

CHAPTER 1.

Misfit.

Scarlett held the scissors in shaking hands. The blades were long and sharp, like the ones the hairstylist use at barbershops.

Taking a deep breath, Scarlett looked at herself in the bathroom mirror.

Her hair was long, almost to her waist. Layers framed her heart-shaped face. Brown eyes stared at her with hot intensity. Slowly, Scarlett raised her hand, using the other to grab a chunk of hair. Using her jawline as a guide, Scarlett began to cut.

Long, curling strands of hair fell down to land around her feet.

Trying to cut the hair in the back was a challenge- Scarlett knew that her hair was going to be uneven.

When it was over, Scarlett pulled her hands through her hair, trying to control her breathing. Her hair felt so thin- so much more different from the long, thick strands of her hair before.

Scarlett sniffed, feeling her throat tighten as she turned her head from side to side to examine her work.

A little choppy.... But it will do.

After sweeping up the hair from the white bathroom tiles with a broom (sweeping it twice for good measure), Scarlett grabbed the dye.

wiping stranded tears from her face, Scarlett finished what she started.

When she was done, Scarlett had bleached and dyed strips of blue, pink, and purple into her hair.

She thought of her friend Christina's purple hair, and laughed softly. The laugh was soon forgotten when Scarlett heard her shrill mothers voice cry, "dinner ready!" Frantically, Scarlett grabbed the tubes of dye and sprinted into her room, stuffing them under her bed. Heart jack-hammering in her chest, Scarlett slowly walked out of her room, down the hallway, and into the kitchen, the floorboards complaining under her weight.

"Scarlett, what took you so-" Scarlett's mom gasped, her mouth shaped into a perfect 'o'. The plate that she was holding slipped from her fingers, twirling in mid-air twice

before exploding into a million tiny pieces. Scarlett winced, pulling her hand through her hair.

"You don't like it?" she whispered.

Scarlett's mom's face started from pink, to blue, to dark red, and eventually, purple.

"Your hair!" she screamed, spit flying from her mouth as she stepped over the remains of the plate, ignoring the 'crunch' of the glass grinding under her bare heel.

Her eyes were squinted and as sharp as daggers. Her brown frizzy hair was swept into a high ponytail, and was swinging back and forth as she advanced towards her daughter.

Scarlett crouched, holding her hands up to shield her face.

Her mother stood over her, breathing like an angry bull. They stared at each other for a few heart stopping moments, Scarlett didn't dare breathe.

Her hand moved like a cobra strike, grabbing a fistfull of Scarlett's multi-colored hair and yanking her to her feet.

Scarlett let out a cry, tears threatening to leak out of her eyes.

"Why?" Her mom screamed in her ear. "Whywhywhy?-"

"I wanted to!" Scarlett shrieked over her mother's cries. Her hand clawed at her wrists, leaving pink lines on her skin. "I like it! I want it!"

"Who did this to you?" Scarlett's mother snarled, pulling Scarlett even higher. Scarlett's feet skimmed the floor. "Was it Christina?"

Christina was Scarlett's best and only friend since second grade. But, as they transferred schools to their Junior High, Christina had changed over the summer. Christina got a nose piercing. She dyed her blonde hair dark purple, and started to wear black all the time. Scarlett had gotten used to the edgy look, and had started wearing black as well, under her mother's judging eye.

Scarlett yanked herself away from her mother, backing away until her back pressed against the marble countertop. "Christina had nothing to do with it." Scarlett whispered. "I did it because I wanted to."

Scarlett's mother stared at her, face slack. Suddenly, she burst out crying, falling to her knees. "I raised you! I took care of you!" She sobbed "and this is how you're going to repay me? You becoming a misfit?"

Scarlett shook her head, walking around her crying mother down the hallway onto her room. She sighed, closing the door behind her, muffling her mother's sobs. Scarlett turned the deadbolt to lock it.

The next day, was a monday.

Scarlett dressed in a dark purple sweater and dark pants, pulling on her combat boots and tying the laces tight. Scarlett inhaled, and turned herself towards her floor-length mirror.

Her hair still looked choppy. The blue in her hair popped out from the purple and pink. Scarlett pulled her hand through her hair, thoughtful. Forcing herself to peel her eyes away from the mirror, she looked at the clock above her bed. The hands read 7:15. Theodore High School was only a block away- she would walk.

Scarlett pulled her backpack higher up her shoulder, and tiptoed out of her room, down the hall, past her mother's bedroom door, through the kitchen, and outside. She shut the door quietly behind her.

A thin frost covered everything in sight. Scarlett's breath came out in clouds.

Breathing on her hands to keep them warm, Scarlett speed walked down the street towards the school.

CHAPTER 2.

Scarlett's high school was made out of brick. She could see the library from the double-paned windows in the front of the school. The words "Welcome To Theodore High School" were painted in white and green letters over the double doors leading inside. Scarlett pushed them open, and began elbowing her way through the crowds of giggling girls, who were probably waiting for Link to arrive.

Link was not only the captain of the football team, but also smart, handsome, and funny. Everyone loved him.

In other words, the boy every girl wants.

When Scarlett reached her locker, she was surprised to see Christina waiting for her there.

Her dark purple hair reached to her waist, Her blue eyes outlined with black eyeliner, giving the impression of a raccoon.

She was on her phone, her thumbs flying over the keyboard, not realizing Scarlett was there until she tapped her on the shoulder.

"Oh hey-" Christina's eyes widened "what did you do to your HAIR?" she hissed, clenching her phone in a single clawed hand.

Scarlett frowned, as she began to do her combination. "You don't like it?" She asked.

Christina shrugged. "Well its...Different."

Scarlett raised an eyebrow "Different....Good?"

"Just, Different." Christina said softly.

Scarlett sighed, opening her locker with a click. "If you don't like it, then speak up."

“No I like it!” Christina cried, smiling. “ I’m just... Surprised.”

“Hey, freak.” A hand shoved Scarlett face-first into her open locker. Scarlett gasped, engulfed in blackness, her hands scrambling to grab the edges of her locker.

“HEY!” Scarlett heard Christina screech. “What’s your deal?”

“Where do you belong in, a freak show?” The voice snickered.

Scarlett took a deep breath, and pulled herself out of her locker, pulling her hands through her hair. She saw that the voice belonged to the pimple-faced Chace Frinkleson- nicknamed, Pimpleson.

Chace had a large white head in the middle of his forehead, staring back at her like a third eye. His face was shiny with grease. He had a smirk on his face, as he always did, with the hint of amusement in his eyes.

Christina let out a low growl, before swinging her fist, stepping forward a half step.

Christina’s fist connected with Chace’s nose with a sickening crack. Scarlett flinched as Chace cried out, stumbling back, his hands cupped over his nose. Blood was dripping from his hands and splattering onto the floor. Christina smiled a toothy smile, rubbing her knuckles.

Scarlett smiled. “You’re supposed to have two eyebrows, not one, Pimpleson!” she yelled as she stared at the one brown line of hair going from one eye to the other.

Chace glared, his eyes squinted pig-like at her.

Christina chuckled as Chace spun around and half ran, half stumbled down the hallway. Scarlett examined Christina’s knuckles, which were starting to bruise. “you okay there?” she asked her.

Christina shrugged, raising her hand to give her knuckles a kiss. “ Been through worse. Besides, someone had to do it eventually.”

Ten minutes later, Cristina, Scarlett, and Chace were in the principals office, side by side, shoulders almost touching.

Chace’s nose and cheekbones were already decorated with blueish and purple bruises.

“that looks like a break.” Christina said with mock sympathy, clicking her tongue.

Mr. Wellmore leaned hard against his desk, his sausage-like fingers folded together in front of him. His face was slightly coated in sweat. He had a receding hairline, a bad comover, and a mouth that seemed to never close.

Scarlett leaned as far back as she could in her chair, trying to hide her disgust for her principal.

Mr. Wellmore leaned forward even further, his leather seat complaining under his weight.

“I have three hard working students in front of me.” he began. Christina snorted, and Mr. Wellmore turned his attention to her. A single eyebrow raised. “why are you in here anyways?” he asked, eyes knitted together in annoyance.

Christina smirked, crossing her legs. “self defence.” She answered bluntly.

Mr. Wellmore turned to Scarlett. “and you?”

“ I was the one who was shoved in the locker, Mr. Wellmore.” Scarlett replied, putting her hands up in surrender

Before Mr. Wellmore could turn to Chace, Chace shouted, “Dey ernn bo bane!” (they are to blame)

Mr. Wellmore sighed. “and why is that?” he asked.

“Maybe because I punched him in the face?” Christina offered.

Mr. Wellmore let out a huff. “ You, Christina, will stay after school, along with Chace.

Now all of you, leave my office.”

It took all of Scarlett’s self control not to sprint out of the room.

CHAPTER 3.

Later that night, Scarlett made a list of all the comments, glares, and odd looks people had given her that monday. It took almost two hours, but Scarlett finally finished.

The list was almost three pages.

Scarlett sighed, leaning her head against her notebook, and closed her eyes. She wished that she had the nerves that Christina had. The way that she didn’t seem to care, and made it known.

Shaking her head, Scarlett checked the time. It was almost 9 o’clock.

Scarlett got up, and did her normal routine- get into her pajamas, brush her teeth, brush her hair.

As Scarlett got under her covers, she thought of the following week. Her gut was instantly filled with dread.

‘Tomorrows another day.’ She assured herself, sighing as she closed her eyes.

And it certainly was.

“ I’m getting really sick of this bullying thing.” Scarlett said to Christina as they stood in line in the cafeteria.

Christina’s hair was pulled back in a long, purple braid. Christina played with it as she replied “What are you going to do about it? People will eventually except you.”

Scarlett sighed. "Not fast enough" She muttered.

"What do you want?" Mrs.Laurence, the lunch lady, spat.

Lunch ladies, Scarlett noted, were always crabby.

"Burger and fries, please." Scarlett asked politely. Mrs.Laurence grumbled as she handed Scarlett her lunch tray.

"I've never seen a girl order anything like that before." A voice said. "Unless its full of that calorie burner junk."

"well, for your informatio-" the words slipped right out of Scarlett's mouth as she turned towards the voices owner, Link.

Link was staring straight at her. He was at least two heads taller than Scarlett,forcing her to tilt her head back to look at him.

Scarlett decided to play off her slip up with an eyebrow raise.

"Girls can't eat burgers?" She asked him, glad that her voice was steady.

Link smiled, his teeth so white it was almost blinding. "Thats not what I said." He answered matter-of-factly. "Its just a surprise, thats all."

Satisfied, Scarlett leaned over towards the cash register to pay for her lunch. " Well, I'm not going to starve myself like the rest of the girls do."

Link put his hands up in surrender. Scarlett noticed that there was a burger on his lunch tray as well.

"You almost done here, Link?" Britney, the head cheerleader(and the biggest snob)came walking in between Scarlett and Link, her high ponytail almost slapping Scarlett in the face.

Scarlett reeled back,scrunching her nose up in disgust.

Britney held her lunch tray full of lettuce- It was the only thing on there- with one hand, the other wrapped around Link's middle.

"Yeah, I guess." Link said, his eyes never leaving Scarlett's face.

"Would you like to join us, um..."

"Scarlett." Scarlett finished him. "My name is Scarlett."

" Don't invite her to our table, Link."Britney hissed, trailing one manicured nail down Link's jawline. "We don't invite freaks." Britney shot a glare at Scarlett "To our table."

Link clenched his jaw, looking down at Britney,his eyes squinted into slits.

Before Scarlett could say something smart back, Christina swooped in,linking arms with Scarlett. Christina gave Britney a toothy smile "I like your hair." She said sweetly "Great extensions." Before pulling Scarlett to their usual table in the back.

"How was your conversation with lover boy?" Christina asked.

"He was amazed that I had ordered a burger." Scarlett said with a shrug, he heart still jack-hammering in her chest. "And.."

"And?"

"And,"Scarlett continued. "He asked me to sit with him at lunch."

Christina stopped walking, unlinking their arms and grabbing Scarlett's shoulders.

"Seriously?" she breathed.

"Seriously." Scarlett smiled.

A finger tapped Scarlett on the back. Christina covered her mouth with her hand, hiding the grin that was beginning to form on her lips.

Scarlett slowly turned around, craning her neck up to see Link's worried face.

Britney stood a few feet away, arms crossed over her chest. She stared at Scarlett with a hot intensity.

Scarlett waved at her with her fingers. Britney scoffed.

"I'm sorry about Britney." Link began, shoving his hands in his pockets. He stared at her with his big blue eyes. "I don't know what got into her."

Scarlett's mouth was suddenly dry. She licked her lips and shook her head. "It's the hair, isn't it?" She asked softly.

Link looked at his feet with sudden interest. "I honestly didn't notice."

"So polite." Scarlett sighed, looking over Link's shoulder at Britney. "Maybe you should go back to your girlfriend, before your ego gets ruined."

"She's not my girlfriend-" he began, before shaking his head and letting out a low chuckle.

"My offer still stands." He said.

Before Scarlett could reply, Christina appeared at her shoulder. "The only reason she wouldn't sit with you popular people is because she promised to sit with me today."

Christina spoke as if it was a tragedy. "And Scarlett never breaks promises."

"Christina!" Scarlett hissed

"But!" Christina continued, her voice perking up "She'll sit with you tomorrow." Christina turned to Scarlett, eyes gleaming. "You promise Link, don't you.?"

"Um..." Scarlett bit her lip, looking up at Link's hopeful face.

"Okay!" Christina turned to Link. "Tomorrow then." Before spinning Scarlett around and pushing her onward.

"Christina!" Scarlett cried when they got to their usual table, slamming down her lunch tray and planting her hands palm-down on the table. "Why did you do that?"

"You should be thanking me." Christina said as she unwrapped her burger and took a bite.

Scarlett sat down, unwrapping her burger and holding it in her hands. "I should make my own decisions." Scarlett snapped.

Christina looked at her from across the table. "And if you did make your own decisions."

Christina shot back, "You wouldn't be sitting with Link tomorrow."

"All because of a stupid burger!"

"Yes!" Christina cried, chewing loudly as she did so. "A burger that changed your life!"

Scarlett closed her eyes and sighed. "What am I going to do?" she whispered.
"You're going to spend the night at my house." Christina answered. "So we can plan."
"Plan?"
"Oh yes." Christina sneered. "Lots of planning."

CHAPTER 4

By the next day Christina and Scarlett had Scarlett's outfit picked out, conversation starters memorized, and Scarlett's make up done.

"Jeeze" Scarlett teased. "Didn't know you were so 'into' this stuff."
"When its not me." Christina said with a grin. "Now, don't blink- you'll mess up the eyeliner."
Scarlett's nerves were in a frazzle, jumping at every sound, constantly having to wipe her hands on her jeans- Christina's jeans- to remove the sweat. 'It's only lunch.' Scarlett assured herself. 'Only a little time into my day'

Lunch came all too soon.

The cafeteria seemed too small, with too many people. Scarlett's shirt stuck to her back with sweat. Her stomach was doing flips and bounds, and Scarlett felt as if she was about to throw up.

"You'll do fine." Christina said as they stood in line for their food. "Just don't say anything stupid."

"Well, that helps." Scarlett rolled her eyes.

with her lunch tray in hand, Christina walked towards the table in the back, phone sticking out from her back pocket.

She was going to take pictures, no doubt.

" You almost ready?" Link seemed to come out of nowhere, flashing one of his brilliant smiles.

Scarlett's heart leaped up to her throat. "Y-yes." She croaked as the lunch lady handed her her lunch tray.

"Alright." Link said, scanning the cafeteria for his table. "Follow me."

Scarlett was a half-step behind him. She raised her head high, hoping that she looked at least calm.

Britney was sitting with the rest of her clique, nodding her head enthusiastically at whatever they were saying. Link waved, catching her eye. Britney began to wave back, before she noticed Scarlett, and pulled her hand back, her face scrunching up as if she saw a dead spider.

Link sat across from her, motioning Scarlett to sit in the empty seat next to his. Scarlett hesitantly did so, giving Britney a teasing smile.

“Your hair looks better than usual.” Scarlet sneered at her. “Did you get any new extensions?”

“Oh, please.” Britney shot back. “Speak for yourself.”

Scarlett shrugged, feeling a blush beginning to creep up her neck.

“Chill!” Link growled as Britney’s clique began to laugh hysterically. “She’s cool.”

“Hey Link!” Someone cried. Scarlett tensed as a group of boys began to sit in the empty seats around them, all wearing their basketball jerseys. “Who’s the new friend?”

“Her name’s Scarlett.” Link answered just as Scarlett opened her mouth to reply.

“Scarlett!” The boys all shouted, pumping their fists in the air.

Scarlett bit her lip to keep from laughing as the boys settled down.

The boy sitting closest to Scarlett, Brian, began to tell jokes, and Scarlett found herself laughing uncontrollably with the rest of the table.

Except Britney. She picked at her food, shooting dirty looks at Scarlett, probably planning revenge on her. But for some reason, Scarlett didn’t care.

Link had his arm around Scarlett’s shoulder, smiling as Brian told another funny story.

Scarlett had felt uncomfortable at first when his hand slithered around her neck to rest on her shoulder, but was soon falling against his side, her head tucked under Link’s chin.

Suddenly, after a story that had sent them all into a fit of giggles, Britney pushed herself up to her feet, her face full of rage and what Scarlett thought, of jealousy.

“How can you all stand this?” Britney roared. “There has been an infestation!”

“What are you doing, Britney?” Link asked with an edge in his tone. “You need to stop.”

“What, and let this continue? Look at the person you’re sitting next to- that you’re *embracing! This, this Misfit!*”

The last word made something inside Scarlett jerk.

Misfit.

Different.

Not to be tolerated.

“You’ll get used to it.” Christina’s words swam in her head as Scarlett stood up, letting Link’s arm slip off her shoulder.

All the names, all the looks, all the whispering from the past two days, filled her thoughts, filling her with a rage Scarlett had never felt before.

Her mom, sobbing on the floor, calling her that exact word.

A misfit.

“Scarlett?” Link asked, uncertain.

Scarlett gave Link’s shoulder a quick pat before stepping up onto the tabletop, her combat boots kicking away lunch trays full of food.

Scarlett felt everyone’s eyes on her, but all she could look at was Britney.

The sound of her name wanted her to spit.

So she did.

she gathered as much saliva as she could and spat the loogie at Britney

It landed perfectly on her right cheek, under her eye.

Britney screamed, high and shrill, wiping her face with her hand, which only succeeded to spreading the spit all over her face.

“A misfit.” Scarlett began. “That’s what you call people who look like me?”

Scarlett looked around the whole cafeteria. Every pair of eyes was trained on her.

Just as Scarlett wanted.

“You all want to be popular!” Scarlett shouted to them. “To be known- but once you’re popular,” Scarlett shook her head. “ You may become this blood-sucking lamprey with hair right here.” Scarlett pointed a defiant finger at Britney, who was gawking at her in surprise.” If the hair is even real.” She muttered, which earned her a roar of laughter from Brian.

Britney stared at him, open mouthed.

“ Why do you call different people misfits?” Scarlett went on. “ You tease them, pick on them, and I’m sure everyone here has been picked on at least once.

“ What is the definition of misfit anyways?” Scarlett cried. “ Different? Abnormal? Is it because we don’t dress like you? Talk like you? Act like you?” Scarlett turned to look down at Britney. “ Because if we did, we’ll all be drones.”

Britney’s clique gasped, looking at Britney with wide eyes.

“Who cares if we dye our hair? Dress in black? We get to decide what we want to do today, tomorrow, next week. Why do we have to suffer because you don’t like what clothes we put on ourselves? Seriously people! What is wrong with the society? All of you have no right to judge someone else.

“You don’t know what people have been through, just to be called a misfit.” Scarlett sneered. Her nails were digging into her hand, leaving deep crescents in her palms.

“Expressing ourselves shouldn’t earn us a lifetime of teasing, of being picked on. You know how many people cry behind closed doors because of your guyses opinions?”

Scarlett, for the first time in the whole speech, looked down at Link.

He was smiling up at her, his blue eyes trained on her face.

Scarlett smiled back before looking at Britney, who stood watching in awe. "A lot of people." she said coldly. " And I will not tolerate it."

Scarlett stepped off the lunch table, looking down at her feet as she began to walk across the cafeteria towards the exit, to her escape.

Christina came bounding over, her phone in her hands.

"Did you video tape it?" Scarlett asked.

"Every single last word." Christina answered.

"Good."

"Stop!" Britney's voice echoed off the walls as she advanced towards Scarlett. " You do not walk away from me."

Scarlett turned around to face her.

Britney was running, arms outstretched, hands curled into claws.

Link was standing at the end of the table, eyes filled with horror.

Christina began to advance towards Britney, hands clenched in fists, but Scarlett held her back.

"Let her come." She murmured.

As Britney lunged, hands reached out towards her. Scarlett smoothly stepped back, letting Britney fall face first onto the tiled floor.

Blood exploded from her nose, splattering onto the ground. She let out a cry of pain, clutching her face as she curled herself into a ball at Scarlett's feet. The cafeteria was silent around them, Britney's moans echoing off the walls.

Scarlett smiled and shook her head. "Keep the video, Christina." she sighed. "We're gonna need it."

Christina had posted the video on youtube, just as Scarlett had asked. Two weeks and a million likes later, the video went viral. News trucks came to the school, reporters thirsty for details.

" What had encouraged you to say those things?" They had asked Scarlett.

Scarlett shook her head. " The answer to your question is everywhere." She had replied. "You just have to ask the right people."

