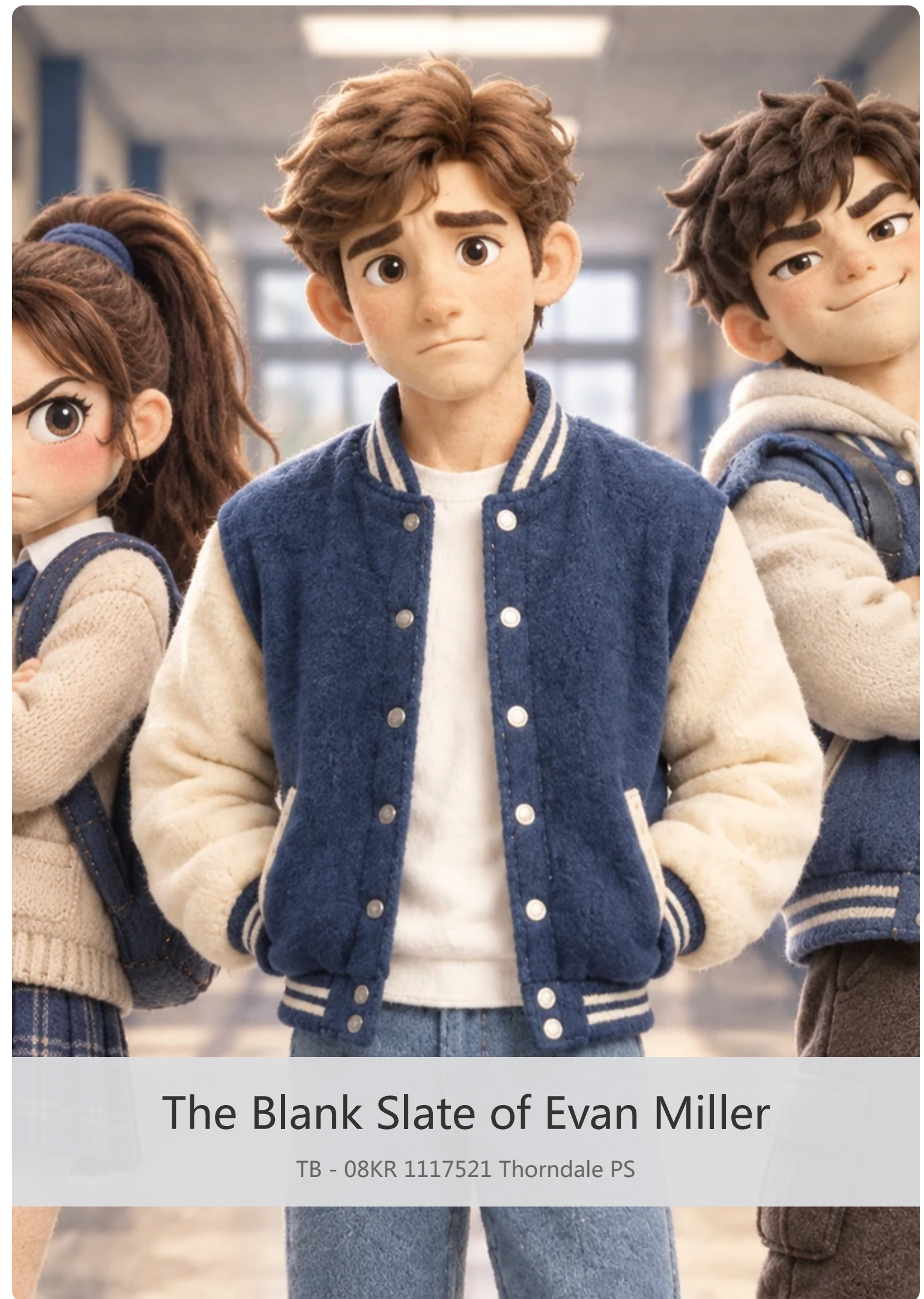




## The Blank Slate of Evan Miller

TB - 08KR 1117521 Thorndale PS



Evan sits by his bedroom window, staring blankly at a row of shiny trophies and his high school letterman jacket. The face reflecting back in the glass feels like a complete stranger's after the summer fall that erased all his memories. Outside, morning sunlight filters through yellow leaves, signaling the terrifying start of his first day back.



Stepping through the heavy double doors of Oakridge High, Evan is greeted by loud cheers from a group of rowdy athletes who slap his back. Yet, as he walks down the crowded hallway, smaller students flinch and step back into their lockers when he passes. A strange knot tightens in his chest as he senses their quiet terror.



In art class, Evan finds a ruined masterpiece hidden behind the storage cabinet, its canvas slashed with harsh black ink strokes. A tiny signed note reveals he was the one who vandalized it just weeks before his accident. Horror washes over him as he realizes the kind of person he used to be.



Evan tries to approach Maya, a quiet girl sitting alone by the windows, to return a sketchbook he found bearing her name. She pulls away instantly, her shoulders tense and eyes wide with defensive anger. Evan holds out his hands apologetically, but words fail to bridge the deep chasm of past cruelty.



Determined to make amends, Evan steps into the cozy, cluttered room of the school's broadcast club, a group he once tormented. The students freeze in surprise as Evan offers to carry heavy camera equipment and edit footage for their upcoming town showcase. Though skeptical, the club leader gives him a cautious chance.



During lunch, Evan's former best friend confronts him near the cafeteria bleachers, laughing off Evan's newfound mild temper as a bad joke. He pressures Evan to join in teasing a younger student, expecting the old ringleader to return. Evan stands tall, shakes his head firmly, and walks away, severing ties with his past circle.



Tension mounts in the hallway when Evan openly defends a nervous freshman whose backpack was kicked across the polished floor. The surrounding crowd murmurs in shock as Evan stoops down, gathers the scattered notebooks, and returns them with a warm, encouraging smile. For the first time, the hallway feels a little lighter.



Late into the afternoon, Evan works alongside his new broadcast teammates under the warm yellow desk lamps of the media lab. Laughter echoes off the soundproof walls as they edit their documentary together, and Evan feels a genuine sense of belonging he never knew he missed.



At the Friday assembly, the school auditorium darkens as the broadcast video plays across the main screen, showcasing the quiet talents of forgotten students. Evan steps onto the stage, speaking humbly into the microphone about taking responsibility for one's past while striving to build a kinder future. The crowd erupts into heartfelt applause.



Walking out into the crisp afternoon air, Evan pauses under the fiery orange autumn tree near the school gates. Maya walks past, pauses briefly, and offers him a quiet, genuine nod of forgiveness. Evan takes a deep breath, stepping into the sunlit afternoon ready to write a brand new story.