

Tactile 1.5

Flicker

Ten years ago

Drew curled up into a ball, raising his thin arms to protect his head. They never left him alone, probably never would; that was the problem with being an easy target. Lonely, poor, unable to defend himself - in their eyes he was the perfect person to inflict more misery on. And today was just like any other day...for them. For Drew, this wasn't any other day. This was the day that changed his life.

They'd stopped after a few minutes when he stopped reacting to their attacks - he'd learnt that ignoring them was by far his most viable tactic even though it still resulted in him being attacked for the better part of break. The shrill whistle sounded across the playground, signalling the end of break. The kids were slow to respond, trudging back towards lessons they knew would just bore them to death - highschool was like that for most people, he supposed, but he was pacing rather quickly towards the nearest entrance; school was safe, people didn't try and hurt him in school. In the classroom the teachers were always watching, their beady eyes relatively focussed on what went on in their classroom, whereas what happened on the playground was a different matter entirely.

His next lesson was actually one of the few he enjoyed, as only 2 of the culprits were in his class, which made it much more bearable - in his other classes they might not be able to hurt him physically, but mental assaults usually hurt just as much. Maths began with a quick starter activity, just solving a few simultaneous equations, and he had quickly finished all of them. He laid his pen down quietly on the desk and slowly pushed against the legs of the table using his legs, tipping his chair back and taking the time to relax. Suddenly his stomach dropped as he tipped too far, the chair legs sliding out beneath him as he crashed to the ground with a THUD - Michael. He looked up from the ground to see that taunting, jeering face he had come to despise over the past year, square shaped, his hair just a collection of bristles on his head, his eyes slightly further down than they had a right to be. Drew honestly couldn't think of a single good reason this guy had made it to the top of the social hierarchy, but he had. And as such, got to do pretty much what he wanted.

But this was too far. Maths was meant to be a good class, somewhere he could get away to for an hour and try and forget about everything. And now he was even taking that away from him, by that stupid, idiotic brute of a guy who thought it was ok to take everything from him. It was in that moment, I suppose, that Drew completely broke.

Fighting back tears, he stood up and ran out of the classroom, down the hall, breaking into a sprint as he reached the main entrance. Trying to take deep, calming breaths failed him, and he resorted to screaming instead. He wasn't too sure what he was screaming at - he was mainly just letting his emotion flow out, something he wasn't able to do at school. His rage didn't cool however, his screams doing nothing to dull the sharp anger he felt inside him, burning his insides with a desire to act. He went home, thankful that his mum had work and grabbed a few necessary items whilst he ate a hastily made sandwich. His anger having transformed into something even more dangerous, he set off back towards school.

He arrived about halfway through lunch, trying to hold himself upright and ignore the stares directed his way - apparently word had quickly gotten out about what had happened in maths. Almost as soon as he had entered the playground he was face to face with Michael, a smug grin plastered over his pudgy face.

“Where’d you get to, nerd?” he sneered at the defenseless child in front of him, his cronies content to laughing with him, “go crying home to daddy?” He chuckled as he said that one, well aware of the meaning behind his words. “No one here to help you now” he continued, still smiling away in his blissful ignorance as he started towards Drew, drawing his fist back in preparation for the first blow. The full story of what happened next was known only to a few, and even less would actually speak about it.

Drew lunged forward, drawing the large kitchen knife he had stuck into his belt and slashing it across Michael’s stomach, his face an expressionless mask. The surrounding people jumped back in surprise, at least one screaming as the violence began, another staying slightly calmer and sprinting to find help. Blood began gushing out of the wound, a virtual torrent which splashed down his front, staining his shirt. Drew waved the knife wildly at the others, his voice betraying the emotionless veneer he was wearing: “Stay back!” he exclaimed, “or you’ll be next”. He knew he sounded crazy, but he supposed crazy had been what he was going for. As Michael doubled over, his hands pressed to his wound Drew stabbed at him, aiming to impale those hands with his weapon. Michael’s face was a perfect mix of surprise, pain and terror, blended into the best expression Drew had ever laid eyes on. The pain brought Michael to the ground, where he lay, his muscles spasming, as Drew descended on him, stabbing him in the leg, over and over again. “Stop. Fucking. Attacking. Me” he almost screamed the words, punctuating each one with another stab in the leg. Tears ran down his face; he could taste them at the corners of his mouth. He wasn’t even aware he’d started crying.

All his emotion was spent, and he joined Michael on the floor, drawing his legs in as sobs racked his body. The next couple of hours were a blur; he was dimly aware of people trying to talk to him, of an ambulance picking Michael up and the police coming for him. Being told he’d made a terrible mistake and how upset his mother would be with him. He wasn’t listening. Didn’t care for this moment, his mind practically unable to form coherent thoughts. He only really had one thought for those few hours, echoing in his head over and over and over again:

“I hope he fucking dies.”