

Like a Saint

By Johnathan Petreman

Loneliness. Every school year that same thought keeps crawling into my mind like a parasite eating away all of my hopes that I desperately cling to. I hate the feeling. The feeling of not belonging. Going into Canyon Springs this year, I had basically given up. Who would befriend a failure such as myself? Accept a loser within their group? Someone completely out of their mind, that's who. Apparently, however, people like that do exist in today's society, because I did find friends here, specifically one. He doesn't care that I'm not the coolest or in tip-top shape. He doesn't care that I'm a geek. He accepts me for who I am, which is the greatest thing of all. The loneliness I once felt began fading away from my life. I began coming out of my shell where I've hidden since sixth grade.

I've always wanted to find that one thing in life that would make me feel like a someone. That sense of belonging. I tried to fit in over and over again. I got fed up with my results always ending up in failure, so I just gave up on that and hid behind my video games to hide the pain I felt from school and people. I lived without belonging up until this year when I ended up befriended by the person I'm writing about. I began feeling the emotions we call "happiness" and "joy," not the artificial versions bought with money. This person also showed me I didn't have to be alone forever, that I was capable of making friends. Sadness and sorrow were replaced by the feelings of belonging and acceptance. The path I originally was walking, the path of loneliness, transformed into that of a bond that I hope will never be broken.

Standing up in the face of wrong is something that people rarely do. If you see someone being picked on or in trouble, many just ignore it and walk away. This person

isn't like that. He helps those who don't stand up for themselves without a second thought, at least for me he does. I don't stand up for myself. I let people walk all over me. I lack backbone. This person does these things for me. He stands up for me. He doesn't let people use me. He'll speak his mind with the truth. Without even trying, I'll be left smiling because of this person. He has an outstanding sense of wrong and right. That sense of judgment is his one-of-a-kind trademark.

I've always been different. People know I am, and they take advantage of my quick-to-anger personality. It was because of this I began questioning my role in life. Then I realized something, something that would stay with me for a long time. I served no greater good. I had a meaningless existence, as far as I was concerned. The fights I fought were for no-good reasons, and were putting me on a path of destruction, the kind without meaning. I walked around, wondering what I should do with my life. Then, after many years of thinking, I realized what I should do. The meaning I sought was to change the world and make it a better place. However, I was beyond anti-social and had absolutely no social skills, because I didn't talk much. I was losing the grasp on my dream...my hope for a better today. I was losing my meaning; without that, why did I even exist? Then my sophomore year came. I was giving up my dream, that is, until I began hanging out with this person. I began regaining my hope, my dream for a better world. My self-given purpose in life was returning, thanks to him.

Many people belong to a certain social group. Even geeks have some sort of group. Before this year, I belonged nowhere. No friends. No one I could trust. I don't even think I trusted myself. I was a misfit. Again, I hated school so much I would literally beg my mom not to make me go to school (which always failed). I know people

don't get me. I don't even get me. The one thing I did know, however, is I needed a place to belong, to be accepted. Fortunately, I found that place. I found my call to belong. I found friends-- the kind that will be there for me when I need them.

I knew no one going into Canyon Springs this year. It was not fun. I was alone and afraid. I didn't think I'd make any friends, but somehow, by some sort of divine intervention, I did. Before this individual befriended me, my soul was deprived of hope. I was a loser for another year, just as I had been. Thanks to him, however, I began believing in myself. I began realizing hope; I began to realize I'm not alone. I believed that I can make my own path in life. School was no longer a hell. This person proved my belief that there were no good people in our world was a mere myth. I could be better than who I was. I wasn't a Nobody. He showed me that I'm me.

You can have two kinds of influence over people: negative or positive. Jeremy has time and time again influenced me in a positive way. He taught me that I need to stand up for myself. He taught me to believe in myself. Most significantly, however, he taught me to be myself. That kind of influence has inspired me to do things I've never done like talk to girls (something that terrified me in the past due to my lack of courage.) My way of life is now changed through the way he's treated me--with respect. He has opened my eyes that there are still good people in our world, something I thought was a myth.

My loneliness was soaring to new heights. My belief that I'd gain acceptance was on its deathbed. I even thought I'd be better off without friends. I was being consumed by the greatest fear I had--loneliness. For some reason, even though I had basically given up hope, given up on people, given up on myself, I still clung to the single ideal of

acceptance. Thanks to him, I know that feeling and I won't look back. In conclusion, he pulled my "no one" out of the abyss of loneliness into a "someone." I guess I'm trying to say -- thank you, Jeremy St. (Saint) Andre.