

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

If This Is How Love Feels: Part 2

Christopher Siders · Friday, November 12th, 2021

*Read the [Intro](#) & [Part 1](#) of *The MisAdventures of Chris Siders*.*

“Hey Chris, how are you doing? I made some cupcakes for you and your roommates.”

“Oh thanks. I appreciate it.” I say while taking a cupcake off the tray.

“Mhmm, this is good! Philip and Derek aren’t here. You can leave the cupcakes on their desks.”

“Oh ok.” Alina enters the room and places the cupcakes on Philip and Derek’s desks.

“So, Chris...”

“Hm?”

“Where are you from?”

“I’m from LA. Where you from?”

“I’m from Gonzalez. It’s about 30 minutes away from Salinas. What’s it like being from the big city?”

“It’s alright. Definitely over-hyped. There’s always some bullshit going on. I’m glad I’m six hours away from all the madness.”

“So, was Monterey your first school?”

“Nah, Cal State Long Beach was actually my first, but I didn’t get accepted. Is Monterey your first choice?”

“Yeah. I got a full ride scholarship being a 4.0 student.”

“Oh shit, congratulations!”

“Thanks!”

“Cool.” An awkward pause ensues. Chris you idiot say something!

“Uhh...” not that dumbass!

“What’s your major?” Whew, saved by her curiosity.

“Oh...umm, I’m undeclared.”

“Undeclared? Well, do you know what you want to do when you graduate?”

“Well...I make music and I write poetry. I’m debating on doing one or the other.”

“That’s cool. I used to write poetry back in high school.”

“Really? Why don’t you write anymore?”

“I...I honestly don’t know why, I kinda just stopped.”

“Hm...so, what’s your major?”

“I am a Collaborative and Human Services major, with a concentration in Public Administration.”

“That sounds like one hell of a major...what do you want to do when you graduate?”

“I want to run a business someday that helps people. You know, contribute to the community.”

“Ah I see...nice.”

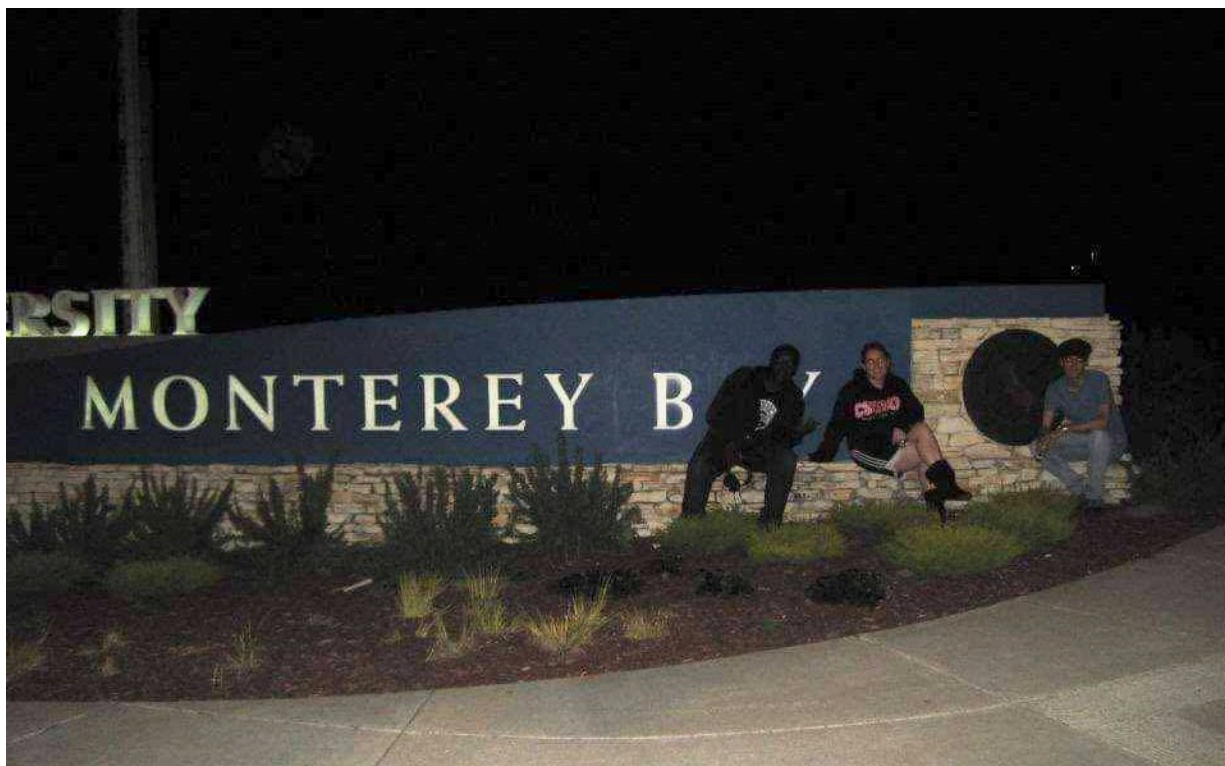
“Mhm.” Another awkward pause ensues. We both look everywhere in the room except at each other.

“Well, Chris. I’m about to get ready for the first day of class tomorrow.”

“Alright. Thanks for stopping by and making us these delicious cupcakes.”

“No problem, and you should read me your poems sometime!”

Alina leaves and goes to her dorm. I let out a sigh of relief. I survived one conversation alone, and one weekend of college. Only 1,458 days till graduation, with more conversations to come. I finish selecting what I want to wear for tomorrow after a half an hour. It’s so weird, getting ready to go to school without having to wear some uniform. I pack my backpack; then I go to sleep. The next morning, I woke up extremely early at 6:30am. I don’t have class till 10am – in three and a half hours. I go back to sleep and wake up an hour later at 7:30am. I figure I’m not gonna be able to go back to sleep, so I lay in bed, thinking about how far I’ve come. I never thought I would see college. Not that everything was bad in high school, it was just difficult to see myself in a prestigious environment.



“...CnNNNnnn...NRupppt...” What the fuck was that? I turn my head towards Philip’s bed and he’s passed out cold with one arm hanging off the bed post. He’s snoring as if he’s calling *Zim* to come and invade the planet. I head to the bathroom to shower and get ready for the day. By the time I’m done, it’s 8:30am. Annoyed with the speed of time, I sit at my desk and listen to music through my headphones quietly till 9am. You would think I’d be excited to explore this campus. Hell no. I just want to get my shit done and head back to my dorm where no one can bother me.

Stepping out into the great beyond equipped with a blank face, head down, and of course blasting music through my headphones, I get hungry. The adventure has to stop till I get some food. I notice two buildings where people are walking in and out with containers of food. One is called the Otter

Express and the other is called the Dining Commons. I walk into the Otter Express first. The inside reminds me of this mom and pop shop back in LA called “Brolly Hut” with the red floor tiles and workers scrambling to get things done. They had tater tots and breakfast burritos out on a warm counter. You take the burritos and tater tots, put them on a tray and go to the register to pay. To the right of the entrance they have a lounge area with tables, blue and green carpet, and a couple of TVs. There weren’t that many people kicking it in there. I left and headed over to the Dining Commons. Their style of service is buffet. When walking in, a woman at the cash register asks for my student ID, I give it to her and she swipes it. I go in and pig out on eggs, sausage, pancakes and potatoes. It is glorious. Best of all, it is FREE. I continue on to building 18, also known as the Media Learning Center. My class is held in room 156, the computer lab.

Walking in my first thought is, “why is this room empty?” I look at my phone and it’s still only 9:30am. I decide to get a seat in the back corner of the room, but then I realize I left my glasses in my dorm room. I end up sitting at the last row on the end. Fifteen minutes later, students start to enter the room. Sitting at my computer watching the computer rows fill up, I am praying to God no one sits next to me.

10am comes and no one has sat next to me. I think today is going to be a good day.

“Good Morning, class! My name is Professor Watkins. I am going to be your professor for this combination course for the semester. This course is a First Year Seminar combined with Computer Science and Technology 104. The purpose of this course is to for you to get better equipped with the resources that are in the campus community, and at the same time to teach you how to get your work done effectively utilizing the computers and your student IDs. Alright, let’s go over the syllabus...”

As Watkins reviews the syllabus, an attractive young white woman with blonde hair walks in the room late. She is wearing a green jacket, black shorts and white converse. I panic to myself thinking, “Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit...” all while looking around to see if there are other available seats she can sit in. Nothing is available, and she sits right next to me. I take a couple deep breaths as she is getting herself situated. Maybe this isn’t going to be so bad.

“Alright class, time for Ice Breakers! Turn around, find a partner, and talk about three personal interests and hobbies. GO!” I look away, and act like there is someone next to me on my left, when there is clearly no one there because I’m at the edge of the computer row. Looking to the right the woman next to me has a disinterested look on her face. After a couple seconds her body language says, fuck it.

“Hi, my name is Miranda.”

“Uh...hi, Miranda. My name is...” drool starts to fall from my mouth. Randomly. I’m pretty sure I just broke the Guinness World Record of making a fool of myself with the fastest time of 10 seconds.

Let’s review the play-by-play: at 10:05am Watkins is engaging with students. Check for that passionate speech as particles of whatever the hell he ate for breakfast fly out of his mouth. In the midst, out of the blue, comes a wild Miranda. At 10:10, Watkins orders the class to participate in an Ice Breaker. You see here at 10:11:20 I stare off in the distance to play off my anxiety in hopes Miranda won’t somehow see me, or get annoyed and find someone else to break the ice with. I turned around to see if she found someone at 10:11:24, and it turns out she didn’t find anyone and

she introduces herself to me. Amazing play by Miranda! From 10:11:25 – 10:11:30 is where I drop the ball by drooling in an attempt to introduce myself properly. That is disgusting. Let's see if I can somehow recover from this slip up!

"...My name is Chris." I say putting my right arm around my mouth to cover it. She gives me this look as if I'm in the middle of the street with a diaper on, screaming the lyrics to "Wonton Soup" by Lil B.

"Uh...Hi."

"Alright class! It's time to report back on what you learned about each other! Only say one thing to the entire class. I hope you're all ready!" Watkins says while doing the Birdman hand rub.

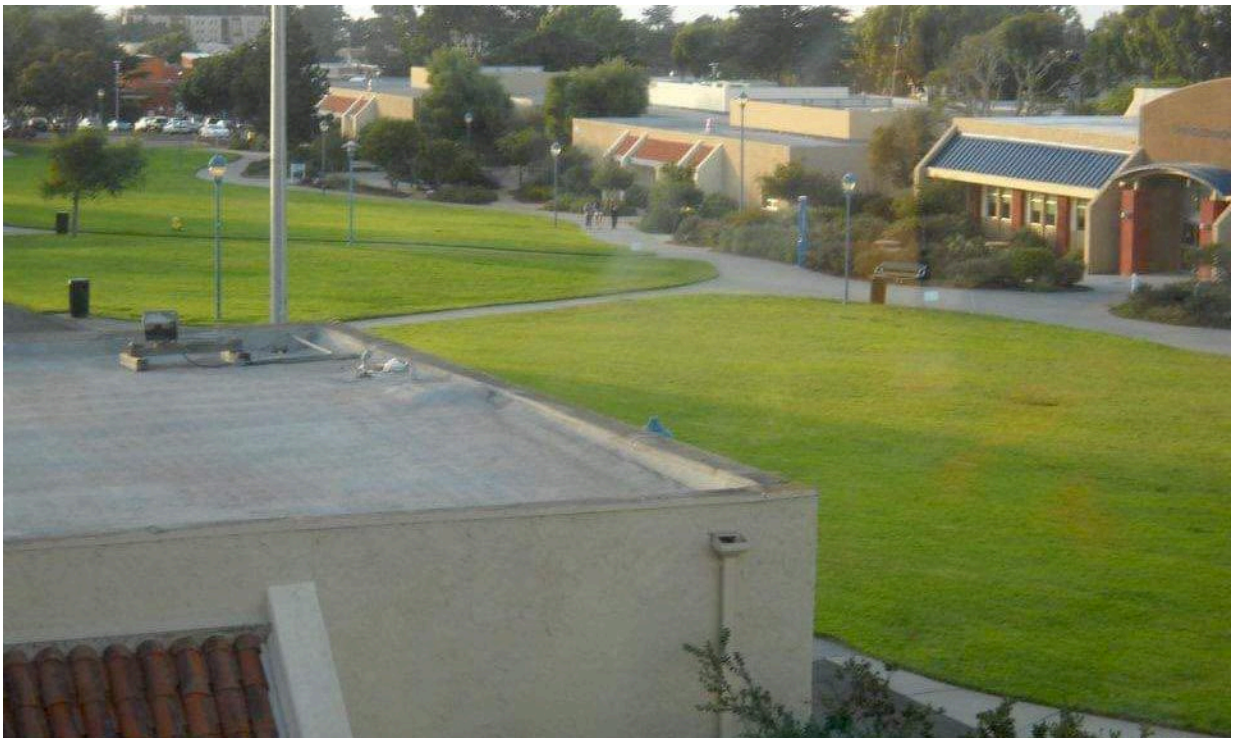
"You can say I like going to the beach, and you like music right?"

"Yeah –"

"I'll say you love music."

"Okay."

I know people think I'm crazy, but I think women might have the ability to read minds, so sitting next to her for two hours was brutal. My fingers would start twitching out of nowhere, then I would slightly turn my head to the right, only to notice she's just paying attention to the instructor. After clicking my pen a few times, I stop because I think I'm getting annoying. When asked to write what we want out of the course, I cover up my paper as if it's a test so she can't see my answer. I try to secretly smell my armpits to see if I stink, knowing damn well I showered this morning. I even try to shut off my brain to stop overthinking. No one can blame me for my actions, how would they feel if they experienced years of colorism? If black people think I'm ugly, I highly doubt white people would find me attractive.



After class I headed back to Cypress Hall. Before getting to my door I notice Alina's door is cracked open. I poke my head in to say hello and there's a white guy wearing a black long sleeve shirt with black shorts, black vans and a weed hat sitting on one of the beds in the room.

“Hey, what’s up dude?”

“What’s good man.”

“Looking for any of the girls?”

“Oh, I was just poking my head in to say hi to Alina.”

“Forsure. Yeah man she’s in class now. What’s your name? I can tell her you stopped by.”

“My name is Chris. I’m her next-door neighbor.”

“In 206? I actually live right below you on the first floor. My name is Harrison, but my friends call me Harry.”

“Nice to meet you Harry...what you doing in the room with no one in here? If you don’t mind me asking?”

“Oh, my girl Gloria lives here. She just left to get some food. She’ll be back shortly. If you’re down, let’s kick it later.”

“I’m down. Just let me know, you know where I stay.”

“Forsure dude.”

Boy that sounded weird. “You know where I stay.” Anyways, me and Harry became good friends. We spent many days kicking it, listening to music, or at the Otter Express getting some food. Everything is chill. One night, walking home from class in the distance, I see Harry and a guy standing next to him.

“Chris!” Harry yells across the main quad.

“Yo, what’s good bro?”

“Nothing much!” Harry then waves his hand for me to come over. Walking over I shake Harry’s hand.

“Hey, bro I want you to meet my friend Robert.”

“What’s up bro.” I said, shaking his hand. Robert then looks around suspiciously, and replies

“Hey...you want some yayo?” Nigga what...in the middle of main campus, this cat walks up to me asking if I want some cocaine. Just...why?

“Uh...no thank you?”

“Are you sure?”

“Na, I’m sure...yo, Harry I’ll catch you later.”

“Alright then bro.” I chuck a deuce and go to my dorm.

When I get inside my dorm, Derek is mixing alcohol with Red Bull at his desk while listening to Blue Scholars. Alina is at Philip’s desk working on chemistry homework. I crash at my bed, head-first into the pillow.

“Anddddd that should do the trick...”

“That can’t be right Philip.”

“Well...wait hold up...”

“Sounds like it’s time for a break.”

“Yeah...you wanna get dinner?” Philip says dropping his pen in frustration.

“Sure.” Alina turns and looks at me.

“Chris? Derek? You guys wanna get dinner with me and Philip?”

“I’m down.” I reply.

“Sure. Where at?” Derek asks.

“Are you all down for seafood? The Fisherman’s Wharf has some good food.”

“That sounds good.” Both Derek and I say simultaneously.

“To Besty 2.0!” Philip declares heading towards the door. Derek gets up from his chair and grabs

his keys following Philip.

“Uh...Besty...2.0?” Alina asks confused.

“You’ll see.”

We get in Besty 2.0 to head out to Fisherman’s Wharf (in Monterey). Alina doesn’t show any reactions to Betsy’s lack of cleanliness. We are all just having a good time cruising through the city, while Philip and I clown Derek’s busted ass vehicle. When we get to the Wharf, my first impression is...it smells...really bad. There’s a lot of cool novelty shops, but everything is just so damn expensive. Like ridiculously expensive. So expensive we have to share a plate of food at the old Fisherman’s Grotto and put our own money down to pay for it. After dinner we head back to campus. Philip and Alina decide to go their separate ways and call it a night.

Within the next couple of days, I get sick and am bedridden. I have a terrible headache, at the same time, sneezing and coughing everywhere. It’s not one of those ordinary sneezes either, every time I sneeze my bones start hurting. Yellow snot is dripping from my nose all over my bed covers. I hear a knock at the door.

“Come in.” Yes, our door is left unlocked at all times of the day. Miraculously, nothing so far has come up missing.

“Hey Chris...you alright? Philip tells me you’re sick and I thought I should stop by and see if you need anything.”

“Oh...tha...thanks I appreciate it.” I say coughing. Alina puts her hand on my head.

“My goodness.. you are burning up. Hold on. I’ll be right back with some water and soup.” I think a teardrop falls from my eye and down my face, but I can’t feel anything. About ten minutes later, she comes back with bottled water, hot soup, medicine and cough drops.

“Okay here’s everything. Take these pills an hour after you’re done with the soup.”

“...Thanks.”

“No problem, I’ll be back to check in on you.” She then plants a kiss on my cheek. Sweet baby Jesus. It’s like God herself reached down and caressed my face with her hand. I ate the soup, drank the water and took the medicine. She did come back a couple times to see how I was doing. Nothing eventful. Still stuck in bed with yellow snot, and a headache bigger than Kanye West’s ego. The next day, still sick as a dog, I get up, put on my pants and hoodie, and go to the Otter Express to get food. My stomach is rumbling. I grab some chicken strips, fries, a soda, orange juice and a couple packs of gummy bears. A woman named Jane working the cash register says,

“Ok that’ll be \$14.75.” I give her my student ID.

“Okay baby, be sure not to use up your blocks and flex.”

“...my blocks? And what?”

“You don’t know about the meal plan system?”

“Uh...no...I don’t. I thought this stuff was free or something.” Jane bursts into laughter.

“Hahaha! You serious? Listen youngin’...nothing in life is free.” Jane prints out my receipt and hands it to me.

“Here’s your receipt. On the receipt it says how much blocks and flex you have left for the semester. Each block is the equivalent to five dollars, and think of flex as loose change money.”

“Oh...ok...thanks.” As I’m walking out, I can hear Jane still laughing. I look down at my receipt and it says I only have 80 blocks and 150 flex left, as of September 21st. Now I am sick and broke as hell. I take my food to my dorm and don’t even eat it all. Another few days pass, and I slowly but surely get better.

On September 28th, I'm in my dorm room, hanging out, relaxing, listening to "Glenn Close" by Binary Star in my oversized gray sweats and white T-shirt. Derek and Alina are gone, which leaves the place to myself. Midnight hits and I get a random boner, and then I hear a scream at my door. Before I can try and conceal my boner, Alina bursts through my door buzzed off alcohol with a couple friends. I quickly sit down and grab a nearby folder to cover it.

"Heyyyyy!!! Happy Birthday, Chris!"

"Uh...thanks..."

"Come drink with us, we going to get you fucked up!"

"Oh nah...I'm cool. I don't drink it's not my -"

"Aww c'mon on. Not even one shot?"

"Na, I'm good. Y'all go and have fun."

"Oookay...and Chris?"

"Hmm?"

"I love you! You're awesome." Alina leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

Disaster averted. I hate getting random boners throughout the day. I always panic trying to get that shit to calm down. It reminds me too much of a time when I got a boner in front of my entire middle school. I was running for student body Vice President in the 8th grade. The night before presenting to the school, I start writing my speech. So engulfed in writing the speech, I quickly grab some dress clothes. The next day, an hour before I make my grand debut, I'm in the school bathroom changing into my clothes. They don't fit. My shirt makes me look fat, and you can see my penis imprint through my pants! It looked like I had a boner, although I didn't. I had to walk out of the bathroom, covering my penis with the piece of paper I wrote my speech on. At the school assembly, I sat on a chair placed on the stage next to the podium facing the audience. Truthfully, the stage wasn't really a stage, and we didn't really have an assembly building. We were outside in the hot sun on the school's basketball court with chairs for everyone to sit on. The podium was a microphone on a stand. Luckily, I was the last to go. When I got called to present, I had a mini heart attack. It felt like judgement day, like I was being called before God. I took a deep breath standing behind the microphone.

"H-hi everyone...m-my name is...Chris Siders." I took another deep breath.

"I-I am running for your student...I mean...to be your student...body Vice President." I lift up the piece of paper covering my penis. I heard chuckles and laughs from the crowd of students. I heard some teachers gasp. I began reading the speech then I stopped. A teacher named Ms. Moore came to the rescue...kinda. Ms. Moore was one of those teachers all the boys had a crush on, probably due to puberty. I was one of those kids.

"Hey Chris? You okay? Just breathe. You're going to be fine." She says as she rubs my back. My hairs stood up, my boner grew and became more visible. Soon everyone burst into laughter.

"...Oh...oh my..." Ms. Moore gasps, covering her face and stepping back. I finished the speech and sat my ass down. The only teacher that approached me afterwards was the one teacher everyone suspected was on drugs. One of my friends allegedly saw him behind the school cutting up "something white," but that's a different story for another day.

"Hey Chris! That was great man. You actually said some real shit unlike these other kids...don't worry. I'm pretty sure you're gonna be fine."

I actually lost, by a landslide. I got two votes. TWO.

The following week, Alina comes over to my dorm and shows me her project on the city of

Salinas.

“Hey Chris, what you know about Salinas?”

“Salinas? Umm, I heard around campus people saying that Blacks aren’t allowed there.”

“WHAT?”

“Yeah that’s what I heard.”

“Do you ever plan on going there?”

“Hell no. If I’m not allowed there...why go?”

“Chris. That’s ignorant. Are there places like that in LA?”

“Actually, yes. I heard East Los Angeles isn’t safe for Blacks.”

“What the hell? We all should be free to go wherever we want.” Alina points to a picture of a boy on the poster board.

“You know this kid?”

“No.” I reply.

“He’s my nephew. I’d take a bullet for him. I want him to live a life free of fear, you know.” I get quiet.

“Salinas is a beautiful city, with beautiful people. Full of culture.” Alina then points to a picture of a police car on the poster board.

“You know why I put this picture of a police car here?” I am still quiet looking down.

“It’s because of gang violence. You know why there’s gang violence, right?” Still quiet.

“Because there’s no programs for our youth. We don’t have anything stable. I mean, yeah, we have a couple things, but those with power ain’t doing shit...just think about LA. It’s certain areas that don’t have proper funds to create and build something for the local youth. Just like Salinas, there are certain areas. Not every part of Salinas is dangerous.”

I started to think about the poetry performances I had at 826LA, a program focused on creative writing and literacy located in East Los Angeles. Before the shows, I used to be scared to walk down the street to get drinks from 7/11. I never had any problems with anyone, as a matter of fact, I made new friends every time visited 826. I’m still quiet.

“Let me pick your brain...I can’t wrap my head around it...what made you think it’s true that Blacks aren’t allowed in Salinas?”

“...have you heard of the term, ‘Driving While Black,’ or ‘on the wrong side of the tracks’?”

“No I haven’t.”

“Those are racist ways of profiling Blacks in certain cities and particular areas. Back home if you are caught on one side of the train tracks past a certain time, the police will pull you over. Driving While Black is exactly what it sounds like. If you’re caught driving a nice car or just seen driving in a certain neighborhood, police will mess with you. My father has been through it, he had a gun pulled on him. My cousins have been through it. I’ve even been followed walking to the corner store to get snacks.”

“Wow...”

“Yeah, so when I hear about certain people, not belonging in certain areas, I just believe it’s true.”

“But...I think you should live your life. Fuck them. Don’t be afraid.” She takes my hand and rubs it gently. I stop talking. She gets quiet. I honestly don’t know what to say. I mean she is right.

“So...that poetry...” she lets go of my hand.

“Yeah?”

“Can you read me a couple pieces?”

“Um...let’s see here...” I start going through my journal.

“Uh-uh...damn...I don't know what to show you.”

“Well, whenever you're ready, no pressure.”

I close my book. “Okay.”

“Well Chris, I'm about to get ready for bed. If you need anything or want to talk, you know where I live.”

“Okay.”

Alina leaves, and I get ready for the next day of school.

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