

10 WORDS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is bustling with students, a small group has gathered around JASON (13). He's the centre of attention and loving it.

JASON

(whispering)

I saw her with a pregnancy test in her hand. Going into the principals office. She'd used it. And she was crying.

The other kids gasp, can't believe it.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'm telling you, she's pregnant. Her birthday is only a couple of days after mine. She's only thirteen, but just watch how big her stomach is going to get.

The group starts whispering amongst themselves. This is top level gossip, and it won't be long before it has spread to every corner of the school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jason sits at the back of the class, the other students around him leaning in as close as they can. He's still gossiping about the 'pregnant' girl.

EMILY (13), suddenly marches into the classroom. Everyone turns to face her, staring at her and muttering.

The teacher, at the front of the class is busily writing onto the whiteboard, a MS. CARTER sees Emily marching in and is at first caught off guard.

MR. CARTER

(to Emily)

Hello? Can I help?

Emily ignore her, makes a beeline straight to Jason.

EMILY

(tearful)

You're the one spreading all this shit? These lies?

JASON

(smug)

You're the one who should have used protection.

SLAP!

Emily delivers a hard slap across Jason's face. Leaving a red mark. In floods of tears Emily buries her face in her hands and runs out of the classroom.

All the other students are put into a state of stunned silence.

MS. CARTER

(settling the class)

Alright, everyone, stay in your seats. Nobody move.

(to Jason)

Do you want to tell me what that was about?

Jason's mouth hangs open.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Jason sits nervously in front of PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS (50s), who's busy filling in paperwork.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

So, the first thing I want to say to you Jason is, Emily is not pregnant.

JASON

But I saw...

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

(cutting him off)

What you saw was her EpiPen pen. She had run out and came to see me as I was in possession of her emergency supply.

Jason's face turns white, horrible guilt washes over him.

JASON

I thought...

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

(cutting him off again)

Well, that's just the thing Jason, you didn't think.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Not for a single second did you
think. And that's the problem.

JASON
I'm sorry.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS
Why are you saying sorry to me?

JASON
I'm sorry to Emily too.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS
Rumours can be very harmful. They
can hurt people deeply. Cause them
to do terrible things to
themselves. The whole school now
thinks emily is pregnant, is
talking, laughing, joking about.
And it doesn't stop here. Online,
on her phone. I might never be able
to convince her to ever come to
this school.

JASON
(nods)
I'm really sorry.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS
You're suspended. Your parents have
been informed. I now need to try
and mop up this ugly mess.

Jason nods, tears welling up in his eyes.

INT. SCHOOL CAR PARK - DAY

Jason walks out of the school, passing by Emily who's getting
into the back of a waiting car. He runs over to her.

JASON
Emily, I'm sorry. I'm really,
really sorry. I didn't mean to hurt
you. I really didn't. I'm just an
idiot. I thought I saw something,
but I should have just kept my big
mouth shut.

Emily looks at him, her eyes filled with sadness.

EMILY
(sighs)
Maybe you should think before you
speak?

Jason nods.

JASON
I just want you to know that I'm
sorry.

EMILY
OK.

JASON
I'll make sure everyone knows none
of this is true.

She stares at him, not sure what else to say to him.

JASON (CONT'D)
Feel free to slap me again if you
want?

She shakes her head.

EMILY
It's not nice being gossiped about.

She climbs into the car and Jason watches as she's driven
away.

INT. JASON'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jason sits on the couch, staring at the television. Suddenly
the sound is turned off. LUCY (17), enters the room with a
mischievous grin and holding onto the television remote.

LUCY
Well, well, well. The whole school
is talking about you.

He smirks to himself.

JASON
Gossiping about me?

She nods.

LUCY
Makes a change. You're the one
normally spreading the gossip.

JASON
I can't help it.

She rolls her eyes.

LUCY
Oh, knock it off.

JASON
I'm serious, once I start talking I just can't stop.

LUCY
But you can, you just don't want to.

JASON
Well I want to now.

LUCY
Too late.

JASON
I've really messed up this time.

LUCY
(nodding)
You have. It's your big mouth. And I'm telling you, one day Jason you're going to get into crazy trouble.

JASON
I already am. I might get kicked out of school for this.

LUCY
Well, don't ask me to feel sorry for you, because I don't.

JASON
So what do I do?

She reaches out to him, grabbing at his mouth she pinches his lips together.

LUCY
Just keep this shut.

He knocks her hands away.

JASON
I can't.

LUCY

Ten words a day. Start there. From the moment you wake up until you go to bed. Ten words. That's all you get.

JASON

(sceptical)

Ten words? Like a ten word challenge?

LUCY

Think you can do it?

Jason raises an eyebrow, intrigued but unsure.

JASON

Ten words? I mean, I've got to try something, but I don't know if I can do that.

LUCY

(smiling)

The whole school hates you for what you did to that poor girl. You've got to change the way you are.

Jason thinks for a moment, then nods determinedly.

JASON

Alright, challenge accepted.

Lucy laughs and pats him on the back.

LUCY

I'm going to enjoy this.

He gives her a thumbs up. She laughs again.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh, so you've already started?

He nods.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

The room is filled with kids laughing, dancing, and chatting. Jason stands near the snack table, looking around nervously.

KID 1

Hey, Jason! Thanks for coming. Have you heard anything from school?

Jason shakes his head.

KID 1 (CONT'D)
Are they kicking you out?

Jason shrugs.

KID 1 (CONT'D)
Well, thanks for coming. But just
so you know, everyone from school
is here.

JASON
(nervous)
Emily?

KID 1
(nodding)
Yeah.

Jason lets out a long deep breath.

KID 1 (CONT'D)
Are you going to talk to her?

Jason considers this, then shakes his head.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jason sits on the couch, sipping a soda. A group of kids
gathers around him, curious about his silence.

KID 2
What did you parents say?

JASON
Nothing.

KID 3
Are you still suspended?

Jason nods.

KID 4
She's here you know?

Again Jason nods.

KID 5
Why are you so quiet?

Jason shakes his head.

The gathered kids all share a look.

KID 6

Well, if you feel like talking,
come find us.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

The party is in full swing. Jason stands off in a corner,
keeping to himself.

Emily approaches him, they're both nervous.

EMILY

I just wanted to say thanks for
letting everyone at school know
what you said about me wasn't true.

He smiles at her.

JASON

Welcome.

EMILY

In fact, people have been really
nice to me all week. Suddenly
everyone wants to talk to me. Be my
friend.

JASON

Nice.

She's surprised by the way he's acting.

EMILY

Are you ok?

He nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Its just I thought you'd have a lot
more to say.

Jason thinks to himself. Counting out how many words he's
already used. He counts them off on his fingers. Three. He's
got seven words left.

JASON

I'm trying to speak less.

He's got two words remaining.

EMILY

And just so you know, I don't want
you kicked out of school.

JASON

You're sweet.

That's it. He's reaches ten words.

EMILY

I don't like holding a grudge.
Maybe if people saw us talking
together, you wouldn't be so hated?

He shrugs.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Would you like my phone number?
Maybe we can think of a way to get
you back into school?

Jason hesitates, knowing he has no words left. He looks
around, trying to think of a solution. Emily's smile fades,
thinking he's ignoring her.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(hurt)
Never mind, I guess.

Jason quickly grabs a napkin and a pen from the snack table.
He writes down his number and hands it to her.

She takes it with a chuckle.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Ok then, I guess I'll take yours.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Jason steps outside and spots Lucy's car. She climbs out to
meet him.

LUCY

You really want to leave this
early?

He nods. She laughs.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Run out of words have you?

He nods.

LUCY (CONT'D)
So that's why you want to leave?

Again, he nods.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Do you regret taking the challenge?

He emphatically shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Oh wow, that was a proper no.

He smiles.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Want to keep it going?

He nods.

LUCY (CONT'D)
How about, starting from tomorrow
you get fifty words a day?

He gives her two thumbs up.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You know what Jason, I'm actually
proud of you.

He wraps his arms around her, and they share a hug.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END