

A Short Story
By Tristan M.

"Who do you think you are?" Those were the first words I heard from anybody from school that day, when I saw who had been, at the time, the school bully, Rick, ginger hair, and glaring green eyes. I was eight at the time, and in 2nd grade. He had been bullying this boy and was threatening to lock him in his own locker, and seeing this, I decided I wasn't going to let it stand. I confronted him, and when I did, those were the words he said, to this day, I still remember them, even after five years. Now I'm 15, in 8th grade, and to right now, if anybody asked me that question, I wouldn't know. I might be one of the top students in Hilltree Middle School, but I honestly don't know who I am.

I was born December 1st, 2002, and my name is Howard Nordin. My mother and father were decent people, as far as I had known, but they were very poor, and had little money to feed me, which wasn't enough for a hungry little me. So, with great reluctance and a storm of tears, they put me up for adoption. However, even after that, they still hadn't enough money to feed themselves, and they starved. After three years in the foster system, no one had adopted me, and one day, somebody set fire to the adoption center, and in the blaze, I barely escaped with my life.

Suffering second degree burns on my arms and legs, I ran as far as I could, and collapsed in the desolate woods next to the ruined town. My stomach was an empty barrel, my skin felt as if someone put me in the oven and forced me against the walls. My head felt terrible, as if a giant was stepping on it repeatedly. Luck must have been by my side that day, because a camper in the woods found me, and brought me to his tent. He healed me, fed me, and we stayed there in those woods for a week.

He kept me with him even after he decided to leave the woods, and the rest is history, he basically became my dad, teaching my everything there was to know, and that was about it. Since then, I've gone to school, and spent my entire life almost utterly alone, I have no friends, no biological family that I know of, just one person whom I call Dad. Now then, you know all the past details, now come back to the present.

Today was not a usual day in Hilltree Middle School, a new kid named Gerald came to school. He had peculiar black hair that looked like it hadn't been brushed for a week, but it didn't look too bad, and he was very scrawny; which made him look like bully-picking on material, so I went to talk to him and warn him, and I was the only one who did. (not the unusual part). See, the way things go at Hilltree Middle School like this; you go to school, you do what you need to do, and you come out and go home. Hardly anybody was friends with anybody, except the bullies and the newer people, who were normally quickly driven apart by the bullies. And that's not the only reason I'm not friends with anyone and never have been. Remember I'm adopted?

Well, rumors went around school both in elementary and middle school that I was the one who set fire to the adoption center, the fire made national news, so everyone in the country knew about it, except those born after.

Anyway, back on track, the new kid talked to me, and seeing as he clearly wasn't perturbed by the ominous atmosphere of Hilltree Middle School, I decided I wouldn't ruin what could be his one and only perfect day. So I talked to him, and we found many similarities between us. One of the only things I can escape into is coding, and its something he does too. I also found he has

had no friends even though he does his best to be one, so talking with me was great. Today, I actually made a friend. I came home and coded like i always do, but today, it was with renewed determination and spirit that I hadn't had since I began.

The next morning, I went to school in a better mood than normal, excited for it for the first time since the first week of elementary.

"Hello again!" Gerald smiled and waved at me.

"Hey!" I greeted back. We started walking up the stairs into the school.

"So, I was coding yesterday, and I had an idea, since we're both good at coding, what if we join the local code club?"

"There's a local code club?" I asked, surprised. I guess when you go straight from your own house to school and then later, back again, you miss small details like the local code club.

"Yeah, there is, so what if we join it, and then go from there?"

"Let me ask my dad, he shouldn't have a problem with it, he keeps encouraging me to go out and find something more to do, but because of past experiences, I've been reluctant."

"Yeah me too, I didn't want to go without a friend, and seeing as I had no friends less than a week ago, I haven't gone." Gerald laughed weakly, smiling.

"Alright, after class meet me at my house, and if my dad says it's alright, we'll go."

"Yeah!" Gerald pumped his fist. I grinned, happy to finally have a friend. The rest of the day, Gerald and I talked about coding and things about school.

To be continued....