

## Muted: A Girl's Voice

Ms. Miller slumped down on her huge bean bag as I sat there in my own, her room is dimly lit from the light of a small lamp she put at the edge of the table. On the table you can see all different kinds of stress relievers, fidgeting tools, and even puzzles like Rubik's cubes. This is a room that would place a lot of people's minds at ease without a doubt. After Ms. Miller has judged that both me and her are comfortable within our bean bags, she asked "So Lui, How are you feeling?"

No response.

Ms. Miller paused for a few moments before she said, "First of all I want to say I'm sorry about James' death, Lui."

No response.

Ms. Miller laid there in the middle of the bean bag, since her dress is black today, the same color of the bean bag, it almost looked like her body is the bean bag itself, some other time this would be hilarious, but not right now.

"So, how about you talk to me through this?" She handed me a whiteboard and a marker, "Go on." She smiled at me, giving off this familiar warmth I have been getting ever since my first day meeting her 3 years ago.

...

*I don't want to talk anymore...*

I showed the board to Ms. Miller as I hide my face behind the board, choking on tears.

“Lui, I understand how you feel, but it’s not your fault. Don’t blame yourself for your brother’s death”

*I had an argument with him that day... my last words with him were “I hate you, don’t ever come back.”*

By this point I have already started crying a bit, tears sliding down my face as I hold the whiteboard. I heard Ms. Miller get up and walked over me, within seconds I am enveloped in her arms, her minty body scent lingering around my nose as I cried. Ms. Miller didn’t say anything but you can tell through her hug that she is saying “It’s ok, it’s not your fault, cry your heart out, I’m here for you.” After a few moments, I’ve stopped crying, Ms. Miller let go of me as I lean back, sniffing, she handed me a tissue to clean my face.

“Lui, how about you join the singing audition that’s going on next week? You talked to me about it last year.” Ms. Miller looks at me again with her smile.

It’s been a few days since Ms. Miller’s suggestion, I sat in the large cafeteria during my free period wondering if it’s really a good idea to join the singing audition. I’ve also gotten quite accustomed to using the whiteboard as a means of communication. Suddenly, Kurt Washer, a transfer student from my class and a very insensitive person I might add he also doesn’t know why I don’t talk, came up to me with a big grin, “S’up Dummy, can’t talk again today?” He gave out a scratchy and horrible laugh “I wonder, what it’s like to be a dumb puppet like you huh? Not talking at all and just using a damn whiteboard.” I sat there in silence.

*Leave me alone Kurt.*

“Leave you alone?” Kurt raised his voice a bit, did I mention he is twice my size and looks like he can easily crush me? “Who the hell do you think you are telling me to leave you alone?”

*P-*

“How about you fucking say something?” Kurt said while smacking my whiteboard away as I write on it, “Oh wait you’re mute! How could I forget? You’re fucking handicap!” He laughed at his own joke and picked up my whiteboard, for a second I thought he was going to be nice and hand me the whiteboard, instead he broke it in half with his knee, laughed and tossed it on the table and walked away, I sat there in shock as I look at the two pieces on the table.

“What happened to your whiteboard?” Ms. Miller asked me as I walked into her room, carrying the 2 pieces of whiteboards.

*Kurt broke it...*

I fell onto the bean bag as it gives out a low “Pomf.”

“I see...” You can see the worries in her eyes as she looks at a Rubik’s cube that she’s holding in her hand . “Don’t you want him to stop Lui? It’s not good for you to just keep quiet...”

*I know... but he reminds me of James, his eyes, his face... I feel like this is James' way to haunt me...*

“You shouldn’t say that! James would never be like that!” Ms. Miller said as she set down the cube and looked at me, “I know that you also know that too Lui, your brother is not the type of person who would do such a thing.”

*I know... But what if this is my karma for saying such horrible things to James?*  
Ms. Miller went over to hug me, “I know for sure it’s not Lui.” She whispered in my ears.

It’s the day of the singing audition, I am somewhat amazed at the fact that I’m still going to go, despite the fact that basically the entire school knows that “Lui the Quiet” is joining the audition, with some other minor typical high school girl gossips that you get. I made my way towards Ms. Miller’s room for my session, attracting some eyes and whispers “Isn’t that her?” “I thought the whiteboard was just a joke...” “Is she even going to sing?” I closed the door and settled down on one of the bean bags, me and Ms. Miller somehow came to call them love sacs, while Ms. Miller lay in her with a big smile.

“You know, you’re kind of the talk of some of the students I know Lui,” She said with a grin.

*I’ve noticed, not just some but surprisingly a lot... am I really that well known?*

“Who knows! You tell me Lui, were you that well known before this year?” Ms. Miller sat up a bit, looking at me, still having that grin of her.

*I don't think so, back then I only know at best about 10 people...I highly doubt 10 people can spread my name much.*

“You never know Lui, all it takes is a single connection.”

*Not really helping me cope with the nervousness I'm building up before the audition Ms. Miller...*

“Don't worry, I know you'll do well, and here are my little words of encouragement,” Ms. Miller laughed and got up, walked over to my love sac and told me, with her biggest grin I've ever seen “ Why leave a legacy when you can be a legend?” She then ruffles my hair up before telling me to go prepare myself while she gets “busy getting proud” of me....it's just a singing audition Ms. Miller.

“Oh right! Bring me your broken whiteboard tomorrow if you haven't toss them yet!” Ms. Miller called to me as I closed the door.

A few hours past and it's the singing audition, I stand in the backstage of our theatre, a grand opera style theatre, fitted with a full on VIP style balconies for people who feel like they should pay hundred times over for a high school level play, bright red velvet carpet and rows after rows of seatings, massive rack of lighting to get every single possible angle of lighting on a single thing standing on a large custom made exotic wood flooring with a shining protective layer on top, this is one of the few exquisite things St. Jackson High takes pride in. I sat in my chair, getting as nervous as

I can ever think I can, a flood of doubts start to fill my head. What if I won't be able to actually talk again? What if I sing the wrong song? What if- but then I remembered Ms. Miller's advice. Why leave a legacy when you can be a legend? I smacked myself softly on the cheek a couple of times, you can hear the announcer introducing singer after singer, each drowned with rounds of applauses, and then it was my turn.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I introduce you to the next contestant, Lui Rosewood!"

A round of applause, though you can tell there is some hesitance within it, I walked upon the stage, wearing a long bright cyan dress with a pair of black heels, my hair tied into a small bun and put up on the back. I stood in the middle of the stage, right in front of the microphone and what seems like the entire school. I nervously opened my mouth, planning to introduce myself again and the song I am going to sing. To my surprise, nothing came out, I stood there for a few moments, you can see people in the audience leaning over to talk to each other, muttering, asking why I'm not singing anything. Don't think Lui! Go! Be the legend!

...

"When the night has come, and the land is dark, and the moon is the only light we'll see. No, I won't be afraid, no I won't be afraid. Just as long as you stand, stand by me."

I paused for a few moments, letting my voice lingering around, I smile and continue to sing "Stand by me". As I sing I can see Kurt's surprised face within the crowd.

The audition has finished, I gave out a big sigh, clutching my whiteboard as I sit in one of the chair backstages. I noticed a group of girls walked towards me, I instinctively stiffen my body up.

“Lui right?” One of the girls in front asked, to which I responded with a nod, “That was a great performance! I loved your voice! I didn’t expect much since I heard rumors of how you were a mute... sorry about that.”

*It’s fine.*

The girls didn’t ask why I don’t talk even when I can, why I use the whiteboard to talk, instead, they just giggled a bit and wished me luck in the ranking.

It’s been roughly 30 minutes or so, I somehow managed to get to the top 5, I stood on the stage, lining up with the other contestants, which included the Jamie twins, Avery from the choir, and other kids a whole level above me. The announcer stood in front of us. “Ladies and gentlemen, your votes have been sent in, and counted, here are our top 5 singers of St. Jackson High singing audition!” Round of applause, cheers, and whoops echo the theatre, “In fifth place, we have... Janet Young!” Cheers, applauses “In fourth place, we have....the Jamie twins!” No way, I made it to the top 3? I scan the theatre, did that many people voted for me?

“Aaron Green! Congratulation on your 3rd place!”

I watched as the announcer placed a bronze microphone trophy onto Aaron’s hand. This is unreal, I’m the top 2... this is incredible, I can’t believe it...

“And for second place...” The announcer leave what seems like years and years of suspense “Avery Jones!” My eyes widen as I realized that I have come first in the singing audition, tears start to form around my eyes as I watch Avery hold his silver microphone trophy.

“And last of all, everyone, please give a round of applause for Lui Rosewood! For coming first in the singing audition!”

My eyes filled with tears, I have an ear to ear smile, I shakily held out my hands as I hold the golden microphone trophy the announcer handed me.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Another round of applause for the top 3 singers of this year singing audition!”

I stood there, clutching my trophy as I look around the theatre, never would I imagine this ever happening.

The next day, I made my way to Ms. Miller’s room, carrying the broken whiteboard pieces and my trophy, I suppose I want to say thanks to Ms. Miller for encouraging me so much. I opened the door and saw Kurt in the room with Ms. Miller, I froze for a second before turning around and about to leave but Ms. Miller called out “Come on Lui, get in here!” In which I obliged without asking question for some reason. I decided to sit on the couch, away from Kurt. “Well, Lui? Don’t you have something to say to Kurt?” Ms. Miller looked at me and then made head gestures towards Kurt, who look very .... different.

... *Kurt... I want you to stop harassing me... please.* I clutched my whiteboard.



“Yeah, actually I came today because of that too...” I looked up to see Kurt with a sad look “I didn’t know why you weren’t talking and assumed, I didn’t know about your situation and made fun of you for it... I’m sorry.”

I scrambled around with my pen before writing *No no it’s fine! As long as you understand and don’t harass me... it’s fine.* I smiled at Kurt, in which I thought I saw something on Kurt’s face but he turned away, Ms. Miller looked at Kurt and then at me and made a very strange smile, like she knows something I don’t.

Well, now Ms. Miller said she has a pretty good decorator for the room, both of my broken whiteboards put against the wall leaning out at an angle while the trophy stands in the middle of the pieces.