

## The Dark Side of the Moon

\*\*Trigger warning: racism

Tiffany is like the visible side of the moon. She is well-known at her school, and just like the moon, many people comment on Tiffany's dazzling beauty as she shines in the night sky. These people are unaware there exists the far side of the moon, a side hidden from the rest.

Lin Na resembles the far side of the moon, she prefers to be hidden from the spotlight. Unlike Tiffany, Lin Na prefers only having a few close friends. Despite her hard work, Lin Na is often overshadowed by her bright counterpart, Tiffany.

Since the first day Tiffany transferred to this elementary school, she despised Lin Na.

It didn't help when Mei Hua arrived.

"My name is Mei Hua, I am from China," the little girl with two black pigtails introduced herself.

With no one else in the class who speaks Chinese, Mei Hua can only rely on Lin Na and Tiffany. Unlike Lin Na's friendly and welcoming demeanour, Tiffany's reluctance was evident as she trudged behind Lin Na and Mei Hua. The stares from her classmates didn't help as the trio exited the classroom to tour Mei Hua around the school.

At lunch, Tiffany heads straight for the lunchroom.

"Hey Tiff," Sienna places her hand on Tiffany's shoulder, which gets immediately shrugged off.

“I’m tired,” she responds to Sienna’s confused looks, “you should try walking around the school for an hour without rest.”

Tiff, Sienna gave her that nickname claiming it sounded better than Tiffany. Tiffany chose to accept it. After all, she did want to fit in, and the privilege of being friends with Sienna is not something everyone has.

“So Tiff, how’s the new girl?”

“She’s nice, just didn’t like how I had to climb eight flights of stairs,” Tiffany responds.

“She looks so nerdy. What’s her name again? Me? Mei? I’ll just call her Mei, whatever the heck that means.”

Behind her, Sienna’s friends chuckle.

Tiffany hesitated, “Mei means beautiful in Chinese.”

Sienna scoffed, “Beautiful? How do you say nerdy in Chinese?”

Another reaction erupts from Sienna’s friends.

Tiffany stays silent.

Sienna turns to face her again, “Wanna get a soda from the convenience store?”

“I’m good, see you in science” Tiffany turns back to her unfinished homework as Sienna and her clique exits.

In science class, the students are learning about astronomy.

“The moon visible to us is only half of what the moon actually is,” the teacher states, “why is that?”

Lin Na raises her hand, “the far side of the moon cannot reflect light back onto Earth, it cannot be seen unless we travel on to the moon.”

Beside her, Tiffany mutters, "what a nerd."

Lin Na remains quiet.

After the final bell rings, Tiffany is more than ready to go home after another tiring day.

"You shouldn't be so mean to Lin Na," Tiffany is interrupted on her way to the bus stop. She turns her head to spot Mei Hua speaking her native language.

"What do you mean," Tiffany attempts to act nonchalant about Mei Hua's comment.

Mei Hua rises to her feet, "Lin Na told me, and I can tell you don't like her. You should befriend her instead of pushing her away."

By now, Mei Hua stands directly in front of Tiffany.

"I can't," avoiding Mei Hua's gaze, Tiffany responds, "it's not that simple."

"Why?"

"Because if I befriend her, no one will accept me."

Loud chattering from behind indicates that Sienna and her friends are here.

"Hey Tiff," Sienna greets, "what are you doing here with Mei?"

"Please call me Mei Hua."

"*Please call me Mei Hua,*" Sienna rolled her eyes, "you really think you're special huh?"

Mei blinks in confusion.

"One of you is already enough, we don't need another Chinese person in our class."

"Sienna, I think you're speaking too fast for her to understand," Tiffany starts.

"Then she shouldn't have come here in the first place!" Sienna burst out.

For a moment, no one speaks.

“You’re being offensive, Mei Hua didn’t do anything wrong,” Tiffany’s hoarse voice reverberates through the still air.

Sienna turns to her, “why are you defending her Tiff? I thought you hated Chinese people.”

“Why would I hate the people from my own country?” Tiffany’s question shocks Sienna.

Seeing Sienna pick on Mei Hua because of where Mei Hua is from enrages Tiffany. Tiffany understands that if Sienna had not befriended Tiffany, she would likely be in Mei Hua’s spot.

“Don’t talk to me anymore,” Sienna spat at Tiffany before jabbing her chin towards Mei Hua, “you can hang out with that loser.”

Sienna and her friends strut away. A few turn back and eye Tiffany with sympathetic looks.

Tiffany went home drowning in her thoughts. Maybe helping Mei Hua was pointless. All she gained was losing one of her closest friends.

“You did the right thing Tiffany. Sienna is a good friend but her relationship with you is farther than you think,” Lin Na’s quiet voice woke Tiffany from her thoughts.

“Stop acting like you know better. All this happened because you befriended Mei Hua.”

Tiffany knows her excuse is absurd, but she cannot blame herself.

Tiffany turns to face Lin Na.

“You know, if you were not Chinese my life wouldn’t be so difficult. Why did you have to exist?”

Tiffany reaches for the empty china vase displayed on her vanity. She hurls it at Lin Na, who stands staring at Tiffany. Lin Na does not move; the vase makes contact with her head. Shards of shiny glass litter the ground beneath her feet.

Tiffany is like the visible side of the moon. She projects her beauty towards the world.

Lin Na is like the far side of the moon. The side Tiffany keeps hidden from the rest of the world.

“Lin Na, sweetie, what is all that noise?”

Slightly panting, Tiffany turns away from the broken mirror and responds, “nothing Mom, I’m fine.”