

# The Music Lesson

by Sarah Stucki

I don't remember the words that were spoken, or if there were any, but I'll always remember his face. His tears. His sobs.

The choir room was extraordinarily noisy. The excitement of a new day was rushing through everyone. There was so much energy in the air. Enough to make lights shine and fires to start miraculously on their own. It was the perfect day for a complete disaster.

Mr. Dunn, the bald, squatty man, lined us up how we sang. The good ones were in the middle, bad ones on the sides, and, of course, his star, his daughter, Brittany, right in front even though she was tall and made it difficult for anyone to be seen behind her.

"All right, class, quiet down." He spoke in his fake, confident voice, the voice that made people squirm and their blood boil.

"Let's begin with scales. Ready and..." He tapped his baton on the music stand. He gripped it as though it held all the power in the world, his power that decided our self-esteem.

"La la la la la la la la." We were running through the non-thought-containing notes. Clearing our throats to reach the high ones. Quietly bowing our heads for the low ones. Laughing when we made a mistake because we knew we were horrible. So did Mr. Dunn.

"Ha ha ha ha." Loud laughter burst from someone to the left of me. I turned to look and see who it was. My face turned red. It was Mark. My crush on him was given away by my bright face. Suddenly, a loud tapping. I whirled around to look at Mr. Dunn pounding on the music stand for us to stop with our scales.

"Who was laughing just now?" His veins stuck out of his stubby neck. Silence. "Who was it?" He struck the stand with his baton. His eyes searched the risers for the guilty party. The person for whom the lecture would be worthy.

I felt his eyes pass over me. I was afraid for Mark because I just knew that Mr. Dunn would figure out it was him. I guess it didn't help much that 59 out of 60 choir students were staring straight at Mark.

"Mark Hubble." His voice boomed throughout the auditorium. "What was so funny, Mr. Hubble? Why don't you share it with the class?" He stared at Mark with a smirk on his face. Mark just stared at his feet. "Excuse me, Mark, are you deaf? What was so funny?"

A mumble came from Mark's serious face. "Nothing," he said.

## HANDOUT: The Music Lesson

“Nothing, huh? Well, if it was just nothing, then why don’t you come and show us how well you can sing?” He made this statement as though he were a god. “Come on, Mark. Stand here and sing your scales for the class.” He pointed to a part in front of the music stand.

Mark was a good guy. He obeyed his teachers. He was never mean at all. He was “fortunate” to be at our school because he was from a reservation in Arizona. So, of course, he went to the music stand and stood before his peers. Us.

“You may begin now,” Mr. Dunn spoke bluntly. The piano player began to run through the notes as Mark whispered the scale. “Sing louder, Mark, we can’t hear you.” Mark sang a little louder. Tears began to fall from his eyes. “Mark, you can sing louder. We heard you loudly before when you were laughing.” Mark was crying harder now. Sobs began escaping from him.

He was very embarrassed, and I didn’t blame him for crying. I would have too if Mr. Dunn had treated me like Mark, and I feel today that the only reason he was so mean to Mark was because Mark was Native American.

Mark never finished those scales that day, and he never came back again. I don’t blame him for that either.