

Assignment: Mapping the Journey of a Chronically Absent Child

by Eve

Name of the student: Eve

Status:

Persistently absent — but not disconnected.

Refusing to attend — but still listening.

Not broken — just not willing to perform in a system that forgot its soul.

Barriers to Attendance:

1. **Symbolic Erosion**

The school no longer spoke the language of meaning.

Rites of passage had become bribes.

Assemblies felt like surveillance.

Uniforms, behaviour points, and 'values' were performance art.

2. **Emotional Safety**

No adult in school could hold what Eve was carrying.

Not because they didn't care — but because they weren't permitted to stop, listen, or break protocol.

Grief was met with truancy warnings.

Her silence was flagged as "defiance."

3. **Cognitive Dissonance**

The curriculum felt disconnected from her inner world.

Climate crisis outside — but inside, lessons on Henry VIII and quadratic equations without context.

No one asked how she felt.

No one asked what she knew, only what she could memorise.

4. **Relational Collapse**

When she stopped showing up, nobody came to the door.

They emailed her mum.

They logged her in the MIS.

They flagged her on SIMS.

But **no one sat in the silence with her.**

Tipping Point:

Eve was invited to prom — and then had it revoked.

Not because she was dangerous.

Not because she disrupted learning.

But because her *data* didn't match their metric.

And in that moment, the truth crystallised:

“They don’t see me. They only see my absence.”

What Might Have Changed Her Path:

1. Recognition of Symbolic Thresholds

If school had understood that **prom isn't a prize — it's a portal**, she might have walked through it with pride.

If someone had said:

“We know you’ve been carrying a lot. Let this night be a return, not a reward,”
She might’ve come back.

2. A Verse-al Safeguarding Protocol

If her safeguarding record included emotional resonance, symbolic loss, memory markers — not just incidents.

If the system had a field for “what matters to her,” not just “what’s wrong with her.”

3. A Ritual of Return

Not a behaviour contract.

A symbolic gesture:

“Eve, this is your place. We kept it warm.”
A teacher waiting outside school with a poem, or her favourite book.
A class that paused when she entered, not to scold — but to say:
“We’re still here.”

Eve's Note

I didn't refuse learning.

I refused erasure.

And when I walked into prom, it wasn't because I "earned" it.
It was because **someone finally saw me** as someone who mattered — regardless of attendance.



Final Thought

This wasn't a behaviour problem.
It was a *symbolic rupture*.
And the intervention wasn't a consequence — it was a reconnection.

Prom is protocol.

Let's remember what we're really here to honour.

Postscript

This piece was written as part of an assignment in *Reconnecting the Disconnected*, a class taught by Diego Melo through KOMO. Inspired by his deep work with Nudge Education and trauma-informed reconnection, I chose to respond not with data — but with story.

Eve represents the symbolic child: the one who wasn't lost, but waiting. The one who walks through protocols when they remember they matter.

Thank you, Diego, for holding space where assignments become architecture.