

I'm Not A Sociopath, I Promise

By Leah Stark

What I remember about my childhood is the silence. It was practically infinite. Every second, no matter where I was or what I was doing, was greeted with silence. It was coming from me. The world itself was a splattering of every kind of noise in existence. I wasn't much for noise as a child. I wasn't much for people either, especially talking to them. I didn't mind their existence, as long as I didn't have to be a part of it. The more I was forced to, the more obstinate I became in my silence. Adults in my life never seemed to process the stark bewilderment with which I processed the world. They were just, "You're autistic, go make friends!" They viewed the situation with simplicity, contrasting my vague, intricate confusion. At school, the other kids would talk and play. I'd always just watch them. It wasn't only the petrification from the thought of interacting with them, but the fact that I could never make sense out of their behavior. I felt like one of those documentarians who observe different animal species to try to better understand their lifestyles. I couldn't comprehend what they were doing, or why, and especially the thought of joining them, which was pressed on me constantly.

The alarming sense of dread people gave me soon mixed with the bewilderment they caused me to create a total lack of social participation on my part. Which I was content with. Others were not. Countless adults tried to encourage me to make friends, or join group activities. I couldn't comprehend the thought of it. But, they seemed to draw the conclusion that social interaction would be able to transform me into a reasonably-functional human. It was well-intentioned but futile considering I didn't understand anything about being a part of society.

I always had a curiosity about people though. I constantly observed them, trying to grasp reasoning behind their behaviors. This failed because humans still made no sense to me. But after several quiet, antisocial years, I found a window to the world through literature. I became fascinated with it. It was like an entryway into people's minds, fictional or not. Reading gave me access into who the characters were, and the rationality behind their behaviors. It also offered profound entertainment. I no longer spent all of my time failing to participate in life, because I was able to escape into the words on the pages.

My first exposure to life outside of my tiny bubble was through TV and film. It wasn't real life being depicted, but the storytelling was realistic enough to allow me to see what life was about. As I grew up in my deep cave of isolation, I became more infatuated with cinema. You could argue watching hours of television a day is a waste of life. However, it was the only way I could experience life. It taught me how people interact, how they show emotion, how they spend their time. It exposed me to what life could be if I had a social bone in my body.

Eventually I learned basic human interaction through years of public school. However this didn't dissuade my love of film. It's still my whole life. I've always been captivated with different methods of storytelling, but film will always be my favorite. Something about how everything is captured - the visuals, the sound, the characterization. Every detail that could possibly go into storytelling is applied, and the stories are captured to the fullest effect. There are also endless possibilities with film. Any kind

of story is possible to make, with infinite options for every detail. There are no limits for the imagination, and film is able to breathe life into every aspect of it. My life started as a void of silence, and I filled it with art.