

We went straight into the lecture-room for general elementary science.

Mr. Shales, Nick Shales, Old Nick was there, waiting for us. He was impatient to begin. The light shone from his enormous bald head and his thick glasses. He had cleaned the board with the tail of his gown and a pillar of white dust hung in the air round him. There was bent glass on the demonstration bench and he stood, leaning his weight on his knuckles, and watching us as we clambered up the steps between the ranged forms.

Nick was the best teacher I ever knew. He had no particular method and he gave no particular picture of brilliance; it was just that he had a vision of nature and a passionate desire to communicate it. He respected children too. This was not a verbal respect for children's rights because it never occurred to Nick that they had any. They were just human beings and he treated each one with serious attention indistinguishable from courtesy. He kept discipline by ignoring the need to enforce it. See him now, waiting impatiently for us all, he included, to examine some fascination of fact, some absorbing reality which never could fail to astonish.

"Better take this down in your books because we are going to try and disprove it. Ready? Here you are then: Matter can neither be destroyed nor created".

Obediently we wrote...

William Golding