

The smell of play doh dances between the silver legged navy-blue chairs. The ones that shocked when sitting the wrong way. Red and blue bits and pieces of clay are found crammed in the corners of the box classroom. It's cold. Warmer inside, but cold out. There are no hallways, and my class sits all by itself. Only parents know how to reach my teacher's door. I can hear faintly, the sounds of Barney playing on the tiny box hoisted above my head. His laughter is mixed with the sounds of children running around on the colorful carpeted floor. It feels like magic, thrill and danger. I sit at my desk with sleepy eyes and warm skin, coloring with the crayons on my table. My fingers are cold, and I can barely feel the crayon held between my left pointer and middle fingers. I am shy and I don't speak much. It's because I don't like the cold. Therefore, I don't like the morning. I know the kids in my classroom, and I know my teachers. I know what kind of breakfast waits for me each morning and I know when nap time is. Still, this place seems scary and foreign. It feels unsafe. All the scents in the muggy room collide and it is too much for my brain. It makes my stomach hurt. I like how I color. My classmate sitting across from me doesn't look up from his coloring page either. We draw in silence and keep each other company. I am coloring a deer. I want him to be purple. With a pink nose. In rolls breakfast. A buffet style cart with oatmeal, grits, toast, fruit, and juice. One by one the teacher calls each student up to the cart. Vally? I find myself receiving a Styrofoam plate with oatmeal, fruit, toast and juice on it. I return to my chair, doing my best not to spill anything--kids stare. The oatmeal has a very strong smell. Like the green play doh in my cubby. It smells like cinnamon, milk and vanilla. I eat it fast, and it warms my tummy. I eat it too fast because now, my tummy hurts again. I don't like the oatmeal. It smells good, and it makes my tummy hurt. The grits are white with a big blob of something yellow and gooey. Butter. It melts throughout the yellow grain, causing it to transform into a yellowish white color. It smells good too. Breakfast is over and my stomach still feels knotted. Will the knots ever go away? I wish they would. But they don't. Not when we watch Reading Rainbow, and not when we take naps in the dark. I don't have my own comfy mat. Not the some of the other classmates. I don't have my own comfy blanket. Not like the other classmates. The teacher grabs me a spare mat from the cubby closet and a thin blanket that smells like vomit and milk. It is moon light white with baby blue strips running along the top. It is a cold blanket. I squirm and whine on my mat because the lullaby music is hurting my ears and I don't want to lay by the trash can on the cold tile floor. Why couldn't she put me on the warm carpet with some of my other classmates. I pretend to sleep. I am bored and I play with the string on the vomit scented cold, stiff blanket. One of the teachers kneel beside me and puts her hands under my t shirt. She pats my back hard. Her hands are cold and rough. She doesn't like that I am still awake. Nap time is over and my stomach flutters with butterflies still. I blame the oatmeal. And the knots continue. Even during snack time. I don't want to give my gram crackers to Sam, so I eat them even though I am full. My stomach still hurts, even on the playground as I slide down the yellow slide and swing on the swings when it's my turn. "Let's make a circle". My teacher gathers us on the carpeted floor when it's time to come back inside. With puffy red cheeks and sweaty hair, it's time to Criss cross apple sauce. "We are going to go on an adventure", she tells us as she turns off the lights..."into the forest!" Some kids groan and wince in fear. "Now. I want you to clap your hands together like this and slap the ground like this" We all obey and slap our hands together and then on the ground. Then, she presses a button on the radio machine, and chorus of kids singing a slow tune, rings out into the room from the radio. "We're going on a trip it's going to be nice and scary..." the songs sings. The teacher motions for us to follow along with claps and slaps on the ground, just as she taught us. As the song ensues and we all listen intently to the lyrics, there is laughter and squeals of joy. We swim through lakes of peanut butter, and we travel up mountain tops...we plough through jam and run through mazes of whipped cream. As the song gets faster, our claps get louder. I am no longer on the floor in my classroom.

I am in the jungle, swimming through peanut butter and running through the jelly jam wilderness. I am swinging on vines and landing in piles of whipped cream. I am climbing mountains while hearing faint sounds of bears howling in the distance. I am on an adventure. I slap my hands and stomp the ground with glee and exhilaration. The sounds of hoots and hollers coming from the kids beside me transform into sounds of monkey's, tigers and lizards on my journey deeper into the wild. I am on an adventure. I am filled with joy and warmth. I am bold and daring. I am safe and I feel secure. My stomach no longer hurts anymore.