

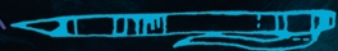
Can Jake silence the voice in his head?



LOUDER

THAN

HUNGER



JOHN SCHU

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PRAISE FOR
LOUDER THAN HUNGER

“A beautiful, powerful, and emotionally impactful book. Jake’s story will fill you with hope and the courage to face your own challenges!”

Jeff Kinney, author of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series

“John Schu has given us a courageous tale confirming that the voices inside of us—the ones trying to silence our lives—are real, but conquerable. This is a story of triumph, and I hope that for readers, *Louder Than Hunger* is louder than heartbreak.”

Jason Reynolds, Carnegie Medal winner for *The Long Way Down*

“Every so often a book comes along that is so brave and necessary, it extends a lifeline when it’s needed most. This is one of those books.”

Katherine Applegate, author of *The One and Only Ivan*

“Captivating, poignant, graceful, and so important. John Schu is a masterful storyteller, and his lyrical prose will be relatable to anyone dealing with self-acceptance. It’s the kind of book that adults will want to put into the hands of kids, but they won’t need to. Kids will be giving it to each other.”

Dav Pilkey, author of the *Dog Man* series



“This heart-wrenching verse novel—inspired by the author’s experiences, as discussed in an end note by Schu (This Is a Story)—is an unflinching depiction of resistance and disordered eating recovery.”

Publishers Weekly (starred review)


“A sensitive, true-to-life narrative that is respectfully and indelibly portrayed.”

Kirkus Reviews




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JOHN SCHU

**WALKER
BOOKS**

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*For Grandma Ruth,
who always reminded me
to slow down.*

*For Molly O'Neill,
who said,
“There’s a story here!
Keep writing!”*

*For every teenager
who imagines performing
on Broadway one day.*

*For thirteen-year-old me,
who needed a book
like this one.*

A Foreword

What if someone was brave enough to tell you the truth?

What if someone dared to reveal their heart to you?

The book that you hold in your hands tells a painful truth.

It reveals a beautiful, broken heart.

Jake's heart.

Jake is thirteen years old, and he has an eating disorder.

You and Jake are about to go on a harrowing journey together; by the time you finish this book, you will be friends.

Reading Jake's story will change you.

You might find that you want to reveal your heart, tell someone your truth.

Telling your story can save your life.

It may save someone else's life, too.

Jake knows this.

John Schu knows this.

That is why he wrote this book.

For you.

—Kate DiCamillo

THIS NOTEBOOK BELONGS TO:

Jake Stacey

Grade: 8

Year: 1996

Favorite Subject: Language Arts

Favorite Book: *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

Favorite Movie: *Home Alone*

Favorite Sport: Rollerblading

Favorite Food:

A Goal: To see a musical on Broadway with Grandma

Writing My Name

.....

I write

Jake

in

cursive

over

and

over

and

over.

It's

calming.

Filling

page after page

in my notebooks
with signatures.

Using
different
colors.

Purple.

Green.

Blue.

It's
soothing.

Trying out
different
styles.

Fancy.

Plain.

Bold.

Experimenting with

markers,

highlighters,

pastels.

Why is it
calming?

Why is it
soothing?

Maybe
because
I'm hoping
by writing
my name
over
and
over,
I'll

figure

out

who

I

am.

Jake

Jake

Jake

Jake

Jake

Jake

Jake

Nobody?

.....

My stomach
G-R-O-W-L-S.

The Voice
tells it
to

S
T
O
P.

I toss the markers
inside the top drawer
of my desk.

I tear out the page
and rip it up
into little bits,
dropping each

piece into the
garbage can.

I look at a photo of
Emily Dickinson
taped to my desk.

I know
her poem
“I’m Nobody! Who are you?”
by heart.

So I run in place,
burning as many calories as I can,
repeating
the opening lines

*I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?*

as

FAST

as

I

can.

*I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?*

*I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?*

The Voice says,

YOU—ARE—REPULSIVE!

Am I Nobody,
Too?

.....

When I can't run anymore
I sit down again at my
big brown desk.

Mom
knocks, knocks, knocks
on my bedroom door.

I ignore her.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

I don't have
enough energy
to tell her to
GO AWAY—
to leave me alone.

I wish everyone

would leave me alone—
forever.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Worry enters the room.

She brings it
wherever she goes.

You can feel it.

Smell it.

Mom puts a plate of
pretzels and pepperoni
on my desk next to me.

My stomach
G-R-O-W-L-S
again.

The Voice says,

DON'T EAT THAT GARBAGE!

YOU ALREADY ATE AN APPLE TODAY!

YOU DIDN'T EXERCISE ENOUGH!

She says,

Why haven't you started your homework?

This isn't like you.

What's going on?

I want to say,

This isn't like you.

You don't usually care.

I glare at
math

problems,
wishing
X and Y
would
run away.

I imagine
feeding the
garbage
disposal
pretzels,
pepperoni, and
these
wretched
worksheets,
watching
it
grind
everything
into
tiny
bits.

The Voice

.....

The
negative
Voice
inside
my
head
talks
nonstop.

It
has
since
the
middle
of
seventh
grade.

It's
louder
than

the
hunger
in
my
stomach.

I
weigh
myself
10
times
per
day.

Then
15
times
per
day.

Then
20
times
per
day.

The
lower
the
number
on
the
scale
goes,
the
bigger
I
feel.

The
bigger
I
feel,
the
less
I
eat.

The
less

I
eat,
the
less
I
feel.

I
make
my
body
smaller
and
smaller
and
smaller.

I
punish
myself
day
after
day.

Why?

For
taking
up
too
much
space.

For
being
me.

For
breathing.

Clothes

.....

I own
two pairs of
overalls:
one denim,
one corduroy.

I wear
a pair
every day
to school.

Sometimes
I wear a big sweatshirt
over the overalls.

Most
people
think
it's
strange.

But
waistbands,
seams,
fabrics
make me feel
itchy,
gross.

Aware of
every inch of my body,
every movement.

Aware of
how the denim
touches my
collarbone.

Aware of
how the corduroy
rubs against my
thigh.

Aware of
how my body

feels at every
moment:
itchy,
gross,
growing.

I Hate Eighth Grade

.....

I'm in Language Arts class.

I think about Emily Dickinson's photo.

I think about her kind eyes.

Emily, eighth grade's hard.

Hard to concentrate.

Hard to smile.

Hard to eat.

Emily, eighth grade hurts.

I wish I could go back to fourth grade.

I was happy in Ms. Wozny's class.

Happy when she told knock-knock jokes,
sang silly songs,
recited poems about chicken soup with rice.

She read aloud to us every day after lunch-recess.

We would gather together on the carpet,
the place where we shared stories.

Stories about fourth graders like us
going on adventures.

Stories about
giants and gold.

Stories that
made everyone laugh.

Stories that
made everyone belong.

Happy when Danielle's desk
was next to mine.

We always talked about how much we loved our
Star Wars and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles action
figures.

Emily, will I ever feel happy again at school?

Walking Home

.....

I walk home from school
lost inside
my mind.

The Voice
helped me skip
lunch today.

The Voice
helped me lie
about why
I didn't turn in my
homework today.

The Voice speaks

LOUDER

and

LOUDER

and

LOUDER

at school.

Skating

.....

As soon as I get home,
I put *Hello, Dolly!*'s
movie musical soundtrack
into a portable
CD player.

It stars Barbra Streisand
as Dolly Levi.

I love her
voice.

I love her
clothes.

I love her big
personality.

She sparkles
like glitter
as Dolly Levi.

I put on headphones.

I hear Barbra's
magical
voice sing out.

I put on Rollerblades.

I skate up and down Kimberly Drive
in our suffocating south suburb of Chicago.

Barbra helps me breathe.

I skate around a small park at the end of my block.

I skate and skate and skate.

Singing along
with Barbra
at the TOP
of my voice.

Imagining Barbra's beside me
on a big, bright Broadway stage.

Skating,

singing.

Singing,

skating.

We

G

L

I

D

E

d

o

w

n

the street.

Skating,

skating,

skating.

Twirling,