

Running Wild in the Neighborhood Today

by Matt Rowan

A lot of the time the kids at the school screamed. They screamed while they read internally from the white board or from a book. They screamed while they went to their lockers. They screamed about their algebra. Most especially they screamed while they took tests on the computers in the computer lab, so much so that usually the school psychiatrist would need be present to observe them. If they started screaming while testing, he would quickly diagnose and often medicate the problem. They would return to their efforts on the test, until such time that they began to scream again.

The psychiatrist was a man who clearly meant to calm his patients, the students. You could tell by his sweater and his neatly combed, plumy hair and the wire-rim glasses he wore. But he was not good at his job. You could tell this by how bad he was at calming his patients, those screaming students.

But he loved medicating. He believed in it. And you know what? The children really were happier. They just didn't feel any better about him, even after he'd cured them, for a short time at least.

Here are your pills, he would say. And the boy or the girl would gulp them down. The screaming would abate, usually, or require one more pill and then abate.

How do you feel? he would say, after they'd ingested the pill or pills and were no longer screaming and therefore capable of talking.

Better, but I still hate you, they always said.

That was never the question, he'd remind them.

They'd remind him they didn't care what he said by shrugging.

He began working one night on a much larger pill. This one would make them feel even happier than before.

He proudly brought the pill to school the next day, though his eyes were lined with dark circles and visually undermined his high spirits.

A student soon began to scream. One he'd never met before. He was excited, a wholly new subject on which to evaluate the effects of his creation.

The student was ready for the psychiatrist, ready to stop screaming. The psychiatrist fed him the the pill and handed him a glass of water. The student had difficulty swallowing at first but was finally able to get the pill down, his eyes watering and his face red with effort.

The psychiatrist asked him, how do you feel?

I hate you more than twice as much as I did before, the student said. But I am happy.

