

## TV Show 36

### Chapter 36: Pay-to-Win for Strength

As autumn set in, the final year of high school began.

Sheldon Cooper had always looked down on spending four years in high school, and with good reason. Even with delays, he managed to finish in just three years and went on to become a full-time student at the University of Texas at Austin.

Emmett walked gloomily across campus.

With young Sheldon gone, the Fruit Hard Candy Band was practically in shambles. Aside from him, no one else seemed to care anymore.

Adam was utterly engrossed in Transformers, completely beyond saving.

Juno was elusive as ever. When Emmett occasionally saw her, she was inseparable from a girl named Karen Smith, making him deeply suspicious and want to quip, "Enough already! You're not just wasting your own potential, you're stealing ours too!"

Senior year was a pivotal time.

Students with good grades began working hard for college—attending prep courses or preparing for the SAT.

When Emmett last visited Adam, he discovered that, besides spending time with Jennifer studying Transformers, Adam was also preparing for the SAT.

This made Emmett both envious and admiring. If he were in Adam's shoes, hanging out with a girl like Jennifer, how could he possibly focus on studying?

"Sigh, what a waste of talent," Emmett muttered deeply, feeling disheartened both by the growing distance from his friends and by his uncertain future.

With his grades, dreaming of a top-tier college was futile. Add in his family's financial situation, and even attending an average university seemed out of reach—never mind indulging in college life.

The relationship between colleges and students increasingly resembled that of businesses and consumers. With such steep costs, you might as well embrace the notion of "indulging."

Unlike Eastern countries, where universities often emphasize academic merit, American colleges were originally designed for the elite, making their admissions processes feel aristocratic.

Critics of the Eastern "test-centric" system often hold up America's "holistic admissions" as an example.

What does "holistic admissions" mean?

It means not judging students solely by their test scores.

So, who qualifies as a "hero" under this system?

You either have money, power, or both—because in America, wealth and power often go hand in hand. To sum it up in one sentence:

**\*\*Pay-to-win is the only way to get stronger.\*\***

The Tiers of Pay-to-Win Players

First-Tier: The Elite

The top-tier pay-to-win players are the wealthy second-generation heirs (or nth-generation heirs). Their parents have accumulated wealth and influence long before they were born, setting up foundations, donating to elite schools, constructing buildings, and funding high-tech labs.

No matter how much these heirs slacked off in high school or how poor their grades were, they effortlessly gain admission to world-class universities that others struggle to reach.

**\*\*True winners in life!\*\***

An amusing example involves Leonard's physics department hosting a fundraising dinner, where the dean instructed Sheldon and Leonard to butter up wealthy donors for sponsorships.

Initially, Sheldon refused. After all, he relied solely on talent and good looks—why should he stoop to flattery? But Amy's reminder that these donors might funnel their money to geology or the humanities (which Sheldon barely considered sciences) prompted him to act.

Sheldon's attempt, however, was disastrous. Refusing to shake hands and bluntly demanding, "Just give us your money," ensured the dean never allowed him near such events again.

Thankfully, Leonard proved to be a fundraising star. A wealthy widow, nostalgic for her college boyfriend whom Leonard resembled, took a liking to him. Having chosen money over love in her youth, she now hoped to fulfill her dream through Leonard.

Leonard initially declined but was stumped when she asked, "What do you think made me marry a billionaire back then?" This left him speechless—and tempted.

In the end, with Sheldon's enthusiastic encouragement—including fetching blue pills and protection from the medical department—Leonard succeeded in securing a state-of-the-art centrifuge for the physics department.

Sheldon's evaluation? "This is your greatest contribution to science."

His assessment of the widow? "A social climber trying to improve her status through donations."

If this widow had children applying to college, institutions like Caltech would welcome them with open arms because, clearly, they were "holistically qualified."

They might accomplish nothing on their own, but their family's wealth and legacy surely outweigh your years of effort.

Working hard your whole life can't compete with being born into the right family—it's that brutal.

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"A lifetime of struggle can't compare to being born into the right family – that's how cruel it is!

Second-rate 'pay-to-win' powerhouses, those with slightly less wealth and status, can't achieve true strength just by throwing money around. In other words, they can't just buy their way into prestigious universities.

They'll spend a few hundred thousand – a 'small amount' to them – donating to these elite schools, becoming members of their donation committees. Then, when it's time for their children to apply, the admissions office gives them priority.

Third-rate 'pay-to-win' types, with even less wealth and social standing, aren't willing to shell out even a few hundred thousand.

They'll spend less money to get their kids into university prep courses, honors programs, and all sorts of niche activities that supposedly demonstrate 'quality,' like horseback riding and golf.

Public high schools simply don't have the resources to offer these 'quality-signaling' activities. Even if they did, most students couldn't afford the equipment.

After this triple whammy of 'quality' filters, most of the spots at prestigious universities are already filled. Add in the need to make exceptions for geniuses like Sheldon and Paige, and there are very few places left for ordinary students.

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With so many monks and so little gruel, how do you decide which of the many ordinary students to admit?

That's where the SAT comes in – the Scholastic Assessment Test, basically the American college entrance exam.

After going around in circles, the focus on 'quality' shifts back to 'grades.' But by this point, it's not like the national college entrance exam in China where everyone competes on a level playing field. A whole bunch of 'high-quality' students, along with their 'high-quality' parents, have already crossed over to the other side. They're laughing as they watch countless ordinary students struggle to walk a tightrope.

No standard is the biggest standard!

[Scene: County High School]

As envious eyes glare at them, Adam and Jennifer walk into the school laughing. They run into Juno and Karen. Adam is a bit surprised but greets them with a smile: "Hey, Juno, Karen."

Seeing Karen acting like Juno's follower, Jennifer's smile freezes.

WTF?!

Shouldn't Karen be *\*her\** shadow, her best friend?

Even though she's been completely focused on researching Transformers and mechanical aesthetics with Adam lately and hasn't had time for Karen, that's no excuse for Karen to act like this.

And what the heck is Karen wearing?

Like that bitch Juno, she's wearing a red hoodie.

Are they wearing matching best friend outfits?

A pair of Little Red Riding Hoods?