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Somehow, Somewhere, Someday

I started middle school, and it was rough. I had to push through countless obstacles just to make it to the end of the day. Everybody ignored me and treated me like I was a dirty tissue. One day something happened that still makes my blood boil. I was sitting in my classroom quietly doing independent work. There is this obnoxious rude boy a few seats away. He asks for a pencil. I did not give him one because, why should I? He was so rude to me all year, and I took all his crap. I said, very quietly, “no.” “what did you say?” he replied. “I said NO!” It went silent. He coldly replied, “Shut up woman, if you are not going to give me a pencil, make me a sandwich.” I heard the laughter and shouting of his friends just as my face felt like it was on fire. I could feel my eyes welling up. Then I swallowed, took deep breaths, and blinked back my tears. I was not going give him the satisfaction of my tears. I freeze and think back to all the times I have experienced something like this. My mind goes blank, and I am sucked into my thoughts.

There I was, 3 or 4 years old, waiting in line to get my snack. I am at daycare, the kid behind me asks what my favorite color is, I think for a little bit. I like pink and purple because it reminds me of the roses in my backyard, blue and green because my mom loves those colors, and brown because it is the color of my skin. I tell this random kid all my favorite colors. I expected him to be impressed by me because I already was so sure of myself. Then he said something I still think about to this day, “you’re a girl, you can't like those colors, you can only like pink and purple.” My parents always taught me that I can be whatever I want to be, but this kid said something else, I was very confused. That night I asked my dad what his favorite color

was. He replied “whatever your favorite colors are” he said. I thought about this, “even if I like pink and purple?” “of course!” my dad replied. “I love pink and purple!” That made me incredibly happy, and for a while, I thought that life would always be as warm and cozy as the blanket of love that my parents sheltered me in. I shortly realized it would not always be like this.

The next memory I have of something like this, is when I was 8 years old. Sitting on the floor, listening to my mom talk about the book she has been reading, ‘Becoming Michelle Obama.’ I remember looking at the cover and thinking, ‘hey I've seen that lady on tv before!’ My mom was explaining how Michelle was in high school talking with her counselor about how she wanted to go to Princeton (a very prestigious college,) and her counselor was not impressed, she said I just do not think you are “Princeton material.” Somehow my 8-year-old brain was like ‘hey, that’s wrong, you can't tell her what she can’t do!’ I later found out she applied anyway, and got in. When I got older, I realized what an amazing and inspiring woman she was. She eventually became one of my leading role models.

I always saw men and women as equal, 2 counterparts, but I soon realized that is not how the rest of the world us. The last memory that flashed before was my favorite. In 5th grade we had just started our research paper. An official research paper. I was extremely excited. Of course, since my last name is Varghese, and it was alphabetical, I chose my topic last. The paper was on the 20th century and there were lots of options, but one caught my eye. The women’s right movement! It was perfect! Too bad it was taken, I settled for women's voting rights, which was still so interesting! I was so excited I worked my heart out on that paper. As I researched the past, I started reading about women's rights in the present. That is when I learned about feminism.

Technically speaking, I got an 80 on that assignment (Apparently, I ‘veered off topic’) but I continued to learn about all the amazing women of the world. I also learned that people did not really like feminists, and that people associate the term with ‘man-hater’ which I knew that is not what I was, I was just a girl who thought I should be treated the same as a boy.

I come back to the moment, I think of all the memories that came spilling back to me, anger bubbles inside of me. “Shut up!” I yell. And the boy was, finally, speechless.

That night as I lay in bed waiting to drift off into the endless comforting void of sleep, I thought about everything. It was crazy how this boy could be stuck so far back in the past and had used something so personal against me. That day at 10:00 at night, standing in my bed, in my nightgown, I decided I was not going to take crap from anybody. That I was going to change the world, and how people view, not as men and women, but as one beautiful society, two counterparts joined. Somehow, somewhere, someday, I was going to do it.