

•Hyun•

By Tali

Finally, the bell rang dismissing the class. A stampede of kids fumbled out of the classroom. Hyun still sat at her seat listening to the chatter that had abruptly broken out in the hallway as other classes were released. The pattering of the rain outside beat against the classroom windows. Today would be another indoor recess/ lunch. This meant all 40 kids from her homeroom would soon come back to class with their lunches. Everything was calculated carefully in Hyun's head. First the bell, then, a few minutes later, the chattering would start up, and last but not least the kids would come back. She didn't like indoor recess, in fact, she hated it. Hyun was shy, and though she had been at this school since kindergarten she had no friends. She endured school for the education, but she always tried to be as invisible as she could.

Invisibility was one of her powers. Of course, she couldn't actually disappear, but she had worked hard to go unnoticed by being quiet and not drawing attention to herself. She rarely raised her hand and she never argued, in fact, she even hid her face with her long, jet- black hair. Though no one paid much attention to her, she was very observative and she often found herself listening and analyzing the other kids in her classes.

Hyun even admired some of the kids, like this girl named Shayna. Shayna was everything Hyun wanted to be. She was beautiful, her eyes were a deep blue that shimmered like diamonds, her blonde -golden hair flowing down past her shoulders. Hyun thought about how her life would be different if she had pale white skin, freckles,

a pointy nose, blue eyes, and golden hair. She let her mind drift off in a daydream as she pictured herself laughing with other kids, and having boys flutter around her, flirting.

Suddenly, the faint thunder of pounding feet snapped her out of her daze. She looked down at the stainless steel thermos that sat in front of her, squinting at her reflection in disgust. Her eyes looked nothing like Shayna's. Hyun's eyes had almond-shaped eyes and her pupils were dark brown. Her eyes drifted to her nose. She hated how her nose was so flat that it looked like it had been smashed in, and her skin, a dirty beige. She sighed and opened up her lunch.

By then, the other students had returned to their seats with their lunches. Chatter filled the room though no one had noticed her thankfully, so she turned back to her lunch. Today her mom had packed her pork dumplings. She smiled thinking of her mom, and gingerly picked up a dumpling and popped it into her mouth. Hyun glanced around the room looking for a head of golden locks... there! Hyun's eyes locked on Shayna, who was surrounded by boys that were drooling just over her presence. Hyun not only admired Shayna's looks but her heart was, like her hair, pure gold. Shayna always talked about her community service work and was always the first to volunteer to help the teachers.

"Hey! What's that smell?" Hyun looked over at a boy who was pinching his nose and wrinkling up his face in disgust. The rest of the class went silent. Slowly kids started to join in, pretending they smelled something too in order to avoid being suspected as the source of the smell. Hyun turned back to her food, laughing to herself

at how mean and immature they were. Then another kid piped up, “Ew, it’s coming from over there!”

He pointed his finger directly in front of him.

Everyone’s gaze slowly followed his finger and settled on Hyun.

Hyun felt her stomach drop. Her mind went blank. she felt all 40 pairs of eyes on her.

“What is that?” the boy pointed down at the lunch in front of Hyun.

“D-dumplings” Hyun quietly stammered.

The boy laughed and walked up to her unplugging his nose in order to investigate.

Hyun felt her hands clam up, and the room suddenly felt 100 degrees hotter.

Her heart sank as his face twisted up in utter disgust.

“It smells like shit!” he screamed.

The classroom erupted in screams as Hyun’s classmates plastered themselves against the now open windows, gasping for air.

Hyun was frozen with dread, her heart was hammering away in her chest and her mouth had dried up. She looked around the room, desperately trying to spot a head of golden locks. She was easy to spot. Hyun briefly made eye contact with Shayna, but Shayna’s eyes quickly shifted to the floor with nervousness. Then she stood up. A spark of hope ignited in Hyun’s heart, which was quickly replaced with a painful throb, as Shayna’s face curled up in a grin. Hyun watched in shock, as her idol joined the other kids near the windows.

•Shayna•

Shayna had just gotten home from school. She threw her backpack clumsily in a random corner of her room. Her dog came bounding down the stairs as usual, but today Shayna's thoughts were occupied on something else. She laid down on her bed and closed her eyes and let her mind finally wonder. She wondered what this emotion she was feeling inside her chest was. The image of the girl's horrified eyes made Shayna wince with uncomfortableness. It was that day, that she had witnessed the brutal teasing of a girl in her class. Even just thinking about it made her cheeks burn with embarrassment for the girl. Shayna never really cared about other people, but something inside of her felt empathy for this quiet lonely girl. It felt like someone was twisting up her heart and ringing it out like a wet cloth. Shayna found that though she was always surrounded by people, she was never truly happy with their company. She knew that deep down many of the people she hung out with were fake and only wanted to use her. Shayna realized that she never had a "real" friend. She looked up at the mirror in front of her. It seemed like Shayna had more in common with the girl from school that she had thought. Maybe this was why she was so held up on what had happened during recess. She glared at her reflection. She always hated how she looked, from the color of her eyes and hair, to the delicate build of her body. The only thing she saw when she looked at herself was a sweet, pure, dumb-blonde. She looked like every

other basic white girl. She thought back on her life, she realized how her physical attributes impacted how she was treated. As a little girl, she grew up pampered and shielded from the harsh realities of the real world. As she grew up, she started to get a lot of unwanted attention from men. One time, when she was taking the train home from school, she heard two boys looking her up and down and whispering. She still remembers the feeling of her face burning with anger and embarrassment when she heard what they were saying.

“Yo, how do you get a one-armed dumb blonde out of a tree?”

“I don’t know man. how?”

“You wave at her and when she waves back she falls out of the tree.”

It was such a stupid joke, and yet Shayna still thought about it when looking at herself in the mirror. She hated how people assumed based on her looks that she was a ditzy, stupid, air-headed girl. Those words didn’t suit her at all. She wanted to become a doctor and liked field hockey. She turned back to the mirror and closed her eyes. An idea had popped into her head that replaced her frustration with excitement.

The next day in school Shayna walked through the hallways with a new bounce of confidence in her step, ignoring the gasps and whispers. It was time for her to show the world who she really was. Her hair was finally as bold as her personality.

