

Forgetful (TeenSS-10595)

There is a boy who forgets his name every time.

He is two and very forgetful. The doctors say it's normal but she's not so sure.

"El-li-ot." A mother enunciates her words to her small child. For each syllable, her hands move to a rhythm. "Repeat after me."

"El-" She starts.

"El!" The child looks up from his chocolate bar and follows.

"Li-" Slowly, she moves her index fingers down and points to him.

"Li!"

"Ot." She finishes.

"Ot!" He repeats.

"Elliot! Elliot! El-li-ot!!" The child laughs and claps his hands together happily. His mother gives an exasperated smile and wipes the chocolate away from his mouth.

"I'm lucky you're a fast learner."

He is five and amazingly adventurous. He finds himself on journeys for a greater good he likes to believe in. He remembers a lot of things but he forgets his name every so often.

"Elliot, Elliot. Where are you?" His mother calls out. She is in the middle of the Sunday market sale, it is as bustling as it is aggressive. She gets worried when he gets lost as any mother would. She knows that Elliot can always find his way back to her and that he is a wanderer.

Still, she worries. "Elliot! Oh, Elliot! Where are you?" She cups her hands around her mouth and takes a good look around. Her eyes fall on a pet shop and it is then that she realizes where he is.

"Elliot?"

He might not have recognised his name but he has recognised her voice. “Ma! Look, look!” Elliot points to a glass case. “Goldfish! G-O-L-D-F-I-S-H!” He spells the words out.

The mother kneels down and looks over his shoulder. In front of her is just a goldfish with a lustrous gleam. “It is.” She smiles.

“Buy it! Buy it!” Elliot points at the price tag excitedly. “It’s only one dollar!”

He’s making quite a scene and everyone around looks at her expectantly.

“Buy a million of them, ma! That way they’d all be friends!”

She gives in, frowning, she takes out a dollar coin. “Now, now, dear. One is all we need.” She slips the coin to the person equipped with the fishing net. “He already has you as a friend.”

She hates to admit it, but she likens her son to a goldfish- innocent, tiny and forgetful.

“Pa, we need to give ‘im a name!” Elliot waves his hands in front of him.

“Should we?” The father laughs. “That depends if you can remember it.”

Elliot pouts and smacks his father on the leg. “Daaad.” He whines.

“Well, what do you want to name him?” His mother inquires from the kitchen where the smell of cookies permeates from. She switches off the stove and pulls out her mittens. She lifts up the tray and leaves them to air out.

Elliot frowns . “I dunno yet, that’s why I’m asking you.”

“How about Elliot?” The father grins, he leans in close and ruffles his son’s hair. “That way you won’t forget your own name.” He expects him to yell, scream, or throw a tantrum, maybe all at once, but when he doesn’t the father frowns.

Because instead of all the expected, Elliot looks thoughtful.

“Alright.” His son nods. “Elliot’s his name now too. Maybe that would help.” He keeps nodding and heads to the kitchen.

Surprisingly, it does work. Elliot does remember his name. After all their trying and efforts, all the unbelieving looks from the sceptic doctors, it does work.

Elliot remembers his name.

If it was that easy, how could Elliot forget his own name just as easily? It was unthinkable that Elliot was playing pranks when the boy couldn't even lie about stealing from the cookie jar. Regardless, she is glad.

He is nine and extraordinarily smart already. He knows how to read, write, and speak utterly well. His years of forgetfulness have left him behind.

Elliot the goldfish is doing well too. The goldfish is now three years old. Elliot spends his time taking care of it. He feeds it daily and admires it behind the glass.

Three years later, his mother still likens him to a goldfish, but this time as curious, discovering, and bubbly.

He is fourteen but much too jumpy.

“What about a different name?”

Out of the blue, the mother suggests. She asks it over the dinner table. His father, too occupied to listen, watches the television in anticipation. Cindy, younger sister, is too busy browsing magazines to care.

“For what?” Elliot already knows but asks anyway.

“For the goldfish, Elliot.” His mother confirms his suspicions. “It's getting confusing and you're old enough to remember your own name by now, I'm sure.”

Elliot drops his fork. “No thanks.” He says quickly before giving a nervous smile. “U-Um... I mean... It's already got my name for so many years, why change it? That would be like calling me Petey from now on! Haha...”

His mother purses her lips together and raises a suspicious eyebrow. She chooses not to question him. “Well, if that's what you want.”

He is sixteen when the goldfish's glass is broken.

"It was an accident, okay?" Cindy yells, flipping her hair over her shoulder. "I didn't mean to, believe me when I say I wouldn't ever break it on purpose!"

"I... I know! But!" Elliot yells out in defence, he is conflicted and aggravated. The goldfish was already ill and dying but he still cannot help but feel mad, after all-

Elliot stops himself before he loses himself and sighs. "...Never mind."

Cindy begins to object but stops and closes her mouth when realisation dawns on her at the same time as their parents in the dining room.

Elliot is eighteen when he finally admits to his family that he still cannot remember his own name.

Surprisingly though, his family is not all that much shocked.

His mother closes her eyes and smiles. "We already know."

There is a boy who forgets his name every so often.