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Mrs. Smith

English Homework

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Believe it or not, I used to be normal. I went to a normal public school, had normal friends and stayed as far under the radar as I possibly could. For the most part, it worked. Up until sixth grade, that is. I was less than average and I thought I was happy mindlessly floating through my childhood. But I wasn't happy and I wish my youthful innocence could have remained intact throughout the journey of finding myself.

It is never easy to be bullied. You begin to dread waking up in the morning. School becomes abysmal. You watch on in sorrow as everyone seems to have their lives in order and you believe this feeling of inadequacy is as good as it gets. I felt this way every single day of middle school. I guess I wasn't like everyone else. I always wore black, even in the summer. I listened to death metal and I had a mind of my own. I had plans that most of my peers couldn't fathom. I didn't want to have any ties to my town. Most of them were most likely going to find themselves pregnant at the ripe old age of sixteen, but the thought of being stuck in this accursed town forever appalled me. I could see that dismal road before my eyes: generations of my offspring doomed to an ordinary existence in a never changing town. I yearned to travel and pursue my passion of writing. I dreamed of escaping to foreign countries, basking in the inspiration I would find there. Everyone, including my teachers, ridiculed my juvenile dreams.

I learned quickly that serious topics like bullying, depression, self-injury and suicidal ideation become a different matter entirely when you are the one experiencing it. It is so easy to sit behind a computer screen or pick up a text book and read about it. You can try to relate as best as you can but in no way does it prepare you for the real thing. I knew to a certain extent about the world of mental illnesses, but even in my darkest times I never thought it could happen to me. It sounds cliché but it's the truth. No matter how hard you try to put yourself in someone else's shoes, the expectation is almost always going to be different from the reality. After my father forced me to transfer schools for my last year of middle school, I was diagnosed with depression and multiple forms of anxiety along with agoraphobia and panic disorder. I didn't handle being around people well. In school or in public, it would get to the point where I would hyperventilate and cry if I had to be anywhere but the comfort of my bedroom for an extended period of time. My parents took me to numerous psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists, but nothing seemed to help. I was a complete wreck by the time high school rolled around. I lasted approximately three weeks before I refused to go back.

Some days are better than others but most days are bad ones. Before coming to The Karafin School, I spent the majority of ninth grade and a little bit of tenth being tutored at a library for two hours a day. I've been in Karafin since December and it's been tough adjusting to being around people again. I still have anxiety and depression, which makes me feel insignificant most of the time. My friends get to live normally and experience the wonders of the infamous "teenage years" while I live in paralyzing fear of my past crawling up on me. I used to remember my childhood but somewhere along the way the lines seemed to blur and all that was left is this haze of humiliation and embarrassment. I would like to one

day be able to be surrounded by a mass of people and not feel so utterly helpless. For now, there is nothing I can do but put my dreams of travel on hold while I search for better days.

I've realized that learning difficulties aren't supposed to be easy. I have every intention of overcoming all of my disorders. I will not let my past nor my situation define the person I am. My mind has been through obscure horrors most will never comprehend. I've waded through the murky darkness of depression and I'm still trying to make it out in one piece. I'm not foolish enough to believe that if this ever ends I will be the same person that I once was, because I know I won't. Everything is constantly changing and we have to find a way to be okay with it or we crumble. There are some things that cannot be fixed. So yeah, I suffered. But for the most part, I survived. I used to be normal but now I'm beginning to realize that maybe being different isn't such a bad thing.