

URINE TROUBLE

by

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INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Middle-school students fight to stay awake as their teacher, MRS. BELDOH (30s), drones on about US geography. Most pretend to listen, but two stand out. HAL (13) sits upright and vigilant, ready to raise his hand at a moment's notice; he has a round face and rounder glasses. JOHNNY (13) doodles in his notebook, oblivious; he's covered in spiky hair and rubber bracelets.

The room is tidy: Desks are arranged in rows, each with a name taped to them; backpacks sit in cubbies; and posters lie flat and straight against the walls. Upcoming homework assignments are listed on the board next to a picture of the current student of the month. HAL is printed in big letters underneath the picture.

MRS. BELDOH  
Who can tell me the name of the  
largest mountain range in the US?

Hal's hand shoots up. Mrs. Beldoh points at him.

HAL  
The Rocky Mountains! And the Andes  
are the biggest in the world.

Mrs. Beldoh smiles at him. Her glasses slide down her nose a tad.

MRS. BELDOH  
Correct and correct. Now who can  
tell me which state is home to the  
Golden Gate Bridge?

Hal raises his hand again. Mrs. Beldoh ignores him and moves around her desk to stand in front of the class. Hal doesn't get the hint—he can hardly contain himself.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
I need someone else to answer.

Mrs. Beldoh fixes her glasses and looks out at her students. Her gaze lands on Johnny. Her voice turns condescending.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
Johnny. Why don't you answer this  
question?

Johnny doesn't look up. Hal lowers his hand, snickering.

Mrs. Beldoh walks up to Johnny's desk. Still nothing. She slaps her palm down on the page he's doodling on. Now he glances up, surprised.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
Welcome back. Tell me: Where is the  
Golden Gate Bridge?

JOHNNY  
Uhh... Chicago?

MRS. BELDOH  
No!  
(without taking her eyes  
off Johnny)  
Hal, can you tell Johnny the  
correct answer?

HAL  
(smug)  
California.

MRS. BELDOH  
See, that's someone who pays  
attention. I'll see YOU after  
class.

Mrs. Beldoh withdraws her hand and returns to the front of the room. Johnny looks down at his drawings, now slightly crumpled. He doesn't look up again.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Throngs of students line the sides of the hallway. Most play games on their phones or blather about their sports games and week-long crushes. Others stand in front of their locker, trying to remember which textbooks they need.

Johnny slinks through the crowds, eyes scanning every face. No one seems to be watching him. He slips into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

The stalls are littered with the middle-school version of graffiti: four-letter words they just learned, hearts with initials, drawings of dicks. Unknown substances are smeared on the tiled floor. All the dispensers are out of soap.

Johnny brushes past a kid who just finished peeing—no flushing or hand-washing for him—and locks himself in the furthest stall. He puts down the toilet lid and sits on it with his feet crossed. He pulls a vape out of his pocket.

He takes a hit, then exhales. Again. And again. He lets the vapor gather in front of him.

After a few minutes, he gets off the toilet and lifts the lid. He lays toilet paper on the seat, pulls down his pants, and sits back down. As he does so, Hal and BRU (14) walk in; Hal's laughing at his own joke. Bru is menacing: He's bigger than Johnny and Hal combined and has a crewcut to go with his hard face.

HAL

Good times.

Johnny perks up at the voice. He knows who it is—and, more importantly, who he's with. He doesn't move.

Bru heads to a urinal, while Hal enters the stall next to Johnny's. Hal unbuckles his pants and sits down.

Now's his chance. Johnny slowly zips up his pants as he stands. The seat clatters. He holds his breath. Hal looks over and recognizes Johnny's shoes.

HAL (CONT'D)

Look what we have here.

Having finished his business, Bru strides over.

BRU

What?

HAL

Johnny's been waiting for us.

Johnny is still holding his breath. He looks around. Nowhere to hide. Nothing to swing. Johnny sees Bru's feet stop in front of his stall. Hal joins him a few seconds later.

HAL (CONT'D)

Are we going in or what?

BRU

Wait.

Johnny eyes the stall divider. Hal bends down and peeks up at Johnny.

HAL

There you are.

Now. Johnny leaps onto the toilet, then pulls himself onto the top of the stall divider. He doesn't look before he jumps toward the urinals.

Bru darts over, tackling Johnny before he hits the ground. They slide on the tiles. Johnny comes to a stop in a pool of urine. His back is soaked.

Bru leaps to his feet, grabs the neck of Johnny's shirt, and wrenches him up. Hal laughs as he struts over.

HAL (CONT'D)  
Nice moves, idiot.

Bru pushes Johnny against the wall, hard.

HAL (CONT'D)  
Can I punch him?

BRU  
Not yet.

HAL  
Aw, come on. You said you'd let me punch him.

BRU  
Shut up.

Johnny looks down at his hands. They're clenched. Uh oh: He's still holding the vape. Bru follows his gaze.

BRU (CONT'D)  
Open your fists.

JOHNNY  
Wha—

BRU  
You heard me.

Bru pushes Johnny harder into the wall. He bares his teeth and leans in. Johnny unclenches his shaking hands. The vape falls and clatters. More laughs. Bru lets go of Johnny and picks it up. Johnny collapses, breathing heavily.

HAL  
This just gets better and better.

Hal jabs the air.

HAL (CONT'D)  
Time for a beatdown?

Bru seethes, but controls himself.

BRU  
Don't try me.

Hal stops laughing. Bru goes to the sink, fixes his shirt, and washes his hands. His back is turned.

HAL  
What should I do?

Hal watches Johnny as Bru dries his hands.

BRU  
You know what to do.

Bru tosses the vape at Hal, then leaves before he can respond.

Hal kicks Johnny's shoes.

HAL  
Get up.

Johnny ignores him, taking stock of his injuries. Hal squats.

HAL (CONT'D)  
Hey. I'm talking to you.

Johnny frowns at him.

JOHNNY  
Leave me alone.

HAL  
Have it your way.

Hal grabs Johnny's arms and manhandles him toward the door. Johnny squirms but can't break free.

JOHNNY  
Let go!

HAL  
Wait till Mrs. Beldoh finds out  
what you did.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Mrs. Beldoh erases algebra problems from a whiteboard. A half-eaten salad rests on her desk. She's alone.

Hal holds onto Johnny with one hand and raps the open door with the other. Johnny tugs against his grip, to no avail. Hal sticks his head through. His voice turns soft and high.

HAL  
Mrs. Beldoh! Guess what?

Mrs. Beldoh looks over, smiles, waits. Hal drags Johnny through the doorway and pulls the vape out of his pocket.

HAL (CONT'D)  
I caught Johnny vaping in the  
bathroom.

Hal beams at her. Johnny shakes his head.

JOHNNY  
It's not mine.

HAL  
I wouldn't lie to you, Mrs. Beldoh.

Mrs. Beldoh comes up to them.

MRS. BELDOH  
I know you wouldn't, Hal. Thank you  
for telling me.

She sticks out her palm. Hal hands over the vape. She sets it  
on her desk. She doesn't look at Johnny.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
You can go now, Hal. I'll take care  
of this.

Hal sneaks a haughty grin at Johnny as he stalks out. Johnny  
fumes.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
I can't say I'm surprised, Johnny.  
You're never up to anything good.

Johnny stares at the ground, refusing to make eye contact.  
Mrs. Beldoh steps closer, forcing him to look up.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
How's detention for a month sound?  
I know you love spending time with  
me.

When Johnny doesn't answer, she bends down, hands on knees.

MRS. BELDOH (CONT'D)  
Well. I'm going to call your  
parents. Let's see what they think.

Johnny glances toward the door as she grabs the phone. Before  
she can finish dialing, he takes off.

END.