

Abi Kunkle

Mrs. Quaife

Creative Writing

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A Self-Perceptive Essay on Pride and Pee

Amidst a self-idolizing culture littered with “Kylie Jenners” and “Cash Me Ousside,” I believed myself to be none other than a martyr of my generation. I have always worn my self-proclaimed intellect like a gleaming medal of honor- something of a life jacket in a sea of ignorant teenagers. I will shamefully confess: I thought myself above my peers. Perhaps it was being in the ‘gifted students’ program in elementary school that started me at a young age believing I was of superior mental capabilities; maybe it was witnessing one too many of my peers trade intellectually stimulating activities for celebrity gossip and makeup tips. Whatever the origin of this hubris, I found myself atop a pedestal. So goes the story of a faulty heroine who must prove herself for what she believes she is worth.

There is a sort of *looming* fear when it comes to proving yourself of something you base so much of your foundation on. After all, if the one word you use to describe yourself is not true, then who even are you? These anxieties gnawed at my insides as I signed up for my first ACT.

Anyone can tell you that you are more than just a number, and while that is true, there is no denying the weight an ACT composite score holds in our society. This number does more

than decide whether I get into the university I dream of, or if I can even afford it; this number is how I prove myself. When I closed my eyes, I could see that perfect 36 (though, I settled for a more “realistic” goal of 33). As the dreaded ACT date approached, I attempted to ignore the feelings of unavoidable failure that seemed to shroud my every thought. Who am I if I am not smart? If I do not get the score I desire?

That awaited Saturday morning, I woke up with an unfamiliar air of confidence. My doubts had seemingly vanished overnight, and I smiled to myself knowing that success was just in my grasp. When I arrived at the testing facility, I was even happier to learn that one of my good friends was in the same testing room as me. She bounced nervously in her seat. I gave her a friendly pat on the shoulder, followed by a knowing smile and assured her that everything was going to be alright.

Note: If you cannot see the fault in this, just wait.

The first test, which was the English portion, went well. Other than a slight twinge in my bladder, there was nothing to break my focus. My dream college acceptance letter and an abundance of scholarships were just as good as in my hands.

The second test was the one I had the most anxiety over. Math is not my specialty. Still, I convinced myself I will persevere despite such challenges. A high score does not make itself!

Note: It is almost comedic how quickly something can escalate. How one raindrop could so easily cause a dam to burst, flooding a whole town.

By question seven of the math test, a slight twinge in my bladder had evolved into something similar to that dam, barely holding on for the sake of its citizens. I told myself I

would be alright. Just an hour left before my break, I reasoned. I could sit through it for an hour!

Each question became harder to answer as more and more of my focus was put toward not causing an incident. My legs began bouncing violently, and nearly ten whole minutes passed of me shifting in my seat, attempting to calm the situation.

(Note: If you are wondering why I didn't just leave and go to the bathroom, the answer is, well, embarrassing. I was under the impression that if you left during a test in session, even for a bathroom break, you would not be allowed back into the classroom and your answers would not be scored. It was not until a few days later that I found that this was not the case. That knowledge did sting a bit.)

Back to the test.

The pain in my bladder so quickly became overwhelming, and I could feel the stickiness in my armpits as I began to panic. In moments like this, the best thing to do is think the situation through. I was not granted such a luxury, however, as the only clear thought my mind could muster was "I NEED TO PEE." My eyes darted around the room, and I became envious of the students around me who made silent progress on their test as I was on the verge of a total crisis. I glanced down at my wristwatch, and a wave of relief passed over me as there were only twenty minutes left before the break. That relief was then drowned in total panic, as I had only answered seven questions in my attempt to silence my bladder. I could almost feel my scholarships evaporating with each wasted second. I purposefully slowed my breathing and stared down at the eighth question, still shaking my legs as my bladder sent me signals of desperation. My hair stuck to the back of my neck, and a single drop of sweat made its way down my forehead to my nose and onto the paper. That was all it took, and I knew I had lost

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my successful future slipped away, along with my urine. I was suddenly able to register the silence of the testing room, along with a recurring quiet ‘drip.....drip...drip..’ coming from beneath my desk.

I do not know how long I sat there in complete shock, staring at my paper and terrified to move. It was not until our instructor called “Five minutes remaining” that I was snapped back into the reality of the situation. I had just peed my pants taking the ACT. And I wasn’t even a quarter done with my test. And I probably will not be going to college.

I flipped through the test booklet and made a few guesses with the problems I was more familiar with, and the rest I bubbled in C. I had just finished scribbling C for the last question when the instructor told us to close our booklets and put down our pencils. As I leaned back into my chair, I cringed at the squishing beneath me and decided not to move any more.

The 15-minute break began and my friend tapped my shoulder. I slowly turned my head, and my wide-eyed expression must have caught her off guard. She asked if I was okay, and I choked on my words as I explained what had just happened. She did not laugh, just handed me her jacket. My face reddened as I lifted from my seat, revealing the sea of urine beneath me. I cautiously scanned the room for onlookers who may be witnessing this total crime scene, and landed upon the testing proctor whose wide eyes burned into me. His disgusted silence gnawed at my flesh and I began to feel the overwhelming urge to jump out of my skin and run away as nothing but muscle and bone. He knew what went down. He knew I had peed my pants. And he hated me for it.

I waddled quickly to the bathroom after gathering myself and could not help but feel

as though I was in 1st grade again, desperately trying to hide my embarrassment and the back of my pants. My friend followed behind me, attempting to convince me that this kind of thing happens to everyone and it is okay, which it clearly wasn't. I could hear the squishing of my pants with each step and I tried to maintain a distance between them so my thighs wouldn't rub together. They were starting to get cold. Very cold. Once I got to the bathroom, I knew there was no use, as I had completely emptied myself in the testing room.

When I returned to the classroom, my eyes studied the small puddle beneath my desk that my wallet and keys were swimming in, and my emotions began to settle into a near-numb state. This happened. This definitely just happened. I sat down in my seat with a squish, and the next test was soon enough right in front of me. I knew I was out of it, all my brainpower had been used stifling myself throughout the last hour, and I was exhausted. I bubbled answer after answer, paying little attention to the questions and passages in front of me. My physical discomfort became the only thing my brain was tuned in on, and any scraps of my ambition had become, well, damp.

I'm here to tell you this: I survived. I know it sounds like it got rough. And it did. I sort of gave up on my test! The one thing that I needed more than anything to maintain my identity! But I survived. I drove home with a broken spirit, confronted my parents with an even more broken spirit, and spent most of my afternoon crying... but I'm alive. I went to Dollar General to buy some flowers for a friend that evening, and as I handed the unsuspecting clerk three urine-stained dollars, I think I began to find some humor in the situation. This happens. Life goes on.



Acrylic by Deidre Darby "Ginger Ails"