UNI

Chapter 1: The Start of a Schoolyear (Nicky's version)
Nicky's POV

"Good morning, Nicky" my mom says while I walk into the kitchen. "Morning mom" I groan in response, stretching my arms before opening the fridge to get some yoghurt. "Are you ready for your first day of university?" she asks while sitting down at the table on the opposite side of the kitchen with her morning coffee in her hand, watching me prepare my breakfast. "What am I? 12? Of course I'm ready." I respond in an irritated sleepy voice while pouring cereal into my bowl. She smiles at me and I can feel her eyes looking me up and down. "It's a good outfit for your first day. It shows your artistic and alternative side very well." "Thnx." I respond while I sit down and gobble up my yoghurt. I look up to the clock and see I've already missed the bus I wanted to take. I sigh and look back at my mom "Will u maybe be able to take me to the train station? I- uhhh" "You missed your bus, didn't you?" She looks at me and giggles. "It's okay baby, I'll take you. You can eat the yoghurt on the go." "Thank you." I run upstairs to grab my bag, I put on my black boots with white laces and we go to the train station.

After I ate my yoghurt, I mostly zoned out all the way to school. Before I realized it, 30 minutes in the train had passed and I'm standing in the central station of the city. Everything looks so huge. I've only been to the city once before with my parents so I can't believe my eyes. So many people are walking and running around with bags and suitcases. I make my way through the crowd and walk out of the station. Once my eyes are used to the bright light I see buildings and towers like I've never seen before in my own village. While I'm looking around in awe I'm walking to the bus station. "Fuck, there are so many busses" I think to myself as I walk past the line of bus stops. It takes me a while before I find the bus to my university, all the way in the back, hidden behind the mass of people. They all look a bit younger than me, probably also going to the university I'm going to. We barely fit into the bus and I can hear the music of at least three different people play while I'm standing in the middle of a small crowd of people at the door. All holding the same pole. Luckily it isn't very warm today, so no sweaty hands.

A few minutes, which felt like hours, later my bus arrives at the university and I basically get pushed out by the people who want to get off. I look at my phone and I see I've got 10 minutes left before the introduction starts. I sit down on a wooden bench and I check my e-mail to see where I have to go, only to find out I haven't received a mail with information about the whereabouts at all. "Nonononononono… This can't be right!" I think to myself as I run to the administration desk in the first building of the university campus I see. "Hi, what can I do for you?" A kind lady asks on the other side of the desk. "H-hi, I uh-" I start fidgeting with my fingers and my leg starts shaking a bit because of the stress and anxiety. "I don't know where to go. Can you p-please help me?" I look at her. She has nice green eyes, matching with her freckles and dark hair. She looks about 30 years old. "Of course, what class are you in?" She asks with a bright smile. "I'm looking for Communication and Multimedia Design," I say while I adjust my fake glasses. She starts looking into her computer. "It's a creative kind of studies," I add. "Oh, the creative studies are in the other building," she says while pointing to the exit. Through the glass doors I can see a building that looks a bit less modern than the one I'm in right now. "Your class should be in there!" "Okay thanks!" I say as I wave her goodbye. I turn around and walk to the door. It's the opposite direction of which most people come from. Someone in fully black clothing walks in and for some reason he grabs my attention right away. Emo hairstyle, dyed red hair. His outfit consist of black techwear jeans and a hoodie with the hood up. He reminds me of my past self. He runs through the entrance and it seems like he doesn't even see me standing, because he bumps right into me. He looks back and I look at him. Forest green eyes staring

into mine. "S-sorry," he says as he scratches the back of his neck while looking me up and down very quickly. It's only a split second, but I noticed "I'm Noah, who are you?" He continues as he smiles softly "I-I'm Nicky." I reply as I walk towards him. "Cool name," he chuckles while he takes a step back, "I should really go to class, though. Cya around!" He makes a peace sign and smiles as he walks away. "Cute," I think to myself as I run out of the building and across the square into the other building. The first thing I see is another administration desk so I decide to walk up to it. "Hi," I start again, "uhmm, I'm coming here for Communication and Multimedia Design but I don't know where to go. Can you help me?" The man behind the desk sighs and looks up from his computer. "You're the third one today," He says while he shakes his head, "the person on the other side really doesn't know what they're doing... Anyways, your studies are in the other building, second and third floor of the D-wing. Just take the first flight of stairs you see and go left once you're at D." I look at him confused "So I have to walk all the way back there?" I ask slightly irritated. "Yeah, sorry kid," the desk man says emotionless, "I don't make the rules nor the plan. Good luck on the introduction though, you're already late!" I check my phone and I see I'm indeed already 5 minutes late. "Ah, I'm gonna run then. Thank you so much!" I bow to him and the man looks at me weird. "This isn't anime man, this is real life, now go."

I run up the stairs and it doesn't take me long before I find the D-wing, it starts right next to the stairs, so on the second floor I barge right into the first classroom with open door I see. I can feel the whole class staring, but I only look at the teachers. "Hey, what can we do for you?" The lady asks. "This class is already complete, so I think you're in the wrong classroom." I start fidgeting with my fingers again "I don't know what my class is, I didn't get an e-mail." I look at her hopefully "Luckily I have the lists of all classes here," she says while taking some papers out of her bag, "what's your name?" "Nicky," I say, "Nicky Fletcher" I still look at her hopefully, trying not to get anxious by all the eyes that are on me. "Oh yeah, I found you," she says as she takes out one of the papers, "you're in class C, right now you're in class B. You just need to walk a bit further, it's at the end of the hall." "Thank you so much!" I say excited as I grab my bag and run out of the classroom and through the hallway. When I get to the end of the hall, I see there's still a door open, leading to an already pretty full classroom. I knock on it and immediately the teachers stop their speech "Hi, I'm Nicky Fletcher. Sorry I'm late, I couldn't find the classroom." I say shyly while I wave to the teachers and the class nervously. A nice looking girl on one of the edges of the half circle waves back. One of the teachers looks at his paper "Ah, yeah, you're still on the list" he says while giving me a warm smile "welcome Nicky, we just got started. You can take a seat next to Feya." He points at the girl that just waved at me. I grab a chair and sit next to her. "Soooo, what did I miss?" I whisper to her. "Nothing much," she says, "we haven't even done introductions yet. But yeah, I'm Feya and you are Nicky?" I smile at her as she shakes my hand. "Yup, that's me! You look a bit older than the rest though." "Yeah, I used to do media design at another school before coming here." She says. "Oh really? Me too!" I reply pretty excited. "So how old are you?" "I'm 22", she says smilingly, "you?" "I'm 23," I say while giggling. "No wayyy, you look way younger!" She says loudly while bumping her shoulder into mine. "Yeah, I get that a lot." I reply while giggling.

The rest of the day at school is just introduction time with my new class. Something I've always hated, because I don't really like small talk. Luckily I've met Feya and she was pretty fun. On my way back home I review the day in my head while I look out the window of the train. All I see in my head are Feya and Noah. Mostly Noah. Even though our conversation was short, I can already remember his face. That cute smile, those green eyes which both held pain and hope. Before I know it I'm already home. I walk up to my room, sit down in my desk chair and take my phone out to check my notifications. 40 message and 5 missed phone calls. Mostly by my online boyfriend Hazel. He's been

doing that a lot lately. It started as being sweet but now it's starting to get more annoying to be honest. I open the messages, only to see my screen fill up with his spam throughout the day "bby, bby, bby, I miss u, how's school?, bby, bby, plz reply, *missed phone call*, sorry I dropped my phone." "Ugghhh" I sigh deeply as I scroll through all the messages. I think he sent me 100 messages in total today, if not more, and I even replied a few times. It would probably be more if I didn't reply. "School was pretty great. Wanna call tonight? I'll talk more about it then." I send to him in response. I close my phone again and lay down on my bed, staring at the white ceiling above me. The image of Noah pops into my head again and I smile immediately. "It would be nice to see him more," I think to myself. "Maybe I'll see him again tomorrow." I close my eyes and I drift off into my dream world of how tomorrow will be. Meeting Feya again. Maybe meeting Noah again. It would be awesome.

"Nicky! Dinner is ready!" I open my eyes and see my dad looking at me. "Oh hi dad, thnx! I'll be down in a sec." I say. My dad walks up to my bed and looks at me a bit irritated. "I already called you three times, come right now." He says as he walks away "Did u fall asleep? Was today that hard on you?" He's standing in the doorway, waiting for me to get up. "I guess I did." I respond as I make up the bed and walk downstairs with him. "Today was pretty great, though. Made a new friend and my class is pretty chill." "Really?" My dad says as we arrive downstairs. My mom already sitting at the table. "That's great to hear Nicky." "Yeah, not much to complain about, except for the start of the day." I giggle as I start to explain how it went. "Oh well, at least you got to your class and you had fun right?" My mom says as she puts some of the food on her plate. "Yup, it was pretty great." I say while smiling softly and waiting for my turn to get food on my plate. While eating I'm mostly just zoned out again. I used a lot of my social energy at school, so it's hard for me to keep following the conversation my parents are having and once my plate is empty, I immediately run upstairs. It's already 8pm at this point, which means it's 1.30am for Hazel. Our time difference is huge, but we're managing to talk a lot during the day. Or rather said, he talks a lot during my day… I open my discord and I can see he's already waiting for me to join him to call. "Sorry I'm late, babe." I say as I enter the call. "It's okay baby." Hazel says with his sweet voice. "So how was your day?" "It was alright," I reply, "the people were pretty chill." "I'm glad to hear that," he says. I can hear he's smiling on the other side of the call. "Anyone interesting in particular though?" he asks hesitantly. "Nope not really," I reply smiling, knowing very well if I do tell him about Noah, he'd get jealous immediately, "just nice people to have as friends." I can hear a sigh of relief. "I'm happy for you baby." He says in response. "So what do you wanna play tonight?" "Let's just play something chill. I'm pretty tired already." I say to him while I yawn. "Alrighty, VRchat it is!" He says while giggling. "Sure," I respond, "let's do that."

We game for a few hours until I decide to go to bed. I say goodnight to Hazel and I put myself on mute in call before I get off my computer and lay down in bed. I look up at the ceiling again and drift off into my own imagination of tomorrow, slowly falling asleep.

Chapter 2: The Start of a Schoolyear (Noah's version)
Noah's POV

It's 8am and my alarm just woke me up. I'm getting up slowly just to put my alarm on snooze and lay back down, facing the wall. Summer break is over and I have to get back to school again. I'm not really up for it. I've failed to pass freshman year last year, so I'm back in first class. Luckily I was able to keep all of my study points, but a lot has happened before and over the summer break, which has made me very stressed out and insecure about myself. I close my eyes and try to shake the thoughts out of my head, not realizing I'm drifting off back to sleep again. An hour later I wake up again to a very angry beeping alarm, since it's been beeping for fifty minutes already. I look at the time. 9am. "Shit," I think to myself as I slide down the ladder of my loft bed and walk to the little kitchen counter on the other side of the apartment to prepare my breakfast and morning coffee. I sit down and start eating the yoghurt I just put into a bowl. "I'm glad mom and dad brought me back here last week," I think to myself as I look around my apartment, "it's way cleaner now. Let's try to keep it that way this year." I smile and after a while I look at the clock. 9.30am. I still wanted to shower before going to school. "I'll try to take a quick shower before getting to school." I think to myself as I put my dirty dishes in the sink. I grab a change of clothes and walk off to the bathroom.

When I get back it's already 9.50am and it's at least a 10 minute cycle ride to school. "Oh fuck, I gotta hurry." I whisper to myself as I grab my bag and run outside to get my bike. I race to school and put my bike into the bicycle storage. I look at my watch and see I still got two minutes left. I put on my hood and run into the building, hurrying because I'm already late. I'm totally not focused on where I'm going. Half zoned out I quickly walk to the stairs that get me to the D-wing until I bump into someone. I turn around and look them in the eyes. "S-sorry," I say as I scratch the back of my neck. I feel my anxiety rise immediately, since the guy I bumped into is pretty cute. I can feel myself crushing already. I try to check him out quickly, hopefully he doesn't notice it. A nice oversized hoodie, half black, half purple. Cool black techwear jeans with white straps and high black boots with white laces, similar to ones I own as well. "I-I-I'm Noah, who are you?" I try to ask, but in my head it sounds more like stuttering than speaking. "I'm Nicky." He says as he look at me and takes a step towards me. "He sounds so confident in the way he's speaking." I think to myself "Hehe, cool name." I say as I chuckle nervously and hold tighter onto the straps of my backpack. Him walking towards me surprises me a bit and subconsciously makes me take a step back in reaction. "I-I should really go to class, though. Cya around!" I say to break the tension. I make a peace sign and turn around, running off to the stairs.

"Gosh, that was so embarrassing," I think to myself as I walk up the stairs. "And 'cya around'?? I'm not even sure if he's going to the same studies as I am. I'm so stupid, I should've asked his number. Dumb idiot you are." I keep having these kind of thoughts as I walk up the stairs and get into my classroom. I sit down in the first chair I see and I'm just in time, because the teachers are arriving shortly after me. I don't even notice it though, because I'm still replaying the first encounter with that cute guy from earlier in my head. "Noah, hello?? Earth to Noah!" I hear the guy next to me say as he waves his hand in front of my face. I snap out of my thoughts and look at him. "Ahh, I'm sorry Eren." I say as I look at him. I'm glad that at least one of my true friends of last year didn't make it as well. And we were lucky enough to be placed in the same class again. The teachers introduce themselves and they explain a game to us to get to know each other better as well. I sit around a table together with Eren and a girl who I don't know yet in the back of the classroom. Just as everyone wants to start a new person walks in. I turn around and I see it's the same guy again. Not surprised he's going to the same artsy studies as me since he already looked pretty eccentric, but why is he in our classroom? The class is already complete, the teachers said so themselves. I try to focus on the conversation they're having

but I'm too distracted by his cute face. He looks nervous and pretty stressed. He's fidgeting with his fingers. "Hehe, cute." I think to myself as I'm already imagining holding them someday. I zone off into my own dreamworld until Eren pokes my waist. "Oi, gayboy, he's already gone." I turn around and look at him. "Oh sorry. But wasn't he cute??" I say a bit too excited. "He iss!" The girl says just as excitedly. I look at her and smile softly. "Oh, I'm Mari btw. Who are you?" She says as she smiles back and holds out her hand "I'm Noah, nice to meet you." I say as I shake her hand back. "Sorry for me simping over the new guy. I bumped into him earlier before running to class. I told Eren all about it already, he's probably already tired of hearing it." "Yes I ammmm." He says teasingly as he rolls his eyes. "It's very okay. I'd do that too if I wouldn't have a boyfriend." Mari says while giggling. "But slay you!". I sigh softly out of relief and we decide to do the game the teachers have just explained to us.

We keep on talking the whole day and the teachers tell us we'll get a real assignment tomorrow. I'm very excited to find out what it is. Today wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. After doing some grocery shopping I arrive back home again. Even though I've already been living on my own for a year, it still feels weird to come home in an empty house. No one to tell your stories to, just loneliness. I sit down on the ground in front of one of my mirrors and I look at myself. It doesn't take long before my thoughts are coming out of my mouth as well. "Today was exhausting." I say to myself. "It was great talking to Eren again, though. And Mari seemed like a lot of fun as well. And Nicky... well." I see myself smiling in the mirror once I mention his name. "Stop smiling, you idiot! He's probably straight and already has a girlfriend or something!" I look at myself again as I slap both my cheeks. My eyes wonder off to the rest of my room. Under my loft bed I created a cute chill area and my guitar is standing there in the corner. It's supposed to be black but it looks more grey because of all the dust it has been collecting. I look on the other side and see my gaming setup with my self-made PC I created with a friend of my parents. I used to enjoy gaming so much, now it's just to not feel lonely anymore. "Maybe I could try to start streaming again?" I think to myself as I look at my setup. "I could put a link in my class's WhatsApp group. In that way they can get to know me more. And maybe it'll reach Nicky someday! That's what I'll do tonight." I smile to myself in the mirror as I look next to the mirror. My kitchen counter is still filled with the dirty dishes from this morning and the groceries I just bought. "It's time to unpack the groceries and make myself some dinner." I say to myself as I get up and open my backpack.

Just when I sit down with my dinner, I get an incoming video call. My parents. They always want to know how I'm doing and what I'm up to. I thought I would get rid of all of that once I started living on my own, but not a lot has changed to be honest. They always call me at least once a week during dinner time so we can still eat together. "Well, here goes nothing," I say to myself. I try to put on my most genuine smile and press 'accept'. "Hey mom, hey dad." I say as I wave to them with my fork in my hand. "Heyyyy, how are you doing?" They say as they get their plates from the table where their phone is on. "I'm doing alright. My first day back at university was pretty chill. I'm in the same class as Eren, so that helped a lot with my social anxiety." I smile at them as they roll their eyes at the last two words. Yeah, that didn't change either. "How have you been today, though?" I say as I shove some of my food into my mouth. They tell me how their day as a teacher in elementary school was, but I'm already pretty zoned out. I can barely follow what they're saying. At least I can hear them laugh or when they ask something, so it doesn't sound like I'm not there mentally anymore. I try to finish my food as fast as I can and I wait for a gap in their conversation which is more focused on themselves than me at this point. "I- I think I'm gonna go, though." I say hesitantly "I still need to prepare some stuff for school tomorrow." I lie as I look straight into the camera. "Ah, that's okay sweetie. We'll talk soon again, okay?" My mom says as she turns her head from my dad towards the camera. "Yeah, cya soon. Byeee." I say as I give them a fake smile and wave while my other hand is already close to the

disconnect button. I tap the screen and just like that my parents are gone. Left again with silence, the feeling of loneliness and an empty plate. I drop the dishes in the sink again as I sigh softly and walk towards my desk. I look up at the clock and I see that it's almost 8pm. "Good, almost time for my first stream in agesss," I say to myself as I boot up my PC and turn on the streaming software. I've created a channel last year and I started streaming at the end of the schoolyear, but during the summer break my whole schedule faded away. I told some of my friends I'm streaming again, so they're there at least. I also sent a link to my stream in my class's WhatsApp Group, maybe they'll join while I'm streaming. "Hello everyone and welcome to the stream!" I say excitedly as the waiting screen fades away and then the stream can begin.

Two hours later I end the stream by saying goodbye to the five new people who joined and my friends who were already there while I was streaming. "U did great, have a good night!" one of the new people wrote down in chat, which made me very happy. I stare up to the clock and see it's just past 10. "Nice!" I say to myself as I walk to the other side of the room where I can sit down in front of my big mirror again. It has become kind of a reflection space of mine. I look in the mirror to myself, while my gaze slowly drifts off to the side. The sink in my kitchen is filled with dirty dishes throughout the day and the counter is still pretty messy from cooking as well. "I'll do that tomorrow," I think to myself as I walk to my fridge to get me a nice alcoholic beverage. I take a sip and walk back to my computer to join a call with some friends again. Not that I even want to be around them right now, but it's better than feeling lonely.

After hours of calling, it's time for the others to go to bed, while I don't even feel slightly tired yet. I look up to my clock again and see that it's a few minutes past 1am. Luckily I don't only have friends in The Netherlands, so I text some of my American friends to ask them if they're still up for a game. Most of them are and with the whole group we game through the night. At 5am I decide to go to bed and because I have to go to school again tomorrow, I put my alarm at 8 o'clock. I look up at the ceiling and close my eyes.

When I open my eyes again, my alarm is very angrily beeping at me again. 8.02am it states. It felt like I only blinked, but apparently 3 hours have passed. I turn off my alarm and stumble down the stairs of my loft bed, only to almost pass out once I reach the ground. Negative voices start to fill my head about how I'm not even able to take care of myself and because I barely slept I don't have the strength today to fight them. I make myself some coffee and plop down on my desk chair. I stare blankly to my computer screen, which is still off, while more negative thoughts get into my head. "You're not good enough. Nobody loves you. The world would be better off without you. You probably deserved to be cheated on by that guy you dated this summer because you weren't good enough. It wasn't even one, it was six he went behind your back with. And that happened for the fourth time? You're so pathetic. You're such a loser. Why do you even want to continue life? You have nothing to live for" The voices keep getting louder and louder. They exhaust my body and I try to scream, but not a single sound comes out of my mouth. "I can't go to school like this…" I think to myself as I climb back into bed. "I'll just tell Eren I'm sick…". I text Eren and I lay back down. I fall asleep right away and when I wake up, it's 2pm again. "Fuck, it's late already!" I think to myself as I get up. "At least I feel better and more rested now. But tonight I probably won't be able to sleep again…" And I was right. This continues to keep going for weeks until I feel strong enough to talk with people about what's going on and I felt confident enough again to show my face back in school. The teachers, Eren and Mari were so happy to see me again. I guess the voices were wrong… If only I could believe that.

Chapter 3:
Nicky's POV

"The second day of school. We got this, it's going to be great!" I think to myself as I sit in the bus on my way to school. I was early enough to be able to sit this time. I can hear the music from the guy next to me through his headphones. I look outside and see the raindrops race each other on the window. "Next stop: NHL Stenden University" the voiceover says. I snap out of my thoughts and stand up. Just as almost everyone else. I check out and look at my phone. 9.50am and five messages from Hazel. I'm pretty early today. I make sure to let Hazel know I'm at school and I walk through the doors of the university. I look around, but sadly I don't see any familiar faces. No Noah, no Feya, no other classmates, just unknown faces. I run to the stairs and go to my classroom.

During the day I walk around the building multiple times, but I can't seem to find Noah anywhere. It's like he disappeared… If only I would've known more about him, could've asked more, could've followed him… Maybe I would've known where he is now then. "Maybe I just have to try again tomorrow." I think out loud. "Try what again tomorrow?" Feya asks me with a curious look on her face. "N-nothing." I say as I look away from her "That's totally not nothiiinnnggg" she says teasingly as she pokes my hip "Ah!" I flinch and look at her again. "Really! Nothing!" I try to say with a serious face. "Okay okayyy." She says while giggling. "I'll believe you." She rolls her eyes and turns back to her laptop. We've been getting an assignment that we have to finish tomorrow. Already on the second day. They told us it was to "activate and discover our creative spirit" or something like that, so for today we have to design our own logo, to show our personality to the class on Thursday. Luckily I already know something about design because of my studies I did before this one, but some classmates don't, so I try to help them out. Ruth seemed to be pretty cool. Her sketches for a logo really looked amazing! I should probably chat more with her.