

TV Show 23

Chapter 23: A Lifelong Rival **

Summer break quickly passed.

Adam, who started his driving journey in second gear, successfully obtained his driver's license. His driving skills left even the seasoned Emmett utterly stunned.

Drifting around corners and overtaking in drainage channels—things Emmett wouldn't dare to imagine—were second nature to Adam.

Whenever Emmett asked for tips, Adam would just smile without saying a word. If pressed, he'd deflect with, "It's all talent and good looks."

Talent, Emmett could understand. But what did good looks have to do with driving skills?

Fortunately, Emmett was only asking out of curiosity. Given his cautious nature, there was no way he'd ever practice such daring maneuvers.

The new semester began.

Adam and his friends were now sophomores in high school.

Because of the credit system, the four members of the Hard Candy band found themselves attending fewer classes together.

Unsurprisingly, Emmett was struggling the most. He even failed a few classes, falling short on credits and having to retake them.

Adam and Juno were progressing steadily, following the curriculum.

As for young Sheldon, all the teachers urged him to transfer to a private high school, where tuition would be waived, and scholarships were lined up. Even the principal personally reached out to arrange everything. However, Sheldon's age ultimately kept him from transferring. Still, he couldn't stand the idiocy of high school life. Instead, he had his grandmother drive him weekly to the best public university in the state to attend lectures with college students.

It didn't take long for the entire lecture hall of university students to marvel at Sheldon's genius while simultaneously being annoyed by him.

Particularly during in-class tests, when Sheldon would glance at their papers, shake his head, and sigh. It made almost everyone in the lecture hall feel the same frustration his high school teachers did—like they wanted to strangle the obnoxious child genius.

Fortunately, there's always a higher mountain, and someone more remarkable than you.

"What's wrong, Sheldon? Feeling down?" Adam asked casually as he noticed Sheldon poking at his lunch without eating.

"No," Sheldon denied it at first. But when Adam and the others looked over, he pouted and admitted, "Fine. I'm feeling a bit off, and I don't know how to describe it. My grandma says it's jealousy, but I don't agree."

"Jealousy?" Adam's eyes lit up with excitement. "Did you finally meet... someone smarter than you?"

The first person that came to Adam's mind was the child prodigy, Paige. He had been waiting for this moment.

Adam believed that befriending her would give him a huge boost in intelligence points.

"Impossible!" Sheldon's voice rose sharply. "She may *seem* smart, but she's definitely not smarter than me!"

"She?" Juno perked up with interest.

"Tell us everything!" Emmett was intrigued, too. Sheldon's uncharacteristic mood had caught his attention. Given Sheldon's grandma had mentioned jealousy, Emmett couldn't help but feel a bit thrilled.

You couldn't blame him for lacking sympathy. Sheldon's usual demeanor was always full of condescension—he practically oozed "stupid Earthlings" and "you're just talking apes." It was maddening.

Now, hearing that someone might've put Sheldon in his place? Naturally, they were eager to hear all about it.

"Her name is Paige Adler," Sheldon reluctantly admitted with a frown. "She's also attending university lectures."

"How old is she?" Juno cut straight to the point.

"..." Sheldon suddenly didn't feel like talking anymore. His photographic memory involuntarily replayed their first encounter in vivid detail.

That day, he had entered the lecture hall and found a little girl sitting in *his* seat. He wasn't happy but forced himself to greet her.

"Hello."

"Hi," the blonde girl replied, pulling books from her pink backpack. She smiled and introduced herself as Paige Adler.

"You look really young," Sheldon said in surprise. "Did one of the adults bring you here?"

"Nope," Paige replied with a sweet smile. "Dr. John Sturgis invited me to audit his lectures after hearing my presentation on quantum chromodynamics at high temperatures."

"I see." Sheldon's expression darkened slightly.

"Yeah," Paige said, staring at him with increasing amusement. "He's been super nice to me!"

Sheldon found her incredibly annoying. Unable to hold back, he said coldly, "Just so you know, Dr. Sturgis is my mentor. He's also my grandma's boyfriend, and he's had dinner at my house—spaghetti with hot dogs, to be exact."

Dr. John Sturgis had much in common with Sheldon. If not for Sheldon meeting Leonard as a roommate in the future, he'd likely have become another version of Dr. Sturgis: a lonely scientist consumed by research, clueless about social interactions, and suffering from mental health issues.

Sheldon's grandmother, on the other hand, was still attractive for her age and quite popular among her peers. She met Dr. Sturgis while driving Sheldon to lectures, and sparks unexpectedly flew between them.

Sheldon was thrilled. He believed this was the best way to elevate the family's collective IQ. He even went out of his way to push for the relationship, acting like he wanted them married immediately.

Now, with a little girl suddenly competing for Dr. Sturgis's attention, Sheldon was furious.

"So?" Paige chuckled.

Sheldon grew even angrier. "Do you even understand how advanced this course is? We're covering topics like deriving nuclear physics from the quark model—"

Paige cut him off with a smile: "Do you know how to calculate gluon interactions using matrix multiplication?"

Sheldon froze, his confidence faltering. "I... don't."

"Do you know how to apply Leibniz's rule for integration?" Paige pressed.

Sheldon's face twitched. "No."

Paige smirked. "Then what *do* you know?"

Sheldon was almost in tears. He shouted, "I know you're sitting in my seat!"

Paige: ...

Sheldon sat down angrily, refusing to acknowledge the infuriating girl beside him. Unfortunately, she found him quite interesting.

"How old are you?" she asked.

Sheldon, regaining some confidence, proudly replied, "Ten."

"So am I," Paige said, her smile growing wider. "When's your birthday?"

"February 26," Sheldon said automatically.

"Mine's June 25," Paige said, glancing around the lecture hall. Her grin deepened. "I'm the youngest student here. How fun!"

Sheldon could only roll his eyes. If he'd already had a blacklist, Paige would've shot straight to the top, becoming his lifelong nemesis.

"I hate her!" Sheldon concluded after recounting the story.

"Hahahaha!" Emmett burst out laughing.

Sheldon clearly didn't understand one thing: The people you hate often reflect a part of yourself.

Adam and Juno couldn't help but laugh as well. They exchanged a glance, but Adam's smile froze as a strange thought crossed his mind. Memories of news stories flashed through his mind...