

An excerpt from my in progress memoir about my relationship with my wife, beginning with the day we met in elementary school, and culminating in her recovery from a life threatening illness.

“The Phone Number”

“Dude, you look like shit” James said as Andy pulled himself up to the table properly.

“Anybody ever tell you you were a charmer, James?” Andy asked bitingly.

“Yeah, David’s mom has said it a time or two” James snidely remarked.

“Okay, plus two points for wit, and minus a few hundred for personality.” Andy bantered.

“Eh, that still puts me way ahead of everyone else at this table” he said with a shrug, and proceeded to pour half a bottle of ranch dressing on a single slice of terrible pizza.

Mike leaned over the table and asked Andy about his mission. “Any luck finding her info?”

Andy couldn’t mask his sorrow from his friend. “Not a bit, man. I don’t get it. It’s like she freaking disappeared completely. Nobody has a number, nobody has an address or email. Hell, nobody even knows where she moved to. I don’t know who else to ask. I’m running out of time, out of leads, and out of hope.”

Mike slapped his friend harder than necessary. “It’ll be alright dude. You still got the rest of the day, right? It can still happen.”

As he tried his best to cheer Andy up, neither of them noticed David walking up behind them.

“Yo, Andrew. Lemme have that slice of pizza.” David reached towards his tray, but Andy grabbed his hand. “Dude, are you out of your mind? I’m starving.”

“So eat your fruit cup man. Trust me, will you? Give me your pizza.” There was a look of urgency in David’s eyes that convinced Andy to go along with his demands.

“What’s this about, man?” Andy asked, but David brushed him off.

“I can’t say yet. Find me after seventh period. *Do not leave* without talking to me, got it?!” With that, David took off across the lunchroom and disappeared into the crowd, with Andy’s pizza in hand.

“God, what is with the theatrics?” Andy muttered after David had disappeared.

“Dude, he’s definitely just gonna eat your pizza” James teased.

“Not really a loss, is it?” Mike said, while staring at his own awful slice in disgust.

The last bell rang, announcing the end of the school day, and Andy’s anxiety was at a fever pitch. He had exhausted every resource he had, and came up empty. Terrified that he had failed, he waited beside

David's locker, impatiently fidgeting. He had said not to leave without finding him, but had not given any other information. Andy stood ruminating over his lack of success this year when he saw David turn the corner and run towards him at full speed, shouting "I got it, man! I got it!"

Andy didn't wait for him to reach his locker, and raced to meet him. "Are you for real, man?! Like, honest to god, you got it?!"

David almost crashed into Andy, but swung his arms wide at the last second and lifted Andy in a hug. "For real, bro, I got it! I freaking got her number for you!"

James walked out of the nearby bathroom, and snorted at the two friends embracing in celebration. "Dude, gaaaaayyyyyy" he loudly shouted.

"Shut up dude, this is a happy moment." Mike said, joining the group of boys in the hall. "Way to freaking go, David. I can't believe you did it. How did you find it?"

David grinned goofily, holding a scrap of blue paper. "I happened to run into Shelley this morning before school, and asked her for Amanda's number. At first she wouldn't spill, but I told her it was for 'Buddy' not me, and she gave it to me instantly."

Andy was overcome with emotion, and could barely hear his friends over his own heartbeat.

"Wait a sec" Mike said, and turned to David. "Why did you ask him for his pizza then?"

David shrugged, and said "I forgot my lunch money at home. I figured a piece of crappy pizza was a fair price to pay for his dream girl's digits, right?"

James shouted "I freaking told you!" at the top of his lungs, and Mike rolled his eyes, but Andy just smiled, dreaming of calling the number he held in his hands now.

"Sure hope it isn't a Wendy's number or something" James said with a sneer as the boys walked towards the exit.

"I gotta swing by Hawthorne's office before I leave, tie up this whole thing" Andy said, waving to his friends as he split ways towards the office. As he reached the door, David shouted to him one last time: "You better let us know how it goes, and you better not wait 2 years, got it?!"