

## I Am Who I Am

Letting out a hair-raising battle cry, Bradley leapt onto the back of his victim, a scrawny classmate for no reason.

“You savage! Get off me—!” he cried as Bradley mercilessly tore out tufts of his black hair and forced him to the ground.

Silence immediately befell the entire playground, the once rowdy now a tense arena. Curiosity plagued, a tight circle quickly formed around the two. It was no surprise that the spectators all rooted for the poor provoked kid. They watched in horror as Bradley threw a stream of precise punches to his opponent, repeatedly pulling him to his feet and ripping the school uniform. The crowd, disgusted and aghast, booed and chanted, “Monster!”

“That’s right, that’s what I am,” murmured Bradley through his bust and bloodied lips with a smirk.

Before long, the throng was dispersed when an exasperated teacher, who grabbed Bradley by the collar towards the familiar principal’s office. All the while, continuously chiding him for his tyrannous behaviour. Bradley did not hear a word, for his ears were ringing. A few slams of doors and exchanges of gruff threats, Bradley found himself in an uncomfortably serene room. He had been sentenced to counselling sessions.

Slumping on the couch, and glaring at the door, Bradley growled, at the mere thought of the counsellor, who was most likely going to be a baggy old woman with endless wrinkles and patience to match. However, the woman who waltzed into the room was certainly not who he expected.

“So, you’re Bradley Chalkers?” The woman asked, consulting her clipboard. He nodded, barely moving his head. Raising her eyebrows at Bradley’s rebellious behaviour, she lowered herself into one of the couches, having it sag under her weight.

“Bradley, my name is Carla, your counsellor, so let’s start off with a simple question. Now, they may be simple, but I want you to think carefully about them, and not just go with your instinct.”

“Mhm,” mumbled Bradley.

“Do you have any control over who you are?”

“No,” Bradley grunted bluntly.

“So what determines who you are?”

“I dunno.”

“Well Bradley, I’m going to tell you. It’s your own thoughts.”

Bradley frowned, not understanding how it had to do with his misbehaviour.

“I sense that you are very confused. Let me explain. Take Nicholas Vujicic as an example. He’s an Australian born with phocomelia, which is a rare disorder with absence of all four limbs. During his childhood, he was brutally bullied by his classmates but he didn’t let it get to him. He didn’t let what other people think affect him, become a self-fulfilling prophecy. What kind of person did he turn out to be?” Carla continued.

“A loser, duh,” Bradley fought back.

“On the flipside, he was highly successful and nowadays, is a motivation and inspiration for so many people. he gives talks and lectures for people all around the world, and is the symbol of bravery.” Carla finished, hardly minding the fact that Bradley didn’t give her the answer she was looking for.

Silence filled the minuscule room as one contemplated, and one looked carefully at the reactions. Bradley could relate to that a lot, being bullied by his “friends”. The problem was that he hadn’t thought enough to block them out, to do what he wanted to do, and not just please everyone.

The worst part isn't losing friends, it's losing yourself. And Bradley had lost himself ten years ago, but now, he was on the verge of finding himself. He couldn't let it be a self-fulfilling prophecy, and mope around beating people up. Bradley had no choice but to be strong, and ignore everything people said about him, because they didn't matter. *Just try*, a voice in his head told him.

Standing up, he gave a small smile to Carla, and, as she, shocked, smiled back, he strolled out of the room, feeling empowered.

At the end of the day, Bradley strolled into the playground. Instantly, cries of "Monster!" were heard. Bradley swivelled around, a frown on his face. His opponent, the same guy who had triggered him that morning, cringed and took a step back, preparing himself to be pulverised.

"I am not a monster," Bradley enunciated every word carefully.

Then, calmly, he walked away. Bradley Chalkers had learnt a lesson, and through this inspiring incident, he had learned to be in control over who he was as a person, and let his own thoughts determine who he was.