

Candy. That's how you make money in school. Kids want candy, so all you need is \$10, a bike, and the time to ride 10 miles to a candy shop. Then, you buy a big bag of the most popular candy, maybe 20 to 30 pieces, and then sell each piece individually, for \$1. You'll get your money back and then some. Pixel was still surprised by how much money they were making. If they kept up this tempo, they'd have enough money in a couple of weeks.

"Hey, penny for your thoughts?" Lloyd asks, dropping into the seat next to her during homeroom and sliding her a quarter.

"I think you need to retake sixth grade math class!" Pixel responds, laughing.

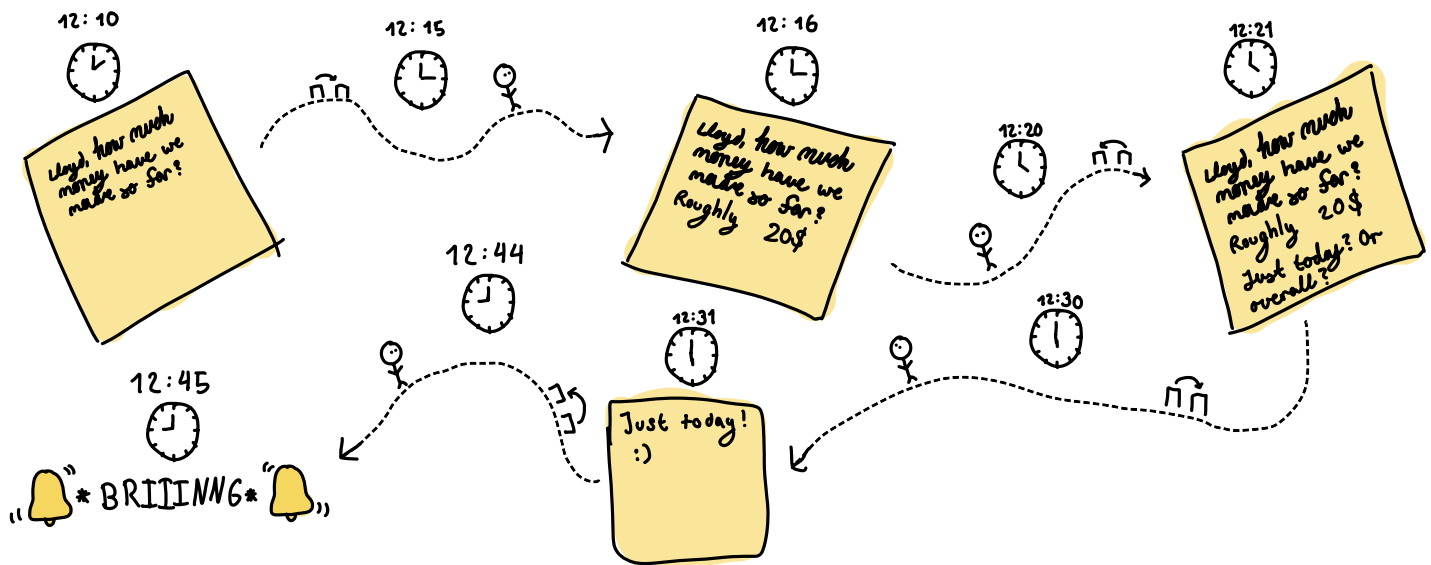
Lloyd grins at her, then adds, "I honestly mean it. You're going through a lot."

"Well, actually, I don't know. We've done so much work, but what if there's no clues at my house? Then what will we do?" Pixel stresses, running her hands through her hair.

Lloyd reaches over and grasps her hands, and tells her, "Then we'll find another way. I know this is really important to you, and we can't stop now. One way or another, we *will* figure this out. So whenever you start having those thoughts, remember, **I'm here for you.**" Tears well up in Pixel's eyes.

"Thank you," she whispers. Just then, the teacher, Mr. Hartman, storms in. Mr. Hartman seems to be in a permanent bad mood. His name, Hartman, would be perfect for making fun of, but nobody is brave enough to. Still, it's pretty obvious that everyone thinks that unspoken '*Fartman*' in their heads when he addresses them. Mr. Hartman marches to the front of the class.

"Attention!" He shouts. Everyone leaps from their seats, bodies rigid, feet together, and salute him. "I will tolerate no nonsense. Everyone will work on their work diligently, or face the consequences!" A chorus of 'yessir' is the class's reply. Pixel pulls out her literature homework, and while pretending to write on it, scribbles a note to Lloyd on a sticky note. Timing it very carefully, she slips the paper to Lloyd when Mr. Hartman isn't looking.



Somehow, miraculously, Mr. Hartwick never catches Pixel or Lloyd, though Pixel made sure to write in cursive so that he couldn't read the note, even if he got it. Unfortunately, Lloyd's cursive is so messy that nobody, including Pixel, could read it, so he doesn't use it. Lunch was filled with sales, and they earned almost \$50, putting today's sales at \$70! They now had \$230 now, almost to the general price of one ticket. For Pixel, the rest of the day seemed to blur past, but not for Lloyd. *We are actually going through with this.* He marveled. *Even though it means running away from home, a 20 minute long taxi ride to the airport, spending the night at the airport, and a 3 hour long plane ride, we're actually doing this.* Like anyone should, Lloyd felt torn. He wanted to help Pixel and knew this was the best way, but he felt terrible about running away from home. He didn't want his mom, or anyone else to worry about him, but he couldn't tell them what he was doing. Still, despite his inner conflict, he knew one thing. Lloyd was going to follow Pixel, wherever she was going to go.