

Until We Are Seen As Equals

Sam ran down the hallway of his school, he was always in a hurry. School was out and besides him and staff, the campus was empty. As he sprinted down the hallway, he tripped and fell face first on the floor. Moaning in pain, Sam turned around to see what he had tripped over.

“What do you want now Matt?” Asked Sam with an annoyed tone of voice.

“Just reminding you where you belong, I still don’t get why the school accepted you.” He replied arrogantly.

The only reason why Matt treated him this way was because he wasn’t white. Although Matt was raised as a racist boy, Sam was starting to believe some of the things he said to be true. He saw that white men were favored in his city. When Matt decided to walk away, Sam slowly limped towards the parking lot thinking about his words.

In parking lot Sam saw his best friend Izzy, a girl with brownish hair and grey eyes he had known all of his life. She greeted him with a smile but immediately noticed something was wrong.

“Was Matt bothering you again?” Izzy asked.

“It’s not just that, although he does bother me, I think he may be right. Especially since Marshall died, the cops just said he committed suicide but they all know what really happened.”

Izzy fell silent to those words and looked down with a sad expression. Marshall was one of their friends, he had a cheerful spirit and always managed to make them smile, and he had short hair, dark skin and hazel eyes, but was murdered. The cops said he was depressed and took his own life, but how could that be if he had it all? He had friends, and support from his parents and teachers. It was logically impossible for him to be depressed.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that..." said Sam,

"You really shouldn't have! It may be true that we aren't treated equally but that doesn't mean it'll stay that way, but if we let their words and actions get to us, we will be enslaved, not by them, but by ourselves. Don't you get it? We have to make the change"

Izzy's words echoed in Sam's head and a single tear came down his cheek.

"Let's go home." She said.

Sam nodded and both of them walked home together.

As the days passed by, Sam avoided Matt and kept watching the news. All over the place he saw people protesting about unfairness, and also about freedom. Sam kept wondering "What is freedom?" It was an odd thought but it was all he wondered. One day, his teacher was giving a lesson about inequality, he brought up subjects like slavery, segregation, and finally asked "Are we free now?"

Most said yes, but people like Sam, from other races, stayed silent. The teacher passed out blank sheets of paper and asked the students to write their thoughts on this subject. Sam stared at his paper, he didn't move for a long time, and finally picked up his pencil and wrote one sentence:

"It doesn't matter what I think, it won't change anything."

As class ended, the teacher looked up and asked Sam to stay, he expected a lecture about not doing his work properly but the teacher said, "It's not true."

Sam looked confused and asked "what isn't true?"

The teacher replied, "Your opinion does matter."

Sam looked at him serious and just said, "If so, why do I feel like I'm trapped?"

His teacher looked at him and said, "that's how they want you to feel, they want you to feel tied down, like if you had no escape. Will you let them?"

Sam meditated on those words. He walked out the door and came back the next day with a paper: I'm not caged, you are because I moved on. I'm free because I choose to be successful, to get up and keep walking even if it's limping. You want to keep us imprisoned by our own thoughts. Just know that our voices will be heard and we will fight until we are seen as equals.

Sam stayed up late that night and thought about being humiliated by Matt, about Marshall's death, about his teacher's words and also Izzy's, and about all the protests going on. He smiled and kept repeating the words: Until we are seen as equals, we will never stop fighting.