

BLENDING MERCURY

“You can’t expect him to mix well with other children. He’s special. He’s a genius,” was the response I received every time we moved to another school district.

My son. The genius.

They may as well have called him retarded. It would have been the same response. *You can’t expect him to mix well with other children. He’s special.*

Special. Special in the way a couch is special that no one is allowed to sit on because you paid dearly for it and never want to see it soiled. We’d paid dearly for Davy, emotionally and monetarily. For ten years my husband and I tried to get pregnant, but nothing worked, not sex, not drugs, not in vitro fertilization, not desperate prayer.

Then during a flight to Texas on a private jet, we made love to celebrate our fifteenth anniversary, and the miracle happened. We were inducted into the mile-high hall of fame, and Davy was conceived.

Davy’s genius has always been a mystery. My brainpower and my husband’s combined, does not come close to what my son can grasp at the age of eight. He comprehends scientific wonders I will never get my mind around. His gift for art is breathtaking, undeniably masterful in every stroke of the brush. He paints scenes he saw

in passing when he was an infant, the details intricate and pure. He sketches while I make him breakfast, his pencil flying over the page, scratching out a scene with me in my apron, a modern day anachronism, frying eggs and bacon.

I cry each time a school turns him down. The teachers are afraid. I understand that. I'm afraid myself. He's only eight and I can't relate to him at his learning level, but I'm still his mom and I know he's hurting on another level. Mentally wounded, like a holocaust survivor, torn between anger at being rejected and yearning to be accepted. He doesn't want to go to school to learn, but to mingle with the other children, to make a friend, tell a joke, grump about cafeteria lunches.

His time for childhood is short. Universities are already vying for him, wanting to be the institution to graduate the next Einstein. But Davy hesitates, still set on mixing with kids his own age for a while, learning the art of communication for the sake of connecting and not necessarily gaining wisdom. Something others take for granted.

"I need to experience interaction with other children, Mother," he says, his young brow furrowed in thought.

I shake my head, a sad smile crossing my lips. "You'll never experience *any* interaction if you keep talking like that, kiddo." I run my hand over his blonde hair, baby soft beneath my fingers. "Kids rarely speak in full sentences, and they don't interact, they play or hang out."

"Hang out of what?" he asks.

"You know - get together in one place to talk, and laugh, and play games."

His expression is serious as he takes this simple concept in. "I see," he says.

Another school, another principal, another classroom of children for Davy to reach out to. Will they reach back and take his hand, teaching him how to love unconditionally as only children can? I drive away, leaving him in a classroom of strangers who may not understand his quirks of perfection and sameness.

He hates disarray. A pair of shoes out of place on the floor of his closet sends him into a cleaning frenzy. Even the different foods on his plate must be separate, not touching one another. We sometimes call him our *kosher genius*, a boy living under his own set of laws, uncalled for but necessary in his mind.

The principal calls before lunch. His voice is quiet, placating. He says Davy has special needs and they aren't prepared to fill them, that the teacher thinks a private school might be a better choice for him. I ask what Davy did to turn her against him already.

"It wasn't anything specific," he says, "more a combination of things. She just doesn't feel adequate to teach a boy of his aptitude."

I lean my head against the wall where I stand with the phone pressed to my ear, and wait. I don't know if he says the words or I only imagine them in my mind, but I eventually replace the receiver and draw a heavy sigh of resignation.

Davy *is* special. There is no denying that, no matter how hard he tries to fit in and be a regular boy, he will never be anything other than special. He's a renaissance child, born with knowledge and talent that few can even dream of.

He climbs into the car and pulls the door closed, his chin nearly resting on his chest in utter dejection. I reach out and take his hand, but he clenches it into a fist and pulls away. He rarely cries. The doctor says it's because he thinks through his pain

process and reasons that crying is a waste of time. But today, as uncommon as they are, tears creep down his cheeks like diamonds from a lump of coal.

“It’s all right, Davy,” I say, and pull him close.

“I don’t want to be sp-sp-sp special, Mom,” he stutters. “I w-w-want to be like everybody else.” His nose is running and I hand him a tissue.

“I know you do, baby. But God didn’t make you like everybody else. He made you special for a reason - for a special purpose. Who knows what you will accomplish in your lifetime? You could help solve world hunger, find the cure for AIDS, or invent a rocket that can fly to the next galaxy and back, faster than the speed of light.”

His eyes light up as scientific equations bounce through his brain at my suggestions. He blows his nose and pulls his seatbelt on. “I wish I had my sketchbook,” he says. “I have a picture to draw.”

I smile and head toward home. “What picture? The classroom?”

He shakes his head. “No. I have a picture of God in my head.”

“Really? What does he look like?” I ask, curious to know how an eight-year-old genius pictures God.

His eyes narrow as he gazes toward the horizon. “I can’t put Him into words, Mom – I have to paint Him.”

My son. The genius. Born special. Born to paint God.