

"Hey Jimmy, want to play tag?"

"Sure why not?" I replied, forgetting that I always play cat's cradle with Carter every recess. I joined a group of kids getting ready to play, not spotting Carter anywhere. Today the air felt different as well. I felt as inflammable as ever knowing that I probably wouldn't have to play cat's cradle. I still really hoped that Carter wouldn't walk outside and demand me to play cat's cradle even though he is my best friend. I'm sure he wouldn't mind me playing with a couple of other friends especially during the small amount of time scheduled for recess. Suddenly, I spotted Carter. "Hey Carter."

"Hey Jimmy, want to play some cat's cradle?" he asked holding up the worn string we always played with whenever we played cat's cradle together. "Sorry, I'm playing tag with a couple of my other friends."

"Oh okay." He responded with his head dropped. He walked along and with every step, making me feel a little guilty about what I had just said. If only I had said okay to playing with him he would be okay right now and I wouldn't feel so guilty, bored, but not guilty. I wanted to go talk to him to see if he was okay, but I knew it would make matters worse.

He took out the string and wrapped around his fists. He looked like he was about to break the string that has gone through many years of twisting and turning. A small boy walked up to him. He looked as if he was trying to accompany him. He dropped the string on the ground and stood upright. He said "Hey Carter, want to jump some rope? I'm sure it'll be -" "No! I don't want to jump some rope with you! Now leave me alone!" he screamed. I stumbled backwards a few steps. What was that about? Was he going to be okay? I had a million questions in my head that I didn't have an answer to. Carter picked the string back up and stuffed it deep down into his back pocket.

This seemed unusual. As Carter's best friend I know that he never puts anything in his back pocket because he feels like he'll lose whatever falls out. That string is so important to both of us. I stood still trying to soak in what had happened. I hoped he was going to be okay and wasn't going to lose that string. That string holds years of cat's cradle. But, it doesn't only hold years of cat's cradle. It holds years of smiles, laughter, fun and the things that make you feel happy in life. Carter had obviously forgotten that considering what had just broke down. If only he hadn't felt what he is feeling right now which I don't know what he is actually feeling. I want to make him feel better and explain why that worn out string shouldn't go in his back pocket which he fears he'll lose things which means he doesn't want the string. I want to help that string move from his back pocket to his front pocket or even his shirt pocket where he can keep a sharp eye on it. I really hoped that he got that into his head as soon as possible before he loses the string or at least before he thinks he loses the string so no one would know for sure. I would need to know.

I slammed my locker shut and walked along down the hallway when..... ch-clang! A locker from the bottom row swung wide open and crashed straight into my knee. I held my left knee tight to my chest. I heard a voice laughing fruitfully at me. "Hahahaha!" Adrian snorted. I certainly am not Adrian's friend but I choose to think as him as my "arch nemesis". "Why can't you just leave me alone man?"

"Why can you just leave me alone man?" he mimicked in an annoying high pitched voice.

"Because he feels like it, got a problem with that?" I looked up to see who spoke such words. My eyes widened and my eyes dropped. I swallowed hard.

"Carter?" I asked trembling.

"What do you want?" I opened my mouth knowing he knew what I was about to ask. He interrupted me. "I'm doing this because of the day you ditched me to go play with your other friends during recess. Best friends don't ditch each other and since you did that to me, I went ahead and found other friends like Adrian here. What a coincidence that he doesn't like you. All of a sudden, Adrian's expression changed from happy to a bit concerned. Carter reached down into his back pocket and dangled a worn out string in front of my face. "This didn't mean anything to you did it?" I stared at the string almost wanting to scream out under all of this pressure. "But-" I froze in the middle of my sentence as the bell rang. They both walked away and headed to class.

Adrian walked up to me slowly looking a bit regretful. "Jimmy, I'm sorry about what happened with Carter. He was kind of harsh. Here, I got you a piece of the string. He kind of got mad and broke it. I thought it would be nice to give a piece to you." I looked at the string. That

string that we always played cat's cradle with represented our friendship. Since it's broken, we no longer have a friendship. This struck me with fury and hatred. This hurt a lot. I appreciate that Adrian gave this to me, but why would he? He used to bully me but now he wants to be friends? That doesn't make any sense at all to me. "Adrian, why did you give this to me? I thought you didn't like me?"

"I guess I—" he froze. He looked at me amiably and walked away from me in the opposite direction and headed on to class. "Adrian!" I called out to him. He just kept walking along and didn't respond to me and I knew he had heard me call out to him. I looked at the string held in my hand. I couldn't keep this with me. I hated the new feel of the string. It felt of hatred and anger. The string that was once smooth and for playing is now rough with no use for anything. I walked over to a nearby trash can and held the string over the can and looked at it dangle above. It was helpless as I had the power to control it. I scrunched the string in my hand instead of throwing it away. If I threw it away, I would never have a friendship with Carter again. Adrian gave me this for a reason and that's another reason why I wouldn't throw it away. I had this hunch I would regret doing that single motion of just letting go where I would never see it again. If I held on to this single strand, there was a chance, a small chance, that everything would be okay between me and Carter or maybe even that everything would be okay in general.

I started to walk up to Adrian as soon as he came out of math class. Suddenly, I was bumped into by Carter, purposefully. There was a long awkward pause. "Get out of the way I'm trying to get to my friend." I glared back at him and he winced. He stood upright and threw his arms out repeatedly. I kept moving inch by inch backwards when finally, I fell flat on my bottom. I was entirely mortified by this, and even more because he was pointing his finger at me, making me stand out as much as possible and I just wanted to disappear. All of a sudden my mood went from embarrassed to half shocked as I spotted out of the corner of my eye Adrian looking at Carter not in a mood of happiness or excitement, but of disgust. This was one of the most shocking things I've ever seen. That day when he offered me the piece of string, it was meant to show me a sign of respect and friendship. I thought he just felt bad for me. He didn't just feel bad for me, but he also wanted to show me a sign of friendship and respect. I don't mean that shock was the wrong thing to feel. But it definitely was true. Adrian paced slowly towards Carter. "Carter come on man, let's leave Jimmy alone and go somewhere else."

"I'm having too much fun right now."

"Leave him alone!" he screamed. Carter took his eyes off of me and turned his attention to Adrian. "Look, not now!"

"No, you look! You're an-"

"A what?!"

"An obnoxious snob who has no friends, and a matter of fact, no feelings!"

Carter shrunk back as people started to stare at him, also adopting the look of disgust Adrian had on his face. People started to aid me and help me up as I just continued to look at Adrian. What would happen after this? Would Carter blame his now former friendship on me? I

went after Adrian as soon as I got back to my feet. I stopped and turned around looking at Carter who stared at me with a blank expression. I saw Adrian fade out of my sight as a crowd formed bigger and bigger up to the point where it became colossal. I wanted to thank him for what he did; I guess I feel its better that I didn't do it right away. I would have to sooner or later but I didn't feel alone since the first time Carter and I weren't friends.

After school was dismissed, I started to walk home steadily, pondering about what I had caused and when I would find the perfect moment to sincerely thank Adrian and maybe even apologize to him for being the cause of him doing such a thing to his friend despite the fact I don't like his friend any longer. "Jimmy?" I turned to look who'd called me; I raised an eyebrow, "Yeah?"

"I'm sorry about what happened today. I can't believe Adrian turned on me like that. But now since I'm not his friend anymore we can get back at him for what he did." He held the piece of string out to me. "I accept your apology Carter but you can't do what you did to me to Adrian. I know that he's been pretty cruel to me in the past but he made up for that today." I pulled out the broken piece of string and held it out to him. His mood changed from desperate to angry. He probably didn't know that I had the string with me after he broke the piece off and tried tricking me into thinking that the piece was a whole. Carter frowned and stomped away from me, dropping the string as he walked along. A firm hand tapped my shoulder. I spun around swiftly. "I saw that man, you made the right decision. I'm sorry for all the times I bullied you too. I realized Carter was just using me to bully you and I realized that."

"It's totally okay, after what you did today, you made up for it and I'm glad that you did realize. I was hoping to have both of you as a friend."

"Well you have me as a friend." He winked and walked away. I watched him walk along knowing that he was a true friend unlike Carter and he wouldn't get mad over small things and bully me if he got mad at me. He stopped at the end of the block and waved me a friendly wave. I waved back and reached deep down into my pocket. I pulled out the string that

represented our friendship. I walked along holding it and finally let go and dropped it.