

Everyone Needs Hope

by Max Mylan

There is a town. A town where nothing ever happens. A fter perfectly suburbanized town, where children cry and adults starve. It's your town, whoever's reading this. It doesn't matter because if you look around after finishing this story, you'll know this is your town. This town in chalk full of sad kids, and poor parents, but we're focusing on two of those sad kids, Carlos Brown and Carina Johnson. Two friends. Both in desperate need for help, and so w start with Carlos.

Carlos was walking down the hall, trying his hardest to blend in, and failing miserably. He kept lookind around. There was a girl at her locker. Was she watching him? He stumbled over his feet just a little and quickly looked around. Did anyone see? Were they judging him? The girl at the locker, was she looking? The guy at the end of the hall, was he laughing? The teacher in his classroom, was he judging Carlos?

Carlos felt a tap on his shoulder, breaking him out of this mental unraveling. Carina stood with her head slouching slightly and her glasses magnifying her eyes. Those glasses making the sadness in her eyes obvious.

"Hey Carina, what's up? Is something wrong? Did I do something?" Carlos sputtered.

"No, no, you're fine. Hey, did you hear a-about that new kid?"

"A new kid? Who?"

"Her name is Hope. She seems a little weird thought," Carina responded.

"Oh, don't say that She might hear us and get sad," Carlos stammered.

And together they started to make their way to class. "I d-didn't mean to be rude! I just meant she's in her own head, you know, walking down the ahll with her head in the cloud." So they went to their classes, Carlos stressed about anything he saw and Carina with the sadness behind her eyes.

As the lunch bell rang Carlos made his way to get his lunch. He hadn't seen Carina since that period and was hoping to catch her before he sat down, so he grabbed a lunch tray and started to look around. Avoiding eye contact with everyone, he started toward his usual table. Unfortunately, as with most of Carlos's life, it was not that easy. His feet got caught up on his untied shoelaces, causing him to sprawl out on to the floor, landing directly on to his food plate.

It was as if there was a virus, a virus of silence quickly spreading throughout the cafeteria. Before they all burst out into laughter, red cheeks quickly turned into a full tomato face before Carlos got to his feet. How stupid did he look? How long would people remember this? Would he ever live it down?

He felt warm hands on his arm helping him up. Not Carina though. This girl had piercing, icy blue eyes that drove right into Carlos's.

"C'mon, let's get you out of here." She led him out of the cafeteria and in to the hall, where she quickly ran into the bathroom to get him napkins.

"Oh God, I'm never going to live that down! What if everyone hates me now! Even the teachers will hear about it, right? They'll give me an F on everything because I'm the stupid kid who dropped food on himself! What if they never forget and trip me every lunch period? I'll have to stop coming to the school then!

"Whoa, whoa buddy, calm down, OK? You're gonna be fine, alright? Just breathe....don't think about anything but your breath, alright?" The girl soothed Carlos.

"I-I can't!" Tears were starting to form in Carlos's eyes.

“Yes, you can. Just breathe. Don’t think about them, don’t even think about yourself, just your breath. Going up and down. There’s nothing else, just that up and down.” The girl placed her hand gently on Carlos’s chest as his heart rate slowed.

“I -...thank you. How did you, how did you do that?” Carlos stammered.

“I learned it from my therapist. Actually, one moment.” She turned and started to ruffle around in her purse before pulling out a small plastic card. “This is his number, my therapist I mean. I think you might benefit...no offense.” She smiled.

“I, um...thank you. What, what was your name again?”

“No problem, and its Hope.”

She then walked away, leaving Carlos with a feeling of comfort and a number he desperately needed to call.

It had been a week since Carlos’s fall and Carina hadn’t seen much of him. But today, they had a plan to go to the mall together. She was waiting after school for him to pull up in his beat down old car. Each second that passed allowed Carina to fall deeper into her own head.

“Hey, you’re Carlos’s friend, aren’t you? Carina spun around only to see the new girl, Hope, walking up.

“Oh, um, yeah, h-how do you know him?” Carina questioned.

“Oh, we’re really just acquaintance. How’s he doing?”

“U-uh, good I guess. Why do you care?”

“I was just wondering, are you OK? You seem sad,” Hope observed.

“N-no. I-I umm...”

“Hey, its cool. I didn’t mean to freak you out or whatever. It’s just you didn’t seem OK.”

“Is anyone?” Carina asked before saying, “Oh, s-s-sorry that just came out.”

“It’s fine, just sorta seems a sad way to look at things,” Hope responded.

“M-maybe it’s sad...but th-that doesn’t mean its n-n-not true,” Carlos stammered.

“I suppose I just like to look on the optimistic side.”

“And if there’s n-n- o-o-optimistic side? Just r-reality?”

“Spoken like a true pessimist,” Hope joked. Carina smiled slightly and for the first time in a long time the sadness behind her eyes began to shrink. “You have a nice smile you know, doesn’t really fit with your life outlook though.” This makes Carina giggle, further shrinking the ever present sadness.

“I-I uh...thank you.”

“You’re very welcome,” Hope smiled warmly.

“Hey Hope!” There was a sputter of an old engine as Carlos pulled up next to them. “Are you coming with us?”

“Oh, well, I suppose. Why not?” Hope laughed.

It had been a month since that talk. Carlos, Carina and Hope were laughing in some park.

“Oh Hope, I wanted to thank you for that card you gave me. Dr. Gibbons has been helping a lot!”

“Yeah, no problem. My pleasure.”

“Well, really, thank you. But why did you help me that day?”

“I suppose I think...if everyone were to help someone the way I helped you...” She smiled with a shrug. “Well, then no one would need help anymore. It’s a matter of perspective, you know? Everyone is capable of happiness; you just have to...seize it.”

And with that Carlos Brown and Carina Johnson looked around and saw a town, a cozy town full of smiling children and proud parents. A town that had so much potential for happiness. All they had to do was stop and enjoy it.