

The Lab Partner

I met Jordan in tenth-grade chemistry. We were paired up by chance, just two names called out in a room full of students who barely knew each other. I did not expect much from the partnership. I had always preferred to work alone.

Jordan was different from anyone I had ever worked with. He was quiet, yet intensely focused. He asked probing, inquisitive questions that felt sincere. During the lab, he asked questions beyond simple assignment-based questioning, such as 'Why does this happen?' and 'If we change one small thing, what will happen?' Initially, I just figured he was trying to impress me. But, almost immediately, I realized he was not trying to impress me; rather, he was simply curious.

That, in and of itself, made me uncomfortable. I had always been the type who followed instructions. I never took risks unless I were sure I would get the correct answer. I did very well in school; however, I did it carefully, and Jordan questioned this for me.

One day, while trying to conduct an experiment that was somewhat complicated, I was finally starting to feel fed up. I was ready to rerun the steps. Jordan simply said with a shrug, 'Let's see what happens.' This sounded easy enough; however, for me, this was a whole different way of thinking.

From that point on, I started approaching things differently. I began to see school not just as something to complete, but as something to explore. I started asking more questions, not just the ones I thought the teacher wanted. I stopped erasing so quickly. I let myself wonder.

Jordan and I only had that one class together. We drifted apart after the semester ended, as classmates often do, but the influence stayed.

Now, in every subject, I bring that mindset with me. I do not rush to fix mistakes. I pay more attention to the process, not just the outcome. I take more academic risks. I even ask questions in class that do not always have answers.

I used to think influence had to come from someone older, someone in charge. But Jordan showed me that sometimes, growth starts in the smallest places, in how someone looks at a problem and says, simply, 'Let's see what happens.'

That one sentence changed the way I learn. And I am better for it.