

I scrub

I scrub so hard that my skin falls apart. So hard that I burn. So hard that pieces of skin pull apart to reveal the fleshy pink of the tissue underneath.

Yet, nothing changes around it.

It's still brown.

So annoyingly, infuriatingly brown. The same color of fecal matter, the same color that apparently smells like curry. A mixture of tears, snot, water, and drops of blood slowly drip on to it.

I slip with the shower water, soap, and scrub daddy.

...

*3 months ago*

"Hey, I could take your jacket if you'd like. I mean it's annoying to carry with you into the stall right?" I flipped around to see whom the words had come from to find, to my surprise, Marry Wibum.

You see. The thing about Mary is that I'm terrified of her. I'm terrified of her blond hair and piercing blue eyes and how leggy she is. Why she's so leggy is beyond me. They seem to go on for miles and miles and where was I again? Oh yeah. Me. Terrified.

"U-hm yeah sure?" This is weird. I've known Mary forever, like everyone else who goes to good ol' William Junior High. Since the days of elementary school, we've probably exchanged five short greetings in the years we've known each other. Essentially, we're not close. In fact, I actually thought worse of our relationship. I assumed that she detested me with the side glances and giggles with her friends while simultaneously staring at me. I probably assumed wrong. Maybe the opportunity to become close just didn't present itself.

So, there I handed my denim studded jacket, my prized possession, the one thing that makes me feel like I fit in, over to Ms. Leggy who apparently wants to be buddy-buddy with me.

“Oh my god, it’s actually adorable. It’ll be in good hands, don’t worry about anything.” I’m not stupid, I could feel something was off but what could I do? Tell her off? Not in a million years would I tell anyone even remotely “off,” much less Mary Flipping Wilbum. Although, I don’t think flipping is her middle name, but we’ll go with it.

“Gee, thanks.” I saw before entering the stall and walking in. I didn’t pee though.

I didn’t want her to hear my liquid waste spilling into the toilet bowl, so I decided to hold it in. Count to ten and flush the toilet. Unroll the toilet paper, and rustle it for a good two seconds, making sure not to go for too long but not too little at the same time, before flushing once again and finally unlocking the door.

My jacket was on the floor. No longer was it the beauty that I hand washed after every use. No longer did the little five year old studs shine, no longer was it a thing to pride for. There it lay, on the sad, slightly moist, public school bathroom tiles, with its arms flailed all over, ripped apart from the actual body, which in turn, not to be left out, was covered in warm sticky rice and curry which was originally supposed to be the lunch that my mother had carefully cooked early in the morning and my dad had carefully packed into my thermos, not leaving a piece of rice from being coated in the curry and lentil soup.

I choked up.

I fell on my knees.

*Why?* Was the only thought that raced through my mind

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*Present day*

From that day forward, I realized that I didn’t fit in as much as I thought I did.

I realized that the giggling from other leggy blond girls were in fact directed toward me. I realized that people talked about me behind my back. I realized more things than what was actually happening.

It drove me crazy.

I was constantly paranoid. I refused to eat lunch and instead chose to take solitude in the bathroom stalls with my book of choice. I barely listened during class and instead opted to make sure that people weren't speaking about me. My grades dropped, my weight dropped. My everything dropped. My life dropped.

I wanted it to drop.

I smiled and told my parents that everything was fine. I told them that classes were just hard and that I haven't been hungry lately.

I was lying.

I was lying so much that it hurt. I was hurting so much that it had to stop.

It had to stop.

But I didn't have the guts to do anything about it. I was too scared, and it saved me.

Along with Akira Ito.

Akira was the new Japanese girl in school. The only Japanese kid, like I was the only brown kid. When I first saw her a year ago I thought that we could bond over the fact that we were the only people of color in our predominantly white school.

Yet another thing I was wrong about.

But what I didn't expect is that she would save me.

"Hey, I noticed that you don't wear that cute jacket anymore. I found it online after I heard what happened, so umm, yeah you can have it if you want" That was the turning point for me. The way she stared at me with genuine concern broke me. And all the hurt spilled out. She held me.

I fit perfectly in her arms.