

A Silent Smile

By: Yesica Arriola Hercules

It was a March morning, the class was all lining up to get on the bus for our first trip of the year. We'd be going to a zoo, or a farm? I never really knew. I thought it'd be a great day. Frankly...I was very wrong. My face was all lit up with a wide smile and my hair expanding more and more each time I jumped up with eagerness. Excitement was seen throughout the classroom. "Okay kids! Let's go on the bus now!" The crowd went wild. Screams were heard through the halls as we made our way to the front door of the school, disrupting every class we walked by. Today would be the best day of my life, I thought.

Everyone piled out of the bus and instantly grouped up with friends. I got together with my best pals and we headed in, following the teacher. "Children, stay together until we get you all into an area." the teacher started grouping us up. The farm was set up oddly. It was all muddy and chilly, but none of us cared. We just wanted to see the animals. There was one main section with a cafeteria and food court that branched out into some smaller areas which were organized by the species of animals. Birds, Reptiles, Butterflies! It was everything I had hoped for. Each area was in the shape of a circle, with the animals surrounding it, and me in the middle. It made me feel as if I was on trial. "Yesica Arriola! Accused of stealing Jenny Sanchez's Starburst." The judge would yell out. "BANG!" His gavel would hit the table and I'd be taken away to candy prison. A strong gust of wind shook me out of my imagination, back into reality. My group and I walked into our area, the barn animals! All of my friends and I were lucky enough to be paired up, but I realized there was one face I didn't recognize. It was a new girl, her name was Julie. Her hair was dusty brown, tied away from her face into a sleek ponytail. The apples of her cheeks were a pale red from the weather. She had perfectly straight teeth that were shown with a sparkling smile. I thought she was the epitome of perfection and intelligence. She'd already formed a friendship with one of my friends, so I also assumed that she was kind. During the trip though, Julie kept cutting me off in the middle of my sentences. I didn't think much of it, maybe she didn't realize she was doing it. But later on, we were all talking and I started speaking. "She's so obnoxious!" I heard a mutter coming from a familiar

voice..Julie. I stopped my sentence prematurely. “Yesica, you alright?” a worried friend looked at me. I went pale, the gears turning in my head. “Yeah..yeah! Of course. I just..lost my train of thought!”. They continued the conversation from then on.

I decided that I had to talk to Julie about it. Once I was confident enough, I finally got together alone with her to talk, it didn’t go exactly as planned. “Hey! Julie! Can we talk?” She stared at me for a second then grinned. “Sure! Is there a problem?” My legs turned to jelly in an instance as I tugged the sleeve on my gray sweater. I finally managed to spew something out. “I..heard what you said earlier..about me being obnoxious..”. Julie gave me a daring look, “And?” I began to stutter. “I..uh..wanted to..uh..”. “You’re wasting my time!” Her voice began to grow louder with every word. “No! I just-” She cut me off..for the thousandth time. “No! Can’t you see? Everyone hates you. You’re a slow, stupid, attention seeker! You never seem to be quiet!!” Julie stormed off, leaving behind a trail of smoke..and my shattered ego. It felt like she found my biggest strengths in a glass jar, smashed it, and left it all to rot.

I ran off into a dark, secluded room to isolate myself from others. I locked the door, broke a box, shattered a mirror, and sat silently..where my mind began to go on an unforgettable tangent. “You’re loud, you can’t do anything right, you’re a failure.” The voice in my head argued with me. I made an attempt to fight back. “No! I try my best! I have friends who care about me!” We argued back and forth until I gave up. I had convinced myself that I was different. I didn’t get along with people like everyone else did. I cried in that room for the rest of the afternoon. When I got out, I had a silent smile. Before I knew it, we were lined up and on our way home. I never told anyone, fearing I’d be a bother. Instead, I became friends with a new person. Their name was Silence. Silence followed me home, and never left my side.

That day changed how I acted, thought, and treated others. I never felt the need to tell others how I felt. I stayed the same everyday, with a silent smile that hid any anger or sadness that I’d experience. I didn't want others to feel the way I did. But I also never wanted to experience it again. I no longer raised my hand with excitement, for I had a deep fear of messing up. I’m afraid to speak out loud, to risk anything. But I’ve made progress. With new friends, ones that care about me dearly. I wouldn’t trade them for anything. If only I hadn’t believed what was said, and trusted myself. I wouldn’t be in an everlasting struggle with myself.

No one should be, or is, able to take away your happiness, your glory. It's our responsibility to believe in ourselves and have confidence. Friends are there to push you to be better, not bring you down. This event never blocked my path. It only created a new one, with a better ending, and joyful grin.