Projectors, Bell Curves, and Midday Showers

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Chapter 1.


"And what are you going to do with your major in English?" my dad says.

"Speak it," I reply.

Not the right answer.

I sign up for education courses.

Chapter 2.

Jacksonville High School.

Student teaching.

Eleventh grade English.

I walk across town in the snow to my assigned class.

Behind the desk, the teacher sits, never moving.

"Read the story from the anthology," she says,

"and answer the questions at the end."

She never talks to me.

No one from the college ever visits.

When it is my turn, I sit at her desk, never moving.

"Read the story from the anthology," I say,

"and answer the questions at the end."

Chapter 3.

Los Angeles.

BA degree, no career.

I don't know how to use my skills in another line of work.

California requires more courses before I can teach,

how to run a movie projector,

how to design a bulletin board display,

how to average grades on the bell curve.

A professor says, "The best thing to do
when you are a teacher is to find time
to take a shower in the middle of the day."

Chapter 4.

Victorville.

The interview.

The principal doesn't want to hire me.

He says, "I wish you had some experience."

I say, "I'm still learning, but by this time next year I'll have it."

He hires me.

That doesn't make me a teacher.

Chapter 5.

School begins.

A week going to meetings,

getting to know the faculty,

decorating my classroom,

renting an apartment.

It's a job, just a job.

First day of school I'm walking across the campus with another teacher.

When an eighth grade girl comes to greet her.

My friend introduces us.

The girl puts her hand in mine,

looks into my eyes

and says,

"Oh, I hope I get you for my teacher."

The moment our hands touch

I become a teacher.

Chapter 6.

My first year.

A wonderful year.

I teach English, history, science, PE.

I teach the kids to dance,

start a school newspaper.

But best of all

I never have to run the film projector

I ignore the bell curve

And, because I teach PE just before lunch,

I take a shower in the middle of every day.

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