

After Class

by Ben Hauck

Ben Hauck

(212) 252-4706

<http://www.benhauck.com>

After Class

by Ben Hauck

[Program Note: When listing the role of the character in the program, please list him as “THE TEACHER,” and not by his character’s name.]

[A high-school-freshman algebra teacher, around forty years old, eyes to the floor, paces nervously left to right of an overhead projector. The overhead projector rests on a media cart, on. A projector screen stands opened behind the teacher, and two wooden school-chairs sit empty a distance in front of him, facing him. Behind the overhead sits his desk, with papers, books, and assorted school items, including stuffed animals or dolls. He considers what he might say to the parents of a student who has had recent problems in his class. The parents will meet him in his classroom an hour after school ends, a half-hour from now. After a few moments of pacing, he halts.]

THE TEACHER

[With a put-on seriousness:] Judge Lawler, Missiz Lawler. Please sit down. [Not liking the approach:] No.

[He continues pacing. Suddenly, he halts again.]

THE TEACHER

[Overly laughing:] HA HA HA!!!, Judge Lawler, Missiz Lawler!—No.

[He continues pacing for a step, then notices the stuffed animals on his desk. He goes to pick them up. As he chooses two, he names them:]

THE TEACHER

Judge Lawler, Missiz Lawler, [Himself:] “Brandon Raper,” *PLEASE*, have a seat. [Takes them to the empty chairs and sets them down. Steps back. Acts as if they mention the weather.] Yes, Lovely day, lovely. Lovely. Lovely lovely lovely. I hear it’s supposed to rain tomorrow, did you hear that? Uh-huh. Yeah. *Well*. Let’s get down to business shall we? The topic your daughter, Amelia. Amelia’s a lovely girl, *pleasant*, she’s a pleasant girl don’cha think? I’ve taught, I’ve been a teacher for eighteen years now, haven’t known a more *pleasant* child than Amelia. Not in eighteen years. She brightens my days, I practically *wait* for her entering my classroom everyday, everyday everyday, mm-hmm.

My Day doesn’t get turned on until I turn on Ole Gruber though. [References the overhead projector.] Mn-hn, tha’s right, “Ole Gruber,” that’s the name of my overhead projector, “Ole Gruber,” had that name for a long time, some thirteen years, I’d say. I call him that cuz we got the word “Gruber” on it, I’d say my best guess is that’s the manufacturer, some overhead projector company. I stared at that some five years I’d say?, five years I’d stared at this word “Gruber” and not said it once, just looked at it

kinda unconsciously not saying it or anything, until one day I was in my classroom with a student, talkin to em, and I look down and say when I'm all, riled up and tryin to make a point or something, I think my overhead wasn't comin on, I looked at it all frustrated and I said, kinda humorously, "*Gruber!*" And it came on. So that's how it got its name, "Ole Gruber."

Like I said, my Day doesn't start until Ole Gruber's on. [Saunters over to his desk.] Gruber's being on is like the sunrise to me, and I flip on Ole Gruber's switch and get that square or rectangle-ular, you know, sheet of light, I just sit in my chair and sip my coffee. [Sits.] I got my feet back and I look at that sunrise Gruber gives me. Sure, as a sunrise it doesn't move much, I mean it's just stationary I guess you'd say, no cock-a-doodle-does or, but—. [Stands.] Ya know the other day I made a realization about that sunrise, on, on the nature of it—Ya know how they say 'it'll happen as sure as the sun'll come up'? Well, Ole Gruber's different, ya see cuz Gruber can break down, his bulb can blow out or the circuits could blow, and there's no real relying on it, the trust you put in him doesn't mean a damn thing to him, he can just *bzzt*, break down. So, I guess with all how old he is, some eighteen years give-or-take, I just walk in here thinkin, Is this the day Gruber'll break down on me? Is this the day he'll choose to call it quits? Good thing I'm not really locked-in to a schedule, just a easy-goin teacher not like *some*, cuz if Gruber broke down and since we don't have any more projectors to go round as far as I know, I'd be outta overhead-teachin for a few days while it's gettin repaired. Or while they're ordering a new one from the Gruber Company. And back to the chalkboards I'd go, I wouldn't wanna do that to my students, revert back to *chalk*. Maybe I should tell them that, that someday we'll be back to the days when I lecture with chalk all over my hands. [Smiles.]

And they're pretty good kids, it's a math class so they come into my class needin a lot of help, they don't come in after class as much as they used to, I'm glad *you're* here. I dunno, it's strange because the students seem to be getting *worse*, in their math, Like algebra, algebra was never a big deal to me in high school, but the kids here, they're all, well not all, but there're a lot of them getting C's and D's and F's and I don't remember those being acceptable grades when I was in school. But they don't SAY ANYTHING about it!—I mean *anything*, they often just sit there, don't raise their hands don't speak—but I'm okay, I can handle it—but it's *frustrating*, it's *frustrating*, because you can't rile them up in any way, you can't *stimulate* them with *math*, I mean when I'm talking to a kid like a person, not student-teacher mode but, you know, buddy-to-buddy, guy-to-gal, talking about math class doesn't *arouse* them, it's other stuff: It's football, it's guys it's gals it's Playboys and Hustlers, and it's cars and substitute teachers and movies with sex and violence and it's popularity. And I try to emulate that, I try to bring that into my teaching, I try to give them transparencies, like the transparencies, the transparencies I made from a Calvin Klein ad, I mean, they like Calvin Klein ads they like Calvin Klein, and I try to give them that, I do algebra problems about people they know, Cindy Crawford, Anna Nicole Smith, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and they seem to like it, I mean I get some response from some of the *guys*, and for the girls I always pun around with math terms: "alge-BRA," "ASS- ymptote." One of the things I do at the beginning of the year, I do it to get them interested, to rile em up, to make em laugh and get excited about

me, I do this little math equation routine, I start off by saying “Mister Raper loves...,” and I pick a girl in the class. *Amelia*, for sake of simplicity, Your daughter’s really one talented girl, Missiz and Judge Lawler, pleasant AND talented, best in my first period class. Then I say, “OH, he *loves* Amelia. But Mister Raper also has a strange infatuation with *cellulite*, you could say he has a bit of a ‘cellulite *fetish*.’ So you could say he also *loves* cellulite. So you can write [Saying as he writes on the overhead projector in red marker:]

$$\text{Amelia} = \text{Love} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{Cellulite} = \text{Love}$$

which you can combine to:

$$\text{Amelia} = \text{Cellulite} = \text{Love}$$

and then add me in there:

$$\text{Amelia} + \text{Mr. Raper} = \text{Cellulite} + \text{Mr. Raper} = \text{Love} + \text{Mr. Raper}$$

Now, Love just absorbs Mr. Raper, so that just cancels Mr. Raper out there, so now you got [*Just say the line.*]:

$$\text{Amelia} + \text{Mr. Raper} = \text{Cellulite} + \text{Mr. Raper} = \text{Love}$$

And that’s all fine and dandy. But then along comes *Cindy Crawford*, and Cindy Crawford’s a very attractive woman, and she’s gonna divide Mr. Raper’s attention away from Amelia. So what do we do now? We divide by Cindy Crawford:

$$\frac{\text{Amelia} + \text{Mr. Raper}}{\text{Cindy Crawford}} = \frac{\text{Cellulite} + \text{Mr. Raper}}{\text{Cindy Crawford}} = \frac{\text{Love}}{\text{Cindy Crawford}}$$

Well, Love again absorbs Cindy Crawford so Cindy Crawford drops out there, and since Cindy Crawford has no cellulite, Cellulite drops out of the equation, and Amelia and Cindy Crawford can’t occupy Mr. Raper’s attention at the same time, so Amelia drops out of the equation there, leaving [*Say the line below.*]:

$$\frac{\text{Mr. Raper}}{\text{Cindy Crawford}} = \frac{\text{Mr. Raper}}{\text{Cindy Crawford}} = \text{Love}$$

Mr. Raper ON TOP OF Cindy Crawford, equals Mr. Raper ON TOP OF Cindy Crawford, equals Love.” [Laughs slightly at his own joke.] And that usually gets em to laugh, or it used to, it used to get real laughs when I said Brooke Shields in the Eighties. I dunno, maybe that’s a sign of my age.

Another thing I do to loosen my students up is I try to make em feel at home in my class. Some of the punks I get adapt to that idea *just fine*, just sit themselves down in their chairs all sprawled out, legs all stretched out and don’t forget the holey jeans they wear, you can see their underwear through em! Others come in all uptight, ya know, first math class in high school, it’s a big school, so I say ‘I’m there for them and if they need to talk about anything, *anything*, talk to *me*, I can keep a secret, I’m a good listener and I’ve already gone to high school with all those hormonal, pubescent teenagers, I’ve already experienced that. I’ve seen it all.” I also usually take their pictures the first day of classes, I have a Polaroid camera and I snap their pictures with them standin in front of Ole Gruber cuz my flash broke and I’m too cheap to buy a new one, so Gruber lights em well. I have em write their names on their pictures, and I put them into a card file and take it home and put it beside my bed. Right next to the tissues. I memorize em, I try to memorize em the first night so I impress them the next day with what I know—people are always kinda “*attracted*” to those who know their name. I know in school I felt special if

my teacher knew my name first.

Actually though, I hated the first day of school cuz in the classes where students didn't know me, especially in middle school and high school, when the teacher would say "Brandon Raper" all the other people in the class would bust out laughing at "Raper." Once a substitute teacher, a really gorgeous one, said it wrong, she said "Rapper" instead of "Raper," and when I corrected her on an impulse, she and the class let out this huge laugh that just seemed to engulf my whole presence, I turned all red embarrassed and didn't say anything the rest of the week. I was the Joke of the Week.

There was this one guy, Casey Broadfoot, big lug of a guy in my government class, he stuck pictures of naked women in between the pages of my books and wrote "RAPER" in big black capital letters on all of them and drew big black arrows in marker pointing to their pussies, er vaginas, and the whole class knew and they were *watchin* me, but I didn't realize why until when I got home I opened my government book at the kitchen table with my mom there and she saw them *all* and slapped me around hard, told my dad and he beat me with a belt, grounded me for a month. She didn't confiscate the pictures though, she left in a tirade, and I kept them in an envelope in my room and, I kept them in an envelope. But, *No*, I don't *have* them anymore, I outgrew that, I outgrew *that*—ALRIGHT OKAY I FUCKED AMELIA UP THAT TIGHT PUSSY! I FUCKED HER UP THE ASS AND I FUCKED HER GOOD AND WELL AND SHE LIKED IT! SHE *LIKED* IT!, AND I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO APOLOGIZE THIS TIME! I FUCKED HER WHILE OLE GRUBER WATCHED AND I FUCKED HER ALL BATHED IN LIGHT FOR EVERYONE TO SEE! SERVES YA RIGHT, SERVES YA *RIGHT*!, FOR LENDING YOUR DAUGHTER TO ME TO STIMULATE HER MIND, AROUSE HER INTEREST, ACT AS HER TEACHER, SHE DIDN'T SHOW A FUCKING *SHIT* OF INTEREST IN CLASS, NO DRIVE, NO DESIRE, BUT SHE CAN *FUCK*, SHE CAN PROCREATE LIKE THEM BEST OF EM AND NOW SHE CAN DO IT BETTER, SHE PROVED HERSELF, *SHE WAS FINALLY MOTIVATED*, AND WHEN SHE LET OUT THAT ECHOING MOAN, SHE *KNEW* WHAT LIFE WAS! IT WAS SHARING, ECSTASY, EXCITEMENT, DARING, OPENING UP, AND VOICING THAT INMOST THING SHE WANTED TO SAY! IT WAS RECKLESS ABANDON—AND IT WAS GIVING OVER TO ONE SHE TRUSTED TO LET HER OWN FULL SELF SHOW THROUGH! LAW, JUDGE LAWLER?! WHO GIVES A *FUCK* ABOUT THE LAW IN THE FACE OF RAW CARNAL HUMAN ECSTASY?!—

[The overhead projector goes out. The bulb has blown. Silence.]

[To the overhead, Spent:] I guess it's time to move on. Your bulb's blown. [Pause.] Gruber, I guess I need to turn you in. I need to turn you in, buddy. You need to retire, you've seen all you can see, you've gotten too old. [Pause.]

Thanks. [Pause.] Thanks.

[Unplugs the overhead projector, picks it up, and solemnly exits as the lights fade in silence.]

Copyright © 1999 Ben Hauck.