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TAG English II

Weyerman – 1, 2

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Occasional Paper 1st Six Weeks

He still wears dinosaur pajamas. Not cool dinosaur pajamas. Not menacing, realistic, claws clashing, teeth tearing dinosaur pajamas. Rather cute, plush, fuzzy ones. The kind with a zipper up the front and a hood so that his head looks like it has green and yellow spikes.

How is it possible that this sweet boy who tells me he loves me 25 times a day and still kisses me on the lips can be in middle school? Surely he will be trampled in the hallway by boys who wear size 12 Nikes and smell like Axe body spray or by girls who show their belly buttons and snicker and gossip about their maturing male counterparts. I don’t even think he listens to music. Not cool music at least. He hasn’t discovered his favorite indie band or rap star yet; he doesn’t even have a Spotify or Pandora. At least I don’t think. He’s not a sports fanatic; he’s a youtube fanatic. He doesn’t don his idol’s jersey; he comfortably wears his C2Gamma t-shirt and brags about having five whole followers on his channel. Maybe we can avoid this whole middle school thing altogether. Maybe 6th, 7th, and 8th grades are not so imperative.

It’s not like I’ve never done this before. I’ve sent three other children to middle school and all have lived to tell the tale. But they were different kids. Hannah confided in me that she saw two people kissing, movie-star kissing; and Matthew always had his football team; and Sam – well Sam wasn’t going to take crap from anyone. She knew that girls could be petty and boys could be stupid; she was above the fray. But Chase is different. He likes science and robotics, he talks about the weather and comic books, he loves his dog and hates PE, he still sits in the backseat because it’s safest, and hates when I tease that he’s my favorite child because surely that would hurt Hannah’s feelings.

He called me upstairs the other day to see his newest neighborhood on Minecraft (which he fully admits is no longer popular and yet he plays daily). He’d built a subdivision called Seaside Ranch, which ironically isn’t on the sea or on a ranch but rather a neighborhood full of modern houses. I’m impressed. He’d meticulously constructed houses with varying elevations, some with landscapes and pools, some with multiple levels and floating staircases, none with bathrooms. He brushed off my compliments, reminding me that he’d simply followed the directions on a youtube video, but nonetheless I brag over his creations. I tell him maybe he should consider architecture as a career path. It would allow him to combine his interests in art, computers, and building. His response to me was that maybe, just maybe, we shouldn’t let a video game determine his future. Well played Chase, well played.

As the new year begins and I send my youngest off to school, my prayer is that someone sees him the way I see him: quirky, nerdy, sensitive, and utterly fantastic. I pray that he has not a lot of friends but true friends and that he knows the importance of not hurting their feelings in the same way he protects the feelings of his sister. I pray that even if he’s lost in the hallway, he won’t be lost in the classroom. That teachers will see his excitement to learn and that they will nurture his curiosity and challenge his preconceived notions. But most of all I pray that as he does discover Axe and belly buttons and Spotify and movie-star kisses that he never loses the spirit of my sweet boy in plush dinosaur pjs willing to kiss his mother good night.