

The Mystery at School

3/28/13 My school might look normal. If you take a step inside, it would still seem normal. I mean, it has a main office, a cafeteria, an auditorium, etc... But trust me, weird things have been going on. Some kids have been dropping out of school. This might not seem unusual. I mean, every school has a couple kids that are better off watching TV 24/7 than going to school, but there's something fishy going on. All the students that dropped out are geniuses, and I'm not exaggerating IQ of about 150. Einstein's IQ was 160! Anyway, there's a common thread running through all these students. They all suffered a mental breakdown right before or right after they left. They were all in the best class. And they all had the same teacher, Mr. Alsa. I believe that Mr. Alsa is the reason why this is happening. The police are also helping me. But, I have to take this case into my own hands, literally. I'm going to get into that class, no matter what. And that is why I, Mark Green, am hitting the books.

I've worked with the police on some occasions. I helped stop a cheating scam involving a state mandated test, a drug dealer, and a huge gang. The police backed me up on these occasions, and this one's no different, other than that this is the first time the case is in my new school. I was nominated for this better school instead of my regular P.S 38 school. I was accepted immediately and put in advanced classes. I'm 16 years old, have dark hair, brown eyes, and get As and Bs. Just a regular person. And this is why I am the perfect candidate to become a spy.

I already developed a plan. While I'm studying to get into Mr. Alsa's class, I already targeted some kids in his class. They have been in his class for a couple semesters and are starting to go wonky. For example, they never talk to anybody, and seem afraid and always on the lookout. This might seem irrelevant, but they also wear long sleeve shirts and long pants, even when it's 100 degrees outside. Also, their grades have been slipping slowly but steadily. The rate is barely noticeable, but it didn't elude me. This is unusual because at Buffalo Academy (my school), grades go up, not down. So, about my plan. I will ask these peers some questions when I get the chance. Their answers and reactions to the questions will lead me to believe what is happening. This will happen because the questions will be about their teacher and the class, a topic probably forbidden to talk about by Mr. Alsa, if he is guilty. Meanwhile, the police will be helping me with any loose ends. To finish off my plan, when the time is right, and the evidence is gathered, the police will barge in to Mr. Alsa's class. They hope we will trap him in the act of doing something worthy of arresting, and end his reign of terror before any more kids get hurt.

Now, about the target, the teacher. Mr. Alsa teaches the best class in school. Instead of going from teacher to teacher, his class reports to him for all the subjects. His classroom is on the 3rd floor, which is the top. The strange thing is that the only classroom on the 3rd floor is his. That could be useful for hiding something. Also, the rumor is that his classroom looks more like a jail than an actual class. I dismissed the rumors, but who knows. They might be true.

3/30/13 I still haven't talked to the students. They're always walking together in a group. They even walk the same way, head down and at a brisk pace. Also, they never make eye contact. I've memorized their schedule- when they're outside of class, where they go, if they're ever alone, etc... I noticed that they walk home together and into the same house. The

suspicious thing about that is that they don't live in the same house. That could be useful for trapping them, or it could be bad. For example, if I'm trying to catch one of them alone, they'll have 4 pairs of eyes looking out (there are 4 students who I've targeted). Anyway, I'm going to stake them out tomorrow and try to talk to one of them. I hope this will work because every day they go to that class is another day that they are getting closer to insanity.

Meanwhile, the police are doing their own research. Apparently, Mr. Alsa forged his PHD. We don't know why, but he was supposedly thrown out of Harvard University. The theory is that he had to get a PHD to be able to teach in a really good school, such as this one. But that theory is pretty shaky. Also, the teacher that recommended that he leave died under mysterious circumstances. She was only 40 years old. The police in Boston that investigated the death said that she died from a heart attack, but there was an unusual amount of chemicals in her body. The investigation ended there because the means of death were already determined. It didn't matter anyway. Not until now. You see, if the police can figure out that Mr. Alsa was connected to the death, they can arrest him, maybe even before I can spy on him.

Still the search continues. I'm getting transferred to Mr. Alsa's class in a couple of days. The police talked to the school, and they told the principal to transfer me. I don't know what to expect, but I know my mission. This case is getting closer to being solved, but is there enough time? If there isn't, then- I don't even want to think about what could happen.

4/1/13 I finally caught up with a person in Mr. Alsa's class. His name was Dylan. I found him on a sidewalk, and thought this was the perfect time to question him. He tried to avoid my questions, but I kept pressing him. I asked him about the class. He said that it was fine. The conversation wasn't that long, and none of my questions that mattered to the investigation were answered. But, I did see something important.

I asked Dylan why everyone in the class always wears long sleeve shirts and pants. He said he never noticed that. I could tell he was lying because everyone in this school pays careful attention to detail. It's pretty much a pet peeve of this school if someone doesn't pay attention. Anyway, as he was walking away, he tripped. I swiftly ran to his side to help him up. His sleeve was down, and I noticed there were multiple scars. I pretended that I didn't see them, and my acting worked. And suddenly, an idea appeared in my head. It had to do with the scars, and I hope it's wrong, but it could very well be right. If it is, then everything would make sense.

After the idea formed, I asked my mom to drive me to the police office to talk about my observations. She agreed and we set off. I arrived at the station at about 9:00, and caught Detective Johnson just in time.

"Mark," he said, "What a surprise. I was just about to leave. I'm guessing you have some information about the case that we're working on."

"Detective, you know me so well, and yes. I have some intriguing information."

Detective Johnson and I spent the next 15 minutes discussing what happened when I interviewed Dylan. I made sure to explain what happened after he fell. Also, I told him my theory.

"Do you really think the teacher, Mr. Alsa, is hurting his students?" he asked.

"I do, detective. That would explain a lot. Also, if he struck a certain nerve that leads to the brain, it could become stunned. Then, it would malfunction and cause a mental breakdown," I answered.

"That's one of the best theories we have so far. I will do more research on this. Wait... if this is true then I can't let you go into his class. It will be way too dangerous."

"No. That's a risk I'm willing to take. I promised I would solve this case, and I intend to do whatever it takes to complete that promise. I am going to do this. Plus it won't be long. After I gather all the evidence I need, I'll leave it up to you. Now, good night Detective, and I will contact you as soon as I can."

"Good night Mark, and be careful. You might be willing to sacrifice yourself, but I'm not letting you do that."

Also, he told me that there's no way the police can connect the death of the college teacher to Mr. Alsa.

"There's no evidence and we cannot get a search warrant. Looks like you're going to be James Bond Jr." He said.

With everything said, I exited the police station and went to the car with my mom. She told me how proud she was of me to take this case. But, she also said that she was not going to risk my well being. That night, I went to sleep with a storm of thoughts in my head, most of them about my case, and the other ones about my safety.

4/3/13 Today, I was finally transferred to Mr. Alsa's class. Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself. I was called down to the office in the morning. There, Detective Johnson was waiting for me. He told me to put on the clothes he brought from the police station. He said that they were decked out from head to toe, but I noticed that all it had was one camera and a recorder for audio. The clothes themselves were pretty nice. The shirt was a red buttoned down shirt with short sleeves.

"That way," the detective said, "if Mr. Alsa whipped you, everyone could see. Therefore, you're protected."

The pants were dark green khakis which went together with the shirt. Thankfully, I didn't look like Christmas threw up on me. The camera was really small, and fit inside one of the shirt buttons. The audio recorder was in the button below that.

When I was suited up, I walked as slowly as possible to Mr. Alsa's room. I was nervous, but I swallowed that feeling down. After what seemed as forever, I got to the single room on the lonely 3rd floor. I took a deep breath, opened the door, and walked in.

I could start by explaining how the room looked. I could start by explaining what Mr. Alsa was doing. I could even start by explaining what the students were doing. But, I'm going to start with my first impression. I'm not kidding when I thought I was in a prison. Dark walls, and bars inside the window made me think I came to a jail. After my first impression, I looked more closely into the finer details of the room. There was a cherry- brown desk in the corner. Next to it was a steel cabinet which was locked. A whip was leaning next to it. I doubted it was just for show. A whiteboard was on the wall opposite of the door. The 15 desks were neatly arranged in 3 rows of 5. I noticed that they were nailed down to the floor. That made me think of Sherlock Holmes and the Speckled Band. But the spotlight of the room was the whiteboard.

The whiteboard was covered from head to toe in writing. Most of it was black, but some of it was red. It seemed as if the red color emphasized the important information. As for what was written, it seemed like it was a complicated formula. Letters, numbers, and symbols decorated the board. There was no pictures, but then again, there was no space for it. I noticed

a couple chemical formulas. I recognized the formulas for glucose, carbon oxides, hydroxides, and halite (salt). Also, there was uranium, hydrogen, and potassium. They didn't seem to go together, but somehow I got the feeling they did. *Dang it. I know I saw that formula somewhere. If only I could remember where. If only...*

"Hello, can I help you?" Mr. Alsa said in a deep voice, interrupting my train of thought, "I believe you are interrupting my class."

"Sorry," I said panicking. "I'm your new student, Mark Green."

"Welcome Mark. I am Mr. Alsa, and this is the class of the future. Seriously. You're one of the smartest people in the world. I might be exaggerating a little bit, but the message remains the same." He sounded welcoming. "Work hard, and you'll do great. If you don't work hard," he paused, "the consequences will be dire." He sounded serious. Deadly serious. Suddenly, he switched his tone to a welcoming one. "Do you want a certain seat?"

I was still thinking about the mysterious chemical formula, when it hit me. "Atomic bomb."

"Excuse me?" Mr. Alsa replied.

"That chemical formula. Some of the chemicals are part of the atomic bomb. Also, most of the chemicals react violently with each other."

"Very good, Mark. Now, where would you like to sit. I never repeat anything twice."

A tornado of ideas started forming in my head but I managed to answer, "May I please sit in the front row. I pay the most attention there." That wasn't true, but my new teacher didn't need to know that. I asked to sit in the front so the tiny video camera could see everything that's on the board. The rest of the class went by fine, but I made a couple interesting observations. For example, when a student answered a question wrong, he looked scared. Mr. Alsa, when a student got a question wrong, looked at his cabinet with the whip. I noticed that his hand was clenched in a fist when he was looking, probably trying to resist a temptation. Also, the four students that were the targets seemed really nervous, uptight, and jumpy. They never stopped twitching a part of their body. Dylan couldn't stop moving his right hand, while Cathy, another student, kept tapping her foot.

After school was over, I went straight to the police station. Detective Johnson was in his office. I explained everything to him, from the classroom layout to the twitching students. He called my mom and told her to pick me up here. Next, we looked over the footage that was in the button. That tornado of thoughts came back to me. I explained to him about all the chemicals and the fact that some of these elements are in atomic bombs. I made sure to mention that when these elements come in contact with each other, they explode. We discussed what I should do next. He said I should come back tomorrow after school too. All he needed was footage of the whip in action, and they can get a search warrant. Right after I said goodbye, my mom came. She was worried but realized I wasn't injured. Relieved, she talked to Detective Johnson about what's next. He told her to sew the two buttons onto a different button-down shirt. Also, he told me to wear a different pair of pants.

"You don't want to look sloppy," he said.

After another ten minutes at the station, my mom and I left. Detective Johnson showed us to the door, but went back to do some paperwork. When we got home, I started doing my homework while my mom got out her sewing kit.

4/4/13 I came to Mr. Alsa's class on time. The class seemed normal at first, but that would change soon enough. Mr. Alsa pulled me aside.

"Do you notice anything about the class, Mr. Green?" he said.

I didn't know what to say so I panicked. "Everybody looks scared." I regretted what I said the moment I said it.

"No, Mr. Green. Everybody is just nervous about a test that's coming up. But, that's the wrong answer. The correct answer is that everybody's following the dress code."

"What dress code?"

"I think you're smart enough to figure that out. Now today's your last warning. There'll be no other ones. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

He sent me back to my seat. I was so scared, I just about wet my pants. Thankfully, the class started, so I focused on something else. The class went by, but, being observant, I noticed that the twitching got worse. Also, all the people who got a question wrong stayed after class. It wasn't their choice, either. Mr. Alsa told them too. I knew that even if I answered a question wrong, I wouldn't stay after class because I was a newbie. I figured out that if this is your first couple of times getting a question wrong in this class, you don't stay afterwards. I knew this because I tried it. I got a question wrong yesterday and a question wrong today. Both times, it seemed as if Mr. Alsa didn't notice. Anyway, my plan is simple. Get into the class after school. I have some ideas on how to get into the after-school program in this class and I'll probably have to use the idea. I decided that I'll just hurt him, him being Mr. Alsa. The key to my plan is patience. So, I wait. And wait. And wait. *Finally, it's time.* I pick up my book and go to Mr. Alsa's desk.

"Mr. Alsa, may I please-" I say, tripping on purpose. As I fell I saw my heavy science textbook smack Mr. Alsa square in the face.

"Mr. Green, please stay after school. I don't think you would want to skip this-" Mr Alsa said, hesitating for a second, "learning opportunity." I could tell he was trying to keep his temper under control.

"Sorry, Mr. Alsa. Won't happen again." I quickly grabbed my textbook and walked back to my seat. I couldn't help but smile a little. *I was in.*

The rest of the day flew by. I secretly contacted Detective Johnson in the bathroom and told him what was happening.

He told me that if I was in trouble I should say, "Mr. Alsa, I have a question about science."

If I said that, the agents that are going to be outside the door will bust in. The rest of the crew will be in a classroom on the second floor, looking at a computer which will show what my button sees.

"Hopefully," Detective Johnson said, "Mr. Alsa will be in jail by the end of the day."

As the rest of the class piled out after the final bell rang, I remembered what was at stake. This teacher, who I was convinced was the cause of the mental breakdowns, is in a room with me. I'm not alone, but there's only two other people. I know I have to stall so the police have enough time to set up all the equipment.

"Welcome to *after-school* school," Mr. Alsa said. "Today we are going to review the questions you got wrong. But, In Mr. Green's case, we'll learn about physics. Since the science textbook was in motion, physics was applied in the situation. OK, let's start with you, Samuel. You know what to do. You got a question wrong in history. I believe it was about the Romans. How about a demonstration on how the Romans got punishment. You can sit down in the front desk." Mr. Alsa pointed to a desk in the front row and the center column.

Knowing what was going to happen, Samuel slowly walked toward the desk of doom. He sat down and pulled down a strap that was beneath the desk. It was cleverly hidden, making it invisible, unless you look closely. Samuel rolled up his right sleeve, showing multiple scars. He pulled the strap over his wrist. Then, he pulled down another strap and tightened it over his elbow, making his arm unmovable. Meanwhile, Mr. Alsa took out his whip from the mysterious, usually locked cabinet, and started spinning it around. *CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!* The whip snapped every time it came to a halt. Suddenly, he swung it at Samuel's arm. *CRACK!* Unable to move his arm, Samuel looked like he felt a sharp pain, right where his grip was. The same exact muscle that made him strong couldn't do anything to stop the whip from hitting it. Samuel, obviously faced with this situation before, didn't do anything but grit his teeth to stop himself from screaming. Again and again, the whip circled around but always managed to hit Samuel right where it hit the last time.

Surprised by what I saw, I immediately took a step back, hitting a desk in the process. Thankfully that got Mr. Alsa's attention away from Samuel. Sadly, Mr. Alsa's attention was on me now, and the whip he held in his hand didn't make me feel any better about his laser eyes drilling into my head.

"Mr. Green, have you learned anything so far. I think these last five minutes have transported us to ancient Rome. Now, let's take a break with social studies and move on to science." Mr. Alsa started walking toward me. "Oh I forgot to mention, this after- school program is silent. One word and you'll stay after school tomorrow. Now strap yourself into the chair that Samuel's in. Samuel, get out of it."

Suddenly, everything came to me.

"You're not smart," I said without thinking, wanting to reveal the truth. I really didn't care about what could happen to me. I just needed to hear Mr. Alsa admit what he did to all those poor students. "You're a faker. You didn't earn a college degree, you just forged one. What, were you just afraid of all the work. Anyway, I know your plan. You're just going to destroy these bright students one at a time. You don't care at all about them. You just want to ruin bright futures. You'll just keep on whipping, hitting, and causing great students to have mental breakdowns. Do you know what people do after a breakdown. Here's a hint- nothing. You caused the demise of too many people. Just tell me this. Are you directly responsible for the mental breakdowns of your former students? And did you injure any students in your teaching career?"

I took a deep breath and took another step back. Everything has been said and now I could come out of this room a hero, or severely injured. Either way, there's no backing down.

"My, my, Mr. Green, that was a lot of words," he answered coming closer to me. Each step was toward me. His right hand was tight around the whip. He started moving the whip in small circles. Then, they became bigger... and bigger... and bigger.

"Well, why should I leave a curious mind without knowledge? I am responsible for the student's mental breakdown. And here's a hint about question number 2. I did harm students, but it was for their own good. And this is the last time you will speak in this classroom today. Do you understand?" Mr. Alsa, a teacher who seemed to keep his cool, was practically screaming.

"Mr. Alsa, I have a question about science," I replied calmly. The confused look on his face didn't last a second before a squad of 7 special force troops broke down the door and entered. The front two had police shields. The next five had automatic rifles aimed directly at Mr. Alsa. Mr. Alsa dropped the whip, realizing what happened. Finally, Detective Johnson entered the room.

"Mr. Alsa," he said putting a pair of handcuffs on him, "You are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. If you choose to break that right, whatever you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you don't have one, one will be..."

6/1/13 Well, it's time to wrap this story up. What else could I say? There was a speedy trial that ended with an anonymous vote by the jury. Mr. Alsa was found guilty on multiple counts of abuse and was sentenced to life in jail. Apparently, he suffered the same abuse in school, back in the "Good Ol' Days" when hurting students was allowed. Then, he developed the "If I had to go through it, everyone has to go through it" attitude. He picked the smart kids to torment because he was the smartest in his class. The school rebounded quickly, and the top class was disbanded temporarily. The students who suffered mental breakdowns went to a therapist. Some got better while, unfortunately, others didn't. Dylan could've suffered a mental breakdown if he had attended one more after-school session. His mind wouldn't have been able to take it. Thankfully, he didn't attend another one, so he'll be all right. The scars are permanent, but he considers them battle scars. Mr. Alsa's former students are getting used to their new classes. They're becoming a lot more social. They even started wearing short-sleeve shirts and shorts.

For me, well... I'm just glad everything's alright. Mr. Alsa is in jail, I'm not harmed, and school is back to normal... sort of. Anyway, this was my first case in Buffalo Academy. But. I doubt it's going to be my last.