

The Scale of Justice  
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I have thought a lot about you over the past weeks since that awful time at lunch. I have a couple of things I want to say to you face-to-face now that I have had some time to think. First of all, I felt so hurt by your words and actions. I think your words hurt the most because it was unexpected and I consider you such a good friend. While I might expect this from others, it was heartbreaking when it came from you.

My parents like to use the metaphor of a scale to speak to me about balance in relationships. The scale is a common symbol for justice maybe because it stands for the balance between right and wrong. I am going to use it today to illustrate my point about our friendship.

<Place a rock on the scale> So this first rock represents that cruel moment a few weeks ago. It was when you and the other boys claimed that I would be better off aborted than to be placed for adoption with two queer dads. The three of you also reduced my fathers' relationship to sex because they are gay. The insults continued with really hurtful inappropriate questions and personal attacks on the character of my two dads, their marriage, the way our family was formed, and even on my birth mother.

When I sought the help of adults in dealing with the attack, you claimed that I had broken *your* trust by doing so rather than talking to you first. You don't seem to remember that I tried to stop the insults as they were happening, but you all kept going. In fact, one of you even accused me of being "always aggressive" when all I did was try to stop the insults and defend the honor of my family.

From what I understand, you went home and told *your* Mom about what had happened. I did the same. And my fathers called the administration before we even got home from school because it was such a serious attack on all three of us. The next day you were more upset that I had told on you – which let's be clear – I did *not* tell on you, my parents did – *and* it was the right thing to do. I still got blamed for this incident going public when I did not make it public. When you unfollowed me on Instagram, <Place another rock on the scale> I was confused and I still am confused why you would do that. I noticed it immediately because my parents only allow a very small following. I have never cried so much in my life. I have never been this angry. This side of the scale represents the real ways you have hurt me. But, this is not the side of the scale I want to focus on today.

<Place a rock on the other side of the scale> We haven't been friends during all of our time at our school, but early on in this school year you said something that really stuck to me. You told me you remembered working in the school garden with me when you were in 1<sup>st</sup>-grade and I was in kindergarten. Sharing that memory was a kindness. I consider it the start of our friendship.

<Place another rock on the scale>

*Spiderman, Spiderman,  
Does whatever a spider can  
Spins a web, any size  
Catches thieves just like flies  
Look out! Here comes the Spiderman.*

Over the school year you and I bonded over our love of Spiderman. I enjoyed all of the times we talked about our favorite action heroes. We love TV in our family and it was fun to watch you get animated about your favorite shows and characters.

<Place another rock on the scale> Because we had grown to become friends, I was so pleasantly surprised to pick your name for the “Secret Santa” gift exchange! All I knew is that it *had* to be a gift associated with Captain America – your favorite. I had such fun searching the Internet and going to stores to look for merchandise. My Papa had made a #H ink stamp for me and we thought that we could make one for you, too. That way it would be personal and still have Captain America on it. I think it turned out great, too! My Dad came up with the idea of the prank of the box-within-a-box-within-a-box-within-a-box way to wrap it. And then I decided to use the stamp for the wrapping paper too. I was so excited to give you that gift! I punked you so much on that gift and it really made all of us laugh so hard. I never told you this, but I made an ornament for our Christmas tree where you are stamped on one side and when you flip the ornament over, my #H is stamped on the other side. It was a way to honor one of my all-time favorite memories at school. I will always treasure that ornament, like I will always treasure our friendship.

<Place another rock on the scale> Gaining a place at our lunch table is a turning point in my whole school experience! Not exaggerating. It has become a highlight of my every day at school. And you helped with that, because you were consistently inviting to me and you always made space.

<Place another rock on the scale> Our middle school field trip was a special time in my life too. That trip was too short, and I really wished we’d get another field trip! I remember the night I told a scary story and everyone gathered around me in the dark, listening intently to the story I shared. It was a special memory, which you were also part of.

<Place another rock on the scale> My dads just let me start social media this year and they watch it closely for safety and teaching me how to do social media in the right ways. Thank you for being the very first friend to follow me on Instagram. You can’t imagine how excited I was for you to do that!

<Place another rock on the scale> You know I love *Stranger Things*. There is a scene in the final episode of season two that I like. It’s the friends’ first middle school dance and Dustin *cannot* get a girl to dance with him, so he finally gives up and goes over to the bleachers where he cries. Then, Nancy Wheeler comes over and asks him to dance. It’s a really common teen storyline I have seen in film and TV a hundred times. I was a bit nervous about *my* first middle school dance this year because I thought that might happen to me too. But it didn’t. It didn’t because you asked me to dance. It was a really important moment for me, and one that I will always remember, because you lifted me up and saw me and made me feel like I belonged. Thank you for that! You will always be the first person who asked me to dance. And then later, on the front steps as we waited for our parents, you suggested that I would be prom queen in high school, which was such a nice thing to say to me.

<Place another rock on the scale> Recently you and some of the other boys asked for my help on a paper about you were writing for class, which I took as an acknowledgment of the writing I do outside of school. That was affirming to me and my work.

<Place another rock on the scale> It also meant a great deal to me that you went home and watched my video on *Disability Justice*. The next day, you gave it a thumbs up. Making time to watch me speak and share positive feedback tells me that you value my voice and respect my points of view.

These nine rocks represent so many moments, big and small, of kindness, support, and generosity that show just how big of a role you played in making this my happiest year at school!

**Now look at the scale.** As you can see, your many kindnesses to me this year far outweigh that one cruel act. And as a person committed to the cause of justice, I must consider the big picture.

We have only two weeks together at school. Maybe I will see you after that, but maybe I will never see you again ever in my life. I hope that we can make up in these last two weeks the time we've already lost — to sit together at lunch, share jokes and stories, and laugh as much as possible. Your friendship is important to me. That is why I asked to speak with you today. By carefully weighing the moments that make up our relationship, I hope that we can find a way to repair it. I hope you agree that our friendship passes the test of the scale and that it is worth saving.