**To this day – Shane Koyczan**

When I was a kid

I used to think that pork chops and karate chops

Were the same thing

I thought they were both pork chops

And because my grandmother thought it was cute

And because they were my favourite

She let me keep doing it

Not really a big deal

One day

Before I realized fat kids are not designed to climb trees

I fell out of a tree

And bruised the right side of my body

I didn’t want to tell my grandmother about it

Because I was afraid I’d get in trouble

For playing somewhere that I shouldn’t have been

A few days later the gym teacher noticed the bruise

And I got sent to the principal’s office

From there I was sent to another small room

With a really nice lady

Who asked me all kinds of questions

About my life at home

I saw no reason to lie

As far as I was concerned

Life was pretty good

I told her, “Whenever I’m sad

My grandmother gives me karate chops”

This led to a full scale investigation

And I was removed from the house for three days

Until they finally decided to ask how I got the bruises

News of this silly little story quickly spread through the school

And I earned my first nickname

Pork Chop

To this day

I hate pork chops

I’m not the only kid

Who grew up this way

Surrounded by people who used to say

That rhyme about sticks and stones

As if broken bones

Hurt more than the names we got called

And we got called them all

So we grew up believing no one

Would ever fall in love with us

That we’d be lonely forever

That we’d never meet someone

To make us feel like the sun

Was something they built for us

In their tool shed

So broken heart strings bled the blues

As we tried to empty ourselves

So we would feel nothing

Don’t tell me that hurts less than a broken bone

That an ingrown life

Is something surgeons can cut away

That there’s no way for it to metastasize

It does

She was eight years old

Our first day of grade three

When she got called ugly

We both got moved to the back of the class

So we would stop get bombarded by spit balls

But the school halls were a battleground

Where we found ourselves outnumbered day after wretched day

We used to stay inside for recess

Because outside was worse

Outside we’d have to rehearse running away

Or learn to stay still like statues giving no clues that we were there

In grade five they taped a sign to her desk

That read beware of dog

To this day

Despite a loving husband

She doesn’t think she’s beautiful

Because of a birthmark

That takes up a little less than half of her face

Kids used to say she looks like a wrong answer

That someone tried to erase

But couldn’t quite get the job done

And they’ll never understand

That she’s raising two kids

Whose definition of beauty

Begins with the word mom

Because they see her heart

Before they see her skin

That she’s only ever always been amazing

He

Was a broken branch

Grafted onto a different family tree

Adopted

But not because his parents opted for a different destiny

He was three when he became a mixed drink

Of one part left alone

And two parts tragedy

Started therapy in 8th grade

Had a personality made up of tests and pills

Lived like the uphills were mountains

And the downhills were cliffs

Four fifths suicidal

A tidal wave of anti depressants

And an adolescence of being called popper

One part because of the pills

And ninety nine parts because of the cruelty

He tried to kill himself in grade ten

When a kid who still had his mom and dad

Had the audacity to tell him “get over it” as if depression

Is something that can be remedied

By any of the contents found in a first aid kit

To this day

He is a stick of TNT lit from both ends

Could describe to you in detail the way the sky bends

In the moments before it’s about to fall

And despite an army of friends

Who all call him an inspiration

He remains a conversation piece between people

Who can’t understand

Sometimes becoming drug free

Has less to do with addiction

And more to do with sanity

We weren’t the only kids who grew up this way

To this day

Kids are still being called names

The classics were

Hey stupid

Hey spaz

Seems like each school has an arsenal of names

Getting updated every year

And if a kid breaks in a school

And no one around chooses to hear

Do they make a sound?

Are they just the background noise

Of a soundtrack stuck on repeat

When people say things like

[Kids can be cruel?](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1718158/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Kids-can-be-cruel)

[Every school was a big top circus tent](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1960283/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Every-school-was-a-big-top-circus-tent-and-the-pecking-order-went-from-acrobats-to-lion-tamers-from-clowns-to-carnies)

[And the pecking order went](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1960283/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Every-school-was-a-big-top-circus-tent-and-the-pecking-order-went-from-acrobats-to-lion-tamers-from-clowns-to-carnies)

[From acrobats to lion tamers](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1960283/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Every-school-was-a-big-top-circus-tent-and-the-pecking-order-went-from-acrobats-to-lion-tamers-from-clowns-to-carnies)

[From clowns to carnies](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1960283/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Every-school-was-a-big-top-circus-tent-and-the-pecking-order-went-from-acrobats-to-lion-tamers-from-clowns-to-carnies)

All of these were miles ahead of who we were

We were freaks

Lobster claw boys and bearded ladies

Oddities

Juggling depression and loneliness playing solitaire spin the bottle

Trying to kiss the wounded parts of ourselves and heal

But at night

While the others slept

We kept walking the tightrope

It was practice

And yeah

Some of us fell

But I want to tell them

That all of this shit

Is just debris

Leftover when we finally decide to smash all the things we thought

We used to be

And if you can’t see anything beautiful about yourself

Get a better mirror

Look a little closer

Stare a little longer

Because there’s something inside you

That made you keep trying

Despite everyone who told you to quit

You built a cast around your broken heart

And signed it yourself

You signed it

“They were wrong”

Because maybe you didn’t belong to a group or a click

Maybe they decided to pick you last for basketball or everything

Maybe you used to bring bruises and broken teeth

To show and tell but never told

Because how can you hold your ground

If everyone around you wants to bury you beneath it

You have to believe that they were wrong

They have to be wrong

Why else would we still be here?

We grew up learning to cheer on the underdog

Because we see ourselves in them

We stem from a root planted in the belief

That we are not what we were called we are not abandoned cars stalled out and Sitting empty on a highway

And if in some way we are

Don’t worry

We only got out to walk and get gas

We are graduating members from the class of

Fuck off we made it

[Not the faded echoes of voices crying out](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1718152/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Not-the-faded-echoes-of-voices-crying-out-names-will-never-hurt-me)

[Names will never hurt me](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1718152/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/Not-the-faded-echoes-of-voices-crying-out-names-will-never-hurt-me)

Of course

They did

But our lives will only ever always

Continue to be

A balancing act

[That has less to do with pain](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1741460/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/That-has-less-to-do-with-pain-and-more-to-do-with-beauty)

[And more to do with beauty.](http://poetry.rapgenius.com/1741460/Shane-koyczan-to-this-day/That-has-less-to-do-with-pain-and-more-to-do-with-beauty)