

Public School

Intro: Creative incidents in a young boy's life.

There were crayons, some colored construction paper, and dispensers of white glue already sitting on our desks.. We were in Kindergarten.

A substitute teacher, began that day, to give out what she proudly pronounced were "Safety" scissors and explained that, unlike those scissors we weren't allowed to play with, these couldn't hurt you. There were no other instructions and she proceeded to sit at her desk... She had no idea what mayhem was about to unfold.

The scissors fit our tiny hands, had blunt rounded ends, but were limited at turning the sharp corners that my drawing suggested.

Instead, I became fascinated with the 'sound' the blades made, next to my ear, when thumb and forefinger swung them together rapidly, like castanets.. This was far more entertaining.

I was delighted to get the attention of the girl next to me, who, amused, started doing the same thing. In my effort to impress her, I must have gotten carried away, because the blades suddenly jammed, pinching the junction where my neck and earlobe met.

Bright red blood suddenly appeared on my hand and scissors. The shocked look on the girl's face prompted me to approach the teacher's desk. I stood there for what seemed like more than a minute before she looked up - blood dripping down my neck, a bloody hand still gripping the scissors.

I remember her blank look, that slowly turned *bewildered* - and then, more of a *denial* really, that her prized "safety" scissors could have done such a thing...

Later, I assumed the incident had something to do with why I was not allowed to finger-paint. This was agony for me to watch, as an outcast, as my classmates slid bright liquid color across glossy paper in hedonistic ecstasy- imprinting sensual gestures in the wake of their fingers...

Perhaps they thought I would eat the paint? Perhaps I would have.

Thank goodness this all began to change when I got to first grade.

I liked our new teacher. One day, she taught us about periods and commas. I understood immediately what punctuation was all about. We started with the Period - only to practice setting it down on paper. We weren't capable of writing sentences yet..

I found the center of the page and landed a dot with such force and emphasis that it attracted the attention of the boy next to me.

Perhaps mocking me, perhaps in admiration, I'll never know, he imitated my gesture and produced a darker, slightly larger dot.

Not to be outdone, I reinforced my dot earnestly, till it grew to three quarters of an inch..

Seeing this, a Wild look overtook him... and we were off on a frenzied race, energetically expanding the radical nucleus of our mark towards eventually filling the whole page. They were Nuclear Bomb punctuation marks.

My competitor did indeed fill the whole page with dark, erratic pencil marks. I was careful enough to leave four tiny triangles exposed in the corners of the page, so the illusion of a circular mass held steady..... Otherwise it was a normal day at school.

But when I got home, I found out it was parent/teacher night. I began to worry that my parents would be told how things had gotten out of hand.

I was asleep when my parents came home but the next morning, there was nothing *strange* in my mother's demeanor.

Back in class however, I was surprised, *and* somewhat Shocked., to see my drawing of the large period, hung up, just behind the teacher's desk, on the narrow cork field that crossed over the blackboard .

I was immediately flushed with Shame and Anxiety. I was sure it was hung there to discuss with my parents, this excessive and unruly thing I had done.

In school that day, and later at home, no one said anything about it, and I never asked... so I guessed that they just forgot to punish me... (pause)....

Shortly after, a special guest teacher came to work with our class for the day. She was pretty and asked us to draw anything we liked, so I drew an angel with wings in a long white gown, like the one on top of our Christmas tree. I put the angel in front of a fence, the kind of fence I'd seen on the westerns my father watched on TV.

The special teacher held up my drawing to the class and said, "This is a good drawing because Robert drew the neck on the angel and placed her in front of something"; and explained that, "necks are part of people and it's a thing we see when we look at someone".

The next day at school, the angel drawing was placed just where my drawing of the period had been earlier.

Which made me think... that the drawing of the period probably wasn't so bad either. Or rather, that it *was* a drawing also.

Anyway, the next year I transferred to Catholic school, where drawings, *period*, weren't seen with the same openness and generosity.

But that's another story!

