

# Chapter 4

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## The Popular Kids

Monday 26th September:

The faint light of the rising sun seeped through my window. I had woken up extremely early and lay in bed, staring at the ceiling. Emm's words echoed in my mind, "If you truly feel redundant, then you have to let go." Was it really that simple? I spent hours wondering what I could've done to make Maria leave me like that, but nothing came to mind.

"Am I that oblivious?" I wondered.

As I heard the sharp sound of my alarm, I finally made a decision. "How about I just talk to her!" The words slipped out loudly. I hoped my parents hadn't heard since I wasn't on talking terms with them yet. I started getting ready, wondering how to start the conversation with Maria and express my frustration. Having an adult to ask for advice would've helped, but I didn't have that luxury, whether or not I was talking to my parents. They barely knew anything about my life and only asked when it was convenient for them.

A few minutes later, I saw James getting ready to leave.

"Hey buddy, how are you this morning?" I greeted him with a big hug that lasted a bit too long.

"I'm fine, let me go now...." he said, dying of laughter.

"Well, do you have anything special today?"

"I actually do have a science test today," he said, clenching his hand.

"Knock 'em down, James. I believe in you!" I added, putting my hand on his shoulder.

His eyes shimmered with excitement, and his broad smile was heartwarming. Giving him my belief was simple, yet I knew how far it could go to boost his self-confidence. He had enough on his plate, so I always tried to make him feel on top of the world.

Later, I was ready and by the door when my mum greeted me like nothing had happened. The whole journey to school was filled with her one-sided chatter, which I never answered.

"Can't she see that I'm not talking to her? Or is she pretending like nothing happened?"

I wondered while gazing out of the window.

"Are you okay, dear?" she asked in a caring tone, patting my back.

"Fine? Really? So, she is acting like nothing happened." I kept my thoughts to myself and just scoffed.

"Even if you are annoyed or angry, you should always respect your mother no matter what happens." Feeling her tone shift from caring to aggressive, I answered just to avoid conflict. I was trying to keep my thoughts focused on what I'd do with Maria and couldn't handle an argument right then.

"I'm sorry, Mum," I answered, looking down and slightly closing my eyes. I tried to act as obedient as possible. Thankfully, we had reached school, and I could put off this façade and look for Maria. Still having no idea what to tell her, I counted on the words just coming as we went along. I started scouring the crowd for her but to no avail. I even asked some of her friends from class, and they hadn't seen her either.

"Maybe it's for the best." At the end of the day, I had no idea what I was going to tell her anyway. While I was lost in thought, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I glanced up, and it was Emma.

"Good morning, Edward! What are you doing here?" she asked.

"What?" I looked around and realized I was sitting at the girls' volleyball field. I guess I was so distracted that I didn't even notice. "I'm sorry, I didn't notice," I got up and was about to leave quickly when she stopped me by my hand.

"Still thinking about it, huh?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

There was no use lying; it was all over my face, so I nodded embarrassingly.

"Listen, how about you hang out with us during lunch? We could take your mind off it for a bit," she suggested, tickled pink.

"We?" I emphasized, questioningly.

"Yeah, you'll meet them. They're quite a fun bunch. So?"

Full of doubt and hesitancy, I figured I had nothing to lose. "You know what, why not!" I replied.

She was about to jump from joy and told me to meet them at lunch by the playground.

I went to my class and saw Leonard and the others sitting down and chatting.

"There he is!" Leonard called while pointing at me. I had a puzzled look as I sat down in my longer empty seat.

"A water gun? Where did you get that idea from?" asked Randy as he put his arm around my shoulder.

"I don't know, it just came to me you know?" I explained. The more I chatted with them, the more I felt comfortable. While Ivon was drinking, Randy said a joke that caused him to spit water all over me. We all laughed to the point of tears, while Ivon was apologizing with a wide-open mouth.

"It's fine, it's just water after all, I'll just get a towel from the bathroom and come back," I reassured him.

On my way there I could hear their faint teasing of Ivon while he was still apologizing. I just chuckled, I had never been in such a social situation, but I felt my bells ring and my heart dance. As I got to the bathroom, I saw a sign that said that all towels were in the locker room.

"Great," I whispered covering my face with my hands. "Now I have to see those annoying football players before we start the day." I stopped for a moment and devised a plan to sneak in quickly without anyone noticing. Seeing those idiots would truly offset my mood before we even begin. Anyway, I rushed downstairs and saw all the football players sitting outside chatting. "That's my chance I wondered." I used my sneaky tactics and made my way in without anyone noticing.

"Phew, that was close!" I said wiping a drop of sweat from my forehead, I was really proud of that, and before I turned to look for the towels, I heard my name.

"Edward? What are you doing here?" a voice questioned from behind.

I turned around and it was Brad. "Great, out of everyone of course it's him." I wondered hoping to avoid any awkwardness. After all, I'm certain the incident back on Thursday still stuck with him and I didn't want to complicate things any further.

"Uhm...I'm just looking for a towel as you can see, I'm soaked." It had slipped out of my mouth quite aggressively.

"So much for not wanting to complicate things." I thought.

He just had a dead stare at me and handed me a towel. I dried myself quickly hoping to avoid any dumber moves, thanked him, and left. On my way out though, the ground was wet and I slipped and fell on my back. It was super embarrassing and my face turned red like a tomato.

"Are you okay?" I heard Brad stand over me and lend me a hand to get up.

I took it and stood back up cheeks still bright red, I could see him holding back laughter, I couldn't blame him, I would laugh too. I thanked him again and left, my shirt even more wet than when I first came in. "You sure you don't want this towel again?" he asked still trying to be helpful. The truth is that I desperately needed it but the need to escape with my humility was greater. "OK then, but you'll need an excuse since the lesson started 2 minutes ago." He added.

"What!" I called out in shock. I looked at my phone and it was already 2 minutes past the lesson, I was already the new student here, so I genuinely couldn't the teachers to get a bad reputation. I had no idea what to do when Bradford suggested to go to class together. He then went on to explain some sort of plan to get away with being late, but my mind had already drifted away and I couldn't hear him. "What?" I asked. He just grabbed a towel and grabbed me and we went to class. I had no idea how we were going to get away with this, but I followed along full of regret. "Why did I want to dry myself, evaporation would've done it for me." I wondered still following along.

As we made it to class, I was barely able to stand up straight, the fall was pretty bad and I was leaning on Bradford the more that I walked. Brad then knocked on the door and the teacher opened it.

"You're late." The teacher exclaimed.

"I know miss but I'm sorry, see my friend Edward here fell hard and...." Bradford went on to tell a story about how I was barely moving and he had to carry me and aid me to get up. "Great, now I look the damsel in distress." I was on the verge of crying from embarrassment when the teacher let us in. I guess my leaning looked believable enough for us to get away with that story. Bradford helped me over to my seat and I just wanted to combust on the spot. I heard Leonard's quiet laughs as well as all the others, I even looked over at Emma whose eyes were filled with worry but laughing with the others. Hoping to disappear right then and there, I glanced at Leonard who was chuckling more and more. I guess if I was on the other end, it would've been funny but for now, I was dreading every moment.

"I can never show Bradford my face again." I wondered, hoping to avoid him till I graduate.

The rest of the morning lessons had gone by quickly and painfully as I dreaded every moment in class. By lunch, I could walk better, Leonard and the others invited me over to play football with them, but I refused. I didn't want to humiliate myself any further today. In an attempt to prevent more crashes with Bradford, I waited for him to leave first. As I turned around to leave the classroom, I saw Emma standing right there smiling. I fell back a bit as she started talking. "Ready?" Suppressing the urge to scream

'NO' at the top of my lungs, I nodded and went along.

"I'm sure you'll love them so much, they are so excited to meet you!" she said excitedly, I could feel her bouncing off the walls more and more as we approached the playground. On the other hand, the more we walked the more regret filled my mind.

"Why did I do this to myself." My hands got sweatier and my heart rate spiked more as we walked, I could even hear my breathing more. Not ready to meet anyone, I stopped hoping to catch my breath. Emma glanced at me with her mouth wide open. "Are you okay?" she asked helping me sit anywhere. "We don't have to do this you know, it's fine" she added, reassuring me that it was fine to back out.

"I don't know what came over me now. I'm really worried about meeting your friends for some reason." I explained still trying to catch my breath.

"Edward, it's fine they're just humans like you and me. You like talking to me, don't you?" I nodded. "Then you'll like them a thousand times more." She added.

As she said those words, she offered to stay here with me if I didn't want to go. Keeping her away from her friends felt dreadful but simultaneously my anxiety skyrocketed preventing me from going. I declined her request to stay and asked her to go have fun. However, she was firm in her position and sat next to me. No amount of persuading her worked and we just sat there. Breaking the moments of silence we had, she started basic chatter asking me about my family and my hobbies. My family's problems are too deep for me to discuss with a stranger, no matter how close I may be to them, so I provided her with the bare minimum of information. The only thing that was indulged in was my hobbies.

"Well, I love the basic things like reading and writing."

"Ohh, so do you read like the modern type books and stuff?" she asked.

"Actually no, call me old fashioned but I love old classical books more," "There is just something about these types of books that I can't get anywhere else," I explained.

"Wait seriously?" she lowered her head and glanced at me.

"Yeah, why?" Ready to be judged for my taste I waited for her response.

"I TELL PEOPLE THE SAME THING AND THEY ALL CALL ME GRANDMA." She yelled surprisingly.

All of a sudden, I started laughing hysterically and was on the verge of tears.

"...Oh my ... grand ma ... really." I couldn't speak properly while laughing hysterically.

"Yeahh everyone called me that," "You're laughing, too!" Emma had her mouth wide open staring at me laughing.

"... I'm sorry... I can't ... stop." Physically I couldn't stop myself from laughing and tears started falling down my face. I even started to cough and wheeze from laughing it was just so funny to me. In an attempt to stop and look at her, I saw her smile and I could feel her on cloud nine. After some very painful moments of laughing, I managed to stop but I was fully out of breath.

"You almost killed me, grand-ma" I exclaimed while catching my breath. She looked at me with disappointment and then burst out laughing, too.

"How long have you been keeping that in," I asked.

"Longer than I'll ever admit." She explained.

I just chuckled and we went on with our conversation naming our favourite authors and books. The more we talked, the more I felt better and felt my anxiety finally stand down.

".....Well, my favourite book is 'The Shining' Let me tell you why." Feeling the heat from her judgmental looks, I was about to start rambling about the reasons, when we got interrupted by the bell. I couldn't believe I kept Emma here all lunch from her friends.

"Sorry again for keeping you away from your friends." I apologized looking down at the

ground.

"No worries, I seriously enjoyed our talk and tomorrow we'll meet them okay, so you better be ready." She said pointing her finger at me.

To thank her for today, I promised to meet them the next day, it was the least I could do after everything she'd done. We split after that, She going to meet her friends before class and I went to the bathroom to be ready for the next class. Before entering the classroom, I made sure Bradford was not in sight; I was out of credit for humility that day. As I entered the class, I saw Ivon and Randy pointing at me. not even giving me the chance to sit down, they immediately started teasing me about my lunch with Emma. The more I protested, the more I got teased, so I just stayed quiet. The rest of the day was boring and I nearly fell asleep twice in chemistry, which the teacher again tried to catch me off guard again, but to no avail. As soon as the bell rang, I ran out of the classroom as humanly possible hoping to check I completely forgot at lunch or more like couldn't. I checked her class and she wasn't there. I felt slightly relieved since now I had more time to prepare what I was going to say and how to handle the situation. As I went downstairs to leave, I caught Emma. "So, what's your reasons?" she asked.

"Well, aside from the fact that horror is my favourite genre of all time, just the fact that one young child being able to see things others can't and having powers no one else has are just fascinating," "What would that child do with this much power and how will he act," I added

She just looked at me fascinated and just "Can't disagree with that." After that, my mum rang and I had to leave. I wasn't prospering at the idea of another car ride with Mum, but I had to suck it up and act obedient. While on my way, some guy stopped me and asked how I knew Emma. "What an odd question?" I wondered. he explained how she was one of the popular kids and that their group was filled with a bunch of annoying people and to just be careful and leave. "Lovely something else to drown my thoughts in. not looking forward to it at all."

The second I entered the car, my mum asked "Are you mad that we didn't take you to the amusement park?"

"So, she wasn't oblivious after all." I thought. "Yes, I am. You know how much I've dreamt about visiting that park, but you didn't care and just took James." I said trying to keep myself from saying everything on my mind.

She sighed as she started explaining how James had had a particularly bad day in training, so they wanted to make him feel better. I pressed for more details and she explained how he had one of his episodes and it was really bad in front of everyone. Hearing all that I couldn't just stay mad, if it was for James' well-being then I couldn't protest her. "I'm sorry dear that they didn't take you and I promise we'll make it up to you." With no reply in mind, I put on my headphones and played some tunes to take my mind away from everything. The rest of the car ride was silent with Mum sometimes brushing her hand on my head. I guess that was a way to show me how she cared about me, and I just took it. Meanwhile, I was dying to know how James did on his test.

The minute we got home, I got out of the car dashed into the house, and started bombarding James with questions about his test without telling him what Mum told me in the car. He went on a whole ramble about the exam and explained every question in detail to me. As tired as I was, I listened to his whole talk, before doing our signature fist pump and then going to my room to rest. The rest of the night was spent studying and thinking about my day. It was an odd day but mainly two things stuck in my mind; why Maria wasn't there and what that guy told me before I left. Firstly, Maria usually never misses a day at school so her not being there was odd. Pacing back and forth in my room I debated whether I should check up on her and ask or not. Eventually, I landed on

asking her what happened and texted her hoping she'd reply. She actually did and quicker than usual, she ignored everything that was sent on Sunday no surprise there. She told me that she had fallen ill with the flu and she wouldn't be able to come to school for a week or 2. Wishing her too well, I ended our talk there resisting all urges to ask what happened. Secondly, whatever that guy said about Emma and her group. Emma was nice and extremely kind thus it left me confused about why he would say that. Even if I listened to him, I had promised her to meet them so I guess I would judge whether they were truly as bad as he thought. The rest of the night was spent studying as no matter what was on my mind, I always had to be the best and keep up my performance.

The next day, I was already up preparing myself to meet Emma's friends and trying to manage myself to stay as calm as possible. Was I worried a bit after what I heard the day before? A bit of course, but I should know better than to trust mysterious rumors. My preparation though was not going well whatsoever, the mere thought of talking to them made my heart race and my stuttering got worse. If it was that bad just at the mere thought of them, I wondered how it would go when I actually met them in person. The best thing to do was to practice more and maintain my cool at all times. I was too focused on my preparation that I missed greeting James before he left, only noticing when I heard his school bus's horn from my window. Luckily though, I managed to wave at him as he rode the bus and he did wave back. After that, I just stopped this pointless training or whatever and got ready. The ride to school consisted of basically just trying to stay calm and occasionally answering my mum's questions, quite boring stuff, but as long as we weren't, I didn't care.

The second I stepped through the gate; I saw Bradford and the other football guys playing. "Great, just great." I couldn't handle another embarrassing incident in front of him, so I was about to turn around and wait by the gate when I heard someone call. "Edward, hey" Knowing exactly who it was I turned around ready to face whatever humility was waiting for me again.

"Hey, Bradford." I tried to escape and take a different route but it felt more awkward and embarrassing to leave mid-conversation, so I stood there accepting whatever came next.

"How's your leg? I couldn't find you after school to check." He asked.

"Much better thanks for yesterday." I muttered with a smile hoping to end the conversation there.

"Are you sure? Your fall looked pretty hard and when I fall in practice, I need a day or two to rest. I could help you up the stairs if you need." He offered generously.

"Of course, he had to mention that fall." I wondered silently

"I remember how hard it was, but Nah, I'm fine now. Thanks for the offer though."

Sensing how annoyed I was, he went back to the others.

"See nothing happened, I'm 100% fine." Literally while that thought was still being processed, I saw a ball flying towards me. As soon as it touched my face, I fell down even harder than last time. "Why did I open my mouth?" I wondered hoping the ground would eat me right then. The whole football team circled me and they all stared as Bradford helped me up. One of them immediately started apologizing and explaining how it was a complete accident. By then, I was a ticking bomb of anger about to explode, but in an attempt to avoid any further damage to my reputation and myself, I accepted the apology and tried to walk away.

However, the moment I took the first step, I fell headfirst on the floor.

"Great just great." Bradford aided me up again and looking at him in full embarrassment I said "Sooo, is your offer still available." He just looked at me and

laughed. I couldn't exactly blame him, it was quite a sight.

As I entered the class leaning on Bradford, the whole class just looked at me again and they tried to hold in the laughs that time though. Bradford just helped to my seat and I saw Leonard and the others about to ask questions and laugh again.

"Just don't ask," I muttered as I heard the others laugh, planting my face on the desk hoping it would disappear. The morning lessons went by fairly quickly and before I knew it, it was already lunch, I tried to get up and it was easier than anticipated. As I turned my face to the door to leave, I heard Emma call me.

"Ready Edward?" she said tickled pink. Right, I was supposed to meet her friends right now. The incident from this morning occupied my brain and I completely forgot about that.

"Mhm," I answered, regretting all my life decisions. She then signaled for me to follow her and we started heading toward the playground. On our walk, I noticed her looking behind her frequently to check that I was fine. My anxiety had not spiked yet although I was starting to fill with worry, but I had to push through as a promise is a promise. Honestly, the walk was hell and by the time we made it to the playground, the blood drained from my face. Emma then waved at some people at a table and then grabbed me by the arm towards it.

"Guys, this is Edward, the guy I told you about. And Edward this is our humble gang."

"Are they as scary as you thought?" She added chucklingly.

The group consisted of a girl and just another guy. "Hello, I'm Rita Sims! Nice to finally meet you. We've heard quite a bit about you." The girl introduced herself trying to hold in a laugh. "And I'm Collin, Collin Jackson. I'm captain of the school's rugby team. It's really nice to meet you." They didn't appear as scary as I thought or heard at all, on the contrary, they looked pretty kind.

"So, you guys are the popular kids everyone has been talking about?" I asked.

"Did Samuel tell you that, he is literally the only one who has a vendetta against him because Collin became the captain of the team and not him? Whatever he told you I hope we can prove him otherwise." "To answer your question, no this is not all of us there are 2 more, Amy who has transferred to another school, and the gentle giant," Rita added.

"Oh, I'm so sorry about Amy," I exclaimed.

"No worries we still meet her at hangouts, she'll love to meet you then," Rita explained. Hangouts??? Already?? These people barely knew me. If it was that hard just to talk to them, how would it go trying to hang out with them?

"Also, who is the gentle giant?" I asked.

"You don't know the gentle giant? You've met him already." Rita explained

"Yeah, you've met him, he's quite the shoulder to lean on." Collin said that holding in a laugh while the others laughed.

"Met him?" I wondered raising an eyebrow. The joke didn't hit me until I heard someone behind me.

"Hey guys!"

"No way, that can't happen again. Why does life hate me?" I wondered as I turned around.

"Hey Brad!" Emma greeted. "Hey Edward, what are you doing here?" he asked questioningly. Right then, I felt my soul trying to escape my body and ascend away.

"I was introducing him to the gang, just now," Emma explained.

Bradford had a surprised look on his face, I guess he wasn't too thrilled with the idea that I was there. I couldn't blame him, our interactions weren't exactly the best. The rest of lunch was spent awkwardly observing them as they chatted and laughed occasionally laughing along or staying dead silent. Props to them, they did try to include

me in their chatter and get me to open up, but I just couldn't. it was still too early for that. My attempt to leave when the bell rang was interrupted by Emma who wanted me to fall back and talk to her.

"How was it? Were they nice?" She asked eagerly.

"Yeah, sure..." I answered trying to be nice.

"I know you're still not used to them but trust me you'll be a chatterbox in no time."

"Sure..." She could sense that something else was on my mind and asked about it. I explained how I had the feeling that Bradford didn't like me much at all.

"WHAT, BRAD?" she yelled. "He is literally one of your biggest fans!" she exclaimed.

Doubtful, I explained how our interactions weren't as good or as friendly as she thought. She pressured me to go talk to him to turn over a new leaf, but filled with even more doubt, I protested. She kept pestering me to do it, but it didn't work, talking to him was an impossible task. "That was enough talking for a life time," I explained.

"Fine, I'll drop it." She said annoyed at my response. She wasn't going to back down so I hoped to just avoid damaging my humility any further. Honestly, the rest of the day was quite boring and just wanted to sleep. When the final bell rang, I felt refreshed again and dashed out of the classroom hoping to leave early. Breaking my hopes to go home early, was my mum who called and explained how she'd be late as she was getting gas on the way. By the time I had reached the bottom of the stairs, I felt someone pull me by the hand and drag me. "Emma is that you?" I asked hoping for an opportunity to escape.

"Yes, and I'm about to take you to talk to Brad." She yelled aggressively.

"WHAT?" By the time my thoughts processed, I was already standing in front of Bradford.

"Since you two are too embarrassed to talk to each other, here you go. Now talk." She yelled feeling the heat radiating from her eyes. She then left and watched us from a distance.

"Uhh, hey?" he tried to initiate the conversation.

"...Hey..." I replied even more awkwardly.

"Emma can be quite feisty sometimes, isn't she?" he tried to start any form of talk.

"Yeah, a little, but she's kind after all so that makes it up?" I replied as we laughed awkwardly.

We stood there just staring at each other for a few moments. All I wanted then was to combust in my place.

"Why is this so awkward?" he asked willing to talk. I went along and figured that I had nothing to lose if I talked.

"I don't know man. I just feel bad for the way I talked to you our first interaction and from there our interactions went downhill from there." I explained.

"What?... No, I get it, you had the right to be mad, I was the one to hit you twice." "I'm sorry for that again by the way. I also tried to be as helpful as possible since then to make it up to you, but for some reason every time we interact you get injured. That made me feel more awful." He rambled while laughing awkwardly.

"No man, I over-exaggerated because of my bad experience with asshole football players, no offense."

"None taken, ...so can we turn over a new leaf and start over? Not asking to be like best friends, but I could settle for not wanting to kill me?" he asked hope shimmering in his eyes. For the first time, I ever felt my mind change about him, maybe he wasn't like the idiots I interacted with before and should give him a chance.

"Sure, why not? Just don't carry me like a damsel in distress again and maybe I won't plot to kill you anymore." He laughed as we shook hands.

Emma rushed over grinning and yelled, "See, that wasn't that hard was it now." she



had that proud look to be right and I just rolled my eyes and laughed. After that, I waved them goodbye and left as mum called and I seriously wanted to go home and pass out on my bed. Our little interaction might've caused a change of heart towards Bradford. I mean it felt nice not to be mortal enemies, but we were too far from being friends, but who knows?

The ride home was just as boring as the ride to school; uninteresting. I didn't know why though. It wasn't like my mum wasn't talking or anything, but I felt withdrawn from any conversation with her. "Maybe I'm just tired." I thought. Things at home just felt dull, too. The rest of the night just passed with me studying and thinking about how my meeting with 'The Popular Kids'. I can't lie it was fun and was better than any of the scenarios I had envisioned. Over the next week or so, I think I had some of the best times at school. Hanging out and getting closer to both the popular kids and Leonard and his friends. Feeling included and laughing with actual human beings was amazing and in my mind nothing could've ruined that. I was invited to group chats and I was actually texting and talking normally I felt my anxiety towards them get better by the day and my stutter was a little better. For a week I felt over the moon and I actually had something to look forward to at school. However, it was Monday again; the day I dreaded. Maria was coming back to school. Despite not mentioning it, the thought of talking to Maria haunted my brain. I had been thinking a ton about what to say and how to say it. I even tried to make a list, but the number of crumbled papers in my trash increased by the day. The number of scenarios for what could happen was driving me crazy and I needed it to go perfectly. I had rehearsed the conversation for a week now, but I didn't feel the slightest bit confident about it.

"Should I just be honest and trust our friendship? Should I just ask her nicely and just agree with whatever she says?" All those questions flooded my mind and I was on the verge of losing my mind.

Sleeping was out of the question since I could feel my heart burst out of my chest and the whispers coming from my mind were too loud. With every passing hour, I could feel my heart beat faster and my mind go crazier and by the time I heard my alarm, I started going into panic mode and I could hear my heart beating. As I stared at my reflection, I kept saying how it was going to be alright and how I should entrust our bond.

The journey to school was as awkward with my mum trying to talk to me but I was too lost in my thoughts that I answered late or flat out didn't notice them. I don't think she understood that I was not up for talking and it nearly ended in an argument about how I was a disrespectful child and how I should respect my mum; the usual stuff. My brain was already flooding with thoughts so this little argument didn't stick very much. I already had enough on my mind.

I texted Maria and asked where we should meet and she told me to meet after school by the football pitch.

"After school?? I don't think I'd actually survive till then." I wondered standing there staring blankly at my phone.

Feeling someone tap me on my shoulder suddenly, I nearly dropped my phone on the ground.

"Edward, are you okay?" I looked around and saw Emma.

Wiping my face with my hand, I answered "Yeah,...for now at least."

She took one look at me and wasn't convinced and took a peak at my phone. "Ohhhh, are you going to do it?" She asked.

"I'm not going to do anything, all I want is for us to just talk," "Maybe it would turn out to be one big misunderstanding and we'd work it out?" I added. "Right???" At that point I was feeling a mix of panic and delusion.

She stared at me with her eyes wide open. "Edward, you need to calm down." She said that pulling my phone out of my hand and helping me sit down. She started talking calmly trying to reduce my tension and all but even Emma's talking couldn't help that time and I guess she felt it too since she told me we can just sit in silence until class starts. I nodded hoping not to have offended her. After that, the periods before the break went in a blur or at least I thought so. I was pretty sure I had blacked out a lot, but I didn't really care since as much as I wanted the day to end I also didn't want to. I was too lost in my mind that I didn't notice that it was already lunch time. I didn't want to move or leave. Hoping for some miracle to happen that I didn't even know, I sat there just blankly waiting.

"Are you coming with or?" It was Bradford. I looked at him and before I could open my mouth and answer, Emma replied,

"No Edward and I have something we need to discuss so we'll meet you guys later."

"Sure, if you need anything you just let me know" Bradford looking at me.

I nodded awkwardly and half smiled. I didn't know what we'd do now since I wasn't in the mood to joke around or anything, but Emma told me she would just read her book and if I wanted to talk, she'd be there. I felt so rude abusing her kindness like that and I also didn't want her to think I'm a fragile person or something so I gathered my breath and as much as I could of mind and I initiated a conversation. She looked surprised and chuckled a little. Having a confused look on my face, I shrugged asking what I said. She was still chuckling and replied "You didn't notice asking me What book is the title instead of the title of the book?"

Well I guess I didn't gather my thoughts or myself well enough since I was spouting out nonsense without even noticing. My face turned as red as a tomato and I covered my face with my hands. She was still chuckling but stopped and just started talking about the book. Honestly talking together did actually help and I was starting to have more confidence and belief in myself and the whole situation. By the end of lunch, I was actually starting to be more focused and less lost in thought. I don't know why but I got the feeling that our friendship was actually strong and we would actually work it out. I was actually smiling again and my humor returned a little.

"Wow you seem like a whole different person now," "What changed in a few minutes?" Emma asked with a grin from side to side.

"Well I guess books are a remedy." I answered

She rolled her eyes and looked at me.

"I'm just glad you're feeling confident." She replied.

After lunch, I felt like a fully different person and I started talking again with Leonard and the others again. The more I talked with them, the more hope I felt flow through me. Don't get me wrong, the panic didn't go away but it was better.

A while later, the final bell finally rang. At last it was finally the end of the day and the moment I waited for was here. I stood up, packed my things and slowly made my way to the pitch feeling a ton of hope and trying to ignore the whispers in my mind. My palms were still sweaty and I could feel my heart beat through my chest, but I was still pushing through and trying to only think about the best case scenario. A few minutes after waiting at the pitch, I finally saw Maria coming towards me. I waved at her, held my head high and tried to look as confident as possible.

"Hello! How are you feeling now Maria? Better I hope." I tried to start the conversation as friendly and as normal as possible.

"Hi, is there something specific you want?"

"straight to the point, well okay," "I just wanted to know why did you ghost me that day?"

"What day?" she replied raising an eye brow.

"You seriously don't remember? The day we were supposed to meet at the café YOU like? How can you forget something like that?" "Did I do something to annoy you or did I offend you in any way?" "If you're mad at me just tell me, and if I did. I'm sorry. I would never ever mean to hurt you or annoy you." I replied.

"It's not that. it's just....." she paused then.

"Just what?" I was eager to know more.

"It's just ..... that my friends wanted to hang out then and I couldn't refuse." She explained.

"Even then, you're free to do whatever you want but atleast tell me so I don't look stupid, I wouldn't have minded believe me."

"I guess.." she answered.

"Well I promise I apologize for anything and if I did make it seem like you can't talk to me."

"Edward, it's not that."

"Then what? i've been looking for a reason why you did what you did and I thought I hurt you or annoyed you."

"you are just not like them. They understand me better than you do and I just prefer them better."

"so everything we've been through together and talked about before coming here meant nothing?"

She laughed, "What things? Edward listen as much as we were friends I don't think we ever had anything in common and sometime I even felt like you were just there." "Just because we said something's and made some promises doesn't mean that it's all true you know."

I stood there my eyes wide open and my mouth wide open with shock.

"so that's the end you just don't want to talk anymore? I'm sorry for ever causing that annoyance to you. Im sorry for actually wanting to be real and caring..."

"That's enough." She cut me off. "you were just exhausting to deal with. I hope you don't take it personally"

As soon as those words left her mouth, I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces.

She turned around to leave and I just told her "I'm sorry....." holding back tears, I watched her as she turned around and left while holding back a waterfall of tears. Sadly, a single drop manage to drop from my eye. I wiped off that tear and with that I gathered myself enough hoping not to break down at school and left.

"Edward wait." I heard someone yell. It was Emma. I just ignored her and kept on walking. She tried to stop me and I tried to keep my cool and not yell or explode at her.

"...I'm sorry...E.mma, but u really don't... what to talk right now." She could hear my saddened voice and saw how I was holding back tears and so she let me leave.

I left school trying to contain myself and not explode. Luckily for me, my mum was there to pick me up so I just dashed into the car, sat down and drowned my head in my bag.

"Is something wrong dear?" my mum asked.

I didn't reply just shook my head to signal I was fine and hoped to end the conversation there. She obviously didn't understand that and kept pressuring into telling her if something was wrong. I get that she's my mother and she just wanted to check on me but I just wanted to be left alone. By the end she just left me alone and drove me home. My brother had practice and my dad was with him so it was just us at the house. As soon as I entered through the door, I rushed into my room and locked the door. That waterfall of tears that I was containing didn't come out. I didn't feel the need to cry, I was just steaming and my breathing was getting faster and faster like I was in a fight or flight

response. Then I felt more blood rush to my brain and I felt the temperature of my head rise exponentially. I just looked in the mirror and wondered what was that burst of confidence and hope then was it not real. Was the miracle I hoped for nit actually happening and I realised that I just drowned myself in delusion; hoping for someone to care about me when it was never going to happen. I started turning redder and redder with every passing thought. Suddenly I just punched my wardrobe so hard I almost broke the sliding door.

My mum instantly burst through the door and started yelling, at that instant the waterfall held back finally got out. I just started balling my eyes. She rushed over to my side and hugged me hoping for me to feel better. Then at a moment of weakness, I told her everything.