

Sergej Knežević

You Just Need To Stop

Evan Miller did not think he was a deal. He was fourteen years old and in grade 8. At school he was basically a ghost. Nobody really cared about him and just passed him. He was bad at sports, video games and basically everything. He was not smart or dumb he was just quiet and unnoticed. Evan Miller liked doing the same things every day because it made him feel safe. He walked to school on the same path, he sat in the same seat and he ate his lunch at the same table, in the corner of the cafeteria, every single day. Evan Miller liked this routine because it was simple and easy to follow.

One Tuesday, as any other day, Evan went to school early. The school was really quiet then. He liked that. It felt really cold outside. The leaves were over the sidewalk. The sky was full of clouds. It looked like it was going to rain. Evan pulled his jacket tighter around him and just kept walking to school.

Near the school gate he saw a boy sitting on the ground. The boy looked really young, maybe he was a student at the school. His books were all over the place. One of the straps on his backpack was torn to pieces. The boy's head was down and his shoulders were shaking so he thought the boy was crying. He was sitting all alone and did not seem to notice anyone around him.

Other students just walked past without stopping. Some of them glanced at him for a moment and then they looked away. Evan slowed down his pace. He said to himself that the situation was not his problem to deal with. The school bell would ring soon. Evan did not want to be late for his class. Still something about the situation felt wrong to Evan.

Evan remembered one awkward situation that happened to him in sixth grade, when he tripped in the hallway and his papers went flying all over the place. Nobody stopped to help him pick them up. He still remembered how his face felt hot and chest felt tightened when this happened. Evan recalled the feeling of embarrassment he had and stopped walking. He got on his knees next to the boy. He picked up a notebook that was lying there. "Hey" he said in his soft voice. "Are you feeling alright" he asked the boy.

The young boy looked up. His eyes were bloodshot red. "I guess" he said. "My bag. Now I have a problem. I just cannot carry all of my things because the only bag I have is broken.

Evan gathered the rest of the books and handed the books over to the boy. He took a piece of string from his pocket and tied the broken strap to the bag. The fix was not perfect but it was good enough for putting all the books back to the bag. The boy looked up, smiled and said "I am Lucas. Thank you. Your help really means a lot to me".

The bell rang loudly. Evan stood up. He knew the school bell meant he would be late for his class. For once, Evan did not care about being late. The smile on the boy's face meant much more to him. They walked into school together.

Over the next few days, Evan saw Lucas more often. Lucas was a boy who would usually sit by himself at lunch, He would have a tough time, in some of his classes. Evan decided to sit with Lucas. They would talk about video games, movies, girls,

and school stuff. It was easy to talk to Lucas and their friendship just happened on its own. They had so much in common.

Weeks went by. Then the winter arrived. One day Evans teacher said that they were going to do a class project. The students had to work with a partner. Evan started to get really nervous. Before he got too worried, Lucas smiled at him and said he wanted to work with him. Soon, Evan realized how working together with other students felt really good. He had never felt this way before.

Evan spoke more in class. The teachers noticed his change. Other students also began talking to him. He felt like people actually noticed his change. Other students also began talking to him. He felt like people actually noticed him now and that was a big change for him.

One afternoon, a few day after the project was finished, Evan had a bad day at school. In math class the teacher asked him a question and Evan did not know the answer. Some boys in the back started laughing quietly. Evan felt his face get hot again, just like in sixth grade. He looked down at his desk and wished the moment would end fast.

After school, Evan walked home slowly. The sky was gray and small drops of rain started falling. He felt disappointed and angry at himself. He thought that maybe nothing really changed and he was still the same invisible kid.

Near the small park Evan heard someone calling his name. He turned around and saw Lucas running toward him, holding an umbrella. Lucas looked tired but he was smiling. "I saw what happened in math class," Lucas said. "It was not fair. That teacher asked a really hard question".

They sat on a wet bench in the park. Lucas shared his umbrella with Evan so they would not get wet. Lucas talked about his own bad days and how sometimes he feels stupid in class too. Evan listened and felt calmer. It was the first time someone really understood how he felt.

Before they went home Lucas said " You helped me when nobody else did. Now I help you".

Evan smiled a little. The rain did not feel so cold anymore.

That one small act of kindness had changed two lives. Evan understood something important. Kindness does not need to be loud or brave. Sometimes you just need to stop when everyone else walks away.