

The third grade disaster

I developed my love for Chicken McNuggets at a tender age (as I'm sure most people do) and, though even now I get intense joy from their fatty, bread-caked flavor, they never quite sit right in my bowels.

In most cases, this isn't a problem and certainly didn't keep me from devouring many a Chicken McNugget as a child. Back then, the issue was usually quite acute and only under rare circumstances was I particularly far from a toilet.

Indeed, in those early years, I had no fear of using public restrooms. Heck, I was perfectly willing to roll around in mud and play in street run-off so pooping in one of the many McDonalds around my hometown was far from an issue.

Of course, there comes a time in every person's life when the closest bathroom is farther than it needs to be. For me, that day was a Tuesday somewhere around third grade. On Tuesdays, the lady up the street whose name I still cannot pronounce (but lets call her Mrs. S.) used to pick up me, my brother, and her daughter after elementary school so we could go to catholic education class. We used to call these classes "CCD" although I have no idea why.

Mrs. S. also just so happened to be the Avon lady, so, on this day (a bright and sunny Spring day as I recall) she picked me to join her on a cosmetics delivery while my brother, her daughter, and a few other kids played on the school playground for a bit longer. For some reason, I never quite enjoyed playing on the playground and it was a treat for me to be able to drive off with Mrs. S while those suckers were still stuck on school grounds.

When Mrs. S. and I got to the appropriate address, the woman who answered the door saw my cute, bespectacled (and not yet pudgy) face, smiled, and offered me some of her own son's Chicken McNuggets.

"Could this day get any better?" I thought as I excitedly shook my head yes.

The woman handed over a couple of nuggets which I promptly devoured. Within mere minutes, Mrs. S. whisked me away back to the playground to pick up my brother and her daughter. The afternoon was going so well a part of me thought maybe something would even stop us from being forced to go to the dreaded, "CCD"... For being our saviour, Jesus sure was boring to learn about.

When we got back to the school, Mrs. S. and I hopped out of the car and she marched swiftly off toward the playground to find my brother and her daughter. I would have followed along behind her being the smarmy little goodie two shoes that I was, but as I started to walk after her, something in my large intestine grabbed a hold of me.

“O dear,” I thought, too afraid of God, my parents, teachers, and “CCD”, to use a more appropriate swear word - even in my own head.

Nothing had dislodged, but I was sure it was coming. I had no idea that my bowels could make so many noises and, though there were many kids playing on the playground, I knew they could all hear the cacophony coming from my abdomen.

Luckily, or so I thought, the school was right there. Bathrooms and sweet sweet porcelain salvation was mere steps away. But then I thought about Mrs. S. - she wouldn't have wanted me to go back into the school where she couldn't see me. I would be disobeying an authority figure if I went inside and so I stopped in my tracks facing the entrance of the school. I was paralyzed between bodily need and fear of the mysterious but powerful adult world.

Another lurch within my stomach destroyed that fear and propelled me into my first act of childhood defiance; I walked through the school doors and began a slow, awkward walk down the hallway. My steps were sometimes over extended, sometimes greatly shortened - my body seemed to know exactly how to contort itself to keep anything from falling out.

However, ooooo dang you however, each step pulled something a little looser and, before I knew it, I had stopped moving. I stopped not because I was holding anything in, quite the opposite. I stopped because there was a great release, but I was still frozen in place until I heard from behind me, “Tyler! What are you doing in here?!? It's time to go!”

I turned around slowly. I was horrified but had few options. “... Coming!” I said lurching my way forward with increasing momentum and an odd amount of confidence given my situation.

When we go to the car, I sat more than a little uncomfortably next to my dear older brother and we pulled out of the school parking lot.

Not 100 yards into the drive, the questions began.

“What's that smell?” asked Mrs. S.

... I didn't answer

“Did one of you fart?!?” she pleaded.

... still I said nothing.

“That's awful!” she exclaimed in exasperated tones.

My brother leaned over to me and whispered, “Tyler, did you poop your pants?”

I couldn't make an audible response, couldn't admit the truth to the whole car, but gave my bro an affirmative nod.

“WE HAVE TO GO HOME!” my brother yelled in response.

“Why?!?” groused Mrs. S., her crinkled and confused brow visible in the rearview mirror.

“TYLER POOPED HIS PANTS!” yelled my brother.

While I don't doubt that he said this for my own protection, I couldn't help but detect a little glee in his response and, with the resulting “OH MY GOD! GROSS! YOU'RE TOO OLD FOR THIS! JUST USE THE BATHROOM NEXT TIME!” from the rest of the car, I was a little bitter that my brother had said anything at all.

Nonetheless, my brother got me a ride home where I cleaned up, and, to both our dismay, we were soon on our way to CCD again. The admonishment continued for the 10 minute ride, but, being the only one who had known true discomfort, I was content to be clean.

I sat down at my little desk at CCD (every year those desks seemed to get disproportionately smaller) and within minutes I realized something was still wrong. The squishy rumbling began again.

Normally a supremely shy child, almost ashamed to talk to anyone anything if it wasn't 100% necessary, I was surprised at how quickly I shot my hand up to use the bathroom and HORRIFIED that I had the audacity to blurt out before being acknowledged, “CAN I PLEASE USE THE BATHROOM?!?”

The teacher worriedly shook her head yes and I shuffled off to the bathroom.

I had never used the bathrooms at CCD before. The whole building smelled like my grandparents on a bad day and I'd never wanted to know what smells lay hidden in the dank, damp bathroom. That afternoon, however, I didn't hesitate. I threw open the boy's room door and rushed into the stall.

I was surprised to discover that, resting on the surface of the murky water were what we used to call “water skeeters” (others call them “water striders” or “water bugs” ... utter nonsense if you ask me - they'll always be water skeeters). Unfortunately I had no time to contemplate the lives of the poor water skeeters or how they came to reside in the toilets in the first place. As my sweet release came, I knew the skeeters were suffering terribly and I felt a few pangs of guilt as I remembered playing with their brethren in the brook behind my childhood home.

I wasn't worried though. If I learned nothing else from CCD classes, it was that I would be forgiven with a few “Hail Marys” later in the evening.