

The next day, Daniel is once again at the same table he usually sits in, staring shamefully at the doodle that earned him a two-hour detention yesterday. Just hearing the sound of other people talking and being able to walk around after spending two hours in a dark, smelly classroom where the only sounds were the slow constant drips from the ceiling to the distant tapping of the teacher's fingernail against the mahogany desk. If he did so much as breathe too loudly, he'd be threatened with another detention the next day.

He shakes his head. It's over now, no use dwelling on the past. He surveys the cafeteria in an attempt to take his mind off the traumatizing experience. Many different people are talking, eating, and laughing. And yet again, he's all alone. It doesn't help that his lunch tray is practically empty. A few sad-looking carrot sticks sit forlornly next to a tiny piece of bread. He can't even bring himself to touch it.

Daniel looks up and sees the same girl sitting at the table across from him. Judging by the cover, it's the exact same book as yesterday as well. Realistically, Daniel shouldn't even be looking in her direction, considering how badly he fumbled the bag. But something just... draws him to her. No matter how many times he tries to look away or block her out of his mind, she always comes back. He can't get the thought of her out of his mind. Strangely, he barely knows her. Before he realizes, he stands up. His feet move forward towards her before his mind can catch up. His mind keeps telling him, *This is a terrible idea. You should stop.*

His behind is once again in the seat next to hers. *Too late.*

"Hey," Daniel greets. The girl once again tears her focus away from the book and onto him. "I had detention yesterday. It sucked. God, I hate the lunch monitor."

"She's the worst, isn't she?"

She can speak! Daniel is stunned into silence for a few moments. He *isn't* a total loser after all.

"I know! I got detention for drawing on the tables AFTER they confiscated my art book. Like, what the hell am I supposed to do?"

The girl smiles at him, exhaling through her nose to let out a laugh. "One time, she gave me detention for reading this book during independent reading because it's not on the 'approved books list'."

"Imagine power tripping on a bunch of 14-year-olds."

"God forbid she ever has kids." She jokes.

"That IF she has kids. She's like 80 years old."

"That's true." She giggles. Daniel offers a hand for a shake.

"I'm Daniel, by the way."

"Eliza. Nice to meet you."

Daniel looks at the book she was reading. "I know I asked you this yesterday, but—"

"Oh, this book?" She asks, lifting up the cover so Daniel can see it. "It's about the origins and interpretations of tarot cards."

"Oh, I see," Daniel nods along, pretending he knows exactly what she means. He doesn't have a single clue what she's mumbling about, but she seemed to like it when he pays attention to her, so might as well keep going. He points to a photo of a card of a man wearing tattered clothes, a bindle and his dog standing proudly over a cliff. "Who's this little dude, a hobo or something."

"That's The Fool card. It represents new beginnings and new adventures. It's all about how open the potential for the future is."

“What’s your favorite card?” Daniel asks.

“Major or minor arcana?”

Daniel simply stares at her with a spaced-out look. “I’m assuming you mean major arcana. It has to be The High Priestess,” She explains, flipping to the page with the High Priestess card. A majestic lady in blue robes sits on a throne between a black pillar on the left and a white pillar on the right. The black one has the letter B on it while the white one has the letter J. “She represents knowledge and introspection. She reminds me that the mind can be a powerful thing.”

“And the letters?”

“The B stands for Boaz, which means ‘In his strength’. The J stands for Jachin, which means ‘He will establish’. It serves as a juxtaposition for things in this world, like light and dark.”

Daniel is simply nodding along with what she’s saying. He doesn’t really care. He’s just happy this girl is speaking to him with more interest this time. In fact, she almost seems like she’s into him this time. The way she keeps looking into his eyes, edging closer to him ever so slightly on the lunch bench, her hand grazing his on the table. She seems... flirtatious? Maybe? Either way, this is the most attention he’s ever received from a girl, and it’s a great feeling. It probably also is a part of his imagination, but every time Eliza moves towards him, he swears the air gets a little colder around them.

Eliza looks up at the clock. “Oh no, I forgot I had to talk to a teacher about something. But we’ll talk later, okay?”

Waving goodbye, she leaves the cafeteria. Daniel looks up at one of the ceiling lights.

“Does this mean... I’m finally gonna get a girlfriend?” He smirks to himself. “Sweet.”