

[HammerBen Hammer, 22, our hero. Recently moved to Siberia to work for an oil company.](#) stumbled drunk through the hallways of the [OilbergerPronounced Oil-ber-zhay. The company at which Hammer is employed.](#) dorm.

He pulled a crumpled informational packet out of his pants to find his room number. The letters swam in front of his face.

He slid the door open and in the square of light that spilled into the room saw [Andrew SedgwickHammer's childhood acquaintance, 21. Hammer doesn't like him.](#) lying on the single bed, mouth open, trail of drool causing spreading dark spot on the sheets.

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Hammer woke up the next day not entirely sure where he was. He opened his eyes and turned to the left; found a window and parted the blinds a crack; and the white light that flooded in filled his senses with pain and his mind, once that was gone, with the knowledge of where he was. Siberia.

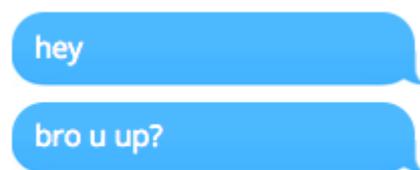
He turned to the other side and noted that the other bed was empty: Sedgwick was gone. He picked his crumpled pants off the floor and took his cellphone out of the pocket to check the time. He accounted for the time difference in his head and figured it to be 7:32, meaning he was half an hour late to the first training class.

"Son of a bitch," he said, meaning Sedgwick, not awake enough to consider exactly why. He put on pants and the snow boots he had packed. He looked in the mirror and decided that it wasn't worth it to do anything about his hair.

The night before, the cold had somehow been mixed up in all the romance of arriving and not bothered him. Now, when he was still half asleep, it seemed like something that was intent on destroying him.

A phone vibrated somewhere in the room. Hammer searched around and found Sedgwick's phone sitting there on the dresser. Why would he leave it?

He hesitated for a moment, and then opened it and navigated to "messages." There were two unread messages from "Shmidy."



Buried under that was one to "Sammy boo

Hammer thought about Sedgwick for a moment. The mop of curly hair, the almost-handsome face, the little gap in his front teeth. They had never had a more meaningful conversation than discussing a homework assignment, and yet Sedgwick seemed to show up in every phase of his life, poking his goofy face into seemingly every school and team and extracurricular activity in Hammer's life.

He thought about the science fair they had been assigned to together in the last year of junior high. Hammer had planned a project about sound waves. His father, a math teacher, had told him that any wave can be decomposed into a series of smaller waves added up. Hammer had used a high-speed

camera to take films of guitar strings vibrating and superimposed them onto each other, playing the sound along with the video to demonstrate. He thought it was beautiful that even the most complex things were made up of simple components. He thought about how even his voice could be broken down into simple sin waves, vibrating, circular.

On the day of the fair, while Hammer set up his computer to play back the videos, Sedgwick hooked his guitar into the gym's sound system. He turned it up as loud as it could go and started to play the national anthem, Jimi Hendrix-style. A teacher or rule-minded student quickly shut off the sound, but not before a gaggle of admirers had made their way to Sedgwick, leaving only a paltry few to witness all of Hammer's hard work.

They won the science fair. Hammer swore off his dream of being an engineer for weeks. He couldn't believe that after all the work he had put in, Sedgwick had stolen the show. And yet now, here they were: engineers for the same oil company. None of it had mattered.

He was thinking about all this when he heard the scream.

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