

Stupid's Rising Up

by Dave Clapper

Stupid's rising up, I see. Melting all the intellect. I before E, except after C, but that's not how the alphabet goes.

It's just a spelling thing, ma'am, I say. It's not a hard and fast rule, I say. In this book, which is alphabetical, I, in fact, comes well after E. Do you C?

No, she says. No, no, no. I'm sure I remember, she said, that I comes before E, except after C.

Stupid's rising up, you can see it in her eyes. If asked what color her eyes were, I'd have to say stupid.

It used to be just the young that stupid were, but alas, the young have olderd but not wisered and thus, you see, stupid's rising up.

I'm tempted to explain this to her, but I know she won't get it. Because she can older all she wants, can older all she can, but no wiser will she do. Her ears are plugged with stupid, you see, are inundated every day with stupid this and stupid that, and all she knows is rules by rote, and those no application.

I tell her this, I tell a tale, hand down an edict. I say, it's not your fault you don't understand. It's the TV, I say, it's the radio, the sirens, the man on the street, the teacher in the school. They're all out to fill us up with synthetic substitutes. They're all working their own agendas, and how do we know what to filter out? Go to the hospital. Go now. The emergency room, even if your insurance doesn't cover it. Have them flush your ears, flush the stupid right out, it's not too late. Come back when your ears are clean and your age will confer your wisdom. Then you'll understand. But do it now. Do it now. Do it now.

I say all this to her, she looks like she's listening even. And my speech winds down, I hold my breath, look at her expectantly. A pause as she realizes I've finished. And she says, What? What. That's what she says. And I cry.

Never mind, I say. Stupid's won out.

