

Chapter 2

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The School Clubs

Thursday, September 22nd:

Waking up the next day, I was devoid of any sense of hope I had that I had the day before. My brain was also trying to process so many thoughts at once like why didn't anyone sit next to me or whether I had already left a bad impression. I also wondered whether Emma would talk to me again or not. Sitting in my lonely seat in class I stared at the empty seat next to me hoping a kind soul would just take it but to no avail.

"Why didn't anyone take it? Am I that bad or is there anything wrong with me?" I could feel my brain making up excuses but none made sense.

"Hey, Edwardd!!" A familiar voice yelled disrupting my line of thought.

I glanced over to see Emma with her hopeful smile. Her greetings were so warm and friendly like we were friends for years. Her broad smile made me forget about all those thoughts filling my mind. I didn't know what was so unique about her that made me like this or whether I was just desperate for any sense of attention. Either way her presence had only left me with a smile and a warm feeling. After that warm greeting, she excused herself to go and talk with her friends. A few moments later, a familiar face walked through the door and smiled at me; it was that football player from the day before. I was looking over with my annoyed face as usual and he just waved at me. My despise for

people like him could never be described in words, I just turned my face and ignored it. As the teacher entered the class, I felt the empty seat calling me again and my head filled up with these thoughts again. I was so in my head that I dozed off a couple of times while the teacher was talking. She actually tried to catch me off guard a few times, but every time I managed to catch myself. Maintaining my focus was nearly impossible due to the loudness of my thoughts.

By lunch, I had dozed off about a hundred times and by the time I got to the lunch hall and met up with Maria, I had completely lost my mind. Maria glanced at me and then asked "So, what's on your mind, Edward?"

The worry in her tone was genuine. I just shrugged and told her how loud my thoughts were and how much I yearned for a few friends here.

"What about that nice girl you were talking to this morning?" She asked. "Emma? No way she's just nice to everyone and greets everyone" "Plus, I don't think she's that interested." I replied.

Maria stood there for a few moments scratching her head and then asked, "What about Leanord; that guy from our old school?"

"We've literally never talked before, I can't just go up to him and ask," "Do you know how awkward that'd go? Also, I don't think I handle a full conversation with him as you know why." I replied.

"I mean he joined the physics club, you could talk to him there," she explained.

"Wait, we have school clubs???" I asked my mouth wide open.

"Yeah, the teacher told us about them this morning, and people started signing up already. I saw him sign up on my way here."

"I don't know if I'm ready for this commitment already."

She kept pestering me and pushing me to do it until I finally agreed.

"Are you sure you won't back out?" she asked raising her eyebrows.

"I promise I'll try, you know I can't go back on a promise I made" I answered.

She still gave me that doubtful look and suggested that she come with me to make sure I go forth with it. On my way to class I caught a glance of Emma and her friend group. They looked like a fun bunch chatting, laughing, and having fun. Right then I looked hope and sorrow filling my eyes dreaming about having people who would stick by my side no matter what. The Physics lesson after lunch was so tedious and boring, I looked around the class and everyone was just struggling. I'm a high-level physics nerd so it

really didn't feel like much to me at least.

As soon as the bell rang, Maria was already waiting outside the class for me. Using my sneaky moves, I tried to go the other way, but she grabbed my arm and started pulling me towards the school gym where they were recruiting for clubs. The place was packed so much it was starting to be hard to breathe and I felt myself collide with people with the smallest movement, I couldn't handle such crowded spaces at all.

"Thank god I had Maria with me right?" I thought.

Well, as soon as I looked around for Maria, she wasn't there. I started scouring the crowd for a bit, hoping to spot her but to no use. Calling and texting were also in vain. With each passing second I hoped she'd be here, I was starting to feel my breathing tremble and my heart beat so fast I was about to pass out. I squeezed through the crowd, hoping to advance to the exit and escape this torture but the more people I passed the more my chest tightened and my head started to spin. Passing out seemed inevitable so I pushed through till I found a bench and sat down hoping to catch my breath again. While sitting down I noticed a guy say he couldn't accept any more students due to the lack of Physics tutors. The student was practically on his hands and knees begging to join saying how he needed to pass physics this year and explained how truly desperate he was. Ignoring the scene was my first option, but the look of desperation shattered my heart and nearly drove my heart to cry. I got up and went over to the stand and requested to join the club as a tutor. The club organizer accepted without hesitation. While filling out the forms for the club I saw a shadow cover the form. I glimpsed over to see who it was and it was Leonard!

"You're supposed to be my Physics tutor for today." He explained awkwardly.

I glanced over at the club leader and he just shrugged and smiled.

"Out of everyone it was Leonard, huh" I wondered. "Life is poetic isn't it."

On our way to the library, we chatted a bit hoping to make this thing less awkward.

"You better go easy on me." He said with a chuckle.

"Nah, I promise to make you suffer," I said sarcastically.

The first lesson went great we both thoroughly enjoyed it laughing and making jokes while also being as productive as possible. It was some of the best time I had in a long time, and the best part is that it didn't feel awkward after all. We covered the basic principles of kinematics, it should've taken about 30 minutes, but since we were slacking around most of the time, it took about an hour. Sadly, all the fun time must

come to an end and I had to leave as it was getting late. I packed my stuff, said goodbye, and left. On my way out, I was grinning from ear to ear and jumping of joy when out of nowhere someone collide with me and knocked over my stuff.

“Hey! Watch it, you idiot!” I yelled my face turning slightly red.

I immediately started collecting my stuff again. “I’m so sorry, man I seriously didn’t mean to.” I peeked to check the identity of the idiot who knocked my stuff and to my surprise, it was that guy from the football team .

“Let me help you man.” He offered in a sorry tone. He tried to help me, but he hit my head by accident.

“Oh, man! I’m really sorr..” he was about to apologize again when I cut him off.

“That’s enough!!!” I yelled I could feel my blood boil at this point and just lost it at him.

“All you jocks are the same insufferable assholes!”

He stood back for a second with his eyes wide open and his face shocked and I packed my stuff and rushed out. The look of shock and sorry on his face didn’t affect me for a second. I whole heartedly didn’t feel a single ounce of sorry for what I had done.

On the journey home, I couldn’t brush the look on his face and how awful he must’ve felt. I started questioning whether maybe I was too harsh in him and my mood changed from anger to regret, but at the same time my life has always been ruined by people like him. I couldn’t him express any empathy as the horrid memories from my childhood played over and over again.

At around 5, I was back home finally. With the first step I took inside I had an odd feeling. The second I entered my room i heard my mum yell with her annoyed tone.

“Where have you been? You should’ve been here an hour ago.”

I explained how I wanted to help out a few classmates and tutor them in Physics.

“You’re wasting time on other people when you should’ve been studying already!” She continued on yelling with her face showing no desire to hear me out.

“Mum, it’s only the 2nd day I’m not behind on any work and I hoped that I could make a few friends.”I tried to reason with her, but as usual she scoffed and told me how dinner was in the kitchen.

I asked about dads whereabouts and she started mumbling and ignored me, so I just knocked it off and went to eat.

While eating, I saw my brother in the living room looking upset. “James, what’s wrong? Did something happen or what?”

He didn't answer and just told me to leave him alone. I complied and just went to my room to continue eating and then study. A while later when I was studying that night I heard my dad come home and I instantly heard my mum rush downstairs to meet him. Their loud screams echoed through the halls and even I could hear them clearly. A few moments later, I heard my brother scream. He rushed into my room and closed the door behind him. He had a distressed look on his face and was sobbing violently. I tried my hardest to soothe him and calm him down, I even offered to let him stay with me that night and he agreed. These fights were quite recurrent in our house and with every one my brothers episodes got worse and worse. We never really talked about it together, but I had always stepped up and tried to help him. I felt it as my duty as after all I was the sole reason for these fights initially. It was around 10 when my brother stood up and was leaving. His saddened and distrust look always broke my heart and I truly wanted to cheer him up as he takes a while to go back to normal. Suddenly, I felt a light bulb sparkle in my head; I spent the rest of the night drawing him a picture of his favourite TV show character. The process was exhausting and took a long time but if it makes him better then I don't mind.

The next morning, I woke up a little early to catch my brother before he got to school to give him his picture.

"Good morning James!!" I greeted him with a hug and a wide smile. I could still feel his distress despite him masking it well.

"Well, I have a surprise for you!" I kept trying to heighten his suspense for it.

I gave him the drawing and his gloomy look turned around for a moment. He thanked me and instantly ran over to hug me. I hugged him back tight and then we did our signature fist pump.

He put it up on his shelf and rushed out to catch his school bus. My brother usually leaves about an hour earlier than me, so I had to wake up extra early, but his smile although brief was truly worth all the work.

During the ride to school, Mum was silent, her face set in a frown. Any attempt at small talk was met with a scoff or an icy stare, so I gave up and stared out the window, my thoughts drifting back to James. About 20 minutes later, I was finally set free from that depressing ride, but I couldn't shake off the odd feeling of what happened last night. For some reason, the incident just stuck with me even though I am quite well at brushing off those incidents.

Desperate to talk to anyone, I texted Maria hoping we'd talk, but she hadn't answered my messages from yesterday. I looked for her everywhere and I finally spotted her by the library with some of her new friends. I waved for her to come and see me and she excused herself from her friends.

"Hey!" she greeted me with the same excited tone.

I greeted her back and asked about the day before and why she abandoned me and didn't say a word.

"Oh! A few of my friends dragged me to join their fashion club and I just couldn't say no." "You know how much I've wanted to become a designer," she added.

"So, you just left me and didn't tell me a word?" I asked questioning whether it was right to ask her.

"I didn't think I'd take long and by the time I was done, it was late and I felt awkward to text you. I'm really sorry."

I couldn't stay mad at her she's my friend and she did have a good excuse; it was extremely packed the day before so I accepted her apology. After that, I got to class and sat down and was still concerned about my brother. James is 4 years younger than me and doesn't have many friends. To add on, most of the people in his class hate him for being different than them. He reminds me of how my middle school was for me and I hoped that he wouldn't even get nightmares about how I suffered. While being lost in my thoughts, Leonard greeted me and put his bag next to me. He started chatting and actually introduced me to his friends Ivon Kraus and Randy Marshel. They looked like quite a fun bunch. However, I wanted to scream of joy, the empty seat next to me was finally full. The conversation was a bit awkward since as usual stutter a lot while talking to new people, but I managed.

It was around then when our Maths teacher walked in. He looked really young, like really young. After he greeted us, he started saying how a new student was transferring to our class. Suddenly, I saw the jock guy from yesterday enter our class and introduce himself.

"Hi, I'm Bradford Rowan, but you can call me Brad."

My jaw dropped and I felt my eyes wide open as he said those words. He smiled over at me and then sat beside one of his friends.

At lunch, I sat with Leonard and his friends and I wholeheartedly enjoyed it. We kept talking about how weird our Maths teacher was. He kept mentioning his childhood and

it was just like a sob fest. I know talking shit about your teacher wasn't the most mature thing to do, but it was quite fun. While talking, I found out how they all aspired to go to medical school one day and they all loved Biology a lot. I honestly really enjoyed their talk about the human brain and they made it sound fun for once. A few moments later, I saw someone rush over to where we were sitting and wave at me. It was Emma! I excused myself for a minute and I asked about her day.

"It's fine and all, but I have some news that you'll really like."

I had a raised eyebrow and then she added "I'll be joining your tutoring Physics group tomorrow!"

I was shocked and I had a weird stutter all of a sudden. "Oh...! I'm reall..really looking forward to it!" I explained.

She just had that shimmer in her eyes and her excited tone. My hands were suddenly sweating more and more and I couldn't stop thinking about my next tutoring session. As I sat back with Leonard and the others, they teased me about how nervous I was talking and how I was using a lot of hand gestures just to mask it.

"I wasn't that nervous was I?" I asked.

"You definitely were. Do you like her or something?" Asked Randy teasingly.

"WHAT? We've talked for like 3 times." I added.

"Sure," said Randy then they all laughed. "Ohhh! You were teasing me, I see it now."

Randy nodded and we all laughed after that. The rest of the day went by quickly. We all left together that day and kept chatting till we got to the bus stop. "Well, I'll see you tomorrow Leonard," I told them all goodbye then went on my way home.

As soon as I got home, I dashed into James' room immediately. I found him sitting at his desk, staring blankly at his homework. His shoulders were slumped, and his eyes looked distant, a shadow of the cheerful kid he used to be.

"James, what's wrong? Did something happen at school?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady.

He glanced at me, then looked away, muttering, "Just leave me alone."

I sighed, feeling a pang of helplessness. "You know you can tell me anything, right? I'm not like Mum and Dad. I know how hard it can get."

He stayed silent, his fingers gripping the pencil so tightly his knuckles turned white. I sat down beside him, lowering my voice. "Promise me that if anything ever happens, you'll tell me, alright?"

James nodded, but his eyes remained downcast. I could tell he was holding back, and it broke my heart.

Around the same time, mum called for dinner. He rushed downstairs for dinner while I went to my room and changed then joined them. The way mum and dad talked at dinner was like nothing ever happened. That was their usual behavior they fight a lot and then act like nothing ever happens. The rest of the night I spent pacing back and forth thinking about a plan for tomorrow and I felt my hands get sweaty again. At that moment, I decided to just go with the flow tomorrow and hope for the best.