“Peter Corboy… yes son you, stand up. Class, see this boy here, I am just letting you all know that he will never amount to anything in his life. He cannot read, he cannot write, he cannot add up. He is wasting his parent’s money and his own time. You hear me son?... Now sit down.”

I was in year 10, there were 36 boys in the room and there was dead silence as he completed my public humiliation. With tears in my eyes I melted into my seat. Those words, now etched in my psyche, humiliated me, made me feel embarrassed, and ashamed. Was I going to be that person he was talking about?

The previous day another boy had been given a serve by the same teacher and with a resilience that I didn’t have, left the classroom doing a ‘so long farewell’ tap dance across the stage at the front. The class broke up in admiration of his bravery and I must say his Shirley Temple impersonation allowed him to leave with some dignity. Where were my tap dancing shoes when I needed them? You know the ones where you click the heels together and wish you were somewhere else and *phuff* you’re gone”

As I sat there sinking lower into the seat my mate good Mick whispered “Fuck him Corbs, look at his life!” It wasn’t his life I was I was worried about. My schooling, in both primary and secondary, had been testament to my inability to see words as they were written, to make sense of how the sentences were formed on the page. As one little girl in year 3 said to the teacher as she looked at the mess of words on my page, “Miss, look his letters are all back to front.” Prophetic words, that had I know what they meant, or if anyone had recognized the problem may have lead me on a different life journey. But life is life and the person I became, the situations I found myself in and the people I met were all a result of the skills I developed to try to cover up what I thought were my inadequacies.

So here I was in year 10, looking like a little kid in year 8, whose mouth and natural predisposition toward being the class clown had once again lead me to being the center of attention. I was funny, everyone told me so (well maybe not my teachers), I could tell a great story, still can and they get better and better each year, and I was cute, curly headed, hyperactive cute, still am!! (don’t head straight to my profile picture to clarify. I believe it therefore I am). My life was a road stretched out before of me, school just wasn’t my thing, so where was I headed?

My story is about the little boy who was so traumatized by his first few years of school that he couldn’t get a sentence out without stuttering. About the boy whose writing needed a mirror to make sense of what he had written, about valium and the need to be medicated to stop the naughtiness. About surfing and finding myself. About working 32 different jobs and the amazing, weird and wonderful people I met. About sitting in the Emirates business lounge heading to Kuwait to deliver a mathematics program (yes you heard right) to a millionaire businessman. About the situations I have found myself in, (see above) situations that at times were so bizarre, so incredibly funny and out there, that I really have to question who is pulling the strings. You know I would really love to meet these string pullers because I’m sure they would have had a hernia operation or two, from laughing or crying so hard….at my expense!