What I can remember the most is that I never formed any consistent memories of my past - only fragments of adventures so odd that I could never find anybody who could relate to them.   
I spent my childhood travelling across Estea, specifically in the country of Kavols exploring the history and current events of the Inamor people with my inventor of a father. It had been his lifelong dream to travel the world capturing the cultures of various minority groups and creating inventions to help sustain them. As far back as I can remember, my father devoted himself to his work. He could spend entire conversations talking about his hopes for his newest inventions and how they could impact communities. His greatest tale to tell, however, was how he met my mother. She had been part of a nomadic tribe called the Azolas, and was a fisherman’s daughter. My father said that he first saw her while she was hauling fish from a harbor during the misty hours of dawn. But when he met her he wasn’t done with his journey across the world, so they continued his work together. I used to wonder about how difficult it must have been for my mother to leave her tribe, but she never spoke of it.   
 I spent my first ten years crammed in the back of a travelling caravan in-between scattered books and drawings of various Inamor settlements, timelines, historical events, and family trees. We would map out our days in the early mornings while my father ate grapefruit and I ate hot oatmeal with sugar and cinnamon. I was his assistant, and although I knew he used that term to make me feel important, it worked. I was used to release the tension of a foreign inventor asking a hundred questions because naturally as a child, I wanted to play with the other children of the families. Some of my fondest memories were made by running off into the forests to find creeks full of filthy water to excitedly jump into with my new friends. There were stray dogs that would run after us, and I have lost count of how many abandoned puppies I would try to bring home after our daily endeavors.   
Hours and hours each day I watched my father reading his notes, re-writing them and explaining to me the most interesting parts. We lived in an old villa on the perimeter of one of an Inamor settlement. It was called Loqra, and I spent a large part of my childhood growing up there. In the winter the house was freezing because we only had one fireplace in the living room to warm up the entire house.  
On days that my father had meetings with other inventors or interviews set up in neighboring towns with mayors, I would go into the settlement with my mother to hand out clothes she had bought in the Old City, along with toys and snacks we had collected.  
Despite it being my home, Loqra was known to be a dangerous settlement to the outside. The gates entering the settlement opened a portal into a type of nightmare universe. It was easy to fall into it, but difficult to come back. People had no money, they wore rags, and children played with garbage that littered the grounds. Wild dogs crept around in the nights, and most people stayed inside once the sun went down.   
Because we lived right on the outskirts of the settlement, we were somewhat protected from the judgement of the rest of Loqra’s people. The town itself was composed of primarily Kavol citizens who had tried to push the Inamor people out. However, because the Inamor had nowhere else to go, they created their settlement at the end of Loqra’s perimeters. They had been hidden away from the main road’s view. Nobody would know just by passing Loqra that there was a completely separate world nearby. Most people were afraid of coming too close, there were too many stories of thieves and unexplained disappearances. But the mystique of such a world appealed to my father, and so I then spent my most influential years learning about their ways as well.   
Although it should have been more clear to me from the beginning, I remember the day that I first realized how divided the country of Kavols really was. It was a summer morning and I was peeling off the flaking yellow paint from the side of the house while my mother finished locking the grand entrance door.   
“Can I buy some candy when we get to the Old City?” I had been daydreaming about massive wads of thick pink bubble gum since that morning and wanted to try the newest sour blueberry flavour I saw the last time we were in the Old City.   
“We’ll see,” my mom responded.   
We walked down the driveway and towards the bus stop where there were already some Inamor teenagers sprawled out on the sidewalk. My mother was like a mother-figure to them, despite the fact that they could barely understand each other because they didn’t speak our native language of Nuw and she didn’t speak much Kavol. She would smile constantly, and offer tasty pastries for them whenever they came over to our home.   
“Inamor! You’re all scum of the earth!” I had heard an aggressive voice break into my ears, I looked up and saw a beaten car full of teenage boys speed past us. One of the Inamor boys who had previously been laying on the sidewalk soaking up the sun was jumping up and angrily swinging his arms up into the air swearing, “Kokot!” which meant ‘ass-hole’ in Kavol. The teenage boys threw their beer bottles at the group and some of the bottles still had some beer in them. A girl named girl Magda was hit in the face with one. She was 13, and pregnant. Her hair was matted down by sticky alcohol and her nose was bleeding from the impact of the bottle. It was a short, but significant moment in my life when I began to notice the glares and disgust from the white Kavols that looked at my group of Inamor friends.  
As children we would sneak onto the bus from Loqra without paying our fares, and get off at a neighboring town where they had gated soccer fields. I would climb the tall concrete walls to peek over and see who was there; if they were white children, we would try another field. Although I never minded interrupting a game of soccer, if we dared to start playing our own game on the same field, most of the times we would end up in violent fights with Kavol adolescents. There would be Kavol teenage boys ready to get in on any action they could, often hanging around just in case they could find a way to justify starting a fight. I became tough hanging out with my Inamor friends, but they kept becoming tougher by the day. By the time I was twelve most of my friends were carrying around pocket-knives and sniffing glue behind abandoned car storages. They would take our the not so discreet plastic bags from their pockets, and that would be my indicator to say I had to go home. After seeing my friends high a number of times, I became afraid of watching their lively eyes turn zombie-like within a few minutes. I was always the outsider with insider access- I was able to see the details, but at the end of our days I would part ways from my group and walk in the opposite direction. I lived in a romanticized world where danger had become alluring for me. It was an adventure everyday and it became like a drug to find the dark secrets of life and watch people dance within them. But I only watched, leaving as soon as the climax of making a bad decision occurred. The settlement became increasingly dangerous as the time went by, young men were hungry for some sort of meaning and started gangs to run the settlement. Suddenly everything was divided by invisible boundaries between one gang leader’s mud-house and another leader’s rotting apartment building.   
By the time the gangs gained leverage, I had left the settlement with my family because my father was getting too many threats from leaders who didn’t want any outsider influence convincing people to oppose their power. My parents and I moved to the Old City where I was sent to a private school. I was forced to develop manners and respect for authority. I hadn’t any experience with authority prior to this and found it extremely difficult to adapt.  
“Ching chong! Ching chong!” The young Kavol students from my new school would tease my Azolan mother with made up words from the closest tribe they could think she was related to.   
“Why do you smile when they say those things? I hate it! I just hate it so much! Can’t you make them stop?” I once asked her, half begging, half fuming with anger.   
My mom just shook her head and replied to me with something that resonated with me for years afterwards,   
“You can’t get angry at them for not knowing what you already know.”   
At first I couldn’t understand the importance of what she said, and I became embarrassed to be so different from everybody else.  
My father had started a new invention for environmental progress in another settlement where they were known to eat dogs. I had begun to feel that my mom and I were nonexistent in his eyes and that all he cared about was finding the most taboo places to fix. While he tried helping other people, we had to protect ourselves from daily discrimination because of our physical differences from the average Kavol. He was safe because he looked like them, and he spoke like them. But I was an alien wherever I went.   
After school I would walk through the Old City, sit on a park bench and watch the people around me. I created stories for each person that passed me, making conversation with strangers that looked like outsiders too. It felt like I didn’t know how to connect with anybody that didn’t look like an alien too. I would take my violin and play on the streets on weekends to make some pocket change. There was an elderly Inamor man who had been busking for 30 years at the same spot, playing his guitar. He wore a black felt fedora, a silk vest with paisley patterns stitched on it, and had a charcoal colored mustache. We would play together, it was a conversation between strings but there was never any verbal exchange between us. It was my way to connect that didn’t require any mental energy, I could just be. But one day my father caught me practicing in my bedroom and turned my passion into his. Soon after whenever my father discovered a new settlement, I would be brought along to gain experience from their best musicians.   
There was a time when we drove up the steep Artat Mountains in search of a group of musicians that were made up of three brothers. One played on a cimbalom, another on a cello, and the last on a violin. We were invited into their home which was made of bricks and colourful scarves for curtains. Their wives had prepared baguettes with salami and butter for lunch, and offered my father little glasses filled to the brim with hard liquor to sip on while the three brothers described their exotic journey through Yragnuh. But as soon as they were done speaking of their travels, my father looked at me and told me to start playing my violin with them. It was as though he was proud of himself for integrating me into a lifestyle that was not my own.   
There was an abundance of encounters such as the brother musicians where I would be pushed into situations I didn’t want anything to do with. But it was only as the years passed by that I began to find that there were tools missing for me to create my own identity, which was why it had been so easy for my father to direct me. I became lost in searching for ways to keep travelling into dark corners of the world because I didn’t know what else to do. It had been a childhood influenced by a confusing sequence of absurdities that left me desperate for some sort of security that I could never find. Each day I sought out to find people to share my thoughts and ideas with, but I could never connect deeply with the conversations I found myself in. I slowly began to accept that perhaps I would always be on the outside, carefully walking around people while keeping my eyes on them but never coming too close. I didn’t understand how to talk to them, and I didn’t know how I could learn how to. My father reiterated to me since I had been a child, the importance of detachment. The importance of observing but not being involved. It was only until I was in my adulthood that I discovered he had been using me to experiment with what kind of a person I would turn into after being exposed to so many extremes. I had difficulties suppressing my sensitive nature, I had nightmares almost every night of the different stories I had heard of from Inamor incesteous relationships between children and parents, or cousins….to hearing about murders of childhood friends that were gang affiliated. I had grown up in an environment where I could never explore how these odd experiences made me feel, I was only taught to live in them, and analyze them.   
“I’m going to escape to Nilreb….” My best friend Josef, confided in me one late Autumn afternoon. We were both eighteen years old at this point, and I was about to leave Kavols and cross the ocean to a country called Mern where I was to study science. I looked at his dark eyes, which had black pencil eyeliner lining his eyelids. I hesitated to respond because I didn’t know what to say. Most people knew that Nilreb was a dangerous country in the East.   
“Why Nilreb?” I asked.   
“What am I supposed to become here? Jan said he could help me find work....”   
He was the only true friend I had at that time. I knew he was struggling with living in the settlement, he was one of the very few who put in the effort to go to school and to prioritize education. He was tormented daily because of his sexuality as an openly gay Inamor male. I couldn’t blame him for finding a way out of the settlement, and even if it wasn’t ideal, at least Nilreb didn’t have anything against the Inamor people. Apparently he had found love online and his boyfriend would help him find a job at a hotel. It was the first time I had known anybody to leave the settlement.

**Summary**I realized a bit too late that I created a sort of manuscript rather than a short story….My plan is to completely switch the tone of my work into an actual tale since what I have so far is only a draft of events I want to use to help me turn it into one. I will do this by expanding on the events I have already written, creating dialogue and sectioning my story into different age-periods. My first 12 years, then 12-15, and 15-adulthood. In each age period I will create a story that flows into the next.