

Wesley Germs

Jacob Guenther

The taunting red numbers on my alarm clock stare at me, unblinking.
"It's almost three o'clock in the morning and you haven't written a word."
The clock is right.
My body sits motionless at my desk waiting for the words to come,
While the rest of me sits at an entirely different desk-

The desk in my fifth grade classroom, ground zero for the illness that plagued the entire school.
Its symptoms were severe; it ate away at the heart and fogged the mind.
And just like any sickness, the germs spread from one original source.
His name was Wesley.

There was no other kid in the school like Wesley, a dented can on the assembly line.
Wesley was consistently clad in filthy, tattered clothes, his hair an overgrown patch of weeds.
His smell was no odor of the body, but onions and fertilizer, a stench that could not be washed off.
Any physical contact with him resulted in an immediate infection.
There was only one known cure to the sickness, to rid your body of it.
Touching someone else with your contaminated hand was the only sure fire way.

"Wesley germs, no backs"

Wesley's germs spread through the school like a nasty rumor.
Isolated, like the lepers before him, Wesley walked the halls as an outcast.
It was no secret to him that he was the cause of the plague, and soon he embraced it.
Wesley had become the monster everyone told him he was.
He chased people around, knowingly infecting them,
Laughing to himself as kids ran away, screaming "Wesley Germs, no backs."

An assembly brought the whole school to the bleachers.
We sat, grouped tightly together like a school of fish,
When Wesley drifted in to take his seat among the crowd.
The school exploded into a flurry, scattering this way and that
Like any fish would when there's a shark in its midst.
And alone in the bleachers sat Wesley, a pariah, feared by, and alienated from his classmates.
Not because he was rude or because of something he did
But because he was different.
Because he got everyone in the school sick with his Wesley Germs,
A plague that turned innocent young kids into despicable little hate mongers,
Into wild dogs, picking out the weakest of the group to attack and devour.

My mind snaps back to the present.
I sit here, thinking about poor Wesley and I wonder how he is doing now.
Did he ever recover from the Wesley Germs?
Is he in school? Does he have a girlfriend?
"You think just because you wrote about him you're off the hook?"
"You make me sick! You're no better than your depraved childhood classmates"
My alarm clock is correct once more.
I can feel the guilt from my past clawing at my insides. Suddenly I feel nauseous.
Could it be, that after all this time, I still have Wesley Germs?
...No backs.