

Mrs. Smedley's Art Class

by Carl Santoro

"Quiet down please. Settle in," said Mrs. Smedley.

"So, I've had all thirty of you submit your black and white drawings, one every day, this week for evaluation."

"But today we will leave those back on a shelf somewhere in your brain. Today I want us to become even bolder and to discover the vibrancy and excitement of COLOR! Using watercolor pencils!"

"I am going to hand you each ten colored pencils, and as before, you each will need to come up and insert each colored pencil into the pencil sharpener until the ten you were given are sharp. Sharp as a dagger I'm expecting."

"Empty the shavings in the pail under my desk and then sit and wait until everyone is done."

(The annoying electric grinding sound of the sharpener became mixed with the rising tide of impatient pencil-tapping, moaning, chatter and bursts of - C'mon, hurry up!)

"As I go around the room I want each of you to drop your pencils into this empty Quaker Oats can. I need all of your pencils in the can. Points down so no one gets pricked."

(Laughter.)

"Quiet down."

"Well, this actually did hold all 300!" said Mrs. Smedley surprised.

"When I call you up, come and select three pencils and return to your seat. This is the initial stage in today's technique. Sort of like surviving with what you have. Making do."

"First, however, I need a volunteer to empty the shavings."

(A hand is raised.)

"Thank you, Linda."

"Let me get the pail under here for you." Mrs. Smedley says and bends down.

(Just then the classroom door bursts open. A person in a clown suit is standing in its threshold and raises a pistol, laughing hysterically.)

"Who wants to leave school early, huh? C'mon, who?" yells the clown.

"You know you do! So who will it be?"

(The pistol fires, hitting the ceiling.)

The clown grabs Linda.

Still bending under her desk, Mrs. Smedley grabs a fistful of the newly-sharpened pencils.

Linda screams and struggles to get free as her classmates dive under their desks.

The pistol is now pointed at Linda's head.

Quickly approaching from under her desk, behind the clown, Mrs. Smedley lunges forward and thrusts her handful of pencils deep into the side of the clown's neck.

With a loud shriek, the clown falls back onto her, dropping the pistol.

Linda kicks the pistol away and runs.

The clown, grabbing its neck, writhing in pain, could be heard making desperate short breaths with bloody gurgling sounds, convulsing as Mrs. Smedley continues to drive the pencils deeper.

(Later the police escort the students out, directing them to keep their hands in the air, as they file out into the parking lot. They wrap Mrs. Smedley in a blanket as she stares out blankly in shock. "How is Linda? Is Linda alright?" she asks the EMT.)

"She's fine, Mrs. Smedley. She did okay."

While recording the crime scene, the photographer wondered out loud why the blood on the floor was so colorful, almost beautiful. Thin, snake-like streams each of a different vibrant hue flowing out around the dead body like an Aurora Borealis halo of sorts.

"Hey, Sarge, what's the point of a watercolor pencil?" asks the photographer

"Sharp, Benny, very sharp."
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MRS. SMEDLEY'S ART CLASS - PART II - LINDA

by Carl Santoro

For Linda Moore, being a Junior in high school came easy. Her grades never disappointed her or her parents. Her pretty looks and long blonde hair had many boys interested.

She entered the classroom, straightening her eyeglasses with one hand and holding tightly onto the right strap of her backpack, pulling it closer to her body.

"Hey Linda!" shouted Thomas from across the room "Did you bring another apple for Smedley today?"

Linda went directly to her desk, ignoring the question. She placed her backpack on the floor beside her and took from it her watercolor pad and a few pencils and lined them up neatly on her desktop.

A small network of Thomas's friends laughed and began to whisper mean jokes about Linda to each other.

Why can't they just ignore me, Linda thought. They're so immature.

It's true. They are. None of them really felt they could ever land her for a date, so they usually set up a veneer of not-caring.

Linda watched as Mrs. Smedley entered the classroom. Immediately Linda sat up straight. Eyes glued straight ahead.

She thought she heard some kind of muffled commotion out in the hallway.

Thomas raised his hand.

"Yes, Thomas?" said Mrs. Smedley.

"Yeah. I forgot my pad. Can I then be excused? He proceeded to snicker over his shoulder looking for approval from his buddies. His pad clearly resting on his desktop.

"I have extra, Thomas. Come up and take one," she said.

"Oh, never mind. Andy gave me one."

Everyone (or almost everyone) laughed at the set-up and punch line.

Why do they always try to make Mrs. Smedley seem like a fool?
thought Linda.

A few minutes into the class session Mrs. Smedley asked for some
assistance
from the students. She needed a volunteer. Linda rushed to her aid.

Suddenly, the door to the classroom swung open.

