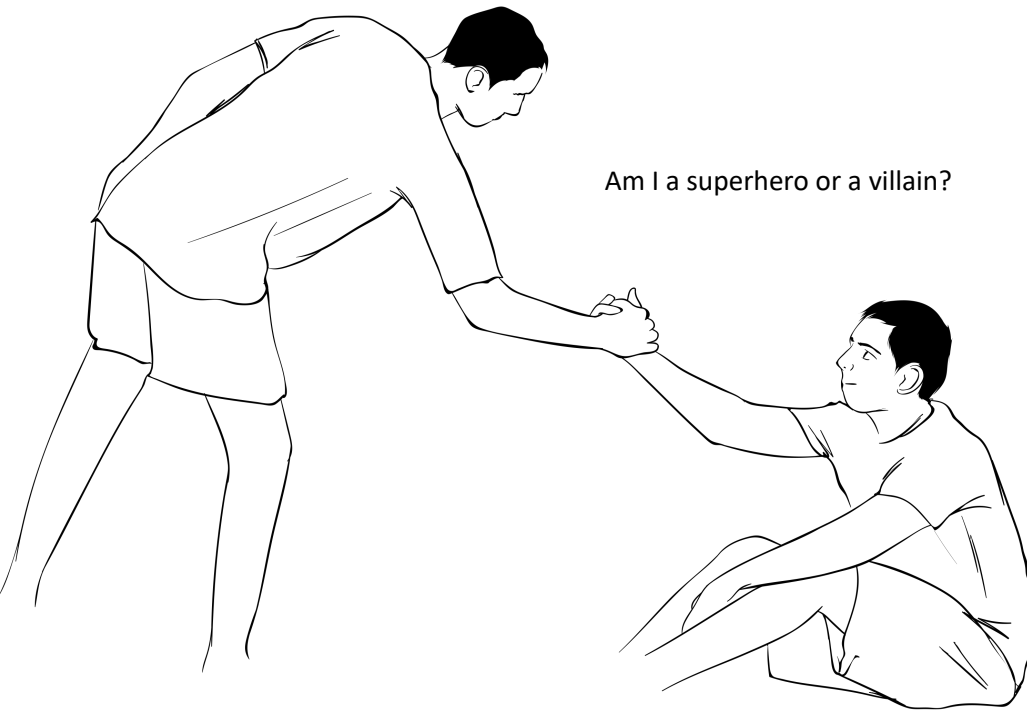
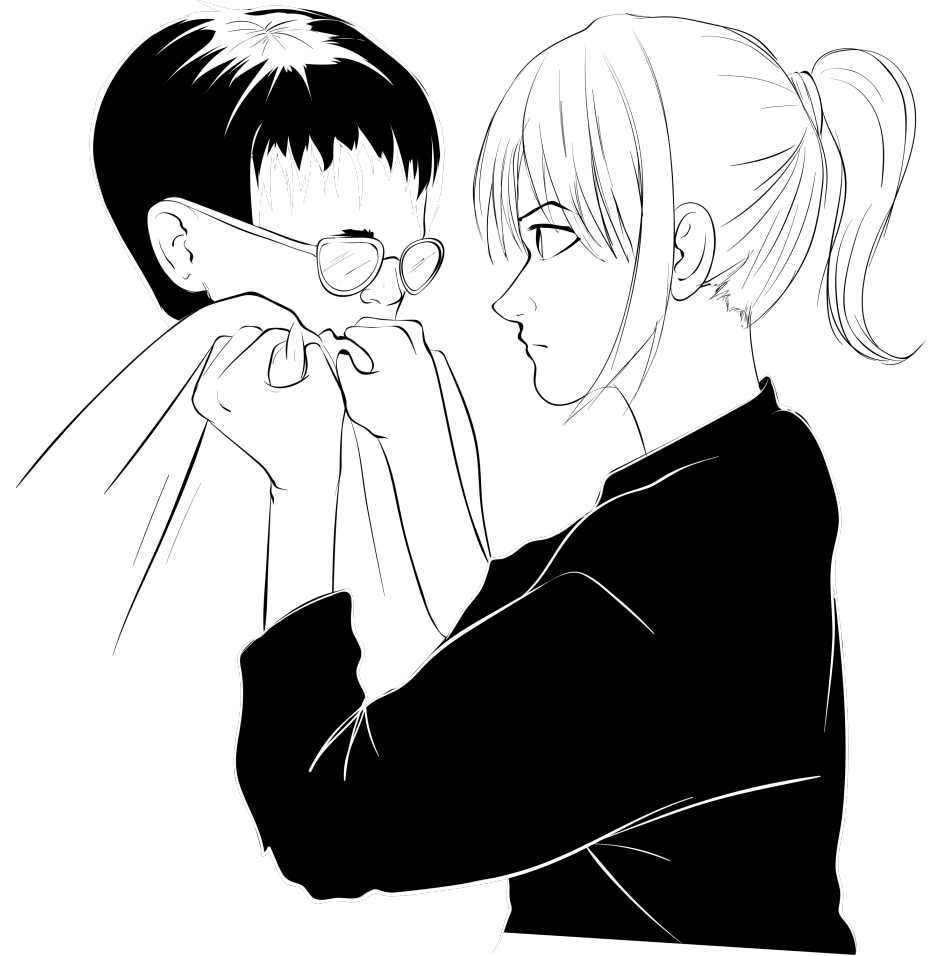


BULLY

Bullies are all in pain. A superhero helps them up.



Am I like them or like him?



WRITTEN BY PETE NGUYEN

ARTWORK BY SUSAN MOTIONS

WHAT IF I COULD TALK TO MY BULLIES LIKE BATMAN DID TO THE JOKER?

BATMAN TRIED TO MAKE HIS BULLY SUBMIT, BUT THE JOKER SAID THAT BATMAN HAD NOTHING. I HAD NOTHING TO THREATEN HIM WITH. NOTHING I CAN DO WITH ALL MY STRENGTH. ALL MY TRAINING IN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL COMBAT MEANT NOTHING.



I WAS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL. A BOY TWO GRADES HIGHER THAN ME HATED ME. I DON'T REMEMBER WHY.

DURING BREAK, HE GRABS ME IN THE HALLWAYS. IT'S ALMOST CLICHÉ. BUT A CLICHÉ IS OVERUSED TO WHERE ORIGINAL MEANING IS LOST. ALL THAT IS LOST HERE IS MY BELIEF IN MYSELF.



AND MY BULLY TELLS ME, JUST LIKE THE JOKER,
"DON'T TALK LIKE ONE OF THEM.
YOU'RE NOT. EVEN IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE. TO THEM, PETE,
YOU'RE JUST A FREAK."

Religion was supposed to save me. But they all just watched.
EveryOne...just watched

I'VE BEEN BULLIED AS AN ADULT. IT'S STRANGE TO THINK SO SINCE I HAVE BEEN TRAINING IN MARTIAL ARTS SINCE I WAS 12. I'M TRAINED IN AIKIDO, KEMPO, TAE KWON DO, AND BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU. I'VE TAKEN ON 300-POUND MEN AND **STRANGL**ED THEM OUT. I CAN PROBABLY TAKE ON 80-90% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION. BUT ALL THAT TRAINING DIDN'T MATTER. I STILL HAVE BEEN BULLIED AS AN ADULT.

I'M ALSO TRAINED IN RHETORIC. I CAN DISSECT ARGUMENTS AND DETACH MYSELF FROM EMOTION TO ARTFULLY PERSUADE AND PROTECT OTHERS FROM BEING MANIPULATED.

BUT I COULDN'T PROTECT **MYSELF**.



I WAS AT WORK. I REPRESENTED SOMETHING HE HATED. AND EVEN THOUGH I WAS TRYING TO HELP HIM, HE DIDN'T CARE. HE WAS LOOKING TO PICK A FIGHT AND MAKE ME FEEL SMALL. HE RIDICULED ME AND MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS NOTHING; I AM NOTHING.

I HATE HIM. BUT NOW I HATE MYSELF MORE.

IT'S **LIKE A SONG** THAT'S ATTACHED TO A MEMORY. WHEN YOU HEAR THAT SONG, NO MATTER HOW MANY DIFFERENT TIMES AND PLACES YOU'VE HEARD THE SONG, YOU ONLY REMEMBER THAT ONE TERRIBLE MEMORY WHEN THE SONG PLAYS.

WHEN I HEAR THIS SONG, I ONLY REMEMBER HIS FACE.

HIS FACE AND A HAMMER.

BEING BULLIED IS A STATE OF MIND. IF YOU DON'T VIEW A SITUATION AS BEING BULLIED, THEN YOU AREN'T BULLIED. BUT IF YOU FEEL BULLIED, IT IS VERY HARD TO SHAKE THE FEELING OF BEING BULLIED.

I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A SUPERHERO. SUPERHEROES PROTECT AND SAVE OTHERS. NORMAL PEOPLE CAN ALSO SAVE AND PROTECT, BUT SUPERHEROES HAVE UNIQUE POWERS ATTRIBUTED TO THEM TO PROTECT AND SAVE OTHERS.



BUT THERE IS ALSO THIS OTHER SIDE WHERE I WANT TO DESTROY WITH MY SUPERPOWERS. THAT FEELING OF FEAR AND HATING MYSELF AFTER BEING BULLIED ALONG WITH MY ANGER ISSUES CAUSES ME TO WANT TO USE MY SUPERPOWERS TO DESTROY THOSE THAT MAKE ME FEEL THE WAY I FEEL. AM I JUST ONE FALL INTO A VAT OF ACID AWAY FROM BEING THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE?