

# My New Beginning

By Olivia Perez

I stared intently at a poster on the ceiling. The spirals in the art confused me. My neck was starting to get a painful cramp from looking up for too long. But the problem was I couldn't stop staring at the poster. It reminded me of something. I just couldn't place my finger on it. My pale fingers rubbed at a familiar spot on my temple. The edges of the circle black and rugged. I traced small circles around the gaping hole. I remembered how it got there. It's probably been there, oh I don't know, fourteen, fifteen years now. My fingers traced my jawline and came across another hole. This one was different. A triangle shaped one. Covered with an ugly purple bruise. Bits of dried blood framing the edges. My other hand ran through what was left of my hair. Small wispy strands of muddy brown. Some of the edges burned. My scalp suffered extreme damage as well. My hand found the small indent just behind my left ear. I looked down at my hands. Red circles covered my palms, and dried blood was woven like gloves on my knuckles and wrists. I flipped my hands over, and stared at jagged cuts which seemed to never heal. Microscopic holes dotted my flesh. I don't really remember what they're from.

I licked my dry lips, and closed my dull blue eyes. I ran my fingers over my eyelids and down the side of my face. My fingers ran over every unwanted cut, scratch, bump, smoldered chunk of flesh, scar, bruise, patch of skin less skin where all you can see is what's underneath. I opened my eyes again hoping I would see someone different, someone still whole. Not my pale bumpy skin full of disasters. Not my decaying hair which only seemed to disappear and never grow back. Not my broken body which needed to be fixed.

"Eve, Eve! Are you with us?" I snapped my head back to the front.

"Of course Mrs. Addington." I said sweetly. I gave one of those winning smiles where you show all of your teeth. Or in my case, the ones I still had. She gave a look that said: I'm sure

you're with us; now why don't you tell us the eighteenth president? But I got lucky and didn't have to say anything at all. I drummed my fingers on my desk, feeling my face turning a shade of pale red. I quickly glanced to my right, and was surprised to see the desk next to me empty. Attendance in this school wasn't required. Most of the time the teachers just kind of sit there and watch us, noticing how we act around others like us, how we don't judge one another for missing an eye, or having perfectly smooth skin.

Most of the newer kids may ask what happened to you, but they don't pry to much. The older ones, like me, are more experienced. We don't lie anymore about how we got here. Some say they went in their sleep, or maybe they're here because they were sick. We tell the truth, no matter how painful. I'm one of those people who the others look up to with all my burns and cuts.

I felt myself sinking away. The world around me began to disappear. I tried to stay present, but I was dragged into a flashback in a blink of an eye.

Germany 1320. That's where I was. I recognized the workers pressing paper, hanging paper to dry, and women sorting cotton or linen. I looked down at my hands, and was surprised to see they were still intact. No scratches, no burns, and no blood. I began to walk around, the workers giving me dirty looks, or some even shouting out insults. Eventually, I turned a corner and was greeted by a man holding a rope. He shouted at me to get out, and I winced at his tone. Before I knew it, the rope was lashed across my back. Pain erupted just under my shoulder blade, and I stumbled forward. The man raised his hand, and hit me just underneath my eye. I felt a small burst under my skin, and turned away. The man was persistent though. He followed me down the hall, whipping at my ankles and calves.

I pushed open the heavy door, and was blinded by the sun. I stumbled. The man grabbed my collar, and pulled me close until I could smell his reeking breath. He held me in a headlock, and whispered warningly, “You come into my factory again dirty street rat, and I will personally cut off your hands.

Just like that, I was back in the present, rubbing the place where that man cut me. He wasn't the only one either. I hurried out the doors and ran across the mossy cobblestone, my feet pounding underneath me. I just reached the woods when I slipped into another flashback.

England 1320. I sat next to my horse Whirlaway, as she struggled to breathe. I couldn't do anything but watch. My horse was dying of ffarsine. I ran my fingers over her bumpy skin, sweat forming at my touch. I shrunk back, and my mother picked me up.

“Look what you did. You ruined your Sunday best. And for what? A horse?” she set me back down, and slapped me across my face. It stung but I was used to it.

I zoomed back into reality. I touched the indent on the back of my head and winced in remembering yet another beating. Things like this continued to happen. I was abused, abandoned, and worst of all forgotten. My life was filled with tragedies similar to these.

Just before I arrived here I broke out in disease. I don't remember what it was called but it gave me terrible red blisters filled with pus on my arms and legs. When they would pop, they would turn black and start to bleed immediately. My family stayed away from me, occasionally a doctor would visit, but other than that I was alone.

Anyways, I've lived here for a while now and you come to enjoy it. Most people think when they go to heaven it's all sunshine and rainbows, but this wasn't true. I never had to sleep

again, and eating wasn't a priority anymore but just an option. My injuries would never heal so people stare at me.

On my own free time, I peer down at the earth below. Yes we can see the world beneath us and no we can't visit. Imagine you saw a very pale girl, weirdly dressed, and full of holes. It would probably scare the living daylights out of you. Once you get used to the idea of walking around with new people appearing every second, each one different, it's fun just to be yourself. After all, nobody will give you a second glance because of how you look. It might be sad to say, but I like my life better up here more than I did back home.

I still occasionally have small flashbacks, but nothing major anymore. Dying was decently painful, so it's hard to forget.

I remember going. The world turned white, and I ended up here. A complete mess. Bloody hands, burned hair, and missing skin. The others took me in. In time I was the one greeting people at the entrance and showing them around, saying nobody would ever judge them on their appearance again, telling them my story of how I died at age seventeen. Making them feel at home. Reassuring them they would be remembered.

