The Abnormal Boy
Theodore Sarantos

"Jimmy can't talk. The cat's got his tongue. Young, young, young."

The small group of second graders had joined hands and were dancing in a circle around Jimmy. He continued walking toward the schoolhouse, which was two blocks away. His eyes stared at the ground, pretending to see the way.

The second graders repeated their chorus. They didn't know how near they were to the truth. Jimmy didn't have a tongue. In fact, his throat didn't contain any of the organs of speech.

"Jimmy can't hear. Jimmy is deaf. Hef, hef, hef."

That was true. But Jimmy could read lips excellently. His tutor had been surprised at the speed he had picked up the art. He continued to look at the ground, to keep from looking at the lips of his classmates. But he knew what they were saying. He had memorized their jingles long ago.

He wished they would stop jumping about him. Usually, nothing they did bothered him too much. But that day was different. He had that weird headache, the one that pounded at his head and hurt him all through his tiny body. The night before, when he had begun to look at the stars from his bedroom window, he had known he would have the headache the next day. It had been a clear night, and although he dreaded the headache, he was compelled to look at the stars. Ever since he could remember he had desired to look at the stars, on clear nights, when he could see deep into space.

"Jimmy don't know where he comes from. He was found on the ground. Lound, lound, lound."

A farmer had found Jimmy in a field. That happened on the same night that thing, whatever it was, had plowed into Mt. Peters, and exploded and exploded until there wasn't anything left of it to tell what it had been. Jimmy had been found at the bottom of the mountain, but no one thought to connect the two incidents. After all, no one could have lived through that crash. No human could have.

Under an old law of that country, the farmer was allowed to keep Jimmy. The farmer wasn't rich, but by the time Jimmy was six years old, the farmer had saved enough money to hire a tutor to teach Jimmy to read lips, and to write and read as other people did. Jimmy spent his first school year alone with his tutor, but she was so well satisfied with his progress that she recommended that he go to the public school, starting at the second grade.

Perhaps if Jimmy had started to school at the same time his classmates did, they wouldn't have picked on him as they did. As it was, his classmates had grown used to each other during their first year of school, and when Jimmy joined them, they had something new to play and experiment with. His defects affected them the
same way they would have affected most small children. They made
fun of them.

They would have stopped it soon enough, if Jimmy had completely
ignored them, but they discovered they could annoy him every once
in a while: the days he had the headaches. Consequently, they
 teased him every day, hoping that would be the day.

Jimmy didn’t know why he got the headaches, or why he allowed
himself to be annoyed by his classmates on those days. Most of the
time he was immune to their torments, and simply went around in his
silent world, but after looking at the stars, he seemed to be sensitive
to every thing that occurred in his life.

“Jimmy’s a weakling. Jimmy’s a punk. Dunk, dunk, dunk.”

No one actually knew if that statement was true or not. His fos-
ter father never asked him to do any heavy work, and his classmates
never asked him to play with them. Even the teacher, when she
supervised the games, never permitted him to participate in the
strenuous games. That was understandable. Jimmy was only two
feet tall, and his pitifully thin body made him appear even smaller.
He was barely human looking.

“Jimmy’s a lumphead. Jimmy’s an egg head. Med, med, med.”

His head was egg-shaped. And much too large for his body. His
tiny eyes and nose and mouth were set in the small, lower front part
of his face. As his head went back, it grew larger and larger and
larger. A very thick mass of hair covered his head, but his foster
father never cut the hair short. He had told Jimmy there was no
need to cut it short and show people that he didn’t have any ears.

“Jimmy’s a brain. Jimmy’s teacher’s pet. Het, het, het.”

Jimmy did get straight “A’s” without trying, but not because the
teacher gave him extra help. The work just seemed easy to him.

The children stopped jumping, and Jimmy glanced at him. They
were pointing at someone, and talking excitedly to each other. Jimmy
looked at the person, and he gasped in fear.

Bull! Bull the Bully! Bull, who had failed three grades and was
now in the eighth grade instead of the eleventh. Bull, who continually
got into fights, sometimes even with boys larger than he, although
he himself was six feet tall and weighed one hundred ninety pounds.
Bull, who could torment Jimmy even on the days when he didn’t
have a headache.

Bull walked through the group of second graders and stopped
when he reached Jimmy. The second graders giggled and whispered
to each other. Bull grabbed Jimmy by the throat, his large hand
completely encircling it.

Bull spoke. “Well, Jimmy, aren’t you going to say hello to me?”

He reached out and pinched Jimmy’s nose. Jimmy opened his mouth
in pain, but no sounds were emitted. The ache in Jimmy’s head and
body pounded harder, and sharper.

Bull reached into his pocket and pulled out a match. “Do you
know what this is?” Bull smiled.

Jimmy knew what it was. Many times before, Bull had lit one inch from Jimmy’s face. Sometimes Bull pushed the flame against Jimmy’s skin; sometimes he was content to let go of Jimmy and stand and laugh as Jimmy dashed away from Bull towards safety.

Now Bull lit the match with his thumbnail. The pain throbbed harder and harder and deeper and deeper within Jimmy. Bull moved the burning match closer to Jimmy’s face. He bent his fat face down before Jimmy’s, so that the match was directly between the two faces.

The match moved closer. Then it touched Jimmy’s nose. He jerked in pain, but he couldn’t free himself from Bull’s grasp. Bull laughed. Then he pushed the match harder against Jimmy’s skin.

Jimmy wanted to know why Bull did these things to him. He wanted to know why Bull liked to make the pain hurt more and more. He couldn’t stand it any longer. He clutched his tiny fingers against his small palm. He couldn’t see the flame any more, or the figures of his classmates. He could only see Bull’s face.

Jimmy swung his fist into that face. The second graders barely saw the movement, it was so swift. But they heard the sickening crunch of smashed and broken bones. Bull crumpled to the ground without a sound. He didn’t move; or breathe.

Jimmy looked at Bull for a long time: then slowly he rubbed his hand. It didn’t hurt at all. Then he walked to the school. After that, no one bothered him anymore.

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Words of Truth

Ronnie Grey

Through the Crusade for Freedom several million ordinary Americans are waging their own cold war across the border that divides the Soviet satellite empire from free Europe. Are you one of these freedom-loving persons?

The results are distinct and impressive. The Crusaders have been able to disclose Red secret agents, to embolden a quarter-million Hungarian farmers to quit their collectives and demand rights as free farmers, to give a powerful assist to the collapse of the Polish Ministry of Security Police. The Crusade, sponsored by the American Heritage Foundation, was organized in support of a simple theory—that the truth can defeat a lie wherever the two can be pitted in fair combat. On the strength of this theory—and of the dollars supplied by individual Americans who have faith in it—one of the most eccentric and effective communications systems of all history has been built and put into operation.

The foundation’s operational arm, the Free Europe Committee, has encircled the satellite empire with five radio stations—the Radio