



Sylvia took a deep breath. It was the first day of middle school tomorrow, and she had a big decision to make.

What to wear.

Middle school was a big step. Not only would she now be rotating classrooms, she would also have her own locker! But she also knew she'd have her fair share of challenges. Her hair never laid as straight and shiny as the other girls, and she didn't have fancy or expensive clothes like some of them.

She looked through her closet at her clothes and sighed.

*I have nothing to wear!* She thought dismally.

"What's going on, sweetie," her mother said, peeking her head in.



"Nothing," Sylvia sighed. "I'm just trying to pick out something to wear for tomorrow."

"Hmm, how about this," her mother said, pulling out a pair of denim overalls. "You can wear the pink shirt underneath! You love this outfit."

"I love this outfit to go to grandma's house, *not* for the first day of middle school!"

She flopped down onto her bed. "I don't have any nice clothes!"

"Sweetheart, of course you do!" her mother consoled. "I love your clothes! They're adorable! And most importantly, they're *you*."

"Well I don't want them to be *me*. I want them to be cute! I want to fit in with all the other kids."

Her mother sighed. "I know exactly how you feel."

Sylvia looked at her mother, confused. Surely she couldn't understand, could she? "You do?"

"Of course I do, I felt the same way before my first day of middle school, and many other days, too. It's completely normal. And believe me, *everybody* is feeling this way."

Sylvia frowned. "Everybody?"

"Everybody," her mother confirmed, nodding.

"Even the girls with the perfectly smooth and shiny hair?"

"Definitely! Because you know what they're thinking?" her mother asked, eyes twinkling.

"No, what?" Sylvia responded.



"They're thinking that they wish they had bouncy, curly hair like you!"

Sylvia touched her hair. Could that be true?

"That's the sad thing about life, honey—everyone wants what they don't have. When I was your age, I tried to straighten my hair flat all the time. But you know what—it just wasn't me. And once I stopped, everyone complemented my hair! But it's not all about the compliments, you know, sweetie. You were made with the hair you have for a reason. And one day, you'll learn to love it, I promise."

"Really?" Sylvia asked, doubtfully.

"I promise," her mother said, laughing. "You'll be so thankful that you have this beautiful, unique hair."

"Now, about your outfit—"

"Don't worry, Mom," Sylvia said, smiling. "I know what to wear."

The next morning, Sylvia carefully clasped her overalls on her shoulder over her pink shirt.

She went downstairs to find her mother making pancakes.

"A special breakfast for your special day," her mother called over her shoulder. She turned. "Sylvia!" she gasped, "you look beautiful!"

Sylvia smiled.

"What made you decide to wear this outfit," her mother continued.

"Well," Sylvia began, taking a seat at the table and grabbing a pancake from a plate full of them, "it's my favorite outfit. And, I don't know, it just...feels like me."



They both smiled.

“I’m so proud of you, sweetie,” her mother said. “It takes people a long time to realize they’re the most beautiful when they’re being themselves. And besides, it’s what makes you feel your best, too!”

Sylvia smiled the whole way through breakfast, and the whole car ride to school.

Nothing could bring her down today. It didn’t matter if someone else’s hair was smoother, or shinier, or that their outfit was more expensive or more stylish. Because Sylvia had something else they didn’t—*she was Sylvia*. And no one else could ever be! And that alone made her beautiful. Clothes and hair didn’t matter in the slightest.

As she walked to her first class of the day, she smiled at everyone she passed.

“Hey!” another girl called. “I love your outfit, where did you get it?”

Sylvia smiled. Her mother was right! Though the compliment felt nice, Sylvia felt even prouder that she was being true to herself.



That, after all, made her feel the best.

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