

## THIS IS ME

Trudy hated herself. Everyone else was pretty, yet she had pale white skin, freckles and red hair. Sara was never happy with herself either. Everyone else was beautiful, yet she had spotty skin, gaps in her teeth, and to make matters worse she had dark hair growing on her legs.

Trudy and Sara were not invited anywhere. They had turned down so many invitations in the past that no one bothered asking any more. 'They must think they are too good for us' their classmates wrongly assumed.

Trudy saw Sara sitting alone every lunch time. She wanted to invite her around to do homework, but then Sara would discover that Trudy was brought up by her mum with no dad around. How would she react when she discovered that Trudy had no tv, laptop or mobile phone? It wasn't worth the risk.

Sara was lonely but couldn't invite Trudy to her house. Her mum drank red wine each afternoon. It was too risky. Her mum **may** be ok on the day, but just one too many and she would become an emotional blubbering wreck. Most evenings she was either in floods of tears, or fast asleep on the sofa. 'I wish my family was normal' Sara repeated over and over. Her dad would say 'Mum is not well darling, one day she may get better'.

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'OK everyone, settle down while I explain today's lesson'

'You each have an identical piece of paper on your desk. Please write on it using black pen and capital letters; one secret about yourself. One thing that you wouldn't want your classmates to know. Fold your paper into four and I will collect them in a box. I must stress, this is a totally anonymous exercise. **No one** will know who wrote what. Please work in silence and take as long as you need.

The room went quiet but you could almost hear the anxiety levels rising.

Miss Khan walked quietly around the classroom picking up each folded 'confession' she gave the box a good stir each time she placed a new one inside.

'Now' she instructed. 'I will read each one of these out. Please show respect by staying quiet to hear each other's thoughts. When I have finished; silently leave the classroom. Your homework for tonight is to write a very short piece on how today's exercise impacted you.'

One by one the notes were read out: 'My mum hit my dad' 'I hate my teeth' 'I feel too fat' 'I think I like people the same sex as me'

Trudy was stunned. It began to sink in that everyone had fears and insecurities.

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Trudy's homework flowed easily; she wrote:

Don't look at my **outside** to judge how I **feel**

It's just a facade, and none of it's real

I can't be you and you can't be me

Accepting yourself is truly the key

The next day Trudy spotted Sara in the lunch queue. 'Do you fancy coming over after school tomorrow?'