**5 rules of high school**

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Casual dress. Backpack on shoulder. Inside? Books - loads of them; literally *loads*. All the books; physics, chemistry and biology crammed up in that space of the backpack that yet holds the pens and the copies-8 of them. Seems like the bag will burst, and with every movement as the bag swings from the left to right, the books wobble, as if asphyxiated, and pleading mercy for their dear lives.

That’s how the first day of high school started.

“What’s the big deal?” You may ask. Yeah. No big deal. Everyone starts college. So did this…. Whatever guy is carrying this backpack. The thing is- it’s not the backpack that he is carrying. It’s his dreams and aspirations, and the hopes that have been invested on him. The moment you put your foot inside the school premises, you are laden with more of those dreams, the dreams of you teachers and high school, though no one knows you personally yet. And he knows it too, standing amid buildings that stretch as far as you can see. (Not *literally,* though). And to have a senior who had gone to high school would have been bliss. Too bad, he is the firstborn. “Parents?” you may ask. Come on! They are ancient. What would *they* possibly know about high school and stuff?

Jungle of people. Literally. He knows no one in the school. Then he sees the teacher who accepted him into the school; the one who took his interview. He greets the teacher, but the teacher is too busy and does not notice him. Befuddled, he begins walking to whatever place his confused steps take him to. Walking and moving on slowly, he bumps into someone, a gigantic creature with a turned down mouth and a walkie-talkie in his hand. He is paralyzed with fear. “This must be one of those legendary creatures everyone talks about- the DIs,” he thinks. “Now I am doomed.” A squeak occurs from his mouth, “Sorry. Please excuse me!” with a tone of pleading and mortal fear. “It’s okay, *babu”.* The DI speaks, “Where are you headed to?” Amazed, he says “Block C Room no 24. But I can’t seem to find it anywhere.” The DI says “Come with me, I will show you.” And the mouth hints a faint rim of smile as the DI leads him to his classroom and even wishes him luck for school. The first thing he learned, he makes a mental note, is that *DI s are not so frightening as people tell they are.*

He enters into the classroom, and sees a dozen faces; all new. He is confused where to sit, and a friendly-looking guy beckons him to come towards. He moves towards the guy and dumps his bag beside him in the corner at the empty spot. “Hello!” he exchanges pleasantries. They go on to talk about what their names were and how much marks they got in their SLC. A weird looking guy walks in and sits beside them without a word. They exchange cold glances. The friendly one starts babbling about where he came from and how he always stood at the top of class in school. The weird guy rolls his eyes and walks away, along with his bag. The classroom is slowly filled up and the empty space is soon occupied by a girl they fail to notice as they are too busy bragging about themselves. Then the teacher walks in and everyone stands. They stand too. *Now* is it when they see the girl. No, they still don’t talk to her.

The teacher starts talking about himself; how he was in college, how the previous batches of the students were a lot less noisy than the present ones and how much the school hoped from them. The students exchange looks concealing compressed laughter when the teacher blows his own praise out of proportion and proceeds to tell them that he was once invited by NASA to work on a new theory but he did not go, as he was too busy tending to a *beautiful* flower garden in front of his house. What he completely misses, though, is that NASA was actually a pre-school and the garden was the neighbor’s house. (Just kidding on that part). Anyways, he tells them his name at the end; not the full name but a combination of his initials. And he adds a tag question; something related to physics that he can answer. But before he raises his hand, Mr. Frankie raises his and answers the question. Always remember, *it is a dog eat dog world, and people won’t think a second time before crushing and pulverizing you.*

Now is the time for lunch. The bell rings, but before that, someone from the backbench starts moaning, and yawning about how much hungry he was and how ruthless the school was because the lunch time should have been 2 hours instead of the currently provided 40 minutes. The class laughs and the backbencher is sent to see the principal. However, he bumps into the same backbencher in the cafeteria and tries to ignore the guy. But the guy greets him and nudges him into eating the samosas he claims to be “so small that you can put them in your ear”. He stands to see the menu and finds reasonable prices. Only after Mr. Backbencher brings him the samosas that he realizes the guy was correct. He proceeds to ask Mr. Backbencher how he knew about the samosas and Mr. Backbencher starts off by telling that he had a brother who read in the same school, and about all the teachers who taught in the school. He produces a sheet of paper which he claims to be writing on all day, as copies were too heavy and when Mr. Backbencher shows him the paper, all he can see is gibberish and doodles. They complain about the samosas and when he peers down at his plate after sometime, he sees that the samosas are gone! Then he realizes another thing. *Do not ever think that you are going to stand up with a full stomach when you leave canteen unless you eat more than a dish. All you leave with is a mouth that needs a dozen happy-dents and an empty wallet.*

The next thing they know as they enter classroom again is that their pencils are gone! No one stole them but they are literally lost! Nowhere to be found. And then he remembers a thought that was well too known to all in the school life, “Aakha jhimik, maal gayab!” The teacher for the next class enters now and they guffaw thinking about the poor soul who stole the pencil.