

Labels

Labels are harmless words. They are used to describe one's reputation. It's pretty pathetic for people to judge others without even knowing them. What's my label, you ask? It's the most horrid, revolting label any person can possibly receive. *Little Miss Perfect*. Sure, you may be wondering what's so terrible about this title, but after realizing how people are going to expect more from you than the average person, it's suffocating.

"Claire, wake up. You don't have time to daydream. You haven't even finished your breakfast." Mother claimed with slight irritation.

I smiled and nodded as I stuffed the rest of my avocado toast in my mouth and chugged down some milk.

"Alright, mother," I started while getting my backpack on, "Have a good day. Love you!" And with that, I gave my mom a hug and dashed out the doors. Right before I closed the door behind me, I noticed a small smile form on Mother's face. Mother is a hardworking woman. Her husband left her after he realized she was infertile. A little after, she adopted me at the age of seven and has been raising me by herself since that day.

"Claire! What's up?" Jay, my best friend, and the only person I trust in this chaotic school tapped me on my shoulder as he slowed down to match my pace. I blinked as I remembered the horrible labels the students at my school gave him. *Irresponsible, idiotic, reckless, gay*. My hands ball into a fist without realizing until Jay started talking again. "So, how's your group project? Are those dunces still making 'Little Miss Perfect' do all the work?"

I responded with an exhausted sigh. "If only you were in my class. You should've seen how fake their smiles were when they said that they wanted to group up with me."

Jay patted me on the back as we entered the school hallways. Since Jay is a year older than me, our classes are in separate hallways.

I watched as he disappeared into the crowd of juniors and noticed another figure running towards me. "Claire Bear! How's the project? Did you finish it?"

Sorry about canceling last minute on the project. I had a track meet. You remembered to put my name on it, right?" To my *'astonishment'*, it was Emelia.

I flashed her a bright smile. "I didn't finish it, but—" I notice a slight frown forming on her face and tried to disregard it, "I should be finished by the end of today." We started walking into our first-period class.

"Hey, Claire. Can I talk to you for a second?" Another person tapped my shoulder, and I turned around to find Kyle, another person in our group. "It's about the project. There are some things I'd like you to change."

I seriously just want to punch him the face and scream, "Why don't you fix it your gosh darn self?!" But rather than losing all the reputation I've worked so hard to keep, I had to go with a simple, "What is it, Kyle? I'll be sure to fix it before the end of today," with a smile.

The rest of my day had gone by in a flash. I hadn't been paying attention to most of my surroundings, but I still managed to finish my project. I'm sorry, *our* project.

"Hey. What's with the sour face?" Jay waved a hand in front of my gaze into space.

"Hey. My group mates are just being jerks. There's nothing much you can do about it." I sighed and looked over to Jay. He looked as if he were in deep thought.

"Hmm, I see. So, is forcing them to their demise not a choice either?"

"Jay! You'll get arrested!" He let out a chuckle, but something seemed off about it. It was as if it was forced.

"You're right. I'm sorry. Here, how about I take you somewhere? It's my treat."

I smiled and nodded while following Jay. "Thanks, Jay. You always know how to cheer me up." I don't know why, but it feels as if I should treasure this moment with him as if it's going to be our last time seeing each other.

By the time Jay dropped me back home, the moon had already risen. I slammed the front door shut and slowly made my way into my bedroom. Before I even realized how dark my surroundings were getting, I passed out.

When I woke up the next day, raindrops were attacking my window. I got up and rummaged through my closet. Once I got changed and brushed my teeth, I walked out of my room to find Mother sitting on the sofa crying.

“Claire... It’s Jay. I received a call from his parents, and I don’t know how to tell you this, but Claire-” Mother started choking.

“Shhh. It’s going to be alright, mother. What did Jay do?”

Mother shook her head while trying to hold back her tears. “Last night, Jay’s mother found him in his room,” she sniffed again. My heart suddenly dropped as I braced myself for the next words that come out of her mouth.

“He killed himself, Claire. After he got home, he got a rope and hung himself from the ceiling fan.”

The rest of what Mother said became white noise. My vision had gone back to what it had been before I met Jay. *Monochrome*. He had been the fire that helped mine survive through all the disasters in high school. He always comforted me when I was depressed. Then, it hit me. Jay had always been there for me, but who was there for Jay? Had he been suffering through everything by himself? If I could’ve noticed it earlier, this wouldn’t have happened. I would’ve helped him with anything as well. It doesn’t matter anymore, though. The light of my life had been robbed from me, and I felt as if I could no longer function as a normal being anymore.