

English Summative 'Memoir'

It was a Tuesday. That was good because on Tuesdays we had sports and I wasn't going to be there.

It used to be a dreadful topic for me growing up, the very idea of changing schools unthinkable in every regard. I had taken great pride in not attending a public Slovak school, or even a Slovak school in general. The pride stemmed from the fact that Slovak schools suck. I knew it because my parents knew it and my parents knew it because they made school books for Slovak schools. Whenever I was at a camp or outside of school activity with kids from Slovak schools I always admired their ignorance towards their educational system. I was something of a snob. It felt good reminding them of the fact that they went to schools of lesser worth than mine and they often protested but I had my ways of making them bitter about their situation regardless.

Looking back, it was indeed pathetic. It all came down to the fact that the sheer pressure of being successful at this one school was way too overwhelming. It was overwhelming because my whole life up until some point I was led to believe that the Deutsche Schule Bratislava was the only good school in my entire country. Was it hard to believe? No. And so that Tuesday was no ordinary Tuesday because the first time in my life I stepped through the doors of another school.

The morning of that Tuesday was exhausting as were the hours until we arrived at the building. The school was nothing like I imagined it to be and my disappointment was there in the back of my brain. The building I had grown up in was grand, an old building in the old part of the capital with the president's palace right around the corner. There I was surrounded by the history of my own country, as shameful as that history may be, it made me feel connected with my own blood in some twisted way. But the building of this new school was anything but what I was used to - an old office that looked more like a relic of my parents' childhood spent during the dark age of our country. *But the appearance doesn't matter that much*, I told myself as me and my mom exited the car and approached the blue gate.

There were little kids playing outside as we walked over to the entrance and somehow it struck me how happy and satisfied they looked. The playground wasn't massive as it was at my old school, but the little insects made do. I wished I was like them, making do with the little I had at my disposal just to make myself happy.

I don't remember who greeted us at the office. I don't remember much of the first few lessons either. It feels odd saying that. I should remember, but I don't. Neither do I really care although it feels rough on my tongue to admit that. I remember seeing a girl sitting in one of the classes as we passed down the corridor to my new classroom. She sat there behind her desk writing something in her notebook. She had bright red hair - no, was it bright? To me she



appeared bright. Angelic glow surrounded her delicate face in the likeness of a porcelain figurine of a ballet dancer. In words that I cannot describe I felt attracted to her and until this day I never learned her name. I have seen her multiple times now in the corridors and the canteen, but it feels like she revealed being an angel just that single today to draw me in, to make me feel safe.

The class was smaller than I expected and much more different than I had hoped for. The boys were like boys, the girls were only two. Outright I felt misplaced. I had to bite my cheek not to cry tears of hopelessness.

The lessons went on until we reached science class where I would take my mathematics exam. At the time I wasn't yet diagnosed with anxiety, but somehow even then I knew what I was feeling. My heart was beating faster than I could hold it and my mind was shredded to pieces that pulled away from each other. My eyes were down with the paper in the teacher and her to nothing to me at that was about to descend prepared. Alone, with to fail I'd disappoint them bizarre to me, listening to fell upon my shoulders



my ribs
entire
pieces
each
falling from their place as I sat
front of me. The kind smile of
encouraging words meant little
moment as the test of my life
upon me. For months I had
teachers, with parents - if I was
and doom myself. It sounds
myself, but back then everything
like thorns from a rose tree.

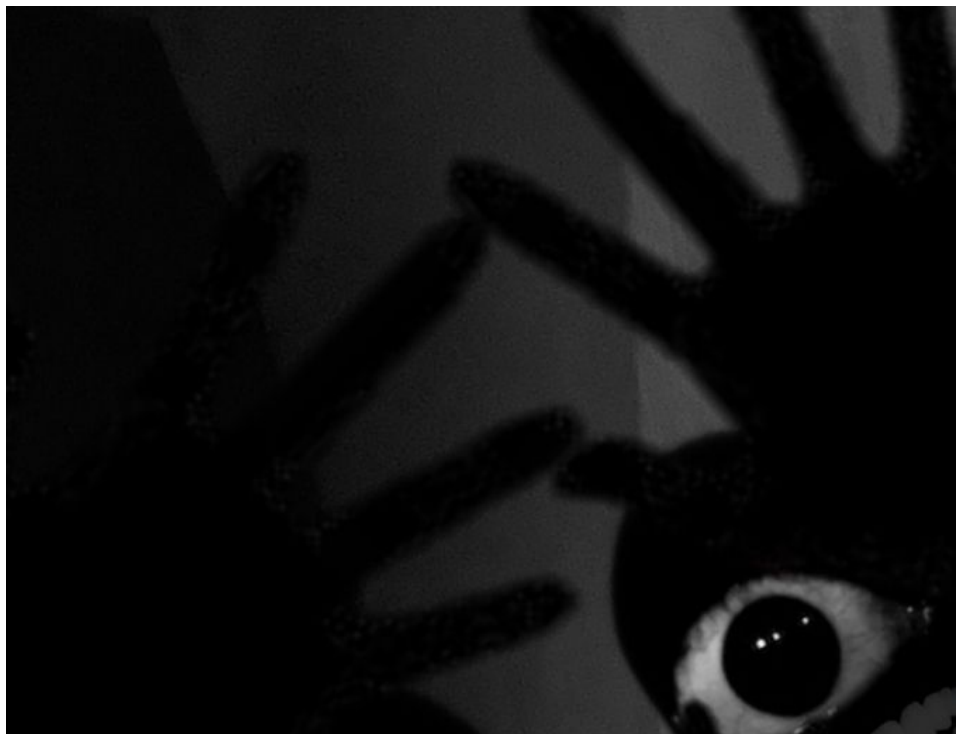
There was a lot I did not know in the exam and of course, I cried. It took an immense effort not to fall into the godless pit that was my anxiety rubbing against the back of my brain and pulling at the tissue to tear me down into the void. I didn't even know her name at the time, but the teacher tried to reassure me, to make me feel better. It took me way longer than it should to finish the exam and she had stayed with me, asking me questions and the like. She felt sympathetic. Not kind or nice, just human. At the time however, I didn't yet make the connection. Whenever I looked at her or anyone else in the room I saw little humanity.



Hi

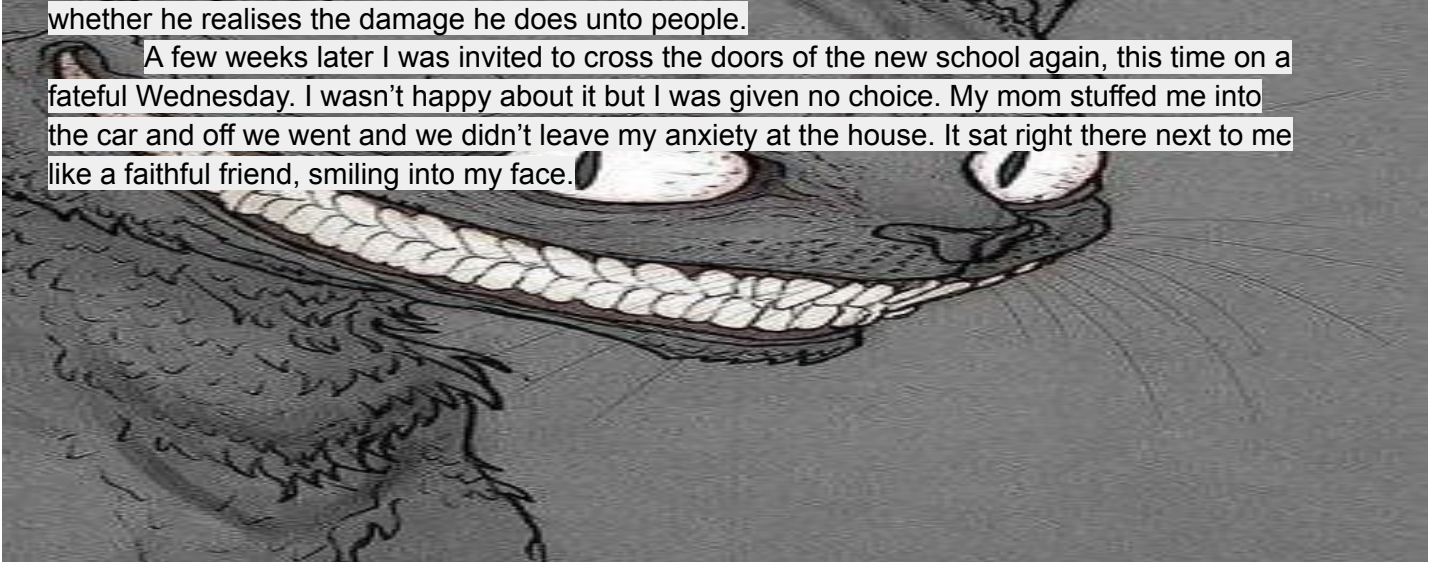
I suppose it was imminent. The English exam was meant to go better, but it really didn't. There is an odd thing about being obsessed with inhumanity and yet having conditions set in your mind how and when you can consume such contents without feeling assaulted.

The exam was simple: read a text and answer a few questions and whatnot. I wasn't scared to fail because I knew it was physically impossible for me to fail at English up until then. I started reading the text and after a few lines I had the entire world in my mind turn into shadows and bombs.



I came home, somewhat smiling, telling my parents how it went until I broke down in tears about the exams. My mom gave me a worried look full of pity whereas my father picked me apart with his gaze like I was a rat and he a cat. A whole conversation followed about it. I blamed the man who wore pink glasses for a joke and let us watch movies during his class. All the kids loved him until he handed us out texts. He could've hurt me himself and I would've appreciated it more than the slow torture it was the years spent with him being my teacher. I sometimes wonder whether he realises the damage he does unto people.

A few weeks later I was invited to cross the doors of the new school again, this time on a fateful Wednesday. I wasn't happy about it but I was given no choice. My mom stuffed me into the car and off we went and we didn't leave my anxiety at the house. It sat right there next to me like a faithful friend, smiling into my face.



Once again, I do not remember the entirety of the day. But it was a fateful day. Looking back on it, the whole thing feels like the universe came together to make it happen. Why? Because on Wednesday there was art class on the time table.

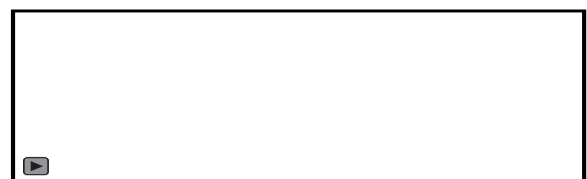
The door to the art room opened and my heart stung a little. It was mesmerising. My mother had dragged me through churches, not evangelical ones, and all of them had left me breathless but none of them like the art room did. It made me remember my old art teacher and I thought I'd curl up into a ball and cry in the corner. My heart began to beat faster again and I had to breathe. I was hungry for air.

The teacher was late so we all sat down. The boys were doing what boys do and immediately in my mind I told myself never to have to do anything with them. It is a promise I regrettably broke.

The teacher came in and again I was star-struck. She had her hair dyed. How? It felt criminal looking at her. It felt criminal that she existed. I wasn't insulted by her hair, but I knew the system did. I thought of all the teachers I had in my life at my old school and knew that they would burn her at a stake if they ever laid eyes on her. They'd say she was a witch. A demon. Satan's envoy. I looked at her and felt like someone had just hugged my heart.



The lesson started and with each word that she sang I felt baptised.
The world had finally smiled at me.



Two students came late to the class. The first had red hair that reminded me of a hedgehog for some reason and the second looked like a kid from a lower grade. The hedgehog one interested me more for the reason that they had me perplexed about their gender. It felt right meeting him in the art room of all places. He looked like a painting that had escaped the canvas and yet like all the birds that leave the nest too early, attracted to come back and spend time where he belongs.

The further the lesson went on the clearer the outcome of the war became. My sense of realism kicked me around like a bag of potatoes, yelling in my ears to cope with reality. It was a truth I could never escape and never forget. Those wounds would never heal. They would rot and eat away at my soul and heart, haunt me as long as I'd live. The countless therapists and doctors I had seen said as much. Nothing could heal me, save for the false promise of time making things better. That day I wasn't healed like my parents would say or everybody who knew the circumstances. The wounds are still there, but during those forty-five minutes someone put a plaster over them without even as much as asking whether I needed it.

First Art Piece- Mateusz Majewski

Second Art Piece - Aaron Jasinski "Design Committee"

Third Art Piece - "Changes" by Matthieu Bourel for L'Officiel Mexico

Fourth Art Piece - <https://pin.it/2bGw4mT>

Fifth Art Piece - <https://pin.it/6mYNUql>

Sixth Art Piece - Mondaufgang am Weiher by LouisDouzette