

Misconstrued

Mr Thompson was my arch enemy, and worse than any comic book villain. He had hated me from day one. I had lost count of the times he had dragged me to the front of the class to belittle me. The other kids would laugh, if they hadn't, they would have been his next victim.

The head of year brushed my concerns aside so I couldn't go to her again. My parents didn't believe me, I don't blame them. At Parents evenings he couldn't have been nicer, yet for unknown reasons, in class, without warning, his face would redden, his eyes would bulge, and his mouth would spit vile insulting words into the ether.

I began suffering from panic attacks. Breathlessness, shaking, sweating, convinced I was about to die. The more I shook the more he sneered. He would shout 'Chester, explain logarithms' The harder I tried to get the answers right, the more he would snigger.

He had set us homework to describe an eclipse. Determined to win approval, I spent hours researching. I learnt where each eclipse had taken place; years, times, which countries. I wrote in my best handwriting and included a detailed, colour diagram. This time he would find no reason to criticise. I handed my work in with head held high, exhausted but proud.

Two days later was our next maths lesson. Although nervous, I took comfort that I had written a great piece, he wouldn't be able to make me look small this time. I was looking forward to receiving some positive comments for once, so took the risk of pushing the 'record' button on my mobile phone. I tucked the phone into my blazer's top pocket smiling confidently to myself.

He called my name out immediately 'Chester come to the front.'

The class fell silent in anticipation, but I felt calm. I knew my homework was excellent.

'Chester, what lesson is this?'

'Maths sir.'

'So why on earth have you written about eclipses?' droplets of water flew from his mouth as the staccato words were spat out'.

'You ridiculous child, you are an imbecile, the topic was ELLIPSE.....ELLIPSE. I have never known such an idiot. Look at this boy class, this is what you call THICK, this is what you call STUPID, this is what A TOTAL FAILURE looks like.'

My legs trembled. The hot flush of embarrassment crept up my neck to my face. Heavy pressure compressed my chest preventing enough air from getting into my lungs. I took some deep breaths and held on to the desk next to me.

'GET OUT YOU USELESS BOY.' I remembered what I had read, 'Listen for four sounds....' His breathing was the first thing. A clock ticking loudly, the sound of a distant phone ringing.
A PHONE RINGING...

I snapped back to the reality of clear thinking, and as I backed away, I remembered. This time I had proof. This time I was recording his vile, hateful words. This time I would be believed.