

Name: Woodbridge High

Location: Earborough, North Province. Enshia.

Time: Circa 2001

Main Characters:-

- Allen Fergusson
- Neal Teniski
- Rachael Gruber
- Viktor Alan
- Robin Brandon
- Sam Gianni

Recurring Characters

- Malinda
- Abby
- Fiona
- Addy

Prologue:-

Call me Allen.

No, this is not a take on Moby Dick's starting famous lines "Call me Ishmael." and the pathetic attempts of a frustrated and bored writer to emulate Herman Melville or any great writer for that matter. There are no extraordinary beings or situations in this tale of normal teenage angst and aspirations. It is simply an attempt to demonstrate and illustrate that there is nothing "normal" about being normal! Every situation, every person, every event is extraordinary when thought of in hindsight. Even if we do not over analyse or for that matter fail to see the very obvious, if observed carefully everything is to say the least not "ordinary".

Character Assassinations:-

Allen:-

Allen is a confused guy. He is not sure if he is a genius or a dim-wit. He goes about his work as if it were the surest thing on the planet. Yet, inside he is as conflicted and confused as a blind guy lead by a blind dog. He is obnoxious and intolerable even to the closest of his friends & family. He is fortunate, but at the same time unfortunate at things which 'normal' people are fortunate about. He is a pessimist who has pangs of optimism more often bought on by his peers than his own angst imbibed self. He is a compulsive people pleaser. He hates liars, but has the aptitude to lie shamelessly and with conviction. His conscience is his only saving grace. He is, but proud of it for if it were not for his auto-pilot conscience he'd be long gone and lost to the dark side.

In essence he is like most of us; he is ruled by his own insecurities and inhibitions. He wants the moon but is afraid of getting it! He is what most people would call a guy who has it all but loses it for

the want of more. He says he trusts no one, but in fact he'd much rather trust a stranger than himself or his friends. He's never sure of himself and will never admit that. He does not rule out the possibility that he can be wrong but gets his guard up and is offended mortally if he is told that he is 'wrong'. He expects too much from people, which almost always leads to his unhappiness and the turmoil in his social life. He longs for intimacy, but is fearful of being hurt. He is in fact truly a lost soul.

Neal Teniski:-

Allen's best friend and confidant. He is our typical nice guy- charming and harmless, unless provoked. Is often misunderstood and victimised by his peers. Allen considers his survival in the early days at Woodbridge high only possible due to his benevolence. He is also the slacker and the black sheep. He is romantically linked to Rachel Gruber, yet he is not averse to flirting with others. According to Allen, Neal has a good heart and that's all that matters. He and Neal have a lot in common in terms of their passions and family. They mutually understand each other. Neal's ego is only next to Allen's in size and he is a very emotional. Allen trusts him blindly and has full faith in him. Allen sees him for the boy he was, the guy he became and the Man he could be.

Rachel Gruber:-

Neal Teniski's romantic interest and Allen's erstwhile foe but current best friend. Innocent, feisty, passionate & considerate. Her unparalleled external beauty is only eclipsed by her inner self. Completely in love with Neil, does not understand the concept of "letting go" or "leaving someone alone". Wouldn't hurt a fly, has no trust issues. Very, possessive & emotional. Dog lover (only as pets). Has a natural flair for creativity and falling over her own words. Her platonic relationship with Allen is almost always misunderstood by others outside their group. They share a very strong connection to the extent that they do not even verbalize much of their communication!

Viktor Alan:-

Neil's Best Friend and one of Allen's best friends. He's the brains in the group and the catalyst that makes Allen super mean to Neil. Often called the "King of good times" because of this repute to be a great guy to hang out with & his wit. Viktor, Neil and Allen make the most comical non gay 'ménage a trios' usually at Neil's expense. His persuasive prowess is legendary. If he wanted, he could 'sell ice to Eskimos'! Has an explosive rapport with Rachel and we can always be ensured of a laugh when they are together mostly at her expense. Has been very dependable and has an uncanny habit of saying the truth without hurting others. The only member of the group to be closely and constantly associated with both Allen and Sam Gianni.

Robin Brandon:-

Allen's other Best Friend. He's Allen's rock that keeps him grounded and is his saviour, most trusted and respected friend. Earlier often relegated to Allen's sidekick, he quickly gained prominence through his own achievements. The only guy with whom Allen never actually fought! He's what links Allen to the outside world. Student extraordinaire. He's a docile and introvert guy though with oodles of self confidence. Has roughly the same educational background as Allen, and hence they share a very deep understanding.

Chapter One: "Call me Allen"

Pilot;-

"How could this be?" thought Allen. It was 10 years ago that he stood at the same spot and swore that he would never set foot in that place again. No, this was not a castle or a restaurant or a mystical religious joint. It was Woodbridge High School. It was his kindergarten Alma Mater. It was the same place he learned that the world is a cruel place and that education is not the least of what is taught in schools. As he passed the huge Iron gates, he could not help but think of the times he spent there. Most of them spent thinking and envisioning of the time when he'd be free of that 'God forsaken' place.

But today, he was there by his own wish and by his own choice. In fact he had to fight to be there, he had taken risks the consequences of which he was fully aware and apprised of by his seemingly concerned parents & friends. He had left all that was known to him, all that was familiar, all that was just and right- all for a shot at being at a place he swore he'd never go. It forced him to think and rehash all the events which had brought him there.

To understand the mind of Allen, one has to understand the mind of the Youth. It is the period of life in which anything seems possible, everything is plausible. Everything is either black or white. Grey is a concept not yet fathomed or dreamt of.

Allen had it all. He was the first-born to a relatively well to do couple who until a few years back lived in the suburbs where he had place to "play" and grow. He was not spoiled but suffices to say, he had never seen hardships as well. His family abided by a very strict moral code which he had fully and completely adopted and practiced to the level of annoyance to his fellow mates. His views brimmed of precociousness and reeked of naiveté. He had grown up too soon for his age. Allen was brought up to believe that to be anything worthwhile in life one had to excel academically, because in the book of 'the world' by his father there was no place for mediocrity. Allen was an average student. Oh! Who are we kidding? Allen barely managed to pass in a few subjects. He was lucky to clear Junior High let alone being near the Average. He was the embodiment of failure to his parents and to himself. He had it all but he had nothing. His mortal weakness, his Achilles' heel was his illegible 'Hand-writing'; the Age of computers was yet to be heralded. It was as if all he was worth was worth nothing in the current system of academia. He had worked hard, too hard in fact. He had given it his mind body and soul. It was then when he got his board results that he realised that for all his wisdom and for all his effort he was below average. Below expectations. Worthless. It was then that he decided that since he had lost all he had and had gone down without a fight, there was only

one way to go; up. He had decided that it was to him to reinvent himself, and do what he feared most; go back to “Woodbridge High”.

Assured once more of all his reasons to be there and for his personal crusade against the world, Allen walked on the soil he swore he’d never walk again.

Chapter Two: “The Harbinger”

Allen had always considered himself to be very liberal and non-judgemental. But, in reality Allen had never been asked for his views and his views were till now only known to him. Unbeknownst to Allen ‘Woodbridge High’ had evolved in the last decade. It was now home to the ‘trendy’ and to the ‘edgy’ in addition to the ‘jocks’. To whom, let’s just say Allen was allergic to.

Allen had never seen the senior wing of Woodbridge High, he was impressed but that was only a fleeting feeling. Allen, had till now lived a disciplined life. His older school was the embodiment of the ‘archetypical disciplinarian institution’ and our good friend Allen was the quintessential ‘Mr. Goody Two Shoes’. Even the slightest bit of insubordination and transgression was detrimental to him.

The entire school was in assembly. So, far so good Allen thought; If only he knew what was in wait for him. The entire School took more than twenty minutes to assimilate; nearly nineteen more than what Allen would have thought was optimally required. There was no order- there was no discipline! Allen was aghast! It was as if he was in the middle of the “Wild West”. By the time the assembly was over Allen had already written off his last years of school life as filled with anarchy and chaos.

The bell rang, First period. Ah! Allen thought now he could rest, but what’s this.... He saw solitary guys talking to lone girls and no one was staring at them! Everyone was too ‘friendly’! This can’t be right Allen thought! True Allen had studied in co-educational institutions all his life but this kind of unabashed conversations were only till now seen on racy TV dramas. Allen could only think of the bad and assumed the worst about everyone and everything. All this was happening too fast, one minute it was like he was in Taliban controlled Afghanistan and the next minute he was at a carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

The first period was Economics, this Allen liked and it was the only thing till now that Allen was familiar to. The teacher gave the Class a pop quiz; needless to say Allen was ecstatic. Almost too ecstatic by Woodbridge standards. He was jumping around in order to answer all the questions, ten minutes into the class and Allen had already branded himself as the Geek. No one was going to be nice to him. Actually no one should be nice to ‘know-it-all’ guys like Allen, who spoil all the fun and are always sucking up to the teachers. It is then that Allen met with resistance from a group of students sitting at the back. He just thought that they were being rude to him since he was the new guy around. This was his first brush with the indomitable rogue-cum-jock Sam Gianni. He was their charismatic leader; he was the very embodiment of all of our dear Allen’s fears and loathsome opinions. Even though his visage was disarming, Allen knew he had on his hands a formidable foe.

Allen's knowledge of useless trivia is only rivalled by his sarcasm. His sarcasm comprises of 90% under-handed comments and 10% wit. What Allen was oblivious to was the fact that people hate 'smart alecks' everywhere with uniform animosity. Needless to say, he is not the guy who makes friends easily. And for what he had observed till now he was in for a bumpy ride ahead...

The classes rolled on and just as Allen was settling into routine, he saw something. He saw a couple take notice of him, they seemed to be intently discussing about him. The guy seemed harmless and handsome the girl... well she was something else. Allen knew instantly that she was special, but it being the first day and all he ignored it. As has been established Allen was not the talkative type and viewed any friendly advance as potentially injurious. But, then the girl introduced herself she said, "You, were good in class today. You seem pretty intelligent. Oh, by the way, He's Neal and I'm Rachel." Allen, dumbstruck that anyone spoke to him uttered some intelligible words. To which Neal replied, "If you need anything, just ask, man!" Ah! Some decent people at last. Allen thought.

Chapter Three: "The Teen Life"

Needless to say Allen had a very hard time adjusting at Woodbridge High. He was impatient, nervous and in short felt completely out of place. Allen knew what freedom of expression was, but up-until now he did not know its true meaning. Allen called up his old pals to see what they were doing and how they were coping. Allen's old pals were nearly all brilliant students and he knew that each one of them was destined for greatness. He was proud of his pals. Maybe they were a bit uncouth and lacked the sophistication; but what they lacked in their outwardly appearance they more than made up that with their combined geniuses. Allen wasn't ready to let go. He was still mentally not at Woodbridge high. His weekend plans still consisted of meeting up with his old pals and reliving their now glorious intellectual past.

Torn as Allen was between his past and the present, there was no denying that he found life at Woodbridge strangely fascinating. He knew well that these were the last years of his life at school and was determined to make the most of the time he had left. He had made it a point to regain his lost teenage life in just 2 years. In order to execute this plan he befriended a guy named Robin Brandon. Robin was from his previous school, but Allen was sure that he had not spoken to Robin not more than twice in the last four years. Robin and Allen struck instant friendship and shared a good rapport. Both of them despised of the Woodbridge High traditions and way of life. But there was a difference, Robin considered himself to be liberated when he came to Woodbridge, whereas Allen viewed this freedom with disdain and suspicion.

Robin in essence was your typical nice guy. He was an above average student with a strong sense of morality and values. But, as much as he was a great guy Robin lacked self-esteem and the belief in his own self. This worked out for Allen since Robin was the sidekick he was looking for. Initially Robin did associate himself with the Sam Gianni gang and was at a point of time very close to his minions. This was in direct conflict with Allen, who left no opportunity to remind Robin that this was undesirable and often asked proof of his allegiance to Allen's crusade against the world.

Teenage hormones are a tricky thing it's like driving a new car with the Accelerator acting up now and then. As mature as Allen was he was not immune to these unpredictable surges. He'd generally oscillate from the depths of the darkest depression to the incredible highs of ecstasy. One might be

lead to think all these mind boggling mood swings would cause anyone to lead a confused and tormented life. But to an average teenager this is what life means at a High School. No wonder so many teenagers listen to sad songs and crooners are millionaires. While we are dwelling on the subject of music; it would be fair point out that Allen was a novice and just as every novice he did not know what good music was. He'd hum songs from the boy bands and then embarrass himself with some cheesy folk song at every party he opted to DJ.

Allen was settling into life at Woodbridge, he now had a close circle of friends in his class. He had also met a great guy- Viktor Alan. Now Viktor was a class act. To say he was intelligent would be an understatement. His brain was like the "Venus flytrap", he had the uncanny ability to reproduce exactly the same text from any of the books he read- complete with punctuation, alignment and page numbers. To Allen, Viktor seemed like a credible threat to his ambitions of becoming the class resident Geek. But unlike Allen, Viktor had an active social life. He was even involved with a petite brunette called Kylee. Viktor had it all, he was a brilliant student was the darling of the teachers and never said or did anything which was politically incorrect. Allen always believed that Viktor could do well as an International Diplomat and could get Bush and Osama to discuss peace.

Viktor and Neal were best friends; they went on double dates and supported each other through their respective teenage romantic upheavals. Rachael was like a sister to Viktor, they had known each other before Neal and Rachael were an item. Viktor had helped both of them through their tiffs and issues.

Part of Woodbridge's charm was its club like atmosphere. Everyone knew everyone and everyone was a member of a clique. These cliques were often amicable with each other but often fought with each other too.

Allen was in no clique. He did have links to the Sam Gianni's group, but he was not one of his minions or the groupies. He liked to think of his life as the Green Day song 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams'- he walked alone. But in reality he was in a clique- a clique in which everyone who did not belong anywhere belonged to.

Over the course of the first few days Neal and Allen had become best of pals. They shared the same passions- Technology and Computers. Neal was a veteran when it came to computers; he had some technical skills too. Allen on the other hand was just a newbie. Both of them could discuss at length the merits of the latest OS from Microsoft and shared a very good rapport.

Chapter Four: "Confessions"

Everyone in Woodbridge had an obsession with the heterosexual notion that unless anyone is involved with anyone of the opposite sex they were in the danger of being outcast. Allen did not buy the theory, but was none the less intrigued.

"Out of all the Girls here in this school, who do you like?" asked Rachael, as if Allen had to decide on a model of car at a dealership. "Don't worry, the information is strictly confidential and it is just a survey to determine and ascertain your preferences." Said Rachael and Neal nodded in agreement.

Allen, felt like the deer in front of a speeding truck on a moonless-night with no clue. He was never frank with his feelings, let alone making known his preferences in the opposite sex! If he lied and pointed out some poor girl, he knew that they would try their level best to hook him up with her. To make matters worse, Neal was assured him, "you have to give us a reply". He did not want to alienate his new friends upon whom his existence at Woodbridge depended- nor did he want to "spill the beans". The fact was that ever since he saw a certain girl he had developed a sort of a crush on her, but that was before he knew that she was seriously involved. Allen thought, "How could life be so cruel? How could she not know?" So, making the wise decision Allen decided to lie through his teeth. "No, no one I met here and /or saw did catch my fancy." Neither of his new two friends believed him but after a few minutes of prodding they left Allen alone. Allen had just avoided a catastrophe. That was the last time he ever thought about it. Real life, Allen noticed was not as forgiving and easy as the movies and this question still seems to haunt him...

Rachael on the other hand had materialised to be a big problem in Allen's life as both Allen and Rachael were competing for Neil's attention. He had to face her every day, even talk to her and somehow mask his true feelings... Allen figured out a way, he would fight with her at every opportunity he got, he would completely alienate her. He would get her to be mean to him. But, to Allen's bewilderment the task seemed easier said than done. She was not that easily scorned. She kept forgiving him some times out of her own benevolence and sometimes due to Neal.

Things went on this way and soon everyone knew that Allen hated Rachael's guts and Rachael absolutely abhorred Allen. Poor Neal, he was the victim of this constant bickering between two of his most trusted friends.

Allen, in his master plan to estrange Rachael from his life started planting stories about Neal in her head. Which he found was pretty easy. Just a simple, "So Neal, who was that girl we met at the coffee house, the other day" uttered within ear-shot distance was enough to cause a domino effect. Rachael, at the prospect of another girl taking even a fleeting interest in Neal would go ballistic. Typically poor Neal would be grilled for about half-an-hour in front of his peers. He had a hard time balancing his social dignity and explosive relationship with Rachael. She was the typical specimen of the "Girl-friend". It was difficult to know where Neal ended and Rachael began. Their lives were entwined; their dreams seemed to be straight out of a Mills and Boon Novel. Everyone just wished that Rachael would find her own Identity and passion.

Chapter Five: "Of Strange Lands"

There were several peculiar elements in Allen's class as he noticed. Now Allen was very particular about where he sat during class- If it was an easy class, Allen would sit in the Middle rows. If it was a difficult class Allen would choose to sit right at the front. This theory had served him well in his previous school. Since he was new he decided to sit right at the front of the class. But, Allen was not aware of the peculiarities of the typical Woodbridge students. Students in Woodbridge put a lot more thought on where they sat; the distance from the Back-Board was the least of their concern. They calculated- how much sun would they get from the window across the class (lest they be tanned more than they intended to), how far was the nearest exit, how far were other members of their clique, whether the seat provided a good view of the field outside, could they duck their head

behind a teller student should the teacher decide to give the class a pop quiz and how easy would it be to eat during lectures? Were among the various issues they dealt with.

The first few days there seemed to be no problem, the entire first row was strangely empty. Then about the 5th day Allen saw his belongings shelved on an adjacent table. He approached the three girls who were sitting where Allen had been for the past few days. He asked them what happened and why was he being evicted. This was the first time Allen came face-to-face with a feminist, make that 3 feminists. All the three girls it seemed had something against the world and boys espically. They had a distinct air of conflict; it was as if they were always fishing for a fight. Allen soon noticed that they were a part of a very tight clique. The Girls were Malinda, Abby and Fiona. His first encounter with the trio ended in him backing off. All the three girls were similar in one way or another, they it seemed did not share the penchant for fashion and could be best described as being 'Plane Janes', which enhanced their feminist approach. Allen then approached another rather weird class mate of his known as 'Addy'. Now this guy was strange, he dressed pretty shabby and seemed to lack the very art of being social. Later he learned that Addy was Sam's right hand man and one of his best friends. The only advice that Addy could dispense Allen was to fight the 'feminist trio' and get back his seat, upon questioning if he could sit in the seat which lay adjacent to him, Addy replied "This is Woodbridge High, here everyone needs to earn their seat and the one with the loudest voice wins". Allen decided to ignore his advice and installed himself elsewhere for the time being.

Now, Allen was the type of guy who believed that there is a time and a place for everything. He was a meticulous planner and was always intent on getting more than 100% from anything he invested in. He was the sort of guy who would finish his lunch early just to complete his home assignments so that he had more time to read at home! He rarely met anyone new during recess and would be generally found in the class reading or finishing up on some pending work in class. As expected this did not go down too well with his class mates... They thought he was a snob, and could anyone blame them?

Another Woodbridge tradition that Allen did not understand was eating during Lectures. It seemed that all the students of his class had never known of a meal called "breakfast". Most of the students it seemed arrived in school as one would at a club- hungry and to have a good time. A usual occurrence Allen found was that everyone ate everyone's lunch and without their permission. This was strange; to Allen his privacy was supreme. Even the thought of anyone going through his stuff overwhelmed him.

Chapter Six: "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo"

Allen was a cynical being. He prided in himself in oversimplifying every situation and his favourite quote was, "I'm just calling a spade a spade". While the meaning of this quote while lost to the world, it was crystal clear to Allen. He believed that Students in Woodbridge were the perfect consumers as they shopped for themselves and for their vanity. But, it was nothing compared to the expenditure on cards and gifts bought by couples for each other. Allen was sure that the gift shops near the High school were running because of the benevolence the said couples.

To Allen the whole idea of a teenage romance and puppy love seemed too much to digest. He viewed all of the 'couples' with much disdain, though he did his best not to show it lest he be outcast. Everyone in Woodbridge had strange notions of relationships, some of which were pretty amusing. A guy in his class fell madly in love with a girl in the class next door. So, in order to spend more time with his muse he decided they should change classes! Now his plan was simple, either of them would approach the school Principal, make up some lame excuse as to why he/she should be shifted to the next class. For the wits that these students had, they had ignored a tiny-tiny detail; the principal of the School Mrs. Yale was not that gullible. Now, she was a lady with a vision- and knew all about her students. As understanding as she was, she knew exactly how to handle the Woodbridge Students. She knew all too well that if she took a stand against them or came out too strong and authoritative it would only enrage and inspire them to unite & rebel. She knew how to delicately handle such situations. So, just as our Juliette was explaining in great detail and reasoning with Mrs. Yale about how if she changed classes it would lead to improvements in her grades and would be in her general wellbeing, Mrs. Yale asked her politely to summon our Romeo. Romeo was dumbstruck and bewildered; he was sweating & shivering at the same time. She had both of them in her office and said, "I know what's going on. Please do not argue. I was young at a time too, and contrary to what you believe I know exactly what you both are thinking & going through. I believe that both of you should concentrate on your education at the moment and deal with the romance later." The couple were both turning very dark shades of red in embarrassment. Poor Romeo, he thought *he* was sly!

To Allen for all the comic relief provided by the young couples it was nothing when compared with the romantic escapades of Rachael and Neal. The couple were so boring that they became interesting! Every cliché about every romance that was ever written was true for them.

Neal was your average good-guy. He loved to stay under the radar, unnoticed, unobserved and uncommented. But, call it fate or 'kismet' he always managed to become noticed. So, he found a much simpler way to deal with it; he made his appearance in school sparse and rudimentary. He treated school as an obligation, which if fulfilled would render a few people happy and if not would not hurt anyone the least of which was himself. His sole purpose in life ever since Allen knew him was, to "get out of this god-forsaken place called Earborough." Now this was not to say a bad thing exactly, but the way he pursued his goal of not being in where he was would even put the people who made Matrix trilogy to shame. He appeared completely aloof as if his high school years had no bearing to his future inhabitancy on the planet Earth! But all this was a part of his charm, he very irreverence towards the attendance register seemed to enrage and fascinate Allen. Allen would wonder, "How could someone just decide not to attend school regularly?!!" Allen was bewildered; and he sought answers. As he got to know Neal, Allen learned that Neal actually did have a problem; it was called 'getting up in the morning'. It was revealed to Allen that his 'New Best Friend' was nocturnal. Meaning, he was only awake when the rest of the world was asleep! This to an unapprised individual would seem as a small problem, but to Neal this was reality. It seemed that his biological clock would not follow the whole wake on sunrise and sleep on sunset phenomenon; it preferred to wake up on sunset and sleep on sunrise!

Now, this entire recalibration of the mundane human system of existence threw the proverbial "wrench" into Rachel's plans of meeting Neal every day. So, poor Rachael stuck in the most dreaded quandary of not seeing her boyfriend would come up with rather ingenious ways to have Neal come

to school. By virtue of acute observation which only Allen was capable of, Allen learned that Rachael followed a 3 pronged approach to get Neal to school. The first act for preparing to drag 'Neal's behind' to school would begin by politely asking him to come to school which would be followed with thinly veiled and sometimes not so thinly veiled threats. The second act and the most important part of the entire operation would be to get one of the boys from the class to wake up Neal as Neal mother, naturally, did not take to it nicely when Rachael would call up every morning herself to wake him. Now the boys that would be called upon to ring up Neal's house everyday tended to change every day, these boys under normal circumstances would be invisible to Rachael in the class. Only because she had to ask them of a task, was she compelled to make small talk with them! Imagine her misery! Well the final and the last ditch attempt in Rachael's plan of attack would comprise to make up a fantastic reason to use the school phone to call up Neal's house one last time to see if she could coax him into attending school that day.

Chapter Seven: "The Annual Concert"

For all the peculiarities that Woodbridge students were known for, the most commendable of it would have to be their school spirit. Nearly every blue-blooded Woodbridge student was a good sport but, would not hear a single word against his school. They were proud of their school and its sometimes rather dubious heritage. Nevertheless, all of them rallied together in times of need. One such occasion would be the Annual Concert which was strangely held every two years. Now, the annual function was a big deal in Woodbridge. In Allen's previous experiences the annual functions had provided him with an unparalleled opportunity to raid the school library or catch up with pending work or in some cases even advance work. But, as mentioned earlier the school Principal Mrs. Yale thought of an extraordinary plan to get students like Allen to involved in the Annual concert; everyone who was not participating was supposed to report to the school ground and exercise in the sun for more than an hour. This scared Allen, and forced him to think of some way to duck out of the Exercise Routine. Allen decided to audition for the school play. Initially for the want of a better looking actor, Allen was chosen as one of the leads. Allen was very happy, not that he got the lead in the play which was one of the highlights of the Concert but because he was able to avoid being in the sun! But, as luck would have it, the director of the play Mrs. Alexia an elderly lady with impeccable English and manners found a better suited Leading man for her play, thus resulting in Allen's prompt exit from the play. By then most of the other parts in the play had already been cast and there were no roles howsoever meagre for Allen. Allen was distraught, his friends thought it was because he lost the lead, little did they know that the reason Allen was now petrified and miffed beyond solace was because of the strong possibility of him being summoned to exercise in the sun.

Allen was left with nowhere else to go! Everywhere he went to apply for it seemed no one needed more people. He even nurtured a fleeting thought of joining the incredibly famous Woodbridge Fashion show. Now, the Woodbridge Fashion show was so famous that it was almost a tradition and the students who participated in the show considered themselves blessed and extremely lucky. It was the part of the show no-one missed. All the girls would dress-up like their moms or according to the latest fashion trends and the boys would copy the styles from all the latest flicks. Obviously, Allen saw this show as despicable and devoid of any logic. But, he was ready to forgo his principles just at the thought of avoiding physical labour. But, ultimately his soul won and he did not even audition for it; this is what he told himself. Actually, he was pretty sure that he would be rejected

form there too but he was not in any condition to handle another rejection. So, in order to avoid notice that he was not involved in the concert in anyway. Allen would quietly go the School play practice sessions with his books and read! This went unnoticed for some time, but then Mrs. Alexia noticed that she had an extra actor with her. So, she had him read for the actors who could not come to practice or were late. He was the universal understudy for all the actors. Allen did not mind this at all; he now had a legitimate reason of being at the play practice. Mrs. Alexia was pleased with Allen, she admired the grace with which Allen had come back to the practice even though he was asked to leave quite unceremoniously! Allen decided that it was in his best interest not to speak and clarify the real reason for him bring at the practices.

Soon the news of Allen's so called school-sprit reached the faculty room. Now to the teachers, Allen was the guy who despite being very harshly dealt with did not shed a tear and conducted himself with the utmost poise and grace; he was praised and now was a much revered student.

Allen's luck was changing. Soon, as a reward for being so selfless during the whole ordeal; he was asked to compare for the concert. To say Allen was ecstatic would be an understatement. Everyone who was anyone in Woodbridge dreamt of that job. Now, just a few months in the school Allen had unwittingly managed to earn a much valued job thoguh along with it some rivalries as well.

The job it seemed suited Allen well. Even though Allen had never managed something of such a great proportions. Now Allen was an integral part of the planning and execution of the concert. Even though he missed his time with the books he enjoyed his time at the practice sessions. This was the start of a new Allen, Allen now explored worlds beyond his PC and books. He was asked to write short introductions to the various programmes. Thus began his journey into the realm of creative writing and expressing himself. Allen was going through a metamorphosis; he was learning management, people skills, linguistics and living a normal teenager for the first time in his sheltered Life.

This was not Allen's first foray into public speaking in Woodbridge or otherwise. Allen had always dreamt of being a good Orator. Yet, being humiliated in public was also Allen's worst nightmares. Unfortunately Allen had been through that more than once in his lifetime. The first time it happened Allen was still a kid and was reading at Woodbridge, it was a fancy dress competition and every student was supposed to go on the stage and say a few words, when it was Allen's chance- he froze on the stage and did not understand what had happened, it was only later on that Allen discovered that is was typical stage fright. Allen was devastated and utterly humiliated the pain of which could be felt by him even today. After that he did several skits at various school functions with a varied degree of success. Then came proper speeches, the first few of them went satisfactorily. But, it was the last speech that effectively completely decimated Allen's confidence. It was an inter house debate and a lot was riding on Allen to perform well during it. Once again- Allen froze, succumbed to the pressure and forgot and completely mixed up his speech. This to Allen was a glowing example of his worthlessness and his failure. To this day, Allen recalls that day as the day when he failed himself. So, personally to Allen this was an opportunity to redeem himself of his past. If he could pull this off he would rise in his own eyes.

During the course of the concert Allen learned a lot about Woodbridge, it was his chance to see what Woodbridge was all about. He learned to live like it meant something. He was actually happy. When he got home in the evening after the rehearsals- Allen, felt tired and at the same time elated

and like he was working at something that was tangible and something that he could be potentially good at. Allen still was the understudy for the play but now for completely different reasons. He was there because he wanted to be a part of something, not because he was trying to escape some physical labour. Allen decided to put his all into the concert and worked to achieve the best results. Through the concert he made several acquaintances and helped many of his classmates along the way, thus gaining their trust and favour. Now his classmates saw him not just as a geek but as a potential friend and treated him like one of them.