

Cyber Bullying

To whom it may concern, (I address this as such because a) I doubt anyone will read this, and b) those that will probably couldn't be bothered)

My name is Erma Buttox, and yes, I am aware of how ridiculous my name is. It is difficult to enunciate, spell, endure, and, in my case, forget. In four years, I have transferred schools six times, received two suspensions, and made no friends. Before you think that I am some type of "bad seed," I must clarify that none of that was predominantly my fault. Apparently, besides having a traumatizing name and a disreputable academic record, I have a fatal disease that sounds like a cross between a Hawaiian fruit and a type of lethal foot fungi. It's meningitis. If you guessed right, then yes, meningitis is an infection that causes temporary or permanent deafness. I have single-sided hearing loss, which means I am partially deaf.

If you still believe that we live in a world in which disabled people receive royal treatment, then I am your living proof of the contrary. To be honest, I don't like people and people don't like me. In case I had any doubts, the millions of online messages reassured me that all people-no matter the district- are the same.

When I was six years old, my parents found out that I have meningitis. I wish I could say that they tried to be supportive and understanding, but they didn't and they weren't. They have always treated me as if I was broken and incompetent. They think that God's punishment to them was giving them a deaf daughter. I think the real punishment wasn't the deaf part, but having to deal with someone as complicated as me every day of their lives.

The bullying began when I entered middle school. Naturally, as the introverted person I am, I had trouble making friends. Weeks went by without exchanging words with anyone from school. No one knew my name or recognized my face, and that's the way I wish it had remained. Weeks later, people started approaching me, asking me questions like what my name was and why I didn't have any friends.

Unanswered questions led to unjustified fresh abhorrence for the new girl who wouldn't talk. Since teenagers are famous for mumbling (and befriending me required a lot of yelling) you can see how that affected my social status considerably. They didn't know I couldn't hear them if they talked by my right ear. "Freak," they spat, snickering in groups as spiteful and malicious as a pack of wolves. I tried to ignore their crass comments as they gradually increased from "harmless fun" to "callous bullying". They jeered at me as I passed by. Teachers saw, but never said anything.

One day, I went on Facebook. I noticed that a few girls added me as a friend, so I decided to accept those requests in hopes of losing enemies and gaining acquaintances. That same

day, I received insensitive comments from Lara Davis on my picture, publicly stating how ugly she thought I was. Many girls agreed, and one suggested I try a plastic surgeon as soon as possible. I immediately deleted everyone from my friend list, new and old.

I moved out of state for seventh grade because my father received a great job opportunity. This meant moving to a new school. This time was different. Everyone was told I was deaf from the start. I noticed the people wouldn't constantly heckle me or even acknowledge my existence. Everything remained that way 7th to 8th grade, and I was grateful for some quiet. I didn't have friends, but I didn't have enemies either, which was okay.

However, as Robed Frost said, "Nothing gold can stay." I began to realize that was true as the summer of 8th grade ended. "Your father got a new job in Tallahassee, Florida! Ima, you know Florida is one of the best vacation spots around!" my mother exclaimed, and turns to walk away. It felt like all I ever saw my mother do lately was walk away. The walls of my dark life were closing in on me and she didn't even notice.

We moved to Tallahassee by summer's end. 9th grade was tough. People pretended to befriend me, and then crushed my heart. I wish I were exaggerating. This was when I realized that if the universe was all connected like the Big Dipper, I was the random, detached star on the side with no notable place or role.

I had to punch a girl in the face in order to be suspended, because my parents would never have transferred me. 10th grade is by far the worst year of my life. Everyone in school calls me "buttocks." I want to tell everyone that it is actually pronounced "boot-o", but decided it was pointless. I don't care about anything. I am emotionally hardened.

The taunts seemed incessant; they went on for months. Soon I began to receive hate mail, and soon after that, threats demanding I leave the school. My locker was vandalized. Photo shopped flyers of me in my underwear circulated, emphasizing the "buttocks" namesake to my name. "Sticks and stones, Erma," I reminded myself. I later received various death threats from many people. When I became exhausted, I decided to set fire to the science room. No one was hurt, but I was inevitably expelled yesterday.

I'm tired of crying and feeling like a fish brandished in the air, forced to feel the loss of water and the presence of air. Unlike other people, music is not my friend, and sound is not ally. I'm tired of attempting to shadow the blade of their words to the blades ripping through my flesh to keep me numb. I have nothing to live for, and no one to miss me. I hope all the bullies get what they want if they see this suicide note. So goodbye, and hopefully not just goodnight to whom it may concern.

Farewell,

Erma Buttox