

TV Show 41

Chapter 41: I Can Fight All Day **

New Jersey.

Bergen County High School.

Knock, knock.

"Leonard Hofstadter?"

Adam's expression turned peculiar as he knocked on a narrow locker in the school hallway.

After checking out of his hotel room earlier that morning, he had driven to New Jersey, visiting several public high schools without success. That was until he arrived at this particular school and spotted a familiar, chubby face on the Honor Wall in the hallway—along with the name: Jimmy Speckerman.

A popular guy, indeed. It didn't take much for Adam to find someone who knew Jimmy's whereabouts. When he asked, the person laughed out loud.

"Nancy? Oh, he's around. Where did they put him today? Never mind. Check the trash can, a locker, or maybe the girls' locker room."

Adam checked the trash can first and then began knocking on lockers.

"I'm here, I'm here!"

A delighted voice came from the tightly locked locker.

"Your mom's a neuroscientist, and your dad's a sociologist?" Adam confirmed.

"Yes, yes," the voice inside the locker said hastily. "Could you let me out first? It's cramped in here."

"Where's the key?" Adam asked.

"Jimmy has it," the voice answered before softening. "He said he'd let me out after he finishes his game."

"What a jerk!" Adam cursed with exaggerated indignation. "Leonard, hang tight! I, Adam Duncan, will get the key and free you! I heard you have asthma—how could anyone leave you locked up in such a small space?"

"Adam Duncan? Do we know each other?" The voice inside the locker sounded touched. "Jimmy's mean. Don't get hurt because of me. It's okay—I'm used to it."

"I've read your mother, Dr. Beverly Hofstadter's, books. I think she underestimated you, so I came here to meet you." Adam lied smoothly. "As for that Jimmy? I'm not afraid of him! What's a little fight compared to helping a friend?"

There was a long silence from inside the locker. Perhaps Leonard was trying to process the embarrassing fact that Adam had read his mother's book about him—or maybe he was stunned by how he'd suddenly gained a "friend."

Friend?

What a familiar yet foreign word!

He had always wanted a friend. Yet the first person who seemed willing to call him one was someone who had read *that* book, *The Lost Cause*. The conflicting emotions left Leonard overwhelmed.

Delight, hope, shame, worry...

"This won't be easy," Adam muttered to himself.

He had been waiting for his system to give him a hint, but without superpowers, he wasn't keen on fighting a bunch of football players. Yet the system remained silent, much to his frustration.

Who said Leonard was easy to befriend?

Geniuses aren't fools!

It seemed that merely sweet-talking Leonard into friendship wouldn't work. Adam steeled himself for the challenge.

"Jimmy Speckerman!" Adam gritted his teeth and went to find the school bully.

Before long, Jimmy returned with Adam, grinning as they approached Leonard's locker.

"You want me to let Nancy out?"

"Yes," Adam replied firmly, staring at the hefty Jimmy. "And his name is Leonard, not Nancy!"

"Who the hell are you?"

Jimmy's face suddenly darkened. He shoved Adam against the locker with a loud bang, startling Leonard into trembling inside.

"Adam, are you okay?"

"Huh. That wasn't so bad," Adam muttered.

The shove had hurt, but the pain subsided quickly—so much so that he wondered if it had even happened.

Could it be his 400 endurance points at work?

Probably.

He had already suspected that endurance affected stamina, recovery, and resilience. For instance, despite long days, he only needed six hours of sleep to feel completely refreshed—whereas most young people struggled without at least eight hours.

A fight? Let's go.

Brimming with newfound confidence, Adam theatrically exclaimed, "Leonard, I'm fine!"

He then glared at Jimmy. "Hand over the key! Leonard is my good friend, and I won't let anyone bully him. I swear it on my life!"

Jimmy looked at Adam as though he were insane.

"Adam..." Leonard's voice trembled with emotion from inside the locker.

"Leonard..." Adam, too, pretended to choke up—mainly out of frustration since the system still wasn't giving him any prompts.

Damn it!

Apparently, blood would have to be spilled.

"You bastard! How dare you?"

Before Jimmy could react, Adam landed a punch on his gut. His 180-to-almost-200-pound frame packed enough force to make Jimmy double over in pain.

It dawned on Adam that, despite Jimmy being a football-playing bully, he was still just a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old kid. His strength was probably on par with Adam's.

"Hand it over!" Adam shouted, throwing another punch.

"You're dead! You're so dead!" Jimmy roared, clutching his stomach. Like a human cannonball, he tackled Adam to the ground in a classic football move.

Boom!

Adam felt like his body was falling apart. Fueled by anger, he swung his fists wildly, hitting Jimmy again and again.

Their fight devolved into a chaotic, clumsy brawl—punch after punch.

Jimmy's rage gradually faded as he realized something shocking: the wiry kid he was fighting was relentless. Despite being hit hard, Adam's punches never weakened, leaving Jimmy's body aching all over.

And Adam was **smiling.**

"I could do this all day," Adam quipped, grinning as if he genuinely meant it.

That broke Jimmy's resolve. He scrambled to his feet, pulled the key from his pocket, and tossed it to Adam.

"Whatever. I'm done with you guys," Jimmy muttered, limping away without his usual bravado.

"Don't you dare bully Leonard again—or I'll beat you every time I see you!" Adam called after him dramatically.

Turning back to the locker, Adam smeared some blood from his fists onto his face for effect. Using the blurry reflection on the locker, he adjusted his hair and clothes, aiming for a "heroic yet battered" look.

Finally, he unlocked the locker and offered Leonard a weary but warm smile.

"Leonard..."

"Adam..."

Ding!

Wisdom +3!

Ding!

Strength +20!