

Dumb, Dumb Reading Stroller White

As I proceeded through elementary school I remember enjoying it less and less each year. In second grade I was placed into the dumb dumb reading group. A phobia of reading out loud started to form at this point. By fourth grade I would go to a remedial reading class. A pullout I remember as super dumb dumb reading. I remember running down the long hallways at school yelling and screaming then sliding on our bellies into a stack of chairs at the end of the hall. We went to super dumb dumb reading but we never went quietly.

This reading problem was starting to get me down. A feeling of frustration was developing; a frustration that was starting to become part of my everyday existence. The last few months of that year I spent every recess sitting under a little bush with my back against the wall watching the other kids play.

Fifth grade I had a great teacher. The bush was no longer an option. I started to get in a lot of fights. By the third month of school I was the meanest, most frustrated motherfucker in the school. I was fighting everyone. I made a daily trip to the principal's office. I fought girls, friends, it did not matter. I could, in no way, control the rage that was engulfing me. I was scared to death of myself. I tried to control my anger. I remember going to the edge of our playground away from anyone else and repeatedly yelling, at the top of my lungs, "FUCK." I would yell so loud that the sound FUCK became my world. FUCK was in me, coming out of me, and with eyes shut tight fuck engulfed my entire world outside. I remember yelling louder and louder, fuck becoming more my world and reality slipping away. Like a cross between a hallucination and a dream, my reality would shift. I would envision the earth pulling away from me. The earth got smaller as I yelled louder, eventually I could roll the world around in the palm of my outstretched hand. Frustration and rage were all around me. No matter how hard I tried I never made the world disappear entirely. I would have, if I could have, destroyed all of humanity in an attempt to ease my frustration and pain. Worst thing was I didn't know where it was coming from and it was obvious that no one else in the entire school felt the way I did. I felt like this everyday.

Toward the end of fifth grade we were required to take a test to see how as a school, we were performing. As I stared at the page, all of the rage that I usually released in the playground comes shooting up through my spine. It nearly rips my head off and the next thing I know I'm standing up. My test booklet is torn and crumpled. "FUCK THIS TEST!" Throwing the booklet in the trash, I head outside. I feel dangerously volatile. I don't want to kill anyone when my body explodes with the force of an A-Bomb. Once

outside I start to feel better. I'd been in trouble enough times to know I would eventually wind up in the principals office so I made my way to his office.

The following summer I took tests to figure out what was wrong with me. My mother and I would drive for hours to different doctors at labs and hospitals. I would get hooked up to machines that had needles that rocked, special do-hickies that tested my eyes, hearing, and equilibrium. It was all tested, my reflexes, reaction time, and IQ. I drew pictures of people in my life, plants and animals and again the circles.

I got into the special school with flying colors. I got into a fight every day with a kid named Trevor. Me kicking the shit out of Trevor every day was the least of this school's problem. Every kid there was the craziest motherfucker in his or her real school back home. This place was the illest of the ill. I'm eleven at this point.

I absolutely hated this school. I had some friends and tried to make the best of it. The main problem was the atmosphere. It was as if the school was electrified. At any given time the entire school would erupt into an every man for himself eraser fight, or a giant all school dog pile onto one unfortunate kid. We had dumpster fires, we took the hinge pins out of doors, so the entire door would fall down when the teacher would open it, we would jump or dangle out the window when the teacher turned her back. The school was an oppressively tense place for both teachers and students.

I was putting in my time, learning to read, waiting for the day I could join my friends in regular school. I told only my closest friends where I was going to school and what it was like. I avoided doing sports of any other activity were I was likely to see an old school mate. Whenever I saw someone from my public school days it was always the same thing "Where have you been? I thought you moved? Where are you going to school?" That subject always came up and I was ashamed.

I never did enter the public school system again. My parents told me they were scared I'd fall behind. They liked the individual attention offered by private schools. Plus they had learned not to trust the public school system. You see if a child is diagnosed with a learning disability that the school can't handle, like the one I had, then the public school system must pay to send that child to a special school. All the frustration, agony, hell and alienation I was put through was to help a school system stay within budget. The school system would never acknowledge that I had a problem beyond their capabilities. This is ridiculous given the fact I couldn't read in 5th grade.

I will always be indebted to my parents for staying by my side, never giving up hope, and laying down some cold hard cash to set me straight. I can only hope I will be as persistently warm and giving if this kind of thing should ever happens to any of my children.