

Lots of people can't stand being proven wrong. More interesting to me are the people who can't stand letting *other* people be wrong, either. My school is well-stocked in these people; however, two that I have met stand out as being exemplary to their kind, going above and beyond the call of duty and devoting themselves to their cause in a truly selfless manner. I had the pleasure of sitting next to both of these individuals in various classes during my first year at college. One was a boy about two years older than me, who for purposes of discretion we shall codename James. The other was a girl in my own grade, several months older than me, who we will give the alias Lily. By nicknaming them after the parents of Harry Potter, I mean partially to imply that, though they would probably tear each other to pieces if put in a room together, they might someday make a good couple (though in real life I wouldn't wish this on either of them). I mention their ages relative to mine because both of them mentioned their seniority to me on one occasion or another during our acquaintance.

Both of these individuals were walking Wikipedias, filled with information of all kinds, some interesting and important, some apparently useless. Lily once told me that she knew so many things because her father was a Trivial Pursuit Champion. James probably just read that much. He once gave me a summary of the history of the punk genre to explain why I had been mistaken in calling the clothing style of another boy at our school by that name. Lily spent many classes describing Korean sentence structure to me in order to explain why she was having trouble with our French exercises. If anyone said anything that contradicted their information, they leapt to correct this person's false ideas, usually in a less-than-polite manner.

I realized their similarities one particular afternoon. On my way to the library, I ran into Lily making her way out of the dorm, and walked the rest of the way with her. Without prompting, she described an argument she had just gotten into with another person about the proper way to construct hurricane-proof buildings. In passing, she mentioned that her opponent had said he "did not want to argue over this." She seemed to take this as his way of saying that they might each be partially correct: "But his argument was completely false, and when someone's argument is false, I'm gunna have to say, Look here, this is why..." She gave no heed to the possibility that the poor guy may have made whatever comment had started the fight in passing, didn't really mean to insinuate that he knew anything about hurricane-proof buildings, and didn't want to make her angry. He had said something incorrect, not consented to be corrected, and there was nothing for her to do but outline for him all the flaws in what he had said,

bringing in information she had to offer from her own intimate knowledge of hurricane-proof buildings. But I heard something else in the guy's comment and felt sorry for him.

After several quiet, productive hours studying in a corner deep in the library where there was nobody to correct my idle assumptions, I was forced to emerge in order to print out an essay. After gathering my pages from the printer and finding them all out of order, I settled down at a table to sort it out, doing my best to ignore the fact that James was sitting a little ways from me. Before I was done with my sorting, he suddenly exclaimed loudly:

"That is not true. That is so not true. I hate it when people use that statement because it's entirely false. I would know: I research this stuff."

He was not addressing me, thankfully, though at first his sudden outburst frightened me with the thought that he was. He was talking to a table full of other students across the room, who I had noticed were also talking about the recent hurricane but whom I had stopped listening to as I focused on what I was doing, so I did not know what the offensively false statement had been. James, must have sensed the falsity from across the room and leapt to correct it, though he had been engaged in conversation with the girl he was sitting with before. It was then that I first wondered what would happen if James and Lily went on a blind date. If their data matched up, they would really enjoy each other's company. If their facts contradicted each other, however, I would not be surprised to hear that verbal sparring led to physical violence between them. I wondered if they had ever had a class together and hoped they never would.

Despite my resentment, their wealth of information was undeniably impressive. Lily was fluent in Korean and decent at several other languages as well, something which I deeply envied. James had many complicated theories of politics and literature that I couldn't listen to without being grudgingly impressed. My admiration for them both would have been uninhibited, if it were not for their apparent misconception that everybody else also cared about being right all the time. Most of the times they corrected me, I had been making an idle remark, never meant to insinuate that I really knew what I was talking about, was parroting what I'd heard other people say before, or was being intentionally foolish in order to attempt a joke. I did not care about getting into a serious discussion on the matter, and when they began explaining things to me, I felt insulted, stupid, and small. At these times, it heartened me to know that many people talked about James and Lily behind their backs (and sometimes to their faces), calling them rude or awkward or, my personal favorite and the one which my friends and I shortened into a multi-purpose

abbreviation, pretentious. Many people at our school were *pretentch*, but James and Lily were the cream of the crop, and so faced some of the most brutal treatment. I admit I tended to avoid them both.

But something about James and Lily still got to me. Part of it had nothing to do with their pretentiousness. James was one of those infuriatingly attractive people that half of campus wanted to (or already had) slept with. Lily was a casual friend of mine, which meant I spent many lunch periods and even one whole hour in the dorm one time talking with (or, more accurately, listening to) her. But my strong reaction to these people was more than trying to find ground to be friendly with them or ignore their pretty faces. It was that part of me was terrified that they might have the right idea.

I have often been torn between my own budding intellectualism and what I sometimes think of as my 'Smalltown Teenager Side.' I've never gotten below a B in a class and I consistently do all the readings for class that most of my peers simply Sparknote, skim, or ignore. I laugh at people with bad grammar in their Facebook statuses and plan on getting my master's degree. I am the Hermione of my friends. But I also love going shopping and wearing makeup and reading shojo manga, and I say the word 'like' a lot when I tell stories. I like kids' movies and perverted jokes. I know lots about fantasy literature but I don't follow the news and my political opinions are not very well-formed. Scholarly articles with big words frustrate me. I have glasses but I don't usually wear them out because they mess up my mascara. And when James tells me that I've been wrong about the definition of Punk my whole life, I feel like I ought to cast aside this whole part of me, the part who laughs funny and does silly dances at parties with her friends and reads fanfiction. I feel like I'm a stupid little child and I need to throw away all my shoes, buy a pair of plain black converses and spend all of my time holed up in the library with my glasses on, reading through every book they have so I can have enough information to talk to these people who really aren't that much older than me in the scheme of things but somehow can talk like they have decades' worth of knowledge that I can't even dream of.

I'm not going to really throw out my shoes or pretend not to like Bollywood movies because of these people. I try reading literature instead of genre in my spare time and it never lasts. But, of course, it really is a problem that we don't care about being wrong when we speak. Maybe the reason the news is so biased or politicians lie or advertisements stretch the truth so much (or whatever the latest media issue is- I never keep up) is that nobody even cares if what they're hearing is right anymore, as long as it makes them feel better. We're fine with being stupid

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and misinformed as long as it means we're happy or that we still look competent in front of our peers. That's a nearly ancient cliché, as I'm sure James or Lily would inform me. But, for once, they wouldn't be telling me I was wrong. What they'd really be saying is, "Yes, you're exactly right, what took you so long?"