

The No-Study Club  
by Pan

Chapter 2

"Mr. Mancuso?"

I sighed as I looked up. Standing in front of me once more was my wife's least favorite student.

"Lacey," I said, not bothering to hide my annoyance. "What is it?"

"I never got a chance to explain," she said, biting her lip provocatively.

Frankly, everything the girl did was provocative, but that particular gesture was particularly blatant.

"Explain what?" I asked, trying to keep my tone level. I'd tried to put our last conversation out of my head, chalk it up to the girl trying to get attention, or some kind of weird game. But every time I saw in class, or in the hallway, I couldn't help but think about it.

She was wearing tight jeans that strained against her ass (not, of course, that I'd been looking), a low-cut top that revealed far too much cleavage, and a leather jacket that was open wide enough to expose her bellybutton and a good portion of her midriff.

"Why I can't study."

"I think you were perfectly clear last time," I said, shutting the textbook I'd been making notes from, wishing I could close the conversation just as easily. She shook her head, a defiant motion that somehow made her breasts jiggle.

Not, of course, that I'd been looking.

"No, Mr. Mancuso," she said, her tone

firm. "I explained why I don't want to study. Why I don't need to study."

"Everyone needs to-..."

"But," she continued, as if I hadn't spoke, "I didn't explain why I *can't* study."

As infuriating as I found the schoolgirl, I had to admit that I was curious. So instead of shutting her down, I decided to play along.

"Why?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"What's stopping you from actually applying yourself, from focusing on something other than your looks?"

She preened slightly at my words, and I realized that I'd done it again; I'd inadvertently complimented the girl's looks.

"It's not just me," she said, her tone smug. "There's a group of us."

"Excuse me?"

"We've made a club."

"I told you last time, your extra-curricular activities are no excuse to..."

"Oh it's not that kind of club," she said quickly. Her eyes were wide and innocent, although I knew the thoughts lurking behind them were anything but.

I still couldn't believe that in the twenty-first century, in one of the state's most exclusive high-schools, there was a student who couldn't imagine a better future than marrying a rich man.

"What sort of club is it?" I sighed, trying to hide my curiosity.

"It's a club for girls like me," Lacey said, her eyes gleaming. She knew she had me.

Well, for once I was going to make sure that she didn't get exactly what she wanted.

"I don't have time for this," I said, standing up. "And you should be getting to your next class."

"Mrs. Mancuso will wait," she said with a sneer, and I froze. Great. If my wife asked Lacey why she was late, I'd be accosted by a barrage of jealous questions as soon as I got home.

"I'm serious, Lacey," I said, turning slowly. "Get to Mrs. Redfield's class. Now."

She hadn't even been in my previous class; she'd come to visit me between her other classes. My pulse quickened at the idea of someone seeing her, perhaps even mentioning it to Sarah.

"Your wife is a pushover."

"Last warning..."

"It's called the No-Study Club."

The name caught me off guard. "What?"

Lacey stood up, her chest juggling as she did. She took a few steps towards me, then placed her hand on my arm.

"Come to the next meeting of the No-Study Club," she said, her voice soft and seductive. "I'll tell you all about it."

"I'm certainly not interested," I replied, shaking her hand off, regretting it as soon as I did. The fire was in her eyes, that fire I'd seen so many times before. The fire of a man-hunter. "Now please, go to class."

"I'm sure we can convince you," Lacey purred. "The merits of our club will become quite obvious if you just attend a

few meetings..."

"I don't know how to make this any more clear," I said firmly. "I couldn't be less interested. Go to class, Lacey. Now."

"We have four members so far," she said, and I rolled my eyes and continued walking towards the door. "Me, Kendra, Vanessa, and Kelly."

It wasn't hard to see what Lacey meant by 'girls like her' - she'd just described four of the most gorgeous girls in the school. Kendra was an African-American student; possibly the only girl in school with a chest larger than Lacey's. Vanessa was Latina; a small, slender beauty with jet black hair, dark skin, and blue eyes. Kelly was a tall redhead with porcelain white skin and bright green eyes.

Four beautiful women. And four of the most frustrating students I'd ever taught. They spent every minute in class gossiping, flirting, and generally acting like school was a social club just for them.

I'd tried everything I could think of to motivate them, but nothing worked. I'd given them detention for chatting during class, I'd warned them that I'd have to fail them if they didn't start putting more effort in, but nothing I did seemed to make a difference.

"Everyone knows about the club," she said, giggling. "It's just a matter of time until more girls start showing up. Of course, we're very selective..."

For the second time, I turned and I sighed.

"Lacey," I said, my voice pained. "It's obvious that I can't force you to try

harder in class. But at the very least, I can ask: don't stop other girls from getting the most out of their education. Your parents paid a lot of money for you to be here..."

At that, a flicker of irritation crossed Lacey's face. I realized I'd hit a nerve, and continued.

"...how do you think they'll react when they find out you're failing?"

"That's why I'm here," she said, her lips thin. "I can't fail your class, or my Dad..."

She trailed off, but I didn't prompt her to continue. I'd been teaching at Rutherfords for five years; I knew the kind of pressure that these kids were under from their parents. For the first time, I felt sorry for the girl.

But that didn't change anything.

"Then you need to put the effort in," I said gently. "If you just studied, you'd..."

"I can't," Lacey said, and the confident girl that my wife hated so much was back in force. "It's against the rules of the Club."

I glanced at my watch. She was a full five minutes late to my wife's class. I had an empty period, but I'd been hoping to grab some lunch in the teacher's lounge.

"Lacey, you have to get to class and I have to go to the cafeteria. I don't know what you want from me, but there's only one way you're going to pass my class, and that's if you work hard and get good grades."

"Or..." she said, one hand moving to her

hip, the other caressing her throat as she looked at me with smoldering eyes, "...I could fuck your brains out."

My eyes almost boggled out of my head.

"What??"

"I'm just saying, maybe we could come to some kind of arrangement. Surely there are other ways to pass the class besides studying. Maybe I could earn my grade by doing things for you. With my body..."

I felt like my blood was boiling. My brain was screaming that this was wrong, that I needed to shut this conversation down, but I couldn't help myself.

"You're a student, Lacey," I said, trying to keep my tone even. "And I'm a student. What you're suggesting is illegal."

She nodded. "True."

"I could have you suspended just for suggesting something like this. Or expelled!"

"Do you think anyone would believe you?"

Lacey asked, toying with the zipper on her leather jacket. "Do you think Mrs. Mancuso would believe you?"

Her eyes lit up at my reaction, and I knew my face had just given away more than I intended. Lacey was right. Again.

If I tried to file a complaint about Lacey coming onto me, even if I could convince the principal and the school board that I hadn't been leading Lacey on, my wife would never believe it. When her best friend had come around to borrow a mixing bowl while I was alone at home, it felt like it had taken an hour to calm Sarah down and convince her that we weren't having an affair.

"Out," I said, my voice low and dangerous.  
"Now."

Lacey smiled; the same cocky, self-assured smile that seemed to come so naturally to her. But to my surprise, she didn't argue or fight back, she just left.

Only when she was gone did I realize I was shaking. I had to get away from this girl, before she destroyed my career. My marriage.

Before she destroyed my life.

That night, Sarah seemed even more wound-up than usual. It was no surprise to learn why: after her normal complaints about parking and traffic, she launched into an angry rant about Lacey.

"She's such a bitch," she said, sitting on the couch beside me. It was Thursday, so we'd ordered takeout; we normally ate it on the couch while watching whatever new show Sarah wanted to watch that week.

"Honey," I said, "you really shouldn't call your students..."

Sarah turned to look at me, and I fell silent. Any defense of another woman, no matter how benign, was always met with anger from my wife.

"What did she do now?" I sighed, and Sarah continued her rant.

After arriving late, Lacey had managed to derail my wife's class, and my wife was livid. I listened to Sarah's side of the story, nodding as she explained how Lacey had disrupted the class by flirting with two male students, and then bullying another girl in the class.

Private schools have less bullying than the public schools I'd spent the first

half-decade of my career teaching at, but that didn't mean it was non-existent. "And I just don't know why she doesn't stand up for herself!" Sarah exploded, and I nodded sympathetically. The target of Lacey's attack had been a girl named Mia, a petite Asian-American student whose only crime was being too smart for her own good. She was the student on her way to becoming a Supreme Court Justice...or, frankly, anything she wanted to be. Lacey wasn't abnormally tall, but she towered over Mia - and my wife, incidentally. Mia was flat-chested, short-haired, and wore glasses. She looked a lot like my wife, in fact - perhaps that was why Sarah was so sympathetic to the poor girl.

"She's going places in life," my wife moaned, stealing a piece of chicken out of my takeout container. Despite the fact that she'd been doing all the talking, she'd somehow managed to complete her entire meal, while I'd barely started mine.

"Lacey?" I asked, confused. Sarah glared at me. "Don't be ridiculous. That girl will be lucky if she ends up a waitress."

I bit back the urge to defend a student, and risked a nod.

"No," Sarah said, smirking as she finished off my fries. "Mia! If that cunt of a student doesn't completely destroy her confidence."

"Sarah!" I exclaimed, and I think this time even she realized she'd gone too far. "I'm sorry," she said, slumping back onto



the couch, crumbs all down her top. She'd left me nothing but a piece of chicken; fortunately, I had a protein shake in the kitchen, which I'd have after my wife fell asleep. "How was your day?"

I answered the question as honestly as I could, dodging the topic of Lacey's visit between classes...and how the conversation had stayed on my mind all day. I had to make sure not to spend any more time with her; the way she'd propositioned me showed how dangerous she really was.

Vanessa had been in my final class for the day, and I couldn't help but notice her contributing even less than normal. Was she really a member of some kind of ridiculous club? It sounded like exactly the kind of thing that a teenage girl would make up to get a reaction out of a teacher.

My eyes widened in realization. Of course! All these years teaching teenagers, and I'd still missed the obvious explanation. Of course Lacey didn't want to be a housewife; she was doing what many teenage girls did (especially ones who look like her) - pressing buttons, seeing what sort of attention she could get from an adult. From a man.

She was still not to be trusted, but I'd known that from the first day I met her. But the concept of a "No-Study Club" was ridiculous; it made so much less sense than her just trying to provoke me.

I shook my head, wondering if I should tell Sarah anything about what had been going on. It didn't take me long to decide against it; even if I convinced my wife

that I hadn't responded to Lacey's advances, she'd wonder why I hadn't told her sooner. And that's the thing about jealousy: "because I knew you'd be jealous" is an answer that just doesn't work.

We threw on the latest episode of one of the true-crime shows my wife considers her guilty pleasure, and by the time the show ended, she was asleep. I slipped into the kitchen, and after downing my shake, decided to work out my frustration in the garage. We have a little home gym made up, and though I'd already worked out that day, I knew that it would help relieve some of the tension building inside me. When I was done, I woke my wife up and took her to bed. I've mentioned that my wife has trouble sleeping, but she wasn't the only one tossing and turning uneasily that night.