

# A Day At School

"Oh no it's a school day" I think as I open my eyes sleepily. My mind starts whirring : "I wonder if today will be a bad day or not? I really don't want to go..... I don't know what is going to happen. I will have to leave mummy." Daddy comes in and tries to get me out of bed. I can't move, I am worrying about being asked a question in maths. Daddy comes in again and is getting impatient. He says breakfast will get cold. I ignore him.Ten minutes later

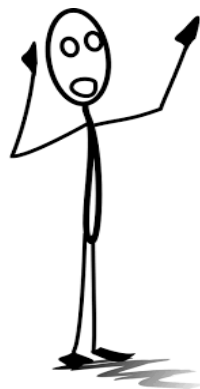


Mummy comes in and reminds me if I don't get into school early to get inside before everyone else it will start the day badly as I will be out of my routine. Grudgingly I get out of bed. With lots of chasing from mummy, I get dressed, eat breakfast and brush my teeth. Then I get into my sensory swing and start worrying again: "I don't want to go into the loud, busy playground, I wish I could stay at home. Maybe I will hide.....Yes! I'll hide." I squeeze into the tiny cupboard in the playroom, moving my tool kit out of the way and curling up like an Octopus in a teeny sea cave. "I hope no one finds me." I think. "I really hope no one finds me." I hear everyone looking for me. My sister finds me and gives away my hiding place with her mega loud voice. The cupboard door is opened and light floods in. I clamber out reluctantly.

I make my way into the car but suddenly realise I have forgotten Monkey ( my favourite cuddly Golden Tamarin). I dash back into the house and grab him. He needs to stay in the car in case the house burns down while I am out.

I am silent in the car as I have realised it is Tuesday and so we will probably have a horrible, loud singing assembly. We arrive at school and I climb into the footwell of the car and refuse to get out. Mummy says she will call the teacher to help and so I unenthusiastically climb out and trudge to the front door steps through the chaotic playground.

As every day, mummy takes me up to my classroom and to my teacher who welcomes me with a smile. I smile back but inside I am miserable. I just manage not to chase mummy down the corridor. I set out the chairs in the quiet, but the bell rings and everyone piles noisily into the classroom.



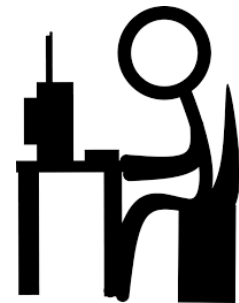
We take the register and then head down for assembly. I was right. It is a singing assembly. My friend O holds the door until I walk through then jumps in front of me so we can sit together. This makes me feel happy and like I might be able to get through the next 20 minutes.

The hall is packed with the entire school. As I walk in, my sister E waves and smiles at me. I try to smile and wave back convincingly so she doesn't worry about me. I sit at the back, squashed between taller children towering over me on all sides. It is hot, stuffy and stinks of sweat. The 'singing' starts (shouting). I feel like a mouse stuck in a hurricane. Like thunder, the 'singing' is ear piercing. I close my eyes, cover my ears and pinch my nose. However, hard I try I cannot block all of the head splitting sound of six year groups screaming "SWEET CAROLINE!!!!" over and over.

I survive the assembly and go back upstairs to maths, thinking all the way: "Please don't let me get picked on to answer a question. Please, please, please". We file into the classroom and start the maths lesson. We are told to copy the Learning Intention into our books."To know how to multiply by 10,100 and 1000." I sit and listen for what feels like forever, my heart racing at the thought of being asked a question. Someone starts tapping a pencil, and the noise consumes my thoughts. I can't concentrate.

Suddenly, the bell for break rings. There is a rush of children shouting and pushing. I am frozen. I feel like I can't move but the tidal wave of noise carries me down the corridor and out into the playground.

I run away from the crowd into the trees where a girl hugs me up into the air and won't put me down. I can't breathe. I struggle to get free and run off again. I sprint into the toilet, lock myself in a cubicle and sit on the top of the toilet silently waiting to hear the bell ring. I rush to beat the crowd to the classroom.



Literacy is next. We are reading 'There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom.' There are sections in the book which are a great source of laughter to everyone in the class except me. I have no idea what is so funny but I laugh anyway so as not to stand out. We take it in turns to read. When it gets close to me I start to panic as I don't like everyone focusing on me. My teacher asks me if I want to read. In my head I am screaming "no!" But quietly I murmur "Yes" choosing to suffer the awkwardness of reading over the embarrassment of admitting I don't want to.

Lunch time. Everyone is shouting and laughing. The room is buzzing with conversation about 'who likes who', and who is 'gay'. I don't understand why people want to talk about each other this way, it's not even interesting or accurate! I don't get why being gay is an insult when it's just a kind of normal and no one else's business. I would much rather talk about quantum physics, or monkeys, or pretty much anything else. I feel like I am an orange triangle in a sea of grey circles.



People are having 'roasting' competitions to see who can insult the other in the cleverest way. My friend O's roasts are the best and I understand her jokes so it makes me feel like I am part of it.

We go outside to play. The footballers take up a lot of the field and balls regularly hit people in the head so I'm constantly watching to make sure I don't get bashed. People play 'Werewolf' and end up shrieking and pushing each other. It's disappointing and annoying because it used to be a fun game and now it just hurts my ears.

The bell goes and me and O come in before everyone else instead of lining up to avoid the riot. We have DT, my favourite subject! I get to use my hands which helps me focus, and I like to be able to build something straight out of my head into the wood. I also don't like to follow precise instructions, I would rather do my own thing and have control over what I make. I can zone out from the chatting and focus on my creation. I don't talk to anyone for the whole lesson.

The bell rings, it's home time! I am so relieved but also worried as I have to get through the clambering of everyone out of the door. I wait until I cannot see anyone in the corridor before I leave the classroom to get my bag from the cloakroom. I am so happy to see mummy and my siblings.

I enjoy my afternoon with my family. At bedtime I start to worry again. Although I am exhausted from getting through the day, I do not want to go to sleep as I know that when I wake up I will have to get through tomorrow. Once all my siblings are asleep, I spend the evening wanting to talk to mummy about all of my worries. When I am with mummy I feel safe and secure. I feel like a monkey in a tree, exactly where I am meant to be.

It takes so much energy to survive a school day with autism.

