Gail Gathman
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English 9
short story

I sat in the corner of the bathroom, with my knees pulled up to my chest, and my hands wrapped tightly around them, not planning on leaving anytime soon. The tears streamed down my face despite the fruitless effort to keep them away. I wondered if people had noticed my absence in choir yet. Even if they did it wasn't like they would care anyways. I was just a stupid, random quiet girl in the corner. The door opened just then. I quickly put my face in my knees. I thought about hiding in the shower; whoever came in wouldn't see my feet in there, but decided against it. If they were looking for me, they would probably check there.

" Maya? Are you ok?" Mrs. Divy, the business manager asked. That was a stupid question. Obviously not. " What happened? Did someone hurt your feelings?" I couldn't seem to answer, but it wasn't as much because my throat was all clogged up from crying as that I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to mention Meredith for fear that Mrs. Divy would bring her in from choir, and she would see me in this embarrassing state. But mostly I was trying not to think about it.

Meredith and I had been best friends. Life seemed to not exist without each other. I couldn't figure out why Meredith was suddenly ignoring me. I tried to think if there had been anything I had said to upset her. I had said some things sarcastically and, now that I thought about it, Meredith seemed to take them seriously.

Every time I tried to talk to Meredith, she would either ignore me, or tell me to stop talking to her. Finally Meredith gave in.

"I talked to my mom, I don't want to be friends anymore."

"why not? What did I do?" I asked.

" well, you put me down, and you talk behind my back, and you know I hate it when you touch my hair– " I could listen to anymore without bursting into to tears in the middle of the hallway. I ran to

the bathroom feeling totally stupid for crying, but also wondering what else she was going to say. None of it was true. At least, I hadn't done any of it meaningfully. Why on earth did Meredith think I talked about her behind her back? She was basically the only person I talked to! And why was she mad about me touching her hair? I wasn't the only one who touched it . . . it was so fluffy and soft.

I pulled myself back to reality as I forced myself to answer Mrs. Divy's question. "umm . . . I don't know . . . I don't . . . really want to talk about it . . ." I forced out.

" Well you can sit here as long as you like. I won't make you go back to choir." Mrs. Divy said.

"oh um thanks." I choked out. Mrs. Divy left and I sat there for a few more minutes trying to stop the stupid tears. I got up and went to the sink to wash my face. My eyes were all red and puffy as well as my face. Washing didn't help. They were still red as ever. I was never going to go back to class at this rate. The door opened yet again and a bunch of girls I knew from lunch came in. I guessed class was over. They all came over and gave me a big hug.

"What happened?" One of the girls named Maylie asked. "I saw you talking to Meredith and then run to bathroom . . ."

"It's stupid" I answered, "I don't really want to talk about it."

"Did Meredith say something mean?" Maylie asked. They urged me to tell them what exactly happened, but I hated it when people talked to me while I was just trying to stop my crying. They gave up eventually and left. And then I had to face the halls and all the stares toward my red, puffy face, and most agonizing, Meredith.

I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't even look at Meredith. People tried to talk to me, to ask me what was wrong but I shrugged them all off. I was afraid that if tried to tell them, I would start crying again, and my face had finally started fading.

The weeks went by, never talking to her, training my gaze away from her. She did the same. I knew I should talk to her but I was too scared and embarrassed. I got to the point where I was angry, and I did something that I instantly regretted.

In English class, we were presenting our short stories we had written, and Mrs. Eidy was having us write each other encouraging notes about them. Meredith was up that day, and I was going the next day. All my anger came out in that note. Except I didn't just write my feelings on it. Instead, I wrote every mean thing I could think of about her and her presentation: *"Your presentation was boring as hell. You have no speaking ability whatsoever."* I was actually kind of scared to give it her, my conscience was screaming at me to just throw it away. I ignored my conscience, and quickly walked by her desk and tossed the note on top of the pile, avoiding her gaze as usual.

The next day, I was practically sweating, as I waited my turn. I wondered what Meredith was going to say on my note. There were tons of mean things she could say about my presentation. It was so bad. I was sitting next to Scarlet when I got my notes of "encouragement". I was surprised at what Meredith said to me: *"Your note was very mean and uncalled for."* I wasn't expecting that, and it made me feel so much worse than I already did. That was probably Meredith's intention. Scarlet noticed my defeated, hurt look and of course misinterpreted it. " Meredith said something mean, didn't she." I made a split second, and utterly stupid response. " yeah." As soon as I said it, I knew I shouldn't have because of course Scarlet answered, "what did she say?" Luckily I had thrown the note away before Scarlet could look at it. "uhmm . . . she said that I looked all nervous stupid." more like *I* said that.

In P.E, Maylie told me that she heard about what Meredith said in my note, and gave me hug. That made me feel even worse. I wanted to tell Meredith that I was sorry but I couldn't face her. It was funny how what she had said to me in the halls hadn't been true until now.

The next day in English, Mrs. Eidy was very upset: "It has come to my attention that people have *not* been writing encouraging things to each other. Do you know how upset this makes me? You have taken a privilege I have given you, and used it negatively." I sank down in my seat, and stared at my legs. My face was burning with guilt. " If you are one of these people, please come see me after class." I sank deeper in my chair.

After class, everyone from English was in the hall waiting to see who would go and confess.

That made it way harder. "*just do it. Get it over with*." I told myself. I couldn't. Maylie came over to me and whispered: " I told Mrs. Eidy that Meredith wrote that mean note to you. Looks like Meredith's not going to confess. What a coward."

" I know right." I said blankly. Inside I was screaming. *I* was the coward here. I went to the bathroom and sat there for awhile. But I had to go to class or else I would look suspicious.

A week went by with everyone ignoring Meredith. Yet Meredith still didn't say anything. I thought maybe it was because she knew they wouldn't believe her.

Finally, I decided to write her a note, apologizing about everything, and asking her why she didn't tell. I watched her while she read it, I couldn't read her expression. She never gave me a response.

We didn't talk until two years later. I had left the school and was visiting everyone. It was a simple "hey Meredith!" and was replied to surprising with a smile and a response. She looked relieved that I finally talked to her. I guess she had been just as scared as I was.