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Nerdy Boy

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Introduction

“Nerdy Boy” is a story stitched together out of awkward silences, sudden joys, bruised pride, and the intricate algorithms of belonging. At its core, it’s a celebration of those who are different – kids who code before they can drive, who’d rather tinker than talk, and whose passion for understanding the world can sometimes set them apart, even as it draws them closer to unexpected friends. It’s fiction, but the feelings are real for anyone who’s ever felt on the edges of things.

The novel takes place in the microcosm of a middle school, that peculiar universe where hierarchies are carved not by decree, but by games played at lunch tables and rumors passed between lockers. Our protagonist – equal parts earnest, intelligent, and intimidated by the unwritten rules of adolescence – grapples with what it means to stand out in a world that’s constantly nudging him to blend in. The journey ahead is filled with mishaps and moments of wonder, hard choices and small victories, each echoing the inner life of a “nerdy” kid learning to claim his place.

As the pages turn, you’ll meet friends who don’t quite fit the mold either: the artist who draws galaxies in the margins of her notebook; the athlete who solves logic puzzles between practice drills; the teacher whose kindness can’t be measured but is keenly felt. These characters, too, are on their own quests – for acceptance, for understanding, for a sliver of sunlight on their most uncertain days.

This book isn’t just for the mathematically inclined or the technologically savvy. It’s for anyone who has ever wished for a single moment that being themselves would be enough. As our protagonist tackles robotics club elections, science fair disasters, coded messages, and the enigma of first crushes, you might find echoes of your own experiences, or perhaps a window into someone else’s world.

“Nerdy Boy” began as a simple what-if and quickly grew into a love letter to individuality. The narrative rests somewhere between coming-of-age and coming-into-oneself, infused with humor, honesty, and heart. Whether you journeyed through school with a pack of friends or stuck it out solo, I hope you find something here that resonates.

Thank you for picking up this book and stepping into a story where “being nerdy” isn’t just a punchline – it’s a path to discovery. Welcome to his world. Welcome to “Nerdy Boy.”

CHAPTER ONE: The Lunchroom Principle

Eighth grade lunch was less a meal and more a social experiment in controlled chaos. For Alex, it was a daily exercise in applied physics, specifically the concept of displacement. His displacement, usually, was from the very center of any social gravitational pull. He navigated the crowded cafeteria with the precision of a satellite avoiding space debris, his tray a fragile cargo carrying the day's mystery meat and suspiciously vibrant green beans.

He aimed for the periphery, the no-man's-land near the emergency exit, where a single table perpetually held only two occupants: him and a ghost. The ghost, in this case, was the spectral presence of past lunches, a lingering aroma of burnt toast and existential dread. Sometimes, if he was lucky, Maya would be there. Maya, with her sketchbook full of alien landscapes and her perpetually ink-stained fingers, was the closest thing Alex had to a confederate in this culinary wasteland.

Today, however, Maya's usual spot was empty. This meant the ghost was a particularly strong presence, humming with the faint echo of lonely chewing. Alex sighed, a microscopic disturbance in the otherwise boisterous hum of a hundred conversations. He set his tray down with a clatter that was lost in the din and began the careful dissection of his sandwich, each bite a quiet declaration of independence from the social hierarchies that ruled the room.

The lunchroom principle, as Alex had mentally dubbed it, stated that the popularity of a student was inversely proportional to their distance from the "cool kid" table. The cool kid table, a monolithic slab of faux wood in the very center, was currently presided over by Kevin "K-Dawg" Miller, whose perfectly spiked hair seemed to defy gravity as much as his social standing defied common sense.

K-Dawg was currently demonstrating his mastery of the "flick-a-tater-tot" technique, launching small, crispy projectiles with alarming accuracy at unsuspecting freshmen. A ripple of laughter, like a wave of poorly timed applause, followed each successful hit. Alex made a mental note to avoid eye contact at all costs. Direct engagement with K-Dawg was like sticking your hand into a black hole; you never knew what might come out, but it usually wasn't good.

His focus, however, was interrupted by a shadow falling over his tray. A large, unmistakable shadow. Alex didn't need to look up. He knew the source. It was like a disturbance in the Force, but instead of dark side energy, it was the raw, unadulterated essence of impending social awkwardness.

"Well, well, if it isn't Alex P. Keaton," a voice boomed, thick with feigned joviality. Alex winced. It was Butch, Kevin Miller's second-in-command, a linebacker in training whose brain seemed to be composed primarily of muscle memory for knocking things over.

Alex kept his gaze fixed on his sandwich, now looking less appetizing than before. "It's just Alex," he mumbled, a valiant but ultimately futile attempt to correct the outdated reference. "Alex P. Keaton" was a character from some ancient sitcom his parents watched, a precocious young conservative. Alex, on the other hand, was precocious in the way a calculator was precocious – good with numbers, bad with social cues.

Butch let out a guttural chuckle. "Right, 'just Alex'. Got a problem, 'just Alex'?" His tone shifted, the feigned joviality melting away like ice cream on a hot day, revealing the cold, hard slab of menace underneath.

This was the tricky part. The Lunchroom Principle had an addendum: the longer you delayed a response, the more creative and unpleasant the ensuing interaction became. Alex quickly calculated his options:

1. Run: High probability of tripping, low probability of escape.
2. Engage: High probability of humiliation, moderate probability of physical discomfort.
3. Feigned ignorance: Moderate probability of annoyance, high probability of being ignored later (a win!).

He chose option three, a classic Alex move. He took a slow, deliberate bite of his sandwich, chewing with an exaggerated focus on the texture of the bread.

Butch leaned closer, his face a distorted moon in Alex's peripheral vision. "What's the matter, brainiac? Too busy calculating the trajectory of your snot rockets?" A few of Butch's cronies, hulking figures with vacant expressions, snickered.

Alex swallowed, a lump forming in his throat that wasn't entirely bread. He had to say *something*. Something that wasn't overly clever, not overly meek. Something that wouldn't invite further attention.

"Just... thinking," Alex managed, his voice barely a whisper. He knew it sounded weak, but it was honest. His brain was, in fact, whirring. Not about snot rockets, but about the fluid dynamics of a successful cafeteria escape route.

"Thinking? About what? How to make that cafeteria food taste less like old socks?" Butch cackled, enjoying his own wit. His cronies roared with laughter, a practiced performance that made Alex's ears ring.

Suddenly, a new voice cut through the noise, sharp and clear. "Leave him alone, Butch."

Alex's head snapped up. It was Maya. She stood a few tables away, her arms crossed, her eyes narrowed. She had arrived, not a moment too soon. Her presence was like a sudden drop in the cafeteria's ambient temperature, a shift in the perceived social pressure.

Butch turned, his smirk faltering for a split second. Maya wasn't exactly popular, but she had a fierce, unwavering defiance that sometimes gave even the likes of Butch pause. She was an artist, and her art often involved unflattering caricatures of the school's bullies. A few of Butch's friends had been immortalized as grotesque, potato-headed monstrosities in Maya's sketchbook.

"What's it to you, art freak?" Butch sneered, regaining his composure.

Maya took a step closer. "He's not bothering anyone. You are." Her voice didn't waver.

Butch grunted, a sound somewhere between a growl and a confused puppy. He clearly wasn't expecting an intervention. The Lunchroom Principle hadn't accounted for this variable: an unaligned force entering the field.

K-Dawg, from the cool kid table, yelled, "Hey, Butch! We got a situation here or what?" He was getting impatient. The tater-tot-flicking performance demanded full attention.

Butch hesitated, torn between asserting dominance over Alex and responding to his master's call. He shot Alex a final, venomous glare. "You got lucky, brainiac. Next time, Maya won't be here to save your scrawny butt." He then lumbered back to the cool kid table, his cronies trailing behind him like pilot fish.

Alex let out the breath he didn't realize he'd been holding. He looked at Maya, who was now approaching his table, a small, knowing smile playing on her lips.

"Thanks," Alex said, genuinely. The word felt small, inadequate.

Maya shrugged, pulling out the chair opposite him. "Someone's got to keep the ecosystem balanced. Besides, I needed a place to draw. And your table is generally less... volatile." She pulled out her sketchbook, already flipping to a fresh page.

Alex nodded, understanding. The Lunchroom Principle, in its most fundamental form, was about survival. And sometimes, survival meant finding an ally, even if that ally just wanted a peaceful place to sketch. He watched as Maya's pencil flew across the page, already outlining the familiar, exaggerated features of a certain potato-headed bully.

"You really think he'll be back?" Alex asked, picking at a rogue green bean.

Maya didn't look up from her drawing. "The universe tends towards entropy, Alex. And Butch tends towards repetitive, uninspired bullying. It's a fundamental law of nature."

Alex almost smiled. Leave it to Maya to turn a near-mugging into a philosophical discourse. He continued to eat, a little more at ease now. The ghost at the table had been displaced by a real, live human being. And in the chaotic, sometimes cruel, universe of the middle school lunchroom, that was a small victory.

He wondered if the Lunchroom Principle applied to other aspects of middle school life. Like classroom assignments, or the dreaded gym class. Or maybe, just maybe, it applied to something even more complex, something he hadn't quite factored into his equations yet. Something like friendship. For now, however, just making it through lunch was a sufficient achievement. He focused on the last bite of his sandwich, grateful for the quiet hum of Maya's pencil and the temporary reprieve from the constant, shifting tides of popularity and peril.

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