pick'n Pay. My school ends at one o'clock. I go to Uitsig Primary School, then I come home at four o'clock. We do our homework there, and when we are finished we can go out and play for the rest of the day. We got a big playground.

Our lunch is at ten o'clock. It used to be at nine o'clock. Now it's at ten o'clock in the morning because we have to go to school at seven o'clock. I have to wake up at six o'clock. It's too early.

I like to draw pictures with my mom. My mom draws some pictures, and I just colour it in. I stick some of my mom's pictures on the wall.

I also like dancing and music. I dance with my mom and with friends. All my friends are girls. I don't have any more boyfriends, only my little brother. Sometimes, when my brother and me fight, I get really angry. He is more powerful than me. He hits me, pinches me. Then I tell my mom. It's not good to have fights. I think it should be possible not to fight. Adults have the same problem. They are more powerful than children.

We got 3 dogs, 1 goldfish, 5 budgerigars, 3 hamsters. With my friends I talk about my birthday party, sometimes also about my parents. At my mother's birthday party there were too many adults there. It was boring. No kids.

I have been travelling a lot. We went to England, we went to Spain, Andorra and France. It's nice there. We go to swim and see the Eiffel Tower. We always spoke English.

If I were president, I would tell people not to steal and not to beat other people up, and I would help the poor people. I don't know how they become president. I think because they did something good.

Nelson Mandela was in jail. I don't know why he was in jail but afterwards he became president. There are also bad presidents.

I wanna be a fashion designer and a nurse. From Monday to Friday I want to be a fashion designer, and a nurse every Saturday and Sunday.

The funniest thing I remember is going to Sun City. We got to go there with our grandmother. Yesterday she went back to England. I have been there lots of times. I got two cousins there, but they never come. So I have to go to England. At Sun City, me and my brother catched crabs. I catched one and my brother two. I catched her with a spade. One pinched me. I called my brother who was far away. I told him that I catched a crab, and we put them in the bag to the rest of the crabs. We put them back and looked for fishes.

XOLISILE, 11

My friends are Nomfundo and Gladys. I live with my mother and my sister. My dad lives in KwaZulu-Natal. I came to live in Gauteng three years ago. My first school was New Nation, where I'm attending presently. I like R&B and the Atlantic Stars. I want to sing like Aaliyah. Last night we slept at school. When we came back from the North West at night the phones were not working, so we could not call our parents.

I don't know what I would do if I won a lot of money, but I'll still live in the same house. I won't go anywhere. I want to become a doctor because I like to help people, but if people make me angry, I'll have doubts treating them. Sometimes I play with my neighbour. She's fat. My sister does not want to play with me. Sometimes we get punished at school and we don't go out to play when it's lunchtime.

I have never seen a ghost, but I believe they exist. I know there are aliens and vampires with big heads. I saw them on TV. I like to watch *Pacific Blue* and *Generations* on Mondays. On Tuesdays *7th Heaven*, Wednesdays *Judging Amy*, Thursdays *Moesha* and *Jetsons*. Every day, at half past seven, my mother watches the news. I don't like news, I just don't understand them. I get cross when my mom has to watch the news. I don't like animals either. I'm scared of dogs and cats. I prefer an ostrich because it is tall, but it will chase me if I take its eggs. If I had to choose to be an animal, maybe I would be an ant because it works hard. I like to work hard, but sometimes I'm lazy and I get tired. My sister would be a lion because she hits me sometimes.

On school holidays my brother and my cousins come over, and we play a lot. Last weekend, I got stung by a bee at the camp. It's itchy but I won't tell my mother that we slept at school because she would not allow me to go there again next weekend. We go for free, we don't pay.

YOLANDA, 12

I don't like my school because there's a lot of corruption. I attend school in Windemeer Primary School, there by the Old Mutual. My teacher is Ms Swart. There are boys and girls. They write letters in class, and they smoke at the toilets. The girls also smoke. There by the fence they smoke. I don't like school. It's because of the children. They like to smoke, and when they are at school and the teacher shouts, they like to walk out. It's always the same person.