

The Boy Who Eats Exotic Food

by Annie C.

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He belongs because his family makes him feel that way.

There's the interesting food he eats that none of his other friends ever tried before. It makes him feel like he's a part of some exclusive club: members only. They think it's exotic food, but he eats it every day – day in, day out.

It's normal for him.

Routine, like endless homework and tedious chores.

There's a certain pride in that, to know he's special and unique, and he wouldn't give anything in the world to change that.

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But then, there are the stereotypes and it's not so pleasant.

He doesn't like being pushed into a corner and labeled with other people who 'look *just* like him' (and when he told them how he felt about that: "*But that other boy has black hair, too!*" someone oh-so-smartly replied). He really isn't any of those things they say. Okay, he fits under *some* of them, but that's not the point. Those are things he would've been no matter what he 'looked like'.

To be fair, he *does* have a slight obsession over certain traditions. It fascinates him, that where he's from has centuries and centuries of rich history. His sister often comments (while rolling her eyes) on how westernized and at the same time, un-westernized, he can be sometimes.

He knows she understands though, and he secretly loves her for that.

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As well, it's not his fault his language sounds the way it does.

It's not weird.

Personally, he thinks it sounds fine.

Beautiful, even.

He doesn't tell this to anyone though: his friends would never let him live it down.

What was so good about English anyway? Truthfully, he always felt that it was a rough language made up of stolen words. There was no real rhythm or cadence to it; just a clash of mismatching sounds.

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He doesn't like that his inner self is so murky and unclear. It's so far from the truth – the way people see him – that he sometimes feel like there's no point in correcting them. But it irks him to no end because, *no*, he isn't the same as 'that other boy, who also has black hair,' and *no*, he *isn't* related to him.

Not even third cousins twice removed.

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People don't understand, he concludes.

He often tries to picture why, but it's like trying to peer into a heavy fog with no sign of clearing up.

Really, it's not rocket science.

He is who he is.

He defines himself.

Who are they to say he's something he's not?

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Annie Chen was born and raised in Vancouver, B.C. She likes reading and writing, predictably. There isn't much to say about her as she hasn't done much (yet). She eats apples whole. Greek mythology perks her interest. Someday, she wishes to learn how to ski downhill.