

It was a peaceful morning, as it usually was in the town of Saint-Hubert, until it wasn't. In a fraction of a second Tim's bedside alarm clock shattered the quiet moment, its cries awakening him. Tim had rolled over in his bed not wanting to get up, that is until the realization that today was his first day of school hit him. He instantly jumped out of bed, unplugging his alarm clock swiftly instead of tiredly fumbling with the buttons to silence it. He stumbled over to his closet, still not fully awake nor aware of his surroundings.

As he struggled to change into his two sizes too small excuse of a school uniform, he noticed the school bus taking off from the bus stop. The bus driver was driving away, a bad omen for the day. He stumbled out of his room and down the stairs, negotiating with his shirt as he tried to put it on. The house, empty, as it always usually was, greeted his awakening with the creeks and groans of the floorboards. Both his mother and father had left for work hours before he even woke up. Tim doesn't see much of them and the sunshine yellow bus was his only salvation to get to school. Tim found it amusing that something so bright took him to a place so dark. But maybe, this time, things would be different. His old school was in the past, and this time, Tim is determined to make a good impression at his new one.

Rushing out onto the sidewalk, Tim chased the bus that was slowly starting to blend into the horizon. Hand invading the door, Tim pounded, a crescendo that cried for the driver stop and let him in. At last, the driver had finally hit the brakes and the bus had halted. The doors slowly opened to reveal a tired bus driver. He gave Tim a look full of angst and frustration.

Tim had leaped into the bus without a moment of hesitation. Walking past the driver, Tim looked into the seats. They were crammed with as many students as possible, all who stared through him and right into his soul. He embarrassingly walked past them as they all looked and snickered. They all exchanged whispers and laughs, words directed at Tim. They punctured him, adding more holes to his already crusaded ego.

Tim rushed to the back of the bus trying not to drag even more attention to his embarrassingly poor outfit and late arrival. He sat on the neglected black seats at the back of the bus, ostracized. He hid himself, making sure he was not in anyone's view. Even as the snickers and whispers died down, he still hid himself out of embarrassment and fear he would be humiliated by the others more if he had revealed himself.

Looking around, he noticed the kids at the front of the bus wore the newest clothes and shoes. They carried themselves confidently, with their blue polos, and freshly pressed uniforms. Those were the kids to impress and the seats at the front of bus were reserved for them. Taking a glance beside him, it didn't take a rocket scientist to realize the kids he was with were the "Weird ones."

They whispered amongst themselves, Tim was curious, yet they were too quiet for him to eavesdrop on their conversation. Was he too much of a loser for them too? Focusing on the streets through the window, Tim was zoned out, just staring at the road. That was the case, until one of the "Weird kids" tapped him on the shoulder. Tim had turned his head to face the person who had gotten his attention. It was a small, scrawny, boy. He had an enormous untidy ginger afro; his face was lined with small freckles. He had held his hand out to Tim for a handshake.

“Hello! The name’s Samuel Louis, but you can call me Sam! What is your name?” His voice was quite annoying, he spoke fast and with a silly tone, a tone Tim did not like at all.

“My name is Tim, Tim Robert’s.”

Tim did not want any type of interaction with anyone in that moment and he wanted to end the conversation as quick as possible.

“What a wonderful name! Say, Tim have you decided which after school club you wanted to join?”

This news was completely new to Tim.

“What are you talking about?” Tim was as confused as could be.

“Have you not heard? You should have received the email about which clubs were available to join” Sam educated.

Tim had not checked his email for a while. Wasn’t that a grown-up thing to do?

“No, I hadn’t,” Tim facepalmed, he had missed the opportunity to choose to enrol in any club he wanted, now he had to get a spot in whatever club was left.

“Well, the only clubs that have not been filled up are the sports club and the chess club!” Sam had pointed towards the other students “Me and the others are the only ones in the chess club, we could really use an extra member!”

This was going to be a hard choice for Tim. Tim was not one to like sports. He thought it was useless to overwork yourself in sports just to see a number on a scoreboard go up one or two times. On the other hand, who likes chess anymore? Well,

besides 80-year-old men and women in retirement homes. Getting into the chess club would ruin his chances at making a decent first impression. Social suicide Tim had decided.

Just as Tim was about to decide, the bus had stopped suddenly as if the driver slammed the brakes with all his weight. Tim would have catapulted into the seat in front of him if he had not held onto to it. In an instant, all the students had gotten up and crowded the exit, all of them fighting and struggling to get out. After a solid minute of squeezing himself through the crowd, Tim managed to get out of the bus and stand right in front of his new school he will spending the next semester at. The school was exceptionally large to say the least, it was twice as tall as his house and over six times wider.

This is it, he was here, no more backing out. Tim walked through the front doors; the glistening white floor tiles reflected the ceiling light onto the walls. Tim had turned the corner from the entrance into the hallway, the walls were lined with shiny baby blue metal lockers, each one numbered. Tim walked through the crowded halls trying not to bump into any unsuspecting students. Tim's class was not that hard to find as it was the first class to the right. As he approached the red door leading into the classroom, he took a deep breath. As he opened the door, he saw all the students sitting at their desks, notebooks out. Tim found his seat easily; it was at the back and in the middle of the row. It was also the only one that was left empty as all the others were filled.

As he tended to his seat, he saw the same group of students from the back of the bus! Sam and the other members of the chess club were all sitting in the same row he

was in! If anyone were to peer into the classroom, they would associate Tim with the “Weird kids” due to the seating.

“Great,” Tim grumbled, “Hello social isolation, goodbye popularity.”

As Tim laid back in his seat, he noticed that the teacher that was supposed to be at the front was behind his desk on his computer. The teacher had paid little attention to them, he simply pointed to the chalkboard which he had prewritten his name upon and wrote down a task. It said in big bold letters

“Write a short introductory paragraph about yourself and present it to the class when called upon.”

One by one the students tended to their notebooks and began writing away. Tim reached into his desk to pull out a notebook and begin writing. As Tim wrote about himself, he began to feel strange. He had nothing cool to tell his class, he wasn’t impressive at all. This realization made his heart thump, mind race with invasive thoughts.

“What to say, what to do! I--...I’ll never belong,” Tim thought.

The words on his notebook began to look more like scribbles as his mind got fogged up with more thoughts by the second. That is, until he felt a soft gentle hand on his shoulder. Tim had turned his head; he instantly recognized the enormous ginger Afro; it was Sam from the bus!

“Hey, are you okay? You seem nervous.” Sam spoke softly with as much care as a mother.

Tim responded quickly, trying not to seem too nervous. “Yeah, I am okay! Just a bit tired, that’s all!”

Turning back around, Tim hurried to fill his page. As he did, he thought about what Sam had said to him. It nagged at him. Perhaps Tim was too harsh, too quick to judge? Too caught up in aspirations of popularity he was trying to be someone else other than himself.

Soon the teacher began to call up students one by one, each one presenting themselves with pride and confidence, something Tim could only dream of doing himself. Eventually, Tim was called up to present. He scrambled to pick up his notes and embarrassingly walked up in front of the class. As he was about to speak, that same strange feeling came over him again. His hands grew sweaty, and his heart was throbbing. He was beginning to stutter at the thought of presenting, that is until he noticed the entire chess club in the back row smiling at him with big goofy grins. That strange, horrible feeling he felt suddenly vanished, as quick as it came over him, it had disappeared.

Tim slowly began to smile himself; it was strange, he suddenly felt the most confident he had ever felt in a long time. He began to read the first lines on his notebook, “Hello! My name is Tim Robert’s!

For once in his life, Tim Robert’s had felt like he **belonged**.

