



# The Mean Girls

**I tried ignoring her, but that didn't work. I tried avoiding her, but she'd always find me. I tried yelling back, but that only made it worse.**

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It started out innocently enough when a group of mean girls at my high school began throwing crumpled notes into the classroom and shouting words at me from a distance, making a point to make fun of my red hair and heavily freckled face. This behavior quickly escalated to words that packed more of a punch with frequent verbal taunts, yelling LESBIAN directly in my face while pushing me up against the lockers.

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There was this one girl who had a particular hate for me that I didn't understand since I had only met her a handful of times and never did anything to purposely upset her.

Her words hit me like daggers with each devastating blow landing harder than the last as I grew smaller and smaller in her presence. I had an unusual feeling as if an internal light switch was flickering on and off while my confidence slowly faded away and I began to hate myself. I tried avoiding her, but she'd always find me. I tried yelling back, but that only made it worse.

The bullying episodes continued and rumors about my sexuality spread like wildfire. Soon, there were ten mean girls ganging up on me. They would wait outside after school to taunt and swarm me until I made my way to the bus. The mean girls thought it would be funny to leave a message on our family voicemail outing me to my parents before I was truly ready, a cruel decision that alienated me from my older siblings since they were ashamed of my sexuality too.

By senior year, I had become dangerously depressed with an inconsolable feeling of sadness that overtook my entire life. High school graduation couldn't come fast enough and although I was able to work through the depression and push on to college, I still carry the physical and emotional scars from the time I spent as the target of their hatred.