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QWIK CUTTER 2: AUGMENTED REALITY





CHAPTER 1

STILL LATE

So,” Shawn Miller said. He took a deep breath. “Want to go to the dance next weekend?”

Amanda Nguyen stared at him. Her black glasses slid down her nose. They were too big for her face. She was constantly adjusting them. Without them, Amanda could barely see.

Shawn froze. For a moment, time stood still. He had been nervous about asking Amanda to the dance. His biggest fear was ruining their

friendship. It was still pretty new. They used to not get along at all.

Everything changed last year in seventh grade. Shawn had had a huge problem. Amanda helped him solve it. Actually, she'd done more than that. She'd saved his life.

A big project had been due in their Advanced Video Production class. Shawn waited until the night before to start it. This wasn't unusual. Always being late was sort of his thing. Mr. Murphy, the AVP teacher, normally didn't care. Sometimes, though, he got annoyed.

Shawn had had an idea. He found an app called Qwik Cutter. It would edit his video clips for him. The program would even add in cool effects. His project would be done in no time.

There was just one problem. The version he downloaded had been hacked.

The program had gone wild. It edited Shawn out of his own life. His parents and teachers didn't know him. Neither did his best friend, John Gomez.

Only one person had recognized him. That was Amanda. She had been the last person Shawn wanted help from. Back then, they didn't like each other. They always argued. Shawn thought Amanda followed the rules too much. Amanda hated that Shawn barely ever got in trouble for being late.

Still, she had helped him get his life back. Shawn was totally grateful. After that, he worked harder not to be late.

Amanda and Shawn became friends. Now, they talked all the time. Sometimes they hung out after school. Shawn had developed a small crush on Amanda. But she didn't know. It made asking her to the dance awkward.

"Oh." Amanda pushed up her glasses. "You want to go with *me*?"

"Sure," Shawn said. "Why not?" He didn't want to seem too anxious.

"Um, well . . . Troy Higgins already asked me. I told him yes."

Troy Higgins? Shawn couldn't believe it. Troy

was a snob. His family was really rich. They lived in the fancy part of town. He wore polo shirts and khaki pants. In the summer, he spent most days on a sailboat.

Is that what Amanda likes? Shawn wondered.

Shawn wore jeans and T-shirts. He was really into video games. More than anything, he enjoyed making movies. There was always a camera in his hand. Everything he saw got recorded. Troy was his total opposite.

“Okay.” Shawn tried not to sound upset.

This was the last dance of eighth grade. Next year they’d be freshmen at Cube High School. There would be a lot more students there. He and Amanda might drift apart.

“You shouldn’t have waited so long,” Amanda said. “I’m always telling you that.”

“Yeah,” Shawn agreed. But he felt confused. The dance was almost two weeks away. For Shawn, that wasn’t last minute.

Amanda talked to him all the time at school.

They texted too. Sometimes they even did video chats.

Going to the dance with Amanda made sense to Shawn. He felt like they were becoming more than friends. That was what he wanted, at least.

The bell rang.

“Sorry, Shawn.” Amanda shrugged. “I have to get to class. See you later.” She walked away. Her best friend, Bernadette Armenta, joined her.

Shawn watched Amanda go. He wondered if she would tell Bernadette what happened.



CHAPTER 2

QWIK CUTTER CAM

Hey!” John waved from across the hall.

Shawn headed over to his friend. “Hi. Let’s walk and talk. I don’t want to be late.”

“Okay. But check this out.” John held out his phone.

“No way,” Shawn said. “That’s the new Qwik Cutter Cam!” He instantly forgot about his girl problems.

John was Shawn’s best friend. They had known each other since second grade. Both boys

loved making movies. Someday, they'd start a production company together. That was their dream.

“Isn't it cool?” John asked.

The Qwik Cutter Cam was awesome. It was made by a company called Rad Virtual. They made the Qwik Cutter app too.

“It says you can shoot *and* edit all in the camera.” Shawn was in awe.

“There's more,” John said. “It has AR too.”

“AR!” Shawn's eyes grew wide.

AR was augmented reality. This would let them add things to their movies. These things weren't happening in real life. But on screen, it would look like they were.

“It comes with a bunch of special effects,” John continued. “You can download more too. There are tons of shooting options. Way more than on your phone. Plus, it has Wi-Fi. We can upload directly to KidVid!”

KidVid was a popular website. It was for

young people. They could post videos to it. Then their friends could watch them.

“Wow.” Shawn looked at John. “You can even livestream! It’s almost too good to be true.”

“Yeah,” John said. “This camera does it all. It’s like having a studio in your hand. Now we can make our scary movie. The AR will make it look so real.”

Shawn and John planned to film a horror movie. It wouldn’t be for kids though. They wanted to make it really gory. The boys had many ideas. After writing a script, they would cast actors. Then they would shoot and edit the footage. That was the plan, at least. So far, they hadn’t done anything.

“We can totally make it now!” Shawn gave John a high five.

Shawn let his mind wander. He pictured someone being chased by a killer. The killer could be an AR element. It would be easy. With the Qwik Cutter Cam, they could do anything.

Next, Shawn imagined standing beside John

on a stage. They were winning a film award. The crowd cheered.

“There’s just one problem,” John said. He tapped his phone screen.

Shawn snapped back to reality. “What’s that?”

“The price.” John flipped his phone around.

“Five hundred dollars!” Shawn’s jaw dropped. “Who has that kind of money?”

Troy Higgins popped into his head.

Shawn sighed. He’d nearly forgotten about Amanda and the dance.

First, he lost the girl. Now, he was being priced out of being a filmmaker too.

Would he ever catch a break?

Later that night, Shawn sat on his bed with his iPad. His science homework was nearly done. The questions were hard. He didn’t fully understand states of matter.

Finally, he clicked submit. Then he put his iPad in his backpack.

Shawn flopped back on his bed. He always turned things in on time now. He was hardly ever late to school either. It felt good. All of his teachers were amazed.

Principal Bennett had stopped him in the hall recently. “You’ve really turned yourself around,” he said. Shawn beamed.

If only he’d been quicker asking Amanda to the dance. Shawn was still sad about that. He couldn’t stop thinking about it.

Shawn got on his computer. Then he logged into KidVid. Maybe some of his friends had posted new videos. That might take his mind off things.

Suddenly, Shawn’s phone buzzed. It was a text from Amanda.

“Hi. What are you doing?” she asked.

Shawn didn’t respond. He pushed his phone aside.

She can just text Troy, he thought. They can talk about the dance. What they’ll wear. Their favorite songs. Blah, blah, blah.

Shawn scowled. Then he grew nervous. He was pushing Amanda away. What if she stayed away? Their friendship could end forever.

As hurt as Shawn was, he didn't want that. Amanda was a good friend.

He started to text her back. But something on the computer screen caught his eye.

It was an ad for the Qwik Cutter Cam. Shawn clicked it. He couldn't help himself.

A site called Cheap Guys came up. They sold new and used electronics.

The Qwik Cutter Cam was featured on the home page. It was only \$50.

No way! That has to be wrong. Shawn rubbed his eyes. Other stores sold it for \$500.

He reached into his desk drawer. In the back was a \$100 gift card. It could be used anywhere, even online. His grandma had given it to him for his birthday. So far, Shawn had only spent \$25 of it. That left \$75 on the card.

I can buy the Qwik Cutter Cam!

Without a second thought, Shawn clicked “Buy Now.” He typed in his address. Below, he added the gift card number. It was only \$15 for overnight shipping. *Score!* His mouse hovered over the “Complete Purchase” button. Shawn closed his eyes and clicked.

The Qwik Cutter Cam was his. Tomorrow he’d be filming and editing with ease. He’d have AR and every special effect he could dream of.

Shawn erased his message to Amanda. He had to text John the big news right away.