

# SG1: Point Five

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This book is a fan fiction dedicated to SG1, and all of those who have participated in this, directly or indirectly. Those of you who have followed my ‘I/Tulpa’ series, starting with “Not Here,” will probably find this a quaint departure from the usual adventure and debauchery, though I suspect you’ll find enough allusions that knowing the characters Jon and Loxy will at least give you a good chuckle. For those of you who have never met J@L, I highly recommend you start with ‘Not Here.’ You could, of course, start with any of the ‘I/Tulpa’ series, as SG1 characters have certainly influenced all of my writing, some more directly than others. Specifically, if you want more information on Tulpas, Wonderlands, or any of my other work, from the perspective of Jon and Loxy, I recommend ‘I/Tulpa: And the Worlds of Crossover. It is the first I/Tulpa story, divergent from ‘Not Here.’ Also, SG1 is in my cross over Trek fiction: Star Trek: Another Piece of the Action.

Where possible, I have added real life reports of what appears to be temporal anomalies. If you want more, and better written, I highly recommend ‘The Daemon,’ by Anthony Peake, as it is full of references. It is my personal belief, time travel happens all the time, and I live my life as if I am just one 1979 penny away from unraveling my entire world-line.

I assure you, there will be grammatical errors. I apologize in advance. I am working on doing better. I have marginally improved. Feel free to email me any corrections or complaints. My knowledge of SG1 trivia is not as sound as my Star Trek trivia. I am simply a modest fan, who finds himself caught up in the whirlwinds of imagination on a daily basis.

Sincerely

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## Chapter 1

Colonel Jack O'Neill, clone, teenager, high school student, found himself on the side of the building where students were allowed to smoke. He chastised himself for needing one, well aware of the dangers, but he just needed something to take the edge off. Contrary to popular belief, starting over isn't easy, even if everything is taken care of. Legally, on paper, if anyone dared to investigate, he was an emancipated teenager. In real life, his apartment was paid for by the Air Force, and he was just as independent as any adult. He had food, money, transportation, and if he needed anything, he had a direct line to a team that would bring a whole platoon to his rescue if he needed it. He could literally anything he wanted, from traveling the world, do just sitting at home and playing video games and drinking beer. He didn't need or have to go to school. He wanted it.

One of his issues was that he wasn't fitting in as well as he had imagined he would. Oh, he had made friends. That was easy enough, but his concerns were not the shared concerns of his peers. Though most people saw him as reservoir of calm, on the inside, he was on edge. A plane in the sky might spark as it turned into the sun and he found himself staring, wanting to see an alien vessel. If he allowed himself to watch the news, he read conspiracy into it, looking for alien threats. He had to stop watching the news. He wanted a beer most nights, but had decided alcohol would have to wait. Cigarettes, however, well, he wasn't going to change everything about his life! He made an effort to talk to folks, walk with folks, because being by himself was too easy, but it was a balancing act, of not being too clingy, both real and outwardly perceived, to compensate for such a huge change. Though he had access to an Air Force psychologist, he had not availed himself of the resource.

He finished his cigarette and headed to class. He witnessed a student walking with his head down, somehow navigating the crowded halls without bumping people. He walked as if his thoughts were so heavy he could barely hold his head up. He wasn't going to avoid the collision with the football team, as they were purposely angling towards him.

Lakeisha, varsity Cheerleader, caught up with Jack in the hall. She even hugged him.

"Hey, Jack," Lakeisha said.

"Hey. Excuse me a moment," Jack said.

Lakeisha held onto him, delaying his exit as she traced his look back to the impending drama. "You can't help everyone, Jack."

"It's not everyone, it's..."

"He's weird. He deserves it," Lakeisha said.

"How does being weird translate into deserving one's ass kicked?" Jack asked.

"Look, I am not a fan of bullying, but he brings it on himself," Lakeisha said.

"By not complying with social norms?" Jack began.

"No, seriously. He's weird. Like psychotic weird. He's the person who might come in and blow up the school kind of weird," Lakeisha said.

"I don't see that," Jack said. "But, let's say you're right. He's off balance. Will being bullied make him better, or cause him to seek power over those who torture him. Excuse me."

Jack could hear the conversation in progress even before he made his approach. "You should look where you're going." "Why? Have your eyes quit working?" "Because maybe if you

looked where you were going, you could have avoided us..." "We share this space, there is no way to completely avoid you..." "Maybe if I kicked your ass you'd do more to avoid me..." "Look, you're not going to intimidate me. I am not going to run scared. I am also not going to fight you. So, if you're going to beat me up, get it over with. But when you're done, I am going to get up, brush myself off, and be right back here in your face, and you'll have the same problem you got now, which is you're too stupid to come up with an alternative solution to perceived differences other than physical coercion."

The aggressor reached out as if to grab the target, but Jack stepped between them, facing the aggressor. "Hands off, Jake."

"Stay out of this, Jack," Jake said.

"There is no this. Well, there is a this, but if you walk away, there is no this. Kind of like magic," Jack said.

"You really want to take me on?" Jake asked.

"No, I want you to walk away. Will I take you on? Sure. But unlike my friend here, I am going to fight back. So, do the math, then walk away," Jack said.

"I am doing the math, Jack. Five of us, one of you," Jake said.

"You suck at math. Maybe why you're a quarterback," Jack said. "So, let's do the math together. Yeah, five against one, I am going to get hurt. But before I go down, I am going to take you down first. More on that, because it's not a fair a fight, I am going to have to take you down so hard that I am probably going to injure you, badly, which mean no more football for you for the rest of the year, maybe even for life. Since you suck at math, maybe you should consider focusing on your football career, and not sidelining people who don't want to engage."

Jake considered the math. His math still sucked, but he was convinced Jack was serious. "Why would you protect him?"

"It's what I do," Jack said.

"You protect dweebs?" Jake asked.

"Jake, you have strength. You have charisma. People like you. You're a natural leader. You're also not an idiot. Why would you use your attributes to hurt people? Set a standard. Stick to it. Encourage others to follow your example," Jack said.

The coach entered the mix. "Is there a problem here?"

"You mean, other than the fact you only intervene when your star player is being threatened?" Jon asked.

"I am not being threatened," Jake said.

"Oh, you were seriously about to be taken down a peg..." Jon offered.

"Jon," the coach said seriously. "You have been warned about instigating fights."

"And about being defiant of authority, and about better hygiene," Jon said.

"You could stand to shower more," Jack said.

"I was using the smell to keep people from bothering me," Jon said.

"It's not working," Jack said.

"Whatever this is, break it up, get to class," coach said.

"This is nothing," Jack said, looking to Jake.

"Nothing at all," Jake agreed.

Jake headed out first, followed by his posse. Two of them entered Jon's personal space, forcing eye contact, as they departed. Jon forced himself to breathe, very aware that the coach was scrutinizing him. Jon proceeded in the direction he was originally headed. Jack and the coach exchanged a look, but then Jack followed after Jon. Lakeisha took his hand to hold him back but he pulled her along.

"That's was brave," Lakeisha said.

"That part was easy. The brave part is trying to make a friend," Jack said.

"With Jon?" Lakeisha asked.

"Maybe he's a nerd. Maybe even a dweeb. But he's not a coward," Jack said. "At least, not directly. And that's interesting."

Jack and Lakeisha caught up with Jon.

"Hey," Jack said, touching his shoulder.

Jon stopped. "I didn't ask for your help."

Jack came around to make eye contact. "The right response is 'thank you.'"

"Really? For making it worse?" Jon asked.

"How did I make it worse?" Jack said.

"The beating has been coming. Had he just hit me there, it would have been done, but by intervening you complicated it. You may have delayed it, but you also likely increased the severity when it does happen, because even though I agree it wasn't a thing, now it's a definitely a thing, and not a thing he is just going to let go and walk away," Jon said.

"You're right. That's the worst case scenario," Jack agreed. "Then again, now that everyone knows we're friends, that's less likely to happen."

Jon blinked as if processing the information. The bell rang and Jon turned to walk into the class late. Jack and Lakeisha followed into the same class.

## Chapter 2

The first time Jack went through high school he had made a point of sitting in back. Now, he was in the front row. He actually wanted to do better this time around. The thing was, because he had been in the front, he had paid less attention to the background players. Now that he had made ‘contact’ with Jon, he was suddenly more cognizant of just how present Jon was in the back ground of his life. He was in four of his classes, including this class; algebra. The teacher began passing back tests, walking the isle as he did. Jack had a 90. That was an improvement, but it wasn’t like it came easier. Having led an entire life hadn’t made him a genius in high school math. He knew more things than any of his peers, and yet, academically, especially in math, he was at best on par with the class average. In history class, he was now starkly aware of just how wrong history was, and it was a struggle not to speak up and say so. Being a student knowing what he knew didn’t make things better. It made it different. There was improvement in his total average GPA, but it still required work.

The teacher put the test on Jon’s desk. “Do you know what the odds are for you only scoring 76 on everything you turn in?”

“Do I get extra credit for solving that?” Jon asked.

“I believe you’re cheating,” the teacher said.

“Oh,” Jon said, sounding relieved.

“You’re okay with that?” the teacher asked.

“I thought you were going to say I was stupid,” Jon said.

“Well, you are stupid,” the teacher began...

Jon interrupted with a conclusion: “Because if I were cheating, it would be wiser to mix the grades up, give myself an occasional 100, but seeing a gradebook line with all 76s in a row, that’s suspicious. Are you worried about my grades or how that looks when someone reviews your gradebooks?”

“Why do you make everything so difficult?” the teacher asked.

Jon seemed to consider the question. He was aware that some of his peers were watching him; he could see as much with his periphery vision. Some seemed uncomfortable and were doing anything but looking. “Do you remember the question I asked you at the beginning of the semester?”

“You never ask questions,” the teacher said.

“I do,” Jack said.

“Yes, Jack, you ask lots of questions,” the teacher said, annoyed by the interruption.

“No. I mean, yes, I ask lots of question, but I am saying, I remember him asking a question,” Jack said.

“He has never asked a question,” the teacher argued.

“Yes, he did,” Jack said.

“No, he didn’t,” the teacher argued.

“He did,” Jack said.

“He didn’t,” the teacher said.

“He asked a question the very first day of class!” Jack said.

“You remember the very first day of class?” the teacher asked, skeptically.

“Yes. It was a very good question,” Jack said.

“It couldn’t have been a good question if I don’t remember it,” the teacher argued.

“Well, you did blow it off. Maybe because you didn’t know the answer. The consequence, though, of dismissing someone who may be smarter than you is that it causes them to not want to participate. Because, if it’s taken you half a semester to notice that he only scores 76, or more likely, only now just curious enough to inquire into the anomaly, then you are really not paying attention, you’re stupid, you just don’t care, or maybe all of the above. So, the new question is, why should he believe that you care now, when you clearly didn’t care before?” Jack asked.

Jack flashed a smile towards Jon. Jon glared back.

“What was the question?” the teacher asked.

“Is the order of operation based on a mathematical principle or is it based on convention?” Jack asked.

“That’s a stupid question,” the teacher said.

“Clearly you think that. Probably why your response was, just follow instructions and you will get the right answer,” Jack said. “I, personally, think it’s a great question.”

“It’s just the order of operation. Stupid question,” the teacher said.

“So, it’s based on logic. Which means, hypothetically speaking, if there were aliens on a planet in Alpha Centauri, and they’re doing math in school like us, they’re going to derive the same answers on their test as we do?” Jack asked.

“Aliens? You kids watch too much television,” the teacher said.

“But, we’d all do the same, math, right?” Jack asked.

“I don’t know. Probably not. The order of operation is based on convention. It’s just what we are taught so that we all come up with the same answers,” the teacher said.

“Well, that’s interesting then. Because, if you really think about it, if the rule sets are arbitrary, not based on math but because some pompous ass a thousand years ago decreed this is the way it should be done, then there is an argument that Jon’s answers are right based on his personal mathematical paradigm, which would also explain his consistency of grades,” Jack said. “I suspect you should just give him all hundred because he is thinking outside the box and not playing by the established rules.”

“That’s not how this works,” the teacher said.

“That’s exactly how this works. I mean, take the scientific principle. You question the validity and assumptions of reality, both natural reality and social reality, and you try evolve to a greater level of understanding. You can’t do that if you don’t question the dogma and fundamental assumptions espoused by the apologists of the day. Every age has thought they were right, but then someone said, what about this, and we changed. Not always easy. Some of us changed kicking and screaming, but we changed. Now, we’re in the present paradigm, but it’s not working so good for everyone and there are people questioning and wanting to do more, but just like the days of old, there are gatekeepers forcing the status quo. You’re the gatekeeper of old, but we are the sojourners of a new paradigm.”

“This is basic algebra, not philosophy,” the teacher said.

“Maybe we should do both,” Jack said. “The thing is, this is not a class of soldiers. You’re guiding people into being free adults. You don’t teach people to think for themselves by instructing them to blindly do what you say...”

“This conversation is finished,” the teacher concluded, then proceeded to instruct them into busy work.

The next class was history. There was evidence that this was also ‘pick on Jon day,’ as once the roll was accomplished, Jon was invited by the teacher to come to the front of the class to do his book report.

“I am not prepared to speak today,” Jon said.

“Well, improv,” the teacher invited.

“I’d rather not,” Jon said, politely.

“And I would rather not give you a zero, so come on up, you’re the next contestant...” the teacher said, playfully.

The humor didn’t change Jon’s disposition. He looked at his desk. “Please, call someone else.”

“Jon,” the teacher said, kindly. “Everyone is afraid of speaking in front of others. The only way to get over this fear is to do it so you can have experiences that prove you can survive even this.”

Jon frowned. “I am not afraid of speaking in front of others.”

“Great. You’re up,” the teacher said.

Jon dragged himself from his desk and started up.

“No book?” the teacher said.

Jon went back to his desk, collected his back pack, and lugged it to the front with him. He sat the pack on the table. It made a sound. Someone whispered, a little too loudly, ‘this is where he reveals the bomb and blows us all up.’ It was Lakeisha’s friend, from the cheerleading squad.

Jon closed his eyes. His hands were shaking. He unzipped the entirety of the bag, revealing several huge books, one of which was a college textbook, a couple paperback library books, and two notebooks, one of which clearly had clippings of newspaper and magazine articles pasted or stashed inside.

“Contrary to popular belief, being weird, and sometimes confrontational, doesn’t mean I favor violence,” Jon said. “I am ethically and morally opposed to violence.” Someone said ‘redundant.’ “Ethically and morally are not necessarily synonymous, look them up.” He picked up a book and displayed the cover: “The Sirius Mystery, by Robert K. G. Temple 1976.”

“Excuse me, Jon,” the teacher interrupted. “This is not an approved book.”

“It’s nonfiction,” Jon stated. No one knew enough to laugh.

“It’s not history,” the teacher said.

“It’s not the history being taught,” Jon argued.

“What else do you got?” the teacher said.

“More of the same,” Jon said. “May I sit down now?”

“Nope, what else do you got?” the teacher asked.

“Chariots of the Gods, 1968 by Erich von Däniken...,” Jon said, holding up the book.

“Anything other than alien conspiracies?” the teacher asked. Now everyone laughed.

“Fingerprints of the Gods,” John began. “Graham Hancock.



“Anything other than from a pseudo archeologist?” the teacher asked.

“That’s what I was afraid of,” Jon said.

“Jon, this is a history class,” the teacher said. “Not the X-files.”

“This is history!” Jon said. Before the teacher could argue, he pressed on. “Seriously, if the gatekeepers of knowledge never allow for controversial dialogue, then science and academia becomes no better than the religious structures that once suppressed information because it was contradictory of the established dogma.”

“This is not suppression. This asking you to comply with the same rules for the book assignment that everyone else had to comply with,” the teacher said.

“How is this not suppression! There are anomalies in history that no one can explain,” Jon said.

“No, there are not...”

“Explain how it is that with our technological prowess, we can’t explain how the pyramids were built,” Jon asked.

“Yes, we can,” the teacher said.

“They didn’t make the pyramids with stone tools,” Jon said. “Hell, I got metal and power tools, and I can’t remove a simple tree root pushing up a sidewalk without breaking my tools. But not only that, we have found absolutely zero tools anywhere, not even a picture of them using tools, and yet we can’t duplicate what they did with our own tools, not even to a tenth of a degree of the precision they achieved. Do you really expect me to believe that since the Egyptians built pyramids, people have become stupider? How many times do we have to relearn drinking from led cups is not good for you?”

“These books are not examples of history, written by academics,” the teacher said. “Nor, are they historical autobiographies. Do you have anything else?”

“Rethinking Giza, how the pyramids may be older than we dare imagine, Doctor Daniel Jackson,” Jon began.

“Oh, come on, Jon,” the teacher complained.

“It’s not about aliens,” Jon said. “And he is a real archeologist. You can’t get much more historic than that?”

“He is insane,” the teacher said.

“But he has a PhD and everything,” Jon argued.

“And he hasn’t worked in a legitimate job since he published that book,” the teacher said. “In fact, I dare say, that book buried him, because he hasn’t been seen since. It’s almost like he fell off the face of the Earth...”

“Just because he is disenfranchised from academia doesn’t invalidate his PhD. He’s smarter than you and I, speaks and writes 23 languages...”

“Being smart doesn’t mean he’s right,” the teacher argued.

“It does earn him a voice, doesn’t it? A PhD is something right? More than you? Do you even have a masters? A PhD means you don’t get to roll your eyes and walk away just because you don’t agree with him. Even if what he says ends up being inaccurate in a literal sense, it could mean something metaphorically or symbolically,” Jon droned on

“Jon,” the teacher tried to interrupt.

“No! Jon, nothing. Gobekli Tepe predates Stone Henge by 6,000 years. Tell me how hunter gather’s built that? How do you explain the Sumerian tablet with 9 planets carved into the stone thousands of years prior to telescopes? How do you explain the UFO in mid-evil art, like the Annunciation? 1468, a UFO shooting a laser at Mother Mary!” Jon asked.

“It’s a representation of spirit...”

“Why would anyone represent God as a UFO?” Jon asked.

“Exactly,” Jack piped up. “What need does god have with a spaceship?”

“What?” Jon and the Teacher both asked.

“Captain Kirk, Star Trek V...”

“Stay out of this,” Jon said.

“Yeah, the story line was little weak,” Jack agreed.

“Okay, Jon, we’re done here,” the teacher said.

“The hell we are. You called me up when I politely asked several times for an out, now I am going to be heard,” Jon snapped.

“Jon!” the teacher interrupted. “You’re smart. You’re well spoken. And you’re working way too hard to avoid the assignment. All you have to do is...”

“Your assignment sucks balls,” Jon said. “It’s boring. It’s constricting. When they put ‘send me your huddle masses yearning to be free’ on the statue of liberty, they didn’t put disclaimers and caveats that you had to kiss ass in order to enjoy liberty. School is about maintaining the status quo within the industrial complex. So, here’s a news flash: The industrial age is coming to an end. The school system can’t keep turning out cogs because we’re going digital. Catch up, or you’re going to seriously impede the ability of several generations from being able to play in what’s to come. This book here, by Daniel Jackson, Doctor, PhD, not from a crackerjack box, he doesn’t just play one on television, meets your criteria but you dismiss it because it messes with your world view. Well, you can take your world, sir, and go fuck yourself with it.”

“Principal’s office now,” the teacher said. “Jack, go with him.”

“I know my way,” Jon said, zipping his books back in.

“He’s going with you for participating in your diatribe,” the teacher said.

Jon stormed out. Jack hesitated at the door. “He does have a point. Sir. I recommend more television. All the answers to life can be found in Star Trek. And the Wizard of Oz.”

“Office, now,” the teacher said.

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Jack and Jon sat at opposing ends of a row of chairs. Jon sat, holding his pack, staring straight ahead. Jack smiled at the principal’s secretary. She was actually an attractive lady, and about the right age... prior to his being reduced back to age 15. It was like being busted in rank, Colonel to civilian. Apparently, she didn’t like the way he was looking at her, indicated by a frown, and a sigh. He found something else to look at.

“Nice speech,” Jack said, avoiding eye contact with Jon.

“I was angry,” Jon said.

“Fervent,” Jack offered.

“Impromptu,” Jon said.

“Even nicer, then,” Jack said.

“Why are you talking to me?” Jon asked.

“Both of you, quiet,” the secretary said.

“You remind me of an old friend,” Jack said.

“Jack,” the secretary said.

“Or what? You’re going to send us to the principal’s office?” Jack asked.

The principal arrived and looked at the boys, looked at the secretary who shrugged, and then looked at the boys.

“You two been fighting?” the principal asked.

“No!” Jon said. “You know I am a pacifist. If you’re going to talk to us, do it separately. We’re not friends and you can’t lump us together.”

“Alright, I suspect I know why you’re here, Jon. We have made it this far into the year without incident? What’s going on?” the principal asked.

“Nothing,” Jon said.

“Great. Jack? Why are you here?” the principal asked.

“I am confused about that myself,” Jack said.

“Do you have an opinion?” the principal asked.

“Oh, you know me, Sir. I have lots of opinions,” Jack said. “And in this instance, I happen to be in agreement with Jon.”

“About?” the principal asked.

“That Mr. Riley can go fuck himself,” Jack said.

Jon closed his eyes.

“Jon, did you say that out loud?” the principal asked.

“I did,” Jon said.

“In his defense,” Jack said. “He did inform Mr. Riley that he was not prepared.”

“I don’t need or want you on my side,” Jon said.

“Mr. Riley was correct, though, in pointing out that this could have been avoided if you had just given him what he wanted,” Jack said to Jon.

“Oh, of course, take the establishment’s side,” Jon said.

“You don’t want me on your side, so what other side is there?” Jack said.

“Jon, if you hate school so much, why don’t you just drop out,” the principal said.

Jon didn’t say anything. He returned his gaze to straight ahead.

“You disparaged a teacher in front of others. I am compelled to give you detention. I know your work schedule for this week is set, so, we will initiate next Monday,” the principal said. The bell rang. “Jack, stay out of trouble. Both of you, get out of here.”

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Jack caught up to Jon as Jon navigated the hall, head down.

“Great use of your peripheral vision, by the way,” Jack said.

Jon stopped. He was concentrating hard on the ground. He muttered something unintelligible.

“What was that?” Jack asked. When Jon didn’t respond, he reached out to touch Jon’s arm.

Jon snapped out of it, his left hand coming up instinctively to block. A flat palm impacted Jack’s hand. At the same time, Jon, rotated and backed away, his pack bumping someone. The ‘someone’ complained, but carried on when he saw Jon glancing at him to determine threat level; both his hands were up in a classic ‘I surrender,’ which was also preparation for further defense. He quickly turned back to Jack.

“Nice block,” Jack said. “Wu Wei Gung Fu?”

Jon forced himself to breathe, turned and walked away. Jack caught up with him.

“No, really. What happened back there?” Jack asked.

“Please, stop following me,” Jon said.

“We’re in the next class together,” Jack said.

Jon stopped and made eye contact. “What do you want?”

“I am interested in you,” Jack said.

“I am not gay!” Jon said, purposely loud to draw attention from anyone in ear shot. “Stop hitting on me.”

Jack raised his hands up in ‘I surrender’ gesture.

“You win,” Jack said.

Jon turned and walked away. Jack gave him space and then followed. He was not threatened by the snickering that followed in the wake of Jon’s declared boundary. He was actually impressed by the tactic. It made him even more curious. The bell rang even as he was getting to class. The computer science teacher, as always, was beginning class before the bell had even rang. “You will find a new work book at your stations. Please proceed in doing the first two lessons.”

The work books were new, wrapped in plastic. Jack removed the plastic and proceeded into the first lesson. It was basic programming, with simple follow the instructions, type what was on the page, then execute the program. Some of his peers were already typing even as he was getting the right window up. One student was typing nonstop, without even referring back to the page. Most people were pausing to refer to the lesson, typing some, referring back. Jon’s workbook was in his lap, opened, face down. Jack forced himself to focus on his own work. The student next to Jon raised his hand for help.

“Just follow the instructions, Mat,” the teacher said.

“But...”

“Copy what’s in the book, you won’t mess it up,” the teacher said.

Jon pointed to the Mat’s screen. “That should be a colon, not a semi colon. And that should be ‘go to 24,’ you have 19,” Jon said. Jon pointed to the Mat’s book. “You must have skipped a line here...”

“Thank you,” Mat said.

“Jon! Do your own work,” the teacher said.

Jon sighed. He closed the book and laid it on the table.

“How come you’re so good at this?” Mat asked.

“I am not,” Jon said.

“Jon? Mat? Do I have to separate you two?” the teacher asked.

Jon pulled a book out of his pack and started reading it. He hadn't gotten even through a paragraph before he realized the teacher was hovering over him.

"What is your problem?" the teacher asked.

"I finished the assignment," Jon said.

"There's no way you finished..."

Jon activated the program. A screen saver drawing lines began to take over the screen.

"How..."

"I am a really fast typer," Jon said.

"Fine. Do the next two assignments," the teacher said.

"I assume those are tomorrow's assignments," Jon said.

"Now, for you, they're today's assignments," the teacher said.

"What will I do tomorrow?" Jon asked.

"I will let you know tomorrow," the teacher said.

"You realize that twenty years from now, no one is going to be writing programs, or even using key boards," Jon said. "Computers will be sentient, and we will talk to them just like we talk to each other."

"Until then, I want to hear the patter of your keyboard," the teacher said.

"Couldn't you just give me a pass to the library?" Jon asked.

"Nope. Next assignment. I am going to watch," the teacher said.

"Because you think I am cheating?" Jon said.

"Next assignment," the teacher insisted.

Jon opened the book to the next assignment. His passive aggressive response was to read aloud, one letter at a time and type with one finger: he chose to prove he wasn't cheating. He took a moment to stare at the page. He turned the page. In all, he looked at five pages. He closed the book and began following the instruction, inputting everything from memory. Jack was watching it all.

"How are you doing that?" the teacher asked.

"He has eidetic memory," Jack said.

"That's impossible," the teacher said.

"No, it's a real thing," Jack said.

"No, yes, I mean, Jon, you have never demonstrated anything like this previously. Your grades suck. Are you taking speed?" the teacher asked.

"I am having a really bad day and I am struggling to slow it down," Jon said.

"What did you take?" the teacher demanded.

"I don't do drugs. I can legally take Ritalin, but I don't take it," Jon said. "May I be excused please?"

"Yes. Report to the nurse?" the teacher instructed.

"I don't need a nurse, I just need a quiet place," Jon said.

"Nurse. Now!"

### Chapter in progress 3

It took some effort for Lakeisha to extricate herself from her friends. It wasn't that she was trying to keep her interest in Jack hidden, but there was something tangibly different about him, which also translated into something about 'them' as a couple being different, and so there was this unseen but very real pressure to keep things quiet. Though she was aware of it, she was not able to make sense of it. She saw him sitting in his car in the school parking lot. The car was running. He had informed her that he had been given a hardship license, and she had even been out with him in it, and... It was a weird. He drove like an adult. As she spied him in his car, she was hopeful he was waiting for her, and so when she slipped away, she navigated around, and came up on the car sideways and pulled up on the door handle before Jack had known she was there. It was locked. He frowned up at her. She could see her breath in her reflection as she smiled through it to Jack. He unlocked it. She quickly climbed in and made herself comfortable.

"OMG, it's cold!" she said.

"Gonna get colder," Jack said.

"Want to go to the mall?" Lakeisha asked.

"Ummm, no," Jack said.

"We're not going to the hill to look at the stars again, are we?" Lakeisha asked.

Jack looked up through the windshield at the clouds and back to Lakeisha. He saw no evidence that she was joking.

"Umm, no," Jack said. There was incredible restraint in not giving her sarcasm.

"We're just going to sit here?" Lakeisha asked.

"For now," Jack said.

Lakeisha put her books on the dash, turned sideways in the seat, reclined her head, and frowned at Jack. Her knees came up into the seat.

"Do you like girls?" Lakeisha said.

"What?" Jack asked. Had she heard about the hallways incident with Jon? "Of course I like girls. Why would you think I don't like girls?"

"Well, because, we've been kind of hanging out, and you took me to look at stars, and I thought that was a euphemism for making out, but we actually looked at stars," Lakeisha said.

"Did you like that?" Jack asked.

"Yeah. Not the point," Lakeisha said. "Is it because I am black?"

"Is what because you're black?" Jack asked.

"You can't be this dense? I know you like me, but... Why haven't you tried to kiss me?!" Lakeisha demanded.

"Lakeisha," Jack said, taking her hand. "I like you..."

"But, not like I like you?" Lakeisha interrupted.

"I like you exactly like you like me," Jack said.

"So, why..."

"Wait," Jack said. He observed Jon leaving on a bicycle and put on his seatbelt. He turned to Lakeisha. "Can we continue this tomorrow?"

"What?!" Lakeisha said.

“If you want to come with, you have to wear your seatbelt, but I don’t think you want to do this,” Jack said.

“What is this?” Lakeisha said.

“Gathering intel,” Jack said.

“What?”

“Seatbelt,” Jack said, and started to pull forwards.

Lakeisha put on her seatbelt. Jack began to drive, leisurely. It isn’t easy following someone on a bicycle. He waited at the street to see which direction Jon would go, proceeded down the street turned, past, and pulled into a lot and waited.

“What are we doing?” Lakeisha asked.

“Gathering intel,” Jack repeated.

“What does that even mean?” Lakeisha said.

Jack sipped from a thermos, offered some to Lakeisha, who smelled it, discovered coffee, (stolen from the teacher’s lounge,) and handed it back. Jon passed the parking lot and continued on down the road. Jack eased the car up to a better vantage point. Lakeisha made the connection.

“You’re stalking Jon?” Lakeisha asked.

“Gathering intel,” Jack iterated.

“Why?!” Lakeisha asked.

“He’s interesting,” Jack said.

“OMG, you don’t like girls,” Lakeisha said.

“I have to have sex with you to prove I like girls?” Jack asked.

“That might help, but now, I am going to wonder if you play for both teams,” Lakeisha said.

“Oh, don’t use sports metaphors for sex,” Jack said. “Sex isn’t a competition. Sex is meaningful. It’s an important aspect of a healthy relationship, but if you use sports to box it you make sex a competition and it becomes something it shouldn’t.”

“You talk like my grandfather,” Lakeisha complained.

“How is he, by the way?” Jack asked.

“He didn’t scare you off?” Lakeisha asked.

“Nah. He’s old school, but he served in the military with distinction, and that, too, is meaningful,” Jack said.

Jack pulled out and started down the street. He could justify going somewhat slow, because the roads were wet, and starting to freeze in spots. He stopped at a stop sign, then proceeded through. When Jon took the freeway ramp, staying on the shoulder, Jack cursed. He continued on the side road, passing and pulling over just after the intersection.

“Why would he take the shoulder,” Jack mumbled. “That’s just stupid.”

“He’s stupid,” Lakeisha said.

“No, he’s way smarter than he lets on,” Jack said.

“I am beginning to wonder about your intelligence,” Lakeisha said.

“Why?” Jack said.

“Because you’re not normal,” Lakeisha said.

“Then, why are you hanging out with me all the time?” Jack asked.

Lakeisha bobbed her head, uncertain. "Because, you're not normal. You treat me... Differently," she said. "Why haven't you kissed me?"

"I will. I promise. When we're 18," Jack said.

"OMG, Jack. We can kiss," Lakeisha said.

"Yeah, I am really struggling with that," Jack said.

"You don't have to," Lakeisha said, leaning closer.

"Yeah, Lakeisha. I am not ready," Jack said. "Believe me. I would never in a million years have ever thought I would turn down a kiss from someone so beautiful, and smart, and kind, but I am not ready, and I need you to accept that, because if you can't, this won't work."

Lakeisha turned to facing forwards, crossing her arms.

"You okay?" Jack asked.

"No," Lakeisha said. "You're making me feel bad. It's as if I am pressuring you."

"You're not pressuring me. You are telling me that you are interested. I, too, am interested. But we have to wait. Until then, I want us to continue to get to know each other," Lakeisha said.

"The more I get to know you, the more I want to do things with you," Lakeisha said. "Adult things."

"I know," Jack said. "And I hope that will always be true."

"Why wouldn't it be?" Lakeisha asked.

"There are things about me you don't know. Impossible things," Jack said.

"There are things you don't know about me, either," Lakeisha said.

"Hence, my plan to take several years to truly get to know each other," Jack said.

"Sometimes, you just have to take a chance," Lakeisha said.

"Yep," Jack said, pulling out and heading back down the side road. He pulled over before the next exit. "That's what we're doing..."

A car was on the side of the road and woman was standing behind the car, the trunk open. Jon abandoned his bike and seemed to be insisting the woman get back in the car. Jack reached over Lakeisha and retrieved binoculars from the glove box.

"Seriously?" Lakeisha said. "You're scaring me."

"It's just binoculars," Jack said. He saw more than he reported. There were kids in the back seat of the car, watching. Jon made sure the parking break was set. "Jon's changing a tire for someone. There are kids in the car."

"He is changing a tire for someone?" Lakeisha asked.

"Yeah," Jack said.

Lakeisha sighed. "That's like incredibly nice."

"Yeah," Jack said. "Still think he's a dweeb?"

"I don't know," Lakeisha said. "It doesn't make sense."

"Well, the woman's safer in the car," Jack said.

"Definitely warmer in the car," Lakeisha said.

Jack watched the entire tire change. When Jon was finished putting on the spare, he put everything back into the trunk, including the damaged tire.

"What do you hope to learn, Jack?" Lakeisha asked.

"I don't know," Jack said.



Once Jon closed the trunk, he put on his backpack and he went to retrieve his bike. The passenger window came down. Jon drew his bike closer, mounting his bike to ride off, shaking his head no. He waved a gesture that clearly meant no. Jack could see the woman's hand, offering money. Jon appeared to refuse, waved, and rode off. He rode off the embankment, heading down the hill, away from the freeway. He appeared to be heading towards the 7-11 that he was already at. Jack pulled into a parking space, asked Lakeisha to wait, and went inside. He left the car running. Jack hovered over the magazine rack. Jon entered and proceeded straight way to the coffee. His face was red, his nose running. He wiped it on a sleeve.

"Hey, you're not scheduled today, are you?" the clerk asked.

"No, just need to warm up. Could I have a free coffee?" Jon asked.

"Could you pull a double Saturday?" the clerk asked.

"In exchange for a coffee?" Jon asked.

"No, have as much coffee as you like. I just need off," the clerk said. "Surprise family thing."

"I would have traded for the coffee. Yes. 3 to 11?" Jon asked.

"Yep," the clerk said.

Jon withdrew from the coffee. He didn't look up as Jack came around.

"Are you following me?" Jon asked.

"No," Jack said. "Just happened to stop for some coffee... It's really cold out there."

Jon got a napkin and wiped his nose. He leaned on the cabinet. He held the coffee in both hands.

"You know, if you let me, I could put your bike in my car and drive you home," Jack said.

Jon held the coffee under his nose and inhaled.

"No," Jon said.

"Why?" Jack asked.

"Because, we're not friends. Because, people will talk. Because, if I accept help I might grow accustomed, become lazy. Then, there's also the long term consideration that everyone eventually either abandons you or sabotages you. I don't need anyone in my life," Jon said.

"I promise not to bail on you till I get you home," Jack said.

"No," Jon said.

"We all need people," Jack said.

"No," Jon said. He made eye contact. "Quite frankly, you're scaring me, Jack. I don't know what your agenda is, but I don't trust you."

"How come you can help people, but people can't help you?" Jack asked.

"I don't want your help, Jack," Jon said.

He poured the coffee in the sink, threw away the cup, and departed. Jack might have followed, but he stopped and paid for the coffee. He then went to his car and resumed following Jon. Jon didn't get back on the freeway, but took the side street, stopping for two lights, and then turned away from the freeway. He eventually arrived at a trailer park. Jon ended his trip at the back at the park. Jon leaned his bike against the trailer hitch, and chained it. He then entered the old, 25 foot Nash trailer.

"What is this?" Lakeisha asked.

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