



That Marie

Lauren Harkawik

It's Some Morning, and fifteen-year-old Tina is sitting in her bedroom at an awkward desk that her legs don't fit under. She's not looking at it, but from her little TV, news anchors are sending caffeinated blips of local news into the air. For her part, Tina's not awake yet, but she's taken a shower, and her wet hair is drip, drip, dripping on her shoulders. It all feels invasive, which is what most mornings feel like to her. Encroached; normal; daunting; tired. Coffee helps.

Two cups, most days. Then it's one frustrated minute with a hairdryer, some clear Blistex, jeans with a men's t-shirt, sideswiped short black hair, and glasses with clear plastic frames. The clear plastic on the glasses doesn't make them any less auspicious. They stand out. Actually, in general, Tina stands out, though she'd rather not. There's

no romantic way to say it, so to put it plainly, she's fat. She has been her entire life. If you look beyond that, which she doesn't, Tina has what you could call "conventionally pretty features" — high cheek bones, curly hair, long eyelashes. Maybe someday that'll matter to her, but for now she's shelled in by a clunky persona.

With her friends, she lets her wit shine through, which offsets the whole awkward clunk thing a little. Among the general populous, though, she walks the halls of her school feeling like everyone's looking at her but nobody's seeing her. And that is what's happening. Because she stands out, but not in a way where anyone can tell who she really is beyond what she looks like, which is ill fitting and odd.

The local weather man is on his third round of sunny skies reports ("It should be raaaather perfect," he's said with the same cadence each time) when Tina gets to the final part of her morning routine. She stands in front of a full length mirror that hangs on the back of her closed bedroom door. She tugs at the bottom of her shirt, and how it doesn't quite cover the waistband she'll be tugging at all day because even though she's too big, so are her pants. She gives herself a sideways look. She frowns a little. She looks down at the floor, like that might help. Then she picks up a scarf, and she ties it around her neck.

The scarf is made of thin cotton fabric that is maroon with little navy blue and gold diamonds on it. It looks cool. Studious. Different. Intentional. Feminine. Seeing it on herself makes Tina perk up, and her heart races a little, and makes her feel nervous in a way that's both anticipatory and fear-inducing. Fight or flight.

She did wear it, once. That Day.

Tina's tried, but failed, to figure out what gave her the courage to wear a scarf on That Day. Regardless of what inspired her to wear it, she couldn't stop staring at it in her reflection in the school bus window, and with every passing moment, her regret increased by twofold. She was about to take it off when the bus jerked to a stop in

front of the school. Everyone got up quickly, and there was no time to take the damn thing off. She tugged at it as she got swept up in the flow of foot traffic toward the school.

But before she could pull it off, it happened.

‘It’ was:

Tina was walking up the steps to the school when Marie — the Marie that Jon calls that Marie — saw her. And Marie — that Marie — politely turned and said, “Love your scarf!” And then she smiled and opened the door to the school and just as quickly as she had appeared, she disappeared.

Tina felt her skin get hot, and then she got a feeling in her stomach that was like a giant ball that was equal parts laughter and nerves. Then the ball burst into a million butterflies, which took flight in her core and heightened every feeling in her body. Then she floated down the hall to her locker, and then to homeroom, and then to everything else she did that day.

Tina had first noticed Marie four months prior to That Day, on the first day of school, when Marie came into history class and sat one row over and one seat up from Tina. Marie was the prettiest girl Tina had ever seen, but not in a way where the girl knows it and is milking it. In a way that feels totally incidental but also isn’t disregarded. And Tina thought she seemed confident, smart, responsible, and polite. She was nice to everyone, and she laughed a lot with her friends.

Her laugh. Ever since the moment when she first noticed Marie, Tina had studied that laugh, and she could hear it louder than any chatter that might be going on at any part of the school. She felt like she had Marie radar. She could tell when they were in the same crowded hallway. She had a keen ability for scanning the lunchroom and finding Marie immediately. Seeing Marie — just seeing her from across the way — gave Tina a burst of energy that carried her through whatever class she was about to go to. It was what Tina would one day nonchalantly call “a crush.” But in the moment, it was huge and all-

encompassing. It was like Tina's happiness depended on Marie's existence and on the possibility that Tina's existence and Marie's existence could someday be a coexistence.

Ever since the day That Day, every single morning, Tina has tried on that scarf, wondering if she should wear it again and, if so, if Marie might notice again. If another really great, wonderful day might be born - one even more exciting and promising than That Day. Every day, when she touches it, she gets a jolt, and she moves herself closer to the mirror, and she focuses just on her face. When Tina and her face are an inch apart or less, she can see that it's pretty. And she feels light inside.

Maybe, she thinks, each day, focusing on the scarf. And she smirks at the possibility before taking it off and putting it down, sighing a little as she tugs at her waistband and avoids the mirror. And as her feet move past the threshold of the doorway of her room, she thinks to herself, maybe tomorrow. And she smirks at that possibility, too.

Lauren Harkawik is a reporter and freelance writer living in southern Vermont, where she shares a hilltop home with her husband, toddler daughter, dog, and cat. Lauren grew up in the suburbs and spent time in Brooklyn before moving to small-town Vermont. She says she feels like a spiritual hybrid of the three — she loves the lights of the city, the quiet quirks of rural Vermont, and the comforting reliability of the suburbs. Lauren earned a BFA in dramatic writing from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts and Film at Purchase College in Purchase, NY and went on to work in the entertainment industry before handing herself over to the pen and becoming a full-time writer.

[Return to Contents \(/summer-2018\)](#)

PREVIOUS
(/FIRST-A-
GRIN-
THEN-A-
CAT-THEN-
BEING-
TOLD-
WHICH-
WAY-
DEPENDS-
ON-
WHERE-
YOU-
WANT-TO-
GO-
MARGARET-
ROZGA)

NEXT
(/FROOT-
LOOPS-J-
L-
ARCAND)

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR
FROM YOU

*Email us at
SweetTreeReview@Gmail.com*

ARCHIVES

[Volume 1 \(/volume-1\)](/volume-1)

[Volume 2 \(/str-webzine-volume-2\)](/str-webzine-volume-2)