



## Almond Eyes

I may not live a celebrity lifestyle, but I know what it is like to be stared at. People were especially alert when I was with my mother. Something always brought obvious recognition when I was with her. When I was very little, I thought they were looking at my pretty dresses or my imaginary friend. Of course, that all changed one day at the market when I was nine years old. My mother had left me alone for a moment, and I was free to wander the store alone. An old woman next to me had pointed at me and said to her friend, “Look at this funny looking girl next to me; look at her eyes.”

Though I didn't want to, I looked behind me at the two old women. They looked like they could be my relatives. I had their eyes— almond eyes— but apparently that was strange to them. I walked away from them as quickly as I could, but wherever I went I was attracting attention. The chill of these old people's stares and the tingling of their children's curious gazing were all trickling down my back. I heard murmurs and even laughter. Never in my life had I felt so exposed and alone. People were saying things that I didn't understand at the time: abomination, half-breed, mutt. I needed to find my mother right away and hide in her arms.

(As I looked from face to face, I started to see all of us transform.)

Later that day, my mother and grandmother found me crying in the basement. I told them what happened. I was crying because all of those people thought I was an ugly monster; I wasn't like them. Nothing was right about me. Everything was so confusing and hurtful. I didn't know where I belonged. My grandmother put me on her lap in front of a mirror and cradled me in her arms. My mother sat next to her and stroked my forehead soothingly. We didn't talk for a long time. We just stared at each other in the mirror. As I looked from face to face, I started to see all of us transform. I could see my mother and grandmother smiling down at a little girl lying down in their arms. She was beautiful and happy. She had the same nose, eyes, and small features of the women above her. She belonged with these perfect women; she looked just like them. I looked into her squinty brown eyes and she grinned. Suddenly, I realized that girl was me.

*Meghin O'Brien*