

DEAR READER,

2-23-19

HEY! I HOPE ALL IS WELL ON YOUR FRONT.  
I'M NO WORSE FOR WEAR FOR THE KIND OF  
LIFE I'M FORCED TO LIVE ON THIS DIRT  
ROW...

DID YOU ENJOY MIDDLE SCHOOL? I DON'T!  
I WAS A MIXED KID THAT DRESSED PROPER,  
TALKED PROPER AND TOSSED INTO A SCHOOL WHERE  
THE KIDS HAD SEGREGATED THEMSELVES - LIKE ANY  
COLOR OF SKIN, CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES CAN MAKE SO  
TOUGH TO BE YOU. CIRCUMSTANCE FOUND ME IN  
THE 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE. I WAS DESIRED BY SOME (NOT MANY)  
OF THE WHITE KIDS BECAUSE OF MY DARKER COMPLEXTION.  
AND DESIRED BY SOME (NOT MANY) OF THE BLACK  
KIDS BECAUSE OF THE LIGHTER COMPLEXTION OF MY  
SKIN. WHAT CAUSED ME THE MOST TROUBLE, THOUGH,  
WAS NOT CHOOSING A SIDE...

I WAS STANDING AT MY LOCKER ONE DAY,  
BETWEEN CLASSES, SHARING BASKETBALL CARDS WITH  
A NEW FRIEND WHO HAD THE LOCKER NEXT TO MINE.  
A WHITE KID. A COUPLE OF BLACK KIDS CAME UP  
AND TOOK HIS BUNDLE OF CARDS FROM HIM. BUT  
NOT MINE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING  
ON. THEY LEFT AND MY FRIEND COMPLAINED HOW  
HE HADN'T DONE ANYTHING TO THEM & HOW "THEY'RE"  
ALWAYS SCREWING WITH HIM. HE REALLY MISSED  
THOSE CARDS. BEFORE CLASS STARTED I SAW THE  
KID WHO TOOK MY NEW FRIEND'S PROPERTY PASS

BY MY CLASSROOM DOOR. SO AFTER CLASS I STOOD IN  
 THE HALLWAY, LEARNING AGAINST THE WALL, WAITING TO  
 SEE WHO WOULD. I SAW HIM. BOOKBAG OVER ONE SHOULDER  
 AND THE BENDER IN HIS OTHER HAND LOOSELY TUCKED  
 TO HIS HIP. I FOLLOWED HIM. I WAS LOOKING FOR A  
 MOMENT THAT I COULD SNAATCH IT BUT BEFORE I  
 COULD MAKE A MOVE HE MET UP WITH HIS BUDDIES.  
 BUT I SAW HIM PUT THE BENDER IN HIS LOCKER!  
 I KNEW HOW TO POP A LOCK (FROM WATCHING T.V.!)  
 SO IT WAS AS GOOD AS MINE. DURING CLASS I  
 ASKED FOR A RESTROOM BREAK. THE TEACHER GAVE  
 ME THE HALL PASS & I HEADED STRAIGHT FOR HIS  
 LOCKER. I GOT TO GO AND TOOK IT OFF MY SHELF AS  
 I LOOKED AROUND. I HAD TO MOVE QUICK. IT  
 GOT CAUGHT TO BE IN A WORLD OF PAIN WHEN I  
 GOT HOME. (NOT REALLY, THOSE SERIOUS BEAGONS DO GO DOWN  
 A LOT AFTER MY SHERMAN LEFT AND WENT BACK TO  
 HARRISBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA) I SLIPPED THE SHELF  
 BETWEEN THE LOCKS ARMS AND TWISTED MY SHELF  
 ALRIGHT, I PULLED DOWN ON IT WITH ALL MY  
 STRENGTH. I COULD IMAGINE THE ARMS BENDING  
 THE PENS INSIDE AS MY FEET CAME OFF THE  
 GROUND AND THEN BAM! NO, IT WASN'T THE  
 LOCK POPPING OPEN, IT WAS A CLASSROOM DOOR  
 CLOSING. AND I COULD HEAR "HEELS" CLICKING  
 AGAINST THE FLOOR. THAT COULD ONLY BE A TEACHER!  
 I SLIPPED MY SHELF OUT OF THE LOCKS, IT CLANGED

LOVINGLY AGAINST THE LOCKER, AND SPANNED TO THE BOYS BATHROOM. BREATHING HEAVY, ADRENALINE RUSHING THROUGH MY BLOOD, DULLING MY SENSE OF TIME BUT MAKING ME HYPERAWARE OF THOSE HEELS STEADILY CLICKING AGAINST THE IMMENSE MARBLE FLOORS, WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY. THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY STOPPED.

2 CLICKS HERE... PAUSE... 3 CLICKS THERE... PAUSE... AND THEN THEY STARTED CLICKING WITH THE RHYTHM OF A NORMAL GAIT AND THE SOUND FADED. I WAITED A FEW MOMENTS LONGER TO MAKE SURE SHE WASN'T BEING SNEAKY... SHE WAS AN ADULT... I CAME OUT OF THE BATHROOM & RAN TO THE LOCKER, AWARE I'D BEEN GONE TOO LONG ALREADY. I SLIPPED MY SHOES BACK IN PLACE AND PULLED. BUT NOTHING. I PULLED SO HARD I WAS HANGING ON TO IT AND THEN I BOUNCED AND POP! IT OPENED. HA! I PULLED OVER MY SHOES, PUT IT ON, OPENED THE LOCKER AND GRABBED THE BENDER. SHUT THE LOCKER & HUNG THE LOCKS BACK ON. I PUT THE BENDER IN MY LOCKER FOR SAFE KEEPING.

I REMEMBER TELLING MY TEACHER I HAD TO TAKE A #2 WHICH AS WHY IT TOOK SO LONG. SHE GAVE ME A LOOK OF TOO MUCH INFORMATION. HA! HA! I SAT DOWN & LOOKED AT THE CLOCK. ONLY A FEW MINUTES HAD PASSED? WHAT? SO FEW LIKE AT LEAST 10 MINUTES HAD GONE BY. THAT EXPLAINS THE LOOKS I GOT FROM THE TEACHER. SHE'S PROBABLY THINKING I DON'T EVEN USE. HA! HA! HA!

AFTER CLASS I'M AT MY LOCKER & MY NEW FRIEND COMES TO HIS. I OPENED MY LOCKER WITH A SMILE ON MY FACE, I KNOW HE'S GOING TO BE REAL HAPPY TO HAVE HIS CANNISACKS. THERE'S LIKE A HUNDRED OR MORE IN SO.

I PULLED IT OUT AND HE SAW IT BUT BEFORE I COULD SAY ANYTHING HE SAID, "FOR REAL?! I THOUGHT WE WERE COOL? I'D HAVE TRADED SOME WITH YOU MAN. YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE YOUR HOMEBOYS TAKE THEM FROM ME!" AND THEN HE SCORMED OFF. I FOLLOWED AND SAID WASO! HOLDING OUT THE BENDER TO SHOW I WAS GIVING IT TO HIM. BUT NEXT THING I KNOW I HAD THE LOCKER HARD AND WAS BEING PUMMLED BY... YUP, YOU GUESSED IT, THE GUYS WHO TOOK THE BENDER IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHAT?? YOU THOUGHT THIS STORY HAD A HAPPY ENDING? I WENT TO BED BUT UNFORTUNATELY MOST OF THE ONES IN MY LIFE DON'T. AT LEAST NOT UNTIL I BECOME AN ADULT. BUT I HAVE A FEW THAG I'LL BE SHARING WITH YOU YOU'LL NEED "SOME" LIGHT TO FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH THESE DARKENED HALLWAYS OF MY LIFE.

UNTILL NEXT TIME.

YOURS TRULY,

DOUG