

## **Blonde Is a Primary Color**

*Mariana Rodriguez*

Every morning proved to be the same story. The incessant *beep beep beep* of the distant alarm clock interrupted my fantasy world of unicorns and charmed frogs, jostling me into the usual, monotonous routine I so dreaded. This morning was different, however. I did not need an inanimate object or my nagging mother to stir me from my dreams. The mere anticipation and anxiety that are synonymous with the unknown conquered my mind, leaving me doubtful and dazed. The hygienic tasks that I usually performed in a dreamlike state took a life of their own. I was the marionette and my own body the puppeteer guiding the brush in my hand through every strand of hair, demanding softness and perfection. My mother kept yelling expressions of encouragement in Spanish from downstairs, but the invisible earmuffs around my head muffled her voice. I needed no support, only salvation from the inevitable failure that awaited me.

I was thankful for the traffic that held us at the five intersections prior to our destination. It was as if the universe was in consensus, I was not ready to embrace the new world. Pulling up to the building, all I could see was a constantly flowing river of blonde set amidst picturesque scenery and loquacious mothers excited about their first day of self-indulgence. I became aware of the jean-short, tank-top wearing robots who smiled to advertise their perfectly white teeth. Their interactions amazed and bewildered me, reinforcing my marginality in that world not only because of the language barrier, but

also because I wore strawberry-patterned sweatpants with a shiny pink shirt and my teeth needed extensive dental work. I pretended to be a chameleon who could camouflage herself into the proper denim shade my mother wore, yet the Barbies easily found my brightness against the blue background and began to stare. Using all the psychic ability I possessed, I willed my body to transport itself back to the beach, back to the only universe I had known in which I was an active participant and not a bystander scared shitless of the future. My legs somehow managed to glide me into a classroom decorated with neon posters unnoticed, and I proceeded to discern my name among the various *Kristens* and  *Davids* that lined the teal plastic cups. After finding my place to be in the very front of the room, I quickly dismissed my parents, sat down in the blue chair, faced forward, and pretended to comprehend the introductions my peers reluctantly extended to me.

The hours after my family abandoned me in that alien world escaped from my memory completely, becoming my subconscious's first attempt at suppression. Seconds flowed into minutes, the minutes into hours, and before I could remove my peeled orange from its designated Ziploc bag for snack time, I became nonchalant once more in time for recess.

Familiarizing myself with my personal prison took longer than I expected. Apparently, as inmates, we were granted enough freedom to compensate for the bigoted views instilled in our minds, and I took the liberty of exploring every corner of the fenced fields. No birds chirped on that bright summer day, no warm breeze refreshed the stuffy atmosphere. I strolled past the whispering children, gossiping elaborate theories of my name and origin, while noticing the brave few who parted their lips in an effort to utter a

welcoming phrase, yet decided against bridging the gap between being my acquaintance and my friend. I cannot say I blame them for such an act; I myself would have made the same decision. Empathizing with a stranger takes humanity, while joining her in her solitude requires an amount of self-conviction no fourth grader has. As I arrived at the corner in which the metal fence meets the woods, tears streamed down my asymmetrical face, dripping down to the blades of grass that should have been emerald given the season. A distant whistle was blown, and I dried my face, ready to embrace my helplessness.

The rest of the day passed in a nonsensical blur, presenting situations that accentuated my peculiarity in the blonde world. I had grown accustomed to the bandwagon of feelings that echoed my vulnerability, and seeing my mother's white car loop around the front of the building that afternoon gave me no relief. Answering her probing questions with a single nod, I remained dazed. Thoughts of the monumental embarrassment I endured overcame my mind, compelling me to scream out in agony. I wanted my mom to understand how deeply wounded I was, wanted her to apologize for setting me up for humiliation, yet my mouth remained closed and my eyes directly set on the road ahead. Somehow, my mother perceived my quiet desperation and bought me my very first chocolate shake from the McDonalds on our way to the house.

I was forced to relive my misery four more times that evening in conversation with my probing aunts. Everyone was curious about my teacher, the other students, and the events that occurred. Yet no one bothered to inquire as to my loneliness and no one asked about how I had been treated. I took an abnormally long shower later that night to relieve the mounting fury. The salty tears mixed with the fresh water that streaked down

my face, and the soap penetrated my skin as I accepted solitude as my best friend. I understood that despite the best efforts my peers would eventually make to include me, a certain part of me would continue to long for the overwhelming humidity of the tropics and for the distant song of the *coqui* that I had grown accustomed to falling asleep to every night. They say that acceptance is the first step of the healing process, and in a sense, I was somehow aware of that fact even at a young age. Even though nothing can erase the sheer mortification I experienced while walking to the corner where the fence meets the woods knowing I was the headline news of the fourth grade, I can reflect on that day and smile. Had it not been for the totally desolate emotions I felt, that McDonalds chocolate shake never would have tasted as sweet and as creamy as it did. After waiting for the last water drop to splash on the tub, I headed down the stairs, forcing my feet to make imprints on the carpet with every step. My mom didn't fret over how empty I felt, nor did she offer her condolences. She merely asked what I wanted as a snack for lunch for the next day. I had no preference as to the contents of either meal; all I knew was that I wanted my orange peeled in a Ziploc bag.

[Contents](#)

[Occasions Home](#)

[PWR Home](#)