

Moron: Chapter 8

It was the season of excess. John Moron, plastered from January through May, stumbled to the finish line of his college career, succeeding despite his worst efforts. He studied for, took, and passed the state's education exam which certified him for work upon graduation. Like it or not, he was going to be a teacher.

Hank accepted a job offer from a prominent accounting firm (Dickhead, Boobs, and Balls) that he had interned with the summer before. Corrina was going to be a nurse. The twins found a legitimate investor for their phone application (Copy Right; a way to license photos, music, artwork etc. from a community of creators at the touch of a button). Cecilia also attained her English degree but had more ambitious plans than Moron did.

The four boys gathered with their families on the shambly steps of the house they were about to leave forever. Someone's mother had bought cheap party decorations, and so each of them passed foolish sunglasses and necklaces around. Every so often they'd go inside and drink the pink lemonade Rubinoff they had stored in Poland Spring bottles.

They met the girls outside of the football stadium where the graduation was taking place (they'd finally get to go inside after all) and they found themselves swept up in the excitement. The sunlight shone through the plastic, causing the cheap vodka to shimmer. Moron floated inside the container, tanning on the waves, bouncing up and down happily in that salmon tinted sea. He must have spent too long on that vanishing ocean, for when he returned he was drunk and discombobulated. Cecilia was leading him by the hand towards the nearest entrance and the sashes on the students around him told him he was in the wrong group. The two of them had ended up in procession with the honor society. The paper dollar sign necklace he was wearing was the same color gold as the stripes the others had worked hard to earn and so he pointed to his sarcastically as they growled and huffed. But through the alcohol and the heat and the jeers, something crashed through, an overwhelming sense of meaning.

As they walked into the stadium Cecilia gripped his hand and looked up at him smiling with tears in her eyes. Though they were surrounded by thousands of people, this was the first and last time that there was ever just two of them. They were one. Even at the time he knew this was one of the very few salient moments life hands you. Neither of them would ever exist that way again, but that instant was theirs, and even senile and dying John Moron would remember the way she looked that day.

Emotions continued to flood and Moron thought back on all the people that had got him there and those that he'd never see again. He thought of his first roommate, Will Cavendish, but this time he didn't laugh. It was sad that he wasn't there somewhere among his peers. He was just a young kid like everyone else, looking for a new start that he never got. Moron thought of his mother who had never gone to college and his father who he never met. He even thought of Rodge Minor, the creepy foot doctor who became his step-dad. Rodge had bought Moron a suit to wear under his robe.

Mostly though, Moron thought of Hank Howard, the boy that saved his life. What would have become of him if Hank hadn't asked him to stay? He wouldn't be at graduation there or anywhere else.

During the ceremony, Moron's awe and appreciation for humanity began to wear off a

little. There were too many speeches for his drunken brain to process. The commencement speech was to be given by Ted Koppel, the British-American broadcaster best known as the anchor for ABC's *Nightline* from 1980 until 2005. Moron started sarcastically yelling "*we want Koppel!*" and "*Koppel or we riot!*". Cecilia disingenuously asked Moron to stop. She liked it and was laughing hard. The honor students seated around Moron didn't share her opinion. What started as dirty looks had transitioned to them shouting back at Moron to shut up. When Koppel finally came on stage one of them turned to him and asked "*Are you happy now?!*"

After the ceremony, Moron met Cecilia's parents for the first time. He wasn't in the best condition to be introduced to them but he hoped they'd grant him a little leniency considering it was graduation. He was surprised at how normal they seemed. Moron's mother and Rodge joined the group, and against all odds, Rodge sliced through the awkwardness. He must have dug deep inside and unlocked some rarely used part of himself, because he entertained everyone for an amount of time long enough to be considered an appropriate conversation. They said their goodbyes and Moron went out to dinner with his mother and Ol' Chuckles Minor.

Later that night, their last night in his apartment, as Moron and Cecilia lay under a bedsheet, he felt the cheap linen on top of him and reasoned that it was the only thing between them and a completely lifeless earth. The next morning they'd walk separately among the world's ruins. He'd be happy to not have to face that planet. He'd be happy to stay in bed and melt into the mattress, their final resting place, but reality wouldn't allow him that luxury.

"I'm going to teach in China," said Cecilia half crying half laughing. She covered her eyes so Moron couldn't look into them.

"I know," said Moron.

"How?"

"You mentioned wanting to go a few months ago and I knew you'd follow through," said Moron.

"I don't even remember saying that," said Cecilia.

"I feel as if we've already lived through all of this."

"You need to get some sleep."

"I love you Cecilia. I hope you enjoy every second of it."

"I know John," she said, brushing the hair from his forehead. "You should try it some time."

"China?"

"No," said Cecilia, smiling. "Nevermind."