

Mrs. Smith's black hair, in a bob, was parted on the right side. Her dark brown eyes stared into mine. "You're a bit old to be writing your ABCs," she said. She had the blue notebook I accidentally left in class yesterday.

I said, "I'm trying to improve my handwriting."

Mrs. Smith shushed a student who called me a retard. It was Amerie Harper, one of the most popular girls in school.

Mrs. Smith said, "try to be careful with your belongings next time." I returned to my seat with the notebook.

As a result of the notebook incident, Mrs. Smith made the class write in cursive. The class complained, because not only was cursive originally assigned for me and the special ed students, but hardly anyone wrote in cursive since learning it in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

My notebook was a 3-subject notebook I carried along with my school supplies. It contained facts and trivial information. For example, Geometry notes that I learned after tests or quizzes. Based on standardized tests, math wasn't my best subject. Additionally, I wrote about clothing brands and hairstyles to avoid, unless I wanted to incur Amerie's wrath. Anytime I "stole" her outfit, she sneered at me and called me a jocker – a thief.

I don't consider myself a smart person. Everyone calls me retarded. I take too long to speak, although I try my best to speak faster. I'm not considered someone with common sense. For instance, I wanted to play the drums once, because I saw someone online play them in a way that inspired me. Mrs. Smith said playing drums required common sense, which Corrine Bailey said she wasn't sure that I had any.

I remember looking through my notebook to see if Mrs. Smith wrote in the notebook. Thankfully, she didn't. My notebook was the most important thing I had. It reminded me of songs that meant something to the artist and anime that came out the year I was born. It reminded me of Jonathan Wilson's height and the day he came to school with pierced ears. It reminded me of the drum incident, and the day I was picked on by Amerie, Corrine, and other girls. I had to make up a test I missed due to being on a field trip, but I don't remember what was said to me that made the girls laugh. I only remember asking to go to another classroom to make up a test then cried in that other classroom. All this was nearly eight years ago.

Recently, I dreamed that Mrs. Smith, at least in my dreaming mind, wrote in my notebook. "Emily is a gay bitch" was scrawled on the bottom left corner under the page titled "Social Studies—American History." In the dream, I found other insults repeated on subsequent pages. My left arm began to unravel like a bandage. Mrs. Smith appeared, her arms crossed, and shook her head disapprovingly. She suddenly had the notebook and wrote in it. My left arm was on the floor, torn to pieces.

I ran, but I had nowhere to go. I wore a pair of flats, which Amerie described as "shiny." It was cold from where I was to where I tried to go – from school to where I thought was my house. I went to a church where Mrs. Smith taught Sunday school. I went straight to the back and hid in the vents, with my unraveled arm still functional. When I could hide no longer, I entered a room with doors. A couple of women led me to one of the doors. A pink room was present with a bunch of doll-like women with

long hair and pink leotards. I disguised myself as one of the doll-like women. I attempted to get a driver's license. In retrospect, I think my dream self was tired of running away.

I think my hatred for Mrs. Smith, and the classmates who disliked me, controlled me. My desire to be like other girls was never fulfilled. My desire was most likely a guise to be a part of society. "I'm not like other girls" is a cliché statement, as well as a red flag. However, when I tried to emulate other girls, I was still different from them. At the same time, I felt I betrayed part of myself.

Again, being a "jocker" was so long ago. Now, I'm not in competition with other girls, if I ever was. I can embrace the part of myself that wants pretty clothes, hair, and makeup. Maybe the hatred I have will go away. I also should go easy on the caffeine.