

Genius

We like to believe that geniuses are an otherworldly race. I mean, only they can find the cure to cancer, or superconductors, or write a book that would make them and their entire lineage rich without ever working again. How many times have “average” people wished they had been born geniuses, thinking that it would make their lives easier? Thinking that they wouldn’t have to work as hard as they do, because they would have a divine gift biasing their outcomes? I used to think like that – until I was sat next to an actual genius during high school.

The boy was a living legend – seven gold medals at the Mathematical Olympiad, scholarship to the MIT, IQ higher than Einstein’s (or so rumours claimed) and God knew what else. I’m not going to lie, I loathed him at first. I wished I could be like him; that high school could be a piece of cake to me as well.

During our classes together, he was better at avoiding me than I was at shunning him. The boy lived in his own bubble, too consumed by what he was doing to notice his surroundings. I, on the other hand, would catch myself staring at him – out of curiosity, mind you, – noticing that his notebooks were almost full with scribbled words I didn’t recognize. Noticing that he was never struggling with what we were supposed to be learning, like I was – almost as though he’d already mastered the subject a long time ago.

A few weeks went like this, until I was caught in the midst of scrutinizing him. He offered me help for the first time, then. I refused because I had thought his tone to be rude, but now, looking back to it, I consider the proposal sincere.

He kept on reaching out his hand every time he detected me scrambling and I kept on denying him, thinking I didn’t need him belittling me even more than he already did (the way envy can make us stupid is incredible, isn’t it?). That is – until he stopped asking for permission. Teen Einstein also turned out to be an outstanding teacher. Obviously.

We got friendly after that. He told me about what he was doing: some research on university subjects, because high school subjects were a child’s play, evidently. Apparently, the way he explained things to me was the way he had explained them to himself, years before, when his research was about our – or rather, my – current topics, instead of university ones.

I asked him why he bothered to learn everything beforehand, once. He simply stated he was a curious child and his patience wouldn’t allow him to wait years to satiate his thirst for knowledge. I remember muttering something about how easy it was when you

were born a genius and actually understanding advanced things was never a problem. The boy had smiled then, a grin I didn't comprehend until months later, when he told me his real story.

The first ever hundred-point-score he got, when he was barely more than a child, was in an IQ test, which is a great score, if you want a tag around your neck reading "average". Society makes us believe average people can't do certain things, for being out of their league and we, its blind followers, eat that fallacy up, never once questioning it. We don't even *want* to question it because it gives us the excuse to be lazy. And Lord, we *long* for that pretext – it makes us feel better with our indolent selves, as there's something to hold accountable for our lack of success. How easy it is to blame Einstein's Theory of Relativity on his IQ instead of his hard work?

However, the boy believed differently. He wanted to stand out, despite what he was labelled as. In contrast to what everyone else deems, it wasn't easy for him. He had to work twice as hard to grasp every subject and frustration was a constant in his days; but not once did he ponder on giving up. Not once did he think less of himself because of the score. His IQ had probably increased by high school, but he refused to take another test. He refused to be defined by a number – to let it tell him what he could or couldn't do.

I like to think he was put in my path so that this could strike me: we define our intelligence, not the other way around. I was amazed when I realized it. It meant I could be average and do things meant for geniuses, since geniuses don't really exist – they are simply curious people who work very, *very* hard.

By Hetal Hasmucrai 12^o 1C, 21-22