

I fell backwards. I would have hit the sidewalk if I wasn't caught by my buddy Rachel.

"Brian, What the heck? Why would you punch Owen?" I'd been punched?! I felt around to see if I was bleeding.

"He was asking for it." Brian said nonchalantly, like I was literally waving my arms yelling "Punch Me!"

Rachel helped me up. Then as soon as I got on my feet, she went right up to Brian.

"You think you're so cool, don't you? With your long side swept bangs, and your piercings, but guess what? You're not! Nobody thinks it's cool to punch innocent 7th graders." She said gesturing towards me. I started walking towards her, I didn't want her go too far or we'll get matching black eyes.

"Get out of my face." Brian growled

".....Make me." Rachel said, a smug smile spreading across her face.

"I don't fight girls."

"That makes two of us." Things were getting tense, it looked like he really was about to fight a girl.

"Oookay, t-thats enough." I intervened, stumbling with each step, resulting in me tripping.

Brian chuckled at my failure, while Rachel, yet again, helped me up.

"Come on Owen, lets go." Rachel said to me before she started walking away.

"Fine, go! Leave! No point in talking to a ginger who has to baby-sit her clumsy 'buddy' 24/7." Brian called after us. I blushed due to embarrassment, but Rachel appeared to have not heard that and kept walking. How does she do that? Rachel is fearless, she does all these things I wouldn't dream of doing.

"Cya tomorrow, Owind." Brian said in that voice that meant "it's the usual tomorrow" the usual being the petty bully tricks he constantly plays on me. The stealing of lunch money, the making me trip and fall, etc. And that nickname he uses serves as a cherry on this sundae. But I'm sick of this. I'm sick of being afraid, of envying Rachel, of getting bullied for getting straight A's. I stopped walking, can I stop this?

“Owen?” Rachel asked, trying to get my attention, but it was no use. I turned sharply around and marched towards Brian.

“What th- Ouch!” Before I could piece together what I did, Brian shoved me. I saw that he was holding his leg, his face read a mix of two emotions, shock and rage. I widen my eyes in realization, I had just kicked Brain in the leg. I stepped back as if he would attack me.

“I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m dead.” I was repeating in my head.

“Little Owind wanna fight?” One of Brian’s friends asked in a baby voice. Brian’s face softened from the previous emotions than looked like it’s usual self, smug.

“Well...? Do you wanna fight Owind?”

“No nonononononono, I do not want to fight.” I stammered.

“3:00 pm, back of the school, Thursday.” Brain sneered.

“No thank you, I don’t want to fight.”

Rachel came to my side to back me up.... At least I thought she would.

“We’ll be there.” Rachel said and even offered her hand to shake on it, but Brian ignored it.

“Cya then.” he hissed as he brushed past me, his friends followed snickering
..... What just happened?



“Come on! Any time now, I wanna see five push-ups!” Rachel was chanting. I was laying in the traditional “corpse” yoga pose, trying to figure out what I should do. After our conversation with Brian, Rachel dragged me over to the Y to start training for “my big fight.” But, liked I’ve said before, I don’t want to fight, maybe I should just go to the principal for help. I turned my head 15 degrees to my left and examined Rachel. She was wearing a white T-shirt with thin horizontal lines that were in rainbow order and

light blue shorts. She also wore some accessories that she considered necessary for the time being, which was a baseball cap that she fished her long red hair through, and around her neck was a whistle and a stopwatch.

“At least lay down on your belly.” Rachel pleaded. I turned over my stomach. Than, she put her foot on my back.

“You are not getting up until I see at least five push-ups. And an additional push-up for every two seconds you delay!” Reluctantly, I got myself in position and heaved my body up, then lowered it back to the ground. I repeated this process 5 times, all the while having Rachel’s foot on my back. When I got up, Rachel immediately grabbed my hand, her backpack, and raced to another side of the gym, ignoring everybody she bumped into.

My dialogue for that minute mostly consisted of “Excuse us, sorry, oh my bad, ah lo sento, excuse us, pardon.” Rachel positioned me in front of a punching bag, then she dug around in her backpack for a bit before presenting two pairs of knuckle guards. She skipped over towards me and started strapping the knuckle guards on my hands. When the guards were secured, Rachel strapped the other pair on her’s.

“Alright, I’ll show you what to do here.” she said, like I clearly didn’t know how to punch. Which is kind of true, but I digress. Rachel hesitated for a moment, like she was thinking of the best way to approach this topic.

“Do you know what you’re doing?” I asked.

“Of course I know what I’m doing.” she assured me.

“Okay, here’s what we’ll do, just imagine this punching bag as someone or something that really annoys you, then when you get all worked up, just let your anger out as a punch.” As she said this, she then proceeded to punch the bag.

“Now you try,” she motioned.

“Do I have to?” I asked

“Yes, if you want to win this fight, you have to practice.”

“But I don’t want to fight,” I said thinking maybe, just maybe, I could convince her out of this.

“Than do you have another plan to make Brian stop bugging you?” she asked crossing her arms.

“Yes, what if we go to the principal-”

“Uh no, no, and no. Unless you want to be bullied like there’s no tomorrow, we are not going to the principal’s office.”

“Why not?”

“Now come on, punch the bag. This thing was designed for people to hit it.” Well, Rachel dodged the question, looking like she was in her mode that only allows her to hear what she wants to hear. So, I obeyed and started hitting the bag. After a couple of weak punches, Rachel signaled for me to stop.

“You’re going at this all wrong.” She said. “You gotta feel sorta a flick in your waist. Do you feel that flick?”

“....No....?” I didn’t know how to answer to that.

“Come on, try again.” Rachel commanded.

“Rachel, can’t we just call it a day? Go to CVS so I can get some Tylenol and you can get your “Everlasting” tasting watermelon chewing gum?” I pleaded. I started feeling rage come up within me, maybe because I knew the answer to my question.

“Owen, you gotta fight. You have to stand up for yourself.”

“Rachel, I don’t want to fight. What part of that sentence do you not understand?”

“All of it, just man up for a day or so. Why you can’t just fight?”

“Because Brian is going to kill me! I’m sorry if I’m not ‘manly’ enough to take on this bully, but either way i’m going to get hurt. Is that what you want?” I snapped. Rachel flinched.

I lowered to the ground with my back against the wall and started taking of the knuckle guards. Rachel came and sat next to me.

“Owen, I don’t want to see you get hurt. Physical or mental or anything like that.”

“What? Than why do you want me to fight?”

“Because, if we go to the principal about Brian, he’ll just get more mad and keep bullying you. And I hate seeing you get harassed for no good reason.”

“Even if I fight, he’ll keep bullying me.”

“No, he won’t. He expects you to chicken out, you fighting back is the last thing he would think of.”

“Really?”

“Yes, if you, Owen Walker, fight back, he might just gain some respect for you.”

She spoke with confidence.

“That won’t happen.”

“Yes, it will.” Rachel stood up.

“You’re my buddy, we made that label together, and the best buddies stay together, through anything and everything.” I looked up at Rachel, in her eyes she had this look, like she was dead serious, and I knew she was. But, thinking about me and Brian fighting, worried me. I looked at the ground, feeling sad, when I had an epiphany.

“What if we came up with a plan to outsmart Brian. A plan where nobody gets hurt. We could use my brain and your tenancy to come up with it.”

Rachel smiled and squealed with excitement as I started piecing a plan together.

“Well, firstly I’d-”

“Wait!” Rachel stopped me before I could say anything else. She ran to her backpack and got out a notebook and two granola bars.

“We’re gonna be here awhile.” She said handing a snack to me.

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Thursday, 4:12 pm

I laid on Rachel’s sofa, adjusting the ice pack on my ankle, and fiddled with a tear in my jeans. I looked over at Rachel who looked worse than I did. Dabbing gauze at the bleeding scraps on her arm. And, as it turned out, we got matching black eyes, I’m not sure if thats a good thing. Rachel’s mom rushed into the room.

“I thought I heard you coming in.... So, how did it go?” I looked at Rachel than at her mom. Her mom knew about the fight? And this was her reaction?

“Well, take a good look at us.” Rachel said gesturing to both me and her.

“I’ll go get the first-aid kit. Why don’t you watch some T.V.?” When her mom left the room, Rachel did exactly that, turning it on to our favorite show, “Phineas and Ferb.”

“This’ll cheer you up.” She said, turning up the volume.

“Why did you fight him with me?” I asked her. “I thought it was just going to be me and him fighting.”

“Come on, I was always planning on fighting with you, from the very beginning.”

“Really?”

“‘Birds of a feather flock together’. Or in this case, Buddys.” I smiled. Through everything she put me through, at the very least, she means well. Her mom came back with, as she promised, the first-aid kit.

“So, how exactly did it go?” She asked.

“Well, I hate to say it, but Rachel was right.”