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Cerebral palsy, daydreaming, and writing:

In my life so far, I am stuck somewhere between being an introvert and an extravert. I value extremely strong family relationship, and yet I seem to be somewhere in my own dimension all the time, often not paying attention to intimate moments in life. I enjoy telling and listening to stories, and yet, most of the time, I have a huge difficulty of interacting with my peers. I seem to be much better at presenting myself to people older than me. I take pleasure in assisting others, and giving them some sort of advice, and yet I never know how to handle my own issues. One of the greatest obstacles to my life always seems to be my condition of cerebral palsy, even if I, myself, fail to notice it. I have always blamed the instability in my life on miscellaneous problems, completely ignoring that one. But what I am about to do now is a major exploration of self, a confession of my mindset and psychology, and the definition of my life up to now, as I understand it.

I always noticed I was different, and not just because of being disabled. Yes, I almost never played sports, and the sports I did participate in were usually ones that did not require standing, such as swimming and horse riding. But unlike a person who received an injury, I did not fret about it. Not once in my life have I looked at the other kids my age and said, “Mom, I wish I could play soccer!”, or, “Dad, I want to shoot a basketball so bad!”. I just always seemed to be okay with the fact that I couldn’t do these things. In fact, I didn’t even care about making friends. I seemed to be my own B.F.F., and you can sometimes still get that vibe from me. That is because I find myself engrossed in things almost nobody around me is into. I remember myself multiple times, trying to interact with other children, while talking about things only I knew. And off course, I couldn’t maintain long-term friendship that way. And it is quite understandable. For example, how many eight-year-olds have seen *Cast Away* with Tom Hanks? Generally speaking, not many. And yet, I was a hardcore fan of the movie at that age. So when I talked about deserted islands, coconuts and plane crashes, most of them looked at me like I was from another planet. In my first three grades of school, during recess, I did the exact same thing. While my classmates were playing, I tried to become part of their game by putting my own plot twists in. For example, when my classmates once pretended to be launching a rocket, I grabbed one of the toy bricks, and, pretending it was a radio, yelled “No launch!”. Each of my peers was either annoyed or was ignoring me. None of them realized (and they couldn’t have) that I was actually recreating a scene from the *Night at the Museum* film series. Other times, I wanted the action of playtime to unfold on something like a “deep sea submersible”, when none of my peers knew how to even pronounce that phrase. I am not claiming to be of higher intelligence, nor do I consider myself special in any other way. The only thing I have come to realize is that I am different. However, my adversity from others does not end there.

As you might have realized, films have played an important role in my childhood. I have been watching action, science fiction, and other genres since I was about five. These films slowly began defining who I wanted to be in life. But we are not talking about a career here, or, on the flipside of the coin, we also are. Almost any child who watches a film wants to be like the main character. Whether they are a tough cop, a brave firefighter, a monster hunter, or even that kid everybody calls a “loser”, until something awesome happens to him and he saves the whole world. Every child wants their own dose of awesomeness in life. And so did I. But this is where my difference with my peers comes I once again. They have moved on to seeing life in a bit more of a mature way, and just stick to the fact that they are living through a student life on planet Earth. But I seem to just stay the same. I have a brain that is constantly in “Hollywood blockbuster mode”, and I seem to just expect new adventures. Despite my longing for being an action hero of sorts, I have never been particularly into video games. That, in my opinion, is another great gap between me and most people my age. I can spend the time needed to play a game reading or writing stories, like a true nerd. I do these things because I found another way of making the wildest of my desires come true: I write them down. I record every idea that comes into my mind on a piece of paper or a laptop. That’s how I make myself the hero of the day. I create my own world, almost an alternate mental dimension, where anything is possible and where I can make the rules. I write stories, and build my protagonists as an improved version of myself, putting them in an environment only I can access. I even have friends there. Inside my fictional world, I interact with “people” better than I do in real life. That is most probably due to the fact that I have the entire story laid out in my mind, and I know exactly how things will go. Or perhaps it is because my hero is an improved version of me, and during this improvement he has overcome his real-life uneasiness.

Yes, I know. There are lots of other nerds like me, so why didn’t I just go ahead and stick to them being my gang? Well, that is because the even the things I read about are completely different. I was about ten when I got fascinated with ocean liners. Previously to that, any reference to any kind of sea vessel whatsoever would make my eyes light up, whether it was a picture in a book, a sentence in a text, or a film of some sort. Ships seem to have always been quite a special subject to me, and I don’t really know how it started. It might have been the fact that I first watched James Cameron’s 1997 masterpiece, *Titanic*, at age five or six. I remember my mother sitting there, pouring her emotions into a painfully exhausted piece of tissue, while I was twisting around on the couch, and executing a series of weird “excitement moves”, seriously hyped up by the action scenes. It might also have been that I watched Wolfgang Petersen’s *Poseidon* at approximately that age, with my grandmother emphasizing on how huge the titular vessel was. Whatever it was, it gave me “shipatitis”. Because of this, for the last nine years, I’ve been reading every single ocean liner book ever written, and watching every existing seafaring movie on this Earth. But when I look for new developments in this media subject, I realize just how little people care about that sort of thing. There are so few views of the trailers, so few comments underneath videos, so few people reading the books. And even ocean liners have nowadays become an almost extinct mode of transportation. And this, again, reminds me that I am different. Over all, I would describe myself as an “Introverted, daydreaming ship-nerd”. But that does not mean that other people don’t accept me, or that I demand of them something more than what I get. Every day I encounter people who are kind to me, and help me with anything I could possibly need them to. But I do have a very huge problem with listening to what they tell me. I rarely take advice, and mostly focus on telling them about my own day rather than on hearing about theirs, even when I ask them the question of how was it. This selfishness of mine has led to many inner and outer conflicts, and it is still a trait I am trying to get rid of. Luckily, I have long figured out what I could do with this behavior of mine.

It was at about age eight when I started inventing my own stories. They were unbelievably ridiculous. So ridiculous everyone thought I would never grow out of them. At nine, I wrote a fifteen-page story about a carnivorous underwater pillow. Yes, *a carnivorous underwater pillow*, that ate a bunch of divers and boats. The whole thing felt like a parody of old-fashioned giant squid films, mostly because I had modeled it after William Petersen’s 1996 *The Beast.* At ten, I basically began plagiarizing my favorite films, placing myself and my friends from school as the main characters. I always wanted to be in the center of the action, and thought my life was not interesting enough. Later, by around 2015, I stopped putting my name into my stories, realizing it was too eccentric. But my hero, whatever his name is, wherever he comes from, and whatever he does, is still modeled after me. Like I have said before, he is an improved version of myself, and does many more things, including walking. He is also more sensitive about things than I am. He is my tool of escaping reality, and so I always want to have him with me, despite the fact that sometimes it just seems unhealthy. And when, in 2015, I started to come up with somewhat more original stories, I found a way to be that hero. I decided to become an author and screenwriter. In the spring of 2018, after a discussion with my family, I decided that I would pursue an English Language and Literature major, in order to become, in the best case, a college professor of English. It is a profession which would allow me to provide education to others, while being able to do my favorite occupation and be a screenwriter at the same time. To achieve that, I took an English Honors course during both my Sophomore and Junior year of high school, along with Advanced Placement English and a Creative Writing Intro course my Senior year. Presently, though still having an undeclared major, my plans remain the same. I am enrolled in three writing courses, including a screenwriting course, and am also planning to take an English Language and Literature class during my second semester. It would seem that I have finally discovered my purpose in life. However, there is only one burning question that remains, which I, myself have great difficulty to answer: Why have I always viewed myself as being so different from others?

And here, finally, is how my disability connects to the scene. Unable to walk by myself, I always required the escort of an adult, who was most of the time a family member. I deeply thank all of my family for always supporting and being there for me, taking me places whenever I wanted. However, we must admit that, from a psychological and behavioral standpoint, it is just not easy for someone in a young age to “spend some time with the guys” in the presence of say, their aunt or grandmother, even if they’re not getting involved in the conversation. I never learned to socialize properly because of the isolation my condition resulted in, and it is extremely difficult to unlearn that now. Having almost no social communication outside my family, books and films became my only friends. It wasn’t quite as easy with the former, as, initially, I just could not stand reading. I could not stand its cousin, writing, as well. But all of that changed because my family kept pushing me to try. It was them who gave me a new means of communicating with the world, and a new way of expressing my feelings instead of keeping them all to myself. They opened a portal to a new world I could live in, without completely cutting ties with the old. They gave me the thing that helped define myself a bit better, and I thank them for that, with all of my heart.