

SCHOOLGIRLS

ANONYMOUS

OUT ON THE
SHELVES

The person reflected in the mirror is wrong.
That's not me, is it?
Am I even in there somewhere, beneath the mirage?
Long hair tucked behind ears
Draping round my face like a brown/red/gold curtain.
Arms too smooth, immaculate, unscarred
If they aren't marked, how do I know that I truly exist?
Chest too prominent under my t-shirt
I thought this one would hide it!
Body too feminine
Wrists too slim and delicate
Face too girlish.
I could be a 1950s school girl.
I see it.
Boater hat over twin plaits slithering down my back.
Or perhaps my hair is out, still perfectly groomed despite the oppressive heat.
My mother takes pride in my hair, you see.
Knee length checkered summer dress, cotton ironed straight and smooth.
School blazer with crest proudly displayed in neat embroidery (maybe a book, or
a bird, or tree) over my chest.
New black Mary Janes with shining silver buckles, not at all scuffed by unladylike
activities such as running.
Standing in a row of all-alike girls, waiting for our schoolmistress to tell us to
begin our daily walk through the park.
I pull up my lacy white socks, clean and bright, just like us schoolgirls.
We'd make a good painting, don't you think?
"Come along girls!" Miss calls, and we (the girls in question) trot along after her.
People whisper as we walk by



“What darling little things!” “They’ll make such good wives someday,”
“Finally, some proper young ladies.”

We smile back at them, and with our heads held high (we are aware of our place in this male dominated world, yet that does not mean we don’t know how to use it to our advantage) continue to walk through the park.

We are all schoolgirls, and although we live in the age of the second wave of feminism, we are proud to be young ladies, to someday grow up to serve our husband and country.

If we plan to have jobs, or to be independent, we keep this to ourselves.

I should be proud too, in my perfect home, with my lovely friends, and school, and life.

Yet why does it feel so wrong?

I don’t belong here, in this mirror image world.

I am not a perfect schoolgirl.

I know this. I have known this for so long. But why do the words that seem to fit the others so well not work for me?

Being part of the group isn’t a problem for Lucy, or Grace, or Natalie.

So why is it for me?

I should be happy. The words should fit. They should mean something to me.

“Keep up girls!”

Why is it not instinctive to answer when the schoolmistress calls?

Why, when the others talk about changing bodies and growing up and cooking and cleaning and having children, is my knee jerk reaction ‘but that won’t be me. I won’t be doing that, because I’m not one of them. I don’t belong in that world’?

It’s not just the heat that’s oppressive.

My hair tangles and sticks to my neck – my mother will be so disappointed it’s not perfect anymore. She always calls me her ‘pretty little girl’. She is so pleased to finally have a daughter after so many miscarriages.

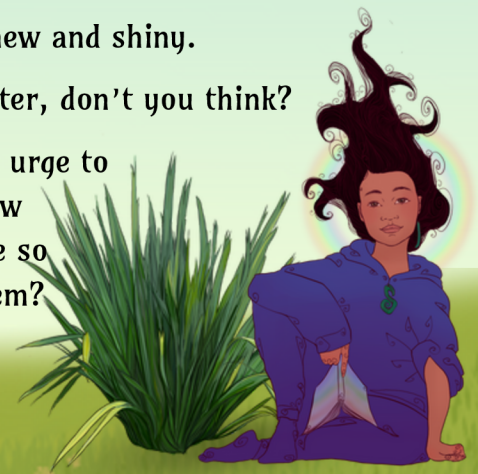
My checkered dress is too tight against my chest.

My blazer just adds to the pushing, constricting weight.

My Mary Janes don’t fit properly, although they are new and shiny.

Why can’t I have shoes like the boys? They would fit me better, don’t you think?

My lacy socks are slipping, and I get the strange urge to rip them off, to tear off the lace and throw them into the muddy park pond. But they’re so beautiful, why would I want to destroy them?



I'm one of them aren't I? Please can I just be one of them? Please?

I am a good little girl. I am a good girl. I am a girl.

NO.

Why can't I just be one of them? Boys are annoying, I don't want to be a boy.

But why is being 'one of the girls' so ill fitting?

The line of skipping schoolgirls slips away.

I want to rip off my skin.

The 1950s oppressive heat has stayed, while the scene evaporated.

Why is this body so wrong?

Why is being a girl, becoming a woman, the thing my mother is so proud of, so excited for, not working for me?

Why can't I be her perfect daughter?

Why can't I be proud to be a girl, proud of the history of all the many women who fought for their rights? Those 1950s schoolgirls would be so disappointed. I have so many opportunities, and I am wasting them.

Why can't I love my body and my life as a girl and my place as the responsible eldest daughter, caring older sister, promising granddaughter, neat schoolgirl, one of the loud happy excitable girls, pretty young lady?

I hate this!!!

I hate my hair.

I hate my arms.

I hate my chest.

I hate my body.

I hate my wrists.

I hate my face.

I hate my role of a girl, the part I play every hour of every day.

I hate the sticky 1950s heat that has attached itself to my skin and won't let go.

So does that mean I hate myself?

