

Hard Lessons for a Bully - Part 3

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continuation of Hard Lessons for a Bully

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They pulled up to the administration building and as Jerrod stepped out of the car he could see they had created a nice illusion of happiness for the people living here and the ones visiting. It didn't fool him these people were all old and dying and a little green grass with some flowers littered throughout, didn't change that fact. Just like he was bad and 6 months of this wasn't going to change the fact he was bad and hated the world.

Officer Tull escorted Jerrod in where they met with Nancy the President of the Administration Board for the home. She was all smiles from ear to ear and Jerrod was annoyed by that. She was too happy and he didn't see any reason why she should be. She extended her hand out and this time Jerrod decided to extend his as well, make a good impression on this highly clueless chick. "You must Jerrod, hi I am Nancy and I run this facility."

Jerrod laughed, "So this facility as you call it, is basically like where these old people go to wait for death right? I mean they are all dying . . ."

Nancy still maintain her smile, "Well we don't let them think that. We tend to try and make this place comfortable just like their home was. We provide them with excellent care and hope that their time spent here is one of enjoyment and happiness."

Jerrod laughed again at her naïve optimism, "Happiness? Enjoyment? They are dying how is that happy or enjoyable?"

"Jerrod I have some paperwork I need for you to fill out, please come this way with me and let's not discuss death any further."

"Fact of life sweetie."

"Yes, I suppose it is but it isn't the attitude we like to maintain around here. We have fun here and we bond with the residents as I am hoping you will too."

Jerrod shook his head, "Whatever, where's the paperwork so I can begin this crap."

"Young man that attitude is not going to be tolerated. We don't stand for behavior like that."

Jerrod sat back in the chair and took on his cocky persona which was his way of telling the world they didn't have anything on him or what he had been through. "Listen Toots, I don't really care about your facility's rules of conduct. I am here to wash dishes and clean so why don't you just point me to the shitter and I will get started."

She was starting to lose her patience and Jerrod could tell it was his goal since the second he walked through the door and saw her cherry smile, he needed to irritate her enough so she would stop smiling. He was almost successful until she realized he thought it was going to be as easy as cleaning, "Jerrod this is supposed to be a learning experience and though you will have chores, today you are going to meet some of the residents and get to know them. I think you will find they are very interesting and intriguing people."

"Whatever, so what you want me to play cards with them and laugh at their dumb jokes for the next couple of hours, sounds easy enough to me . . ."

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Nancy decided she had had enough of arguing back and forth with Jerrod. "Yeah something just like that. So are you ready to meet the residents and get to know who you are going to be working with for the next 6 months?"

"Sure whatever, let's get this show on the road, I don't have all day."

"Yes, going out to cause more trouble no doubt, well we wouldn't want to keep you too long then would we."

He followed Nancy down the hall to a door which behind it he could hear lots of talking. She opened the door and stood back so he could get a view of the room which he was about to enter and would become very familiar with over the course of the next 6 months. "Here ya go."

Jerrod acted annoyed as usual, Nancy could see she was going to have her hands full with him. She had him follow her around as she introduced him, first to Marcus a patient suffering from Alzheimer's and Marcus was fascinated with Jerrod. "You here to pick me up for my tee-time sunny?" Jerrod was confused, "what are you talking about you crazy old goat?"

Nancy stopped Jerrod, "Jerrod Marcus Marcus Jerrod." Nancy took Jerrod aside to give him background on Marcus. "Marcus has Alzheimer's Jerrod and so he doesn't realize he is in a home. He often times thinks he is this billionaire who lives in the Hills, he is thinking right now you are his chauffeur."

Jerrod looked at her with this look of "duh", "but I am not and he is in a home, not a mansion."

"Please Jerrod these people are suffering from all kinds of diseases and it helps if you play along with their fantasies because they don't know any different and if you don't go along with what they say at times, they will become angry, confused and sad. They are harmless and you will find, actually they can be very entertaining."

For instance Peter and Lloyd, these two seem to think they are rivals and every day they fight over whatever, they compete and they both have their eyes on Glaydis. "You old fool those are my shoes, why don't you learn to keep those sticky fingers to yourself, stop stealing my slippers, ya monkey's butt."

"Last week you stole my golf clubs, and revenge sucks ya yeller-bellied geezer."

"When are you gonna wake up? You own one golf club and it isn't like you can play anyway, don't you know where you are? You are in a home not a club house ya moron."

Jerrod for the first time was laughing, these old folks were funny and a little entertaining. He didn't want Nancy to catch sight of him actually enjoying himself, he had to maintain his same negative poor attitude. Nancy did catch a glimpse of his smile and knew he was intrigued by the residents. "Fellas could you stop your bantering just for a second here. I would like you both to meet Jerrod. Jerrod is going to be working with us for the next 6 months."

Lloyd and Peter stopped their bickering and half-smiled at Jerrod, "hey kid do you think you could help me beat him at poker?" Peter said as he nudged Jerrod. Jerrod again halfway smiled, "sure thing old man." Peter laughed, "Good cause he can't even see the cards, last week we played crazy eights, he thought his 3's were 8's."

"Ah shut up you old liar. There was chocolate on the 3 and it looked like an 8, anyone could make that mistake. I still beat you in shuffle board, tell the kid about that."

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Peter winked at Jerrod, "I think we could be friends, nice to meet you."

"Stop sucking up to the kid, you are old and a kid like him could run circles around your old butt."

"I wish I could roll circles on your face."

Okay boys calm down no fighting or I am going to have to separate you two again and Gladys is on her way down. The old men immediately stopped arguing and looked up at Nancy, "She is?" they both said simultaneously. "Yes gentlemen she is on her way down, so knock it off or I am sending you both to your rooms, got it."

Jerrod watched as the two men changed their attitudes completely and started fixing their hair and Lloyd turned his scowl to a grin. They were smitten with Gladys Jerrod could tell and it was kind of cute.

Soon Jerrod had met all the residents and they all had unique qualities and now there was only one left to meet. Fredrick. Fredrick was sitting back in a corner by himself reading. Jerrod was shocked that the man could concentrate on anything with all the commotion going on around him. Nancy said and last but not least, "This is Fredrick one of our more scholarly residents. He reads all the time and it is hard to gain his attention. Fredrick! Fredrick!" After a few more times of her calling out his name she gained his attention once she approached him with Jerrod.

"Yes he said" He saw Jerrod standing next to Nancy and pointed to him, "Who is this?"

Nancy smiled at Fredrick, "Fredrick this is Jerrod and he is going to be visiting us every afternoon for the next 6 months."

Fredrick stood up to politely greet Jerrod, as he rose to his feet Jerrod couldn't believe how tall he was, slender with silver hair and spectacles which set on the tip of his nose. "Uuh." He didn't have much to say and seemed to be irritated and annoyed that he was interrupted from his reading.

There was something about Fredrick that Jerrod was taken by, it wasn't necessarily his enormous build but more-so his demeanor, he was polite but didn't act like the rest of the residents. He seemed less rambunctious. Fredrick seemed distinguished and like he knew a lot. Jerrod decided to shake his hand, "Nice to meet you Fredrick." He shook the old man's frail hands and though Fredrick seemed to have no real smile on his face, Jerrod could have sworn he seen him smile as Jerrod shook his hand. Jerrod felt like he could be nice to Fredrick.

He decided to ask Nancy about Fredrick. "So, umm what is wrong with him?"

"Oh with Fredrick, well he suffers from Parkinson's and in the past few years. He is 95, one of the oldest residents here. It is a miracle he is still with us. His wife died a few years back and his kids thought it best he move here so he could be cared for properly."

Jerrod was curious, "Parkinson that is like a crippling disease right? Why isn't he in a wheel chair? I noticed he can still stand up and walk?"

"He does still attempt to walk but he doesn't go far from that chair during the day. Partly, because he can't walk well, but mostly because he loves to read and that is the only place he can sit where he is away from everyone else." Jerrod, I think you will find Fredrick is a really interesting man and he has lots of stories he can tell you, as do all of the residents. Keep in mind they were once young like you and, like you they thought nothing could stop them. I think you are going to like the time you spend here and I really think these guys are

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going to teach you a lot, because they have been there and done that.â

Jerrod walked out of Nancyâ s office feeling okay for a change, not so angry but letâ s face it he wasnâ t happy. The residents were okay and they did make him laugh which is the first time he really laughed at something other than hurting someone else. It felt different. Letâ s not get carried away, he didnâ t really like them he just thought they were kind of funny. Still nothing was going to change him.

The next few weeks Jerrod followed the same routine he went to school and at 3:45 Officer Tull picked him up and took him to the home where he spent time cleaning and helping serve meals. He did each of those for an hour every single day. He was always eager to get done with the chores so he could be entertained by the residents. Peter, Lloyd, Glaydis, Fredrick and even Marcusâ s faces would light up when he came to visit them. He played cards and even though he still wasnâ t that impressed with any of them he enjoyed their company. He didnâ t have anything to prove to them, they didnâ t care how tough he was or how funny he was. They saw him as a young and anxious kid who was just starting out in this world. They also knew he had so much to learn.

Every day for the first week the last 30 minutes he was there before he went home he would visit Fredrick. He would just sit with him and watch him. Fredrick didnâ t pay him much attention, he was more enthralled in his reading, after all why waste his time on this kid with so much attitude. One day Jerrod decided to engage in conversation with Fredrick. â So you are old, what is that like?â

Fredrick was a little offended by his question, â Such manners to ask such a question. Yeah I am old and it sucks kid, now if you will excuse me I am trying to read here, so I see no need to talk to you any longer. I would appreciate it if you left now.â Fredrick went right back to reading and waited for Jerrod to leave. Jerrod didnâ t move, he just sat there and stared at Frederick. Frederick looked up again from his book, â What? Ya got cotton in your ears boy, shake it out and leave me to my reading please.â

Jerrod felt challenged and intrigued as to why Frederick was so withdrawn from the rest of the residents. He decided to keep on trying to talk to Frederick, â So, what book is that?â

Frederick looked up once again, â Politeness doesnâ t have it with you, huh, okay have it your way. Get out of here boy I donâ t wish to talk.â

Jerrod snapped back, â No I want to talk and I asked you what book you were reading because I wanted to know.â

â You think I care what you want, you are just a kid, no one respects young kids.â

Jerrod felt offended and that never happened, â Why is that?â

â Because you are all annoying and think you know so much when you havenâ t lived and you know nothing kid, and I donâ t waste my time with those who donâ t know nothing, you bore me and I have little time left before I die and talking to you makes me want to go sooner.â

â Listen here old man, I know a lot. I have lived and I donâ t let this world phase me at all. Beat that.â

Frederick though irritated had to laugh at the boyâ s ignorance and he decided to intimidate the boy, he stood and as he did Jerrod could feel himself becoming scared and nervous. â Is that so boy, you think you can compete with all I have been through.â He lifted his shirt to show Jerrod scars which were etched deeply into his skin like he had been hot-ironed branded.

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Jerrod was taken back with how painful they looked and how many there were. "What happened to you?"

"I got in a fight with a kid like you, annoying the hell out of me and he wouldn't leave and needless to say he lost." Frederick sat back down and picked up his book again. Jerrod was now officially scared of Frederick and Frederick knew it, he was just playing with him. It was fun toying with this cocky little punk. Frederick didn't care about him he was all of 16 and had no clue of what was before him. Frederick looked back at Jerrod who was still sitting right in front of you. "You know what you need to learn to understand people when they tell you to get outta here."

Jerrod gulped a bit as this very large man was basically just hovering over him, "Did you really get those scars from another kid in a fight?" Jerrod was shaking a little because Frederick commanded respect.

"Kid if you think one of you's could do that kind of damage to me? You really need to get the cotton out of your ears as it is pushing against your brain. No, a kid didn't do this to me. Men did this to me and you are not men kid. Men who didn't like me gave me these scars. You have battle scars like that kid?"

Jerrod knew he didn't have one scar on his body except for the birth mark on his back. "Um no."

Frederick started to back up a little away from Jerrod "Let me guess you are one of those boys who thinks no one can hurt him?"

Jerrod got that all-too-familiar cocky grin back on his face again, "Yeah, because no one can."

"Really? Is that so?" Frederick began to laugh continuously, "You need to remember who you are talking to here. I was hurt by people with your same mind set but do you know what happened to them? They ended up dead in the end, is that what you want boy, to end up dead?"

Jerrod gulped Frederick was not messing around he was serious and Jerrod took notice of his demanding and almost terribly terrifying gruff voice. "Ah the things I could teach you if I had the time and actually wanted to. I would have you changing your drawers by the time you left here."

Jerrod shrugged "Well then teach me, I want to learn."

Frederick batted his hand swiftly to his side, "You aren't worth my spit kid"

Jerrod was not backing down and he figured this old man had to crack at some point, "Well I would really like to hear your story sir." Had he really just called someone sir, he didn't even call the officers in town sirs.

Frederick sat back down finally as it seemed this kid wasn't leaving anytime soon, "You really want to know?"

Jerrod nodded his head "Yeah I do."

"Okay kid when you come back tomorrow I will tell you a story, but be sure to wear your big boy britches okay because you will need them." He had gotten in Jerrod's face and Jerrod could feel for the first time maybe ever an uncomfortable chill descend through his body.

Frederick then followed up his invitation with a rejection, "Okay now get out of here and let me get back to something far more interesting than you kid."

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Jerrod went to shake his hand and though Frederick had shaken it the first day, he stared at it this time and as Jerrod could feel the awkward long tension from having his hand extended out for way too long, he quickly took it back as it was obvious Frederick was not going to acknowledge the gesture with his hand. "Get outta here kid, I mean it!"

As Jerrod left that day he shook off the fear he was feeling from Frederick, and put on his cocky smile and gave way to his negative attitude once again. It was clear though Frederick had forced him to be afraid for the first time in a long time. He forced him to think about things a little bit more and had started breaking down the cement wall covering Jerrod's heart. Could it be someone was finally getting through to him?

The next day after school the squad car came and picked him up and for the first time in the weeks Jerrod had been getting in the car, he greeted Officer Tull, "Hi"

Officer Tull was shocked he hadn't heard a greeting from Jerrod ever. "Hi Jerrod you ready to go."

Jerrod slightly smiled, "Yeah" It was progress Jerrod seemed less angry and irritated. When he arrived at the home he walked in eager to get his chores done so he could visit with Frederick. He didn't care much about anything else other than eagerly awaiting his time with Frederick.

Soon he had finished all of his work and he walked over to Frederick's corner and of course Frederick was reading as usual, "I am here" he attempted to gain Frederick's attention and as usual Frederick just stared at him acting irritated he was interrupting his afternoon.

"Ah you again kid. Okay you want a story and I guess you won't leave me alone until I give you one so sit your cocky self down and let's get this over with."

Jerrod took a sit and it was weird he felt like a little kid again awaiting a bedtime story. "So you are all of what 14, right?"

Jerrod was offended he would guess him so young, "No I am 16!" He shouted at Frederick.

Frederick chuckled as he looked Jerrod over "Kind of small for 16, guessing you are one of the more scrawny kids in your class." Frederick gruffly chuckled under his breath.

Again Frederick had managed to bruise Jerrod's stone-cold ego, "I am a little shorter than most of the guys yeah, but I guarantee they don't push me around. I take control over all of them."

Frederick again laughed at Jerrod's ignorance, "haha . . . you are little and I am guessing those kids could take you. Let me guess class clown and you get bullied a lot?"

Jerrod less-confident than usual shook his head, "No sir I beat the crap out of all of them."

Frederick wasn't buying this kid's approach "Ah little man is a tough guy huh? Interesting because to me you are a little squirt who I could crush with my bare hands, you don't fool me kid, you have a lot to learn."

"So I am waiting tell me this great story of yours."

"Sure thing kid. Those scars I showed you yesterday, they are much older than you boy. They are the constant reminder of how tough I became." Frederick took off his spectacles and he could see the look of terror and slight offense in Jerrod's eyes.

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â So what you got beat up a lot then when you were younger.â

Frederick shook his head and leaned back in his chair. â Yeah I did but not in the way you think?â

â What you were picked on and beat up by kids in school.â

â Son, kids didnâ t beat me up men beat me up. I know history class teaches you about stuff, stuff probably much like I went experienced but I can tell you more than any textbook ever will. They leave out the horrible and the cruel, they tell it matter of factly and I tell it just as it happened, happened to me and my family.â

Jerrod was now becoming more and more curious â So what you were in some kind of war or something?â

â Yeah kid I was in some kind of war or something. I was a prisoner for years.â

Jerrod was confused, â You were in the military then and a prisoner of war?â

â I was a prisoner of war but no I was not in the military. I was a prisoner in World War II, me and my entire family were basically kidnapped from our home back in Germany. You have heard of Hitler right?â

Jerrod smiled his devilish smile, â Yeah he is one of my idols, I read about him all the time, he was cool.â

Frederick was disgusted in his admiration for a man that made his life a living hell. â Yeah he was cool all right. So cool that he killed thousands of people, people just like you.â

Jerrod shook his head in denialâ Naw I am no jew he would have liked me and trained me in his army.â

Frederick was offended â You have a problem with jewish people, do you?â

Jerrod was pretty sure the jewish community deserved no respect â Well they deserved to be tortured and killed they were freaks.â

Frederick was taken back by this boy's all-around hatred for his religion but he maintained his cool headâ Wow, really? Why did they deserve that treatment, do you feel?â

Jerrod thought this old man must be some sort of an idiot, â Because they were jewish duh and jews were weird and not what human beings were supposed to be. They werenâ t the superior class.â

Jerrod had confirmed himself to be a kid who knew very little in Frederick's eyes â Spoken like a true ignorant white kid.â

â Well My fellow white superior I am jewish and I was tortured by the Nazis and by your hero Hitler and that was how I got those scars I showed you yesterday. I spent years being beaten and spit on by ignorant men much like you are going to grow up to be. They stripped me of my pride and dignity. They burned and branded me, whipped me and beat the shit out of me daily. I dealt with more pain in 3 years than you will ever deal with in your whole entire life.â

Jerrod shrugged his shoulders, â So? That is what they did to the jews.â

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Frederick really felt this boy was treading lightly with his patience. "Again matter of factly, yes that is what they did. Do you know anything about the Jewish religion, anything at all? Like for instance it is nothing worse than what you believe in fact what you believe is much much worse than my people. Did you also know that your glorified idol Adolf Hitler considered anyone who wasn't blond haired and blue-eyed deserving of torture and death? I notice that you don't have light hair there kid and those aren't exactly sky-blue colored eyes. So, you realize your hero would have killed you too. You would have been tortured just like me. You wouldn't have been inducted into his army you would have been the target of his army."

Jerrod was now less interested in Frederick now that he knew he was Jewish. He knew he didn't like Jews and Hitler was his idol. "I would have fought, those guys wouldn't have pushed me around."

Frederick again laughed at his naïve ignorance. "Yeah you are probably right, because once they tore your clothes off, hit you with the butts of their guns so hard they knocked you out, starved you of food and water for days and weeks, I am sure you would have the energy to bully them. Face it kid you would have been a helpless victim just like the rest of us."

Jerrod started to think about what Frederick was telling him and he realized maybe the old man had a point. "Is that what they did to you?"

"Yeah oh but much much worse, they broke bones and took razors to our heads to scalp us leaving us completely bald. So that handsome haircut of yours would have been gone not to mention the pain of those sharp razors gauging your scalp painfully. Then they would literally throw you into a cell of over a hundred people that is after they took a hot steel instrument and punched your skin burning it with a number. You didn't have a name only a number. You were a nobody, no one cared about you and you feared for your life everyday but at the same time you also prayed for death as it would put an end to the awful painful torture."

Jerrod no longer had a cocky smile on his face he was literally almost being brought to tears by Frederick's re-account of his experience in Auschwitz. Frederick could see the fear in his eyes and figured maybe this kid had had too much. "You still feeling you would have fought back being weak and completely drained from no food/water, endless beatings and torture?"

"That would have been awful." Jerrod said almost sounding as if he had sympathy for Frederick and what he had been through.

"Oh it was kid it was. I survived though. It was horrible and probably like living the worst nightmare you have ever had, only difference was, you were wide-awake. Some of us got sick and when we did they did have surgeries they performed but those surgeries were done with unsterile instruments and nothing to deaden the pain. They liked it when we screamed and when we cried they only beat us more and tortured us worse. Bullying took on a whole new definition in those camps. We were corralled like cattle and treated like shit on the bottom of someone's shoe. I broke my leg one day from one of the soldiers pushing me with extreme force to the ground where he proceeded to stand on my leg with his steel enforced boot and push as hard as he could until my leg snapped. I laid there for hours because I couldn't get up, the pain was so horrible and once they were sick of me laying on the ground they decided to fix my leg by stepping on it so hard it pushed the bone back into place. They hauled me off to a cell and threw me in and informed me that was where I would be until my leg healed. You ever broken a bone son?"

"Yeah I broke my arm when I was 5 jumping on my friend's trampoline. I remember it hurt like crazy and I cried for hours even after the doctor had splinted it. It was awful."

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Frederick nodded, "Yeah well I suffered for over a month until my bones finally healed on their own. I was one of the lucky ones though."

Jerrod didn't understand how suffering that much could deem him lucky, "Lucky ones?"

"Oh yeah most of the time if one of us injured ourselves so much that it would be too much work to fix us, so they executed us. You ever seen an execution before?"

"Yeah they show them on tv a lot these days."

Frederick laughed, and said, "TV doesn't capture the horror and pain the executions they committed in those camps were. I watched as my friends were tortured and killed inhumanely. I saw the looks on their faces as they were hung, choked and sucked dry of their last breaths, then shot. I became immune to pain after while because your body after so much pain and overwhelming pressure will go into shock. I was happy when the torture was so painful that my body would protect me after a few hours."

"You mentioned you had family, what happened to them did they survive too, like you?"

Frederick had tears coming to his eyes and it was the first time Jerrod had seen him become emotional and step out of his intimidating demeanor, after a hesitated pause, he shook his head, "No, no my family didn't make it out. When we were escorted to the camps I was separated from my parents and my sisters. I never saw them alive again. Those bastards took my family away from me. Every day I hate them for that. I could have forgiven the torture but they took my family, how would you feel if your family was taken from you?"

Jerrod looked at Frederick as he quickly wiped his tears away from his eyes and attempted to return to his tough exterior, "My dad left my mom and I when I was 5, so I kind of know what you are feeling."

"No kid you have no idea, your father may have left but there is a good possibility you may see him again. I never got to see my parents again because they were brutally and viciously tortured and murdered. You have no CLUE how that feels and I really hope you never do, because it is the worst feeling in the world. They lied to me, to all of us and told us we would be reunited with our families if we behaved and took the abuse they dealt daily. They promised us we would be free and had some of us not escaped, we would have all been dead."

Jerrod could feel his heart breaking for Frederick and he started thinking about his mom, "Yeah I would be pretty sad if my mom died I guess. I mean I know I am mean to her and I blame her for my dad leaving but I would miss her."

Frederick picked up his book and began reading again. "You wanted a story and I gave you one, now leave me to read in peace kid."

Jerrod was feeling awful and finally he was feeling sad, sad for Frederick, sad for his family, sad for what the Nazis did to them. Jerrod hadn't felt anything as strong as he was feeling for such a long time, he wasn't used to the emotions and even as much as he tried to hide what he was feeling, even Jerrod couldn't conceal his emotions the best at this point.

"Can I hear how you escaped and how you survived sir?"

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