

# Say “Hi”

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There’s a chill in the air that feels like a new beginning. Which is ridiculous considering how utterly normal today has been. I left my class when the bell went and sat down with my friends and just started laughing. Normal. But then I walked to my next class and passed you and everything changed. You said ‘hi’ in that way that you do, when you smile and say my name and it feels like I’ve never heard it before. I’m taken back inside the memories I thought I had buried. How easily you switched to using my pronouns when I came out, how you greeted me with my preferred name while some of my friends were still using my deadname. The way you changed my name on word documents to make me feel better during class projects. Every time you surprised me with friendliness and smiles, it got a little bit harder to not want to be around you.

I got used to that, seeing you every day in class, smiling when you said ‘hi’ to me. I wasn’t used to someone being nice to me just because they felt like it. I’m still not. I laughed when my friends turned around to involve you in our debates; the pure confusion on your face before you launched right into it like we were discussing normal things, not guacamole or made-up governments. I remember how many times I cried and broke down that year and wonder why you would go out of your way to acknowledge me. A tiny pinprick of hope, that’s what it was. That maybe you were saying ‘hi’ for the reasons I hoped you were.

And then it was him. Him, leaving his friends to make jokes at your table. Him, showing off and flirting so obviously even I could see it. It filled me with jealousy, how close I saw you getting, but I had no right to be jealous. It wasn’t fair to him. He was just doing what I didn’t have the guts to do. So I pushed away the jealousy and sadness, kept my distance, and tried to make my feelings slide away unnoticed.

I thought it worked. I was so over you. Well, I thought I was over you. Until that one moment, that one single moment that replayed in my mind all weekend after. You called my name, grinned at me to watch you, and slide down a banister. And just like that, I was screwed.

I don’t see you as much now. New year, new classes, new people. He and you had a fight, I think, and now you’re nowhere near as close as you were. Part of me feels bad for him; how terrible it must feel to lose a chance you thought you had. Especially with someone as perfect as you. The other part of me nurtures hope. False, unjustified, rose-tinted hope. Every now and again I think I’m moving on, moving past this, then something will strike me, something small, and I’ll fall for you all over again.

So I don't know why it feels like a beginning today. Like someone's playing music and I'm waiting for the beat to drop. It's a perfectly normal day. I get through morning classes, the bell rings, I laugh with my friends, then off to my next class. But then you say 'hi' and as I smile silently back, that tiny pinprick of hope dances in my stomach.