

Word Nerd by Susin Nielsen

Do you have overprotective parents? Parents that need to know who you are with, what you are doing, and how you feel every single minute of the day? Well if you do, I'll bet they are not as overprotective as my mother. Mind you, she has a good excuse. The love of her life, my dad, dropped dead from an aneurism before I was even born. He was her security, her comfort zone, and with his death her sense of well-being disappeared. She thought she could protect me by hovering. To make things even worse I have a deadly peanut allergy. One taste of anything peanut related and I am in anaphylactic shock. I need a shot from my Epi-Pen and a trip to the hospital. My mom thinks I could die on a daily basis. Her overprotectiveness drives me nuts.

My mom is really smart. She has a PhD. You would think she could make piles of money, but no university wants to hire her fulltime. So we flit from city to city and when my mom finds out that they are not going to give her a permanent position, we just move someplace else. Meanwhile she teaches sessionals, and trust me, she does not make much money.

Oh how I hate moving. I never fit in because I don't have the right clothes, I am smart, and my name – get ready for it – is Ambrose. I am named after my Australian father, but really, what North American parent in their right mind would name their kid Ambrose? My name is like a target between my eyes. I have been teased about my name forever. With every new school I go to I usually get picked on right away. This time it is by three boys I call The Three Stooges. One day they decide to put a peanut in my sandwich. I almost die. My mom freaks. She decides that I will not go back to public school and I will study at home online with a correspondence school. I am bored out of my mind!

We live in a basement apartment. Upstairs lives a very nice older Greek couple. We did not even know they had a kid until he comes home from prison. His name is Cosmo. He was sent to prison for robbing a house. I have promised my mom not to even talk to him. But I am bored.

We start out by playing Scrabble. I am an expert, and Cosmo learned in prison. Pretty soon we start playing Scrabble and talking about stuff every day. I even convince him to join a Scrabble club at a nearby church. The club president is a very good-looking girl, and Cosmo has a thing for her. I start spending more and more time with Cosmo. He even starts to teach me some self-defense just in case I meet up with The Three Stooges again. We are planning on entering a Scrabble Tournament. My mom would kill me if she knew how much time I was spending with Cosmo. It is getting harder and harder to keep my friendship with him a secret from my mom. Then one day I find out that Cosmo has a past, and it has finally caught up to him.

Read page 201- “Suddenly and without warning” to “hit the driveway”

Who is Silvo and why is he after Cosmo? What will happen to me? What will my mom do when she finds out about Cosmo?

To find out read Word Nerd by Susin Nielsen