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7:17 am:

for an IHA student

By Sue Kenney

I swipe my bar code to enter the building
push past the double doors
to see you slumped
against your locker,
Good morning, pajama girl.
Sportsac backpack propped
like a pillow against the hard sea
of skinny metal boxes and blue tile wall.
Your uniform kilt
permanently pleated
floats around you like a
life preserver
your flannel pajamaed legs,
still warm and comfortable,
crossed pretzel-like
in front of you.
Our eyes meet,
we nod discreetly
each unwilling to break the silence
of this sacred hour.
This is your time.
The wide hallway,
the smooth, cool floor
smelling faintly of polish
belongs to you
until the double doors
bang open again,
spilling crashing waves
of kilts and sweaters,
iphones and computers,
books and water bottles all over
you breathe deep
collect your calm
and brace yourself
for the onslaught of the day.

Sue Kenney teaches language arts at Immaculate Heart Academy in Bergen County, NJ. She earned her Doctorate of Letters degree from Drew University in 2015, and has adjuncted at William Paterson University. She volunteers as an immigrant's rights advocate for First Friends and visits undocumented people being held in detention by ICE. Her most recent publication is "Social Constructions of Otherness in the United States," which is in the anthology, *Critical Approaches to Literature*.