

Scrolling Faces

As dusk approached, Marilyn planted her body on the brightly colored bed. Eyes glued to her Holophone, she scrolled absentmindedly through transformations of regular faces into plastic surgery masterpieces. Their long faces featured trendy, pointed chins with enlarged eyes, giving a cat-eye look. Wishing she was as stunning as the ‘after’ pictures like any seventeen-year-old, she was concerned about her appearance. It was everything a girl could dream of. In fact, it was everything everyone in America could dream of—experiencing the newest plastic surgery trends. Looking past her Holophone, she gazed up at her mirror hanging in that same spot since the time she was born—she fixated on her almond-shaped, hooded eyes. Disgusted, she immediately threw the Holophone on her bed.

“Marilyn, get down here! Food’s getting cold,” called her mother’s demanding voice. “Coming,” Marilyn said, annoyed. Sitting at the huge wooden dining table, she noticed her mother’s newly upgraded face literally glowing. “Mom, you look different! Did you get your skin tone colored or is it the lighting? Lucky.”

Before her mother could answer, her father rushed in from an exhausting workday. He stopped in his tracks with an uneasy expression as he caught a glimpse of his wife. “Honey, is that you? Your skin color looks... lighter.”

“It’s the new Dermal Painting! Like my new skin tone? It’s called ‘Effortless Sun Kiss’ and it’s trending. Honey, I think you should get it done next time you go to get your nose altered!”

He rolled his eyes and mumbled, “You change your face so much these days I can hardly

recognize you.”

Jealously, Marilyn muttered, “Mom spends so much money always getting the latest trends. Dad, when can I get plastic surgery? Everyone at school has. It’s unfair. And—” Before her mom could answer, her dad immediately cut her off. “That’s between you and your mom. Leave me out.”

The only mealtime conversations lately involved the topic of plastic surgery. Otherwise, they sat in silence. Every single dinner Marilyn hoped that *this* would be the day they changed their minds. Marilyn stood glaring into her mother’s eye. A sudden flash of insight struck her momentarily. She saw none of herself in her mother's appearance. Her mom’s hooded eyes had been transformed recently.

“With time maybe you *will* outgrow those hooded eyes. If not, we’ll help you get the surgery. You know we can't afford the constant upgrades. Now skedaddle along,” said her mom. Marilyn stormed up the stairs to her room. She jumped on her bed, grabbing her Holophone. As she opened the phone, a huge ad popped up. An array of bright yellow and orange colors cascaded all around her as a caterpillar morphed into a graceful butterfly with big eyes. As it exploded towards her, it invited her in a soothing voice, “Parents won’t commit to forever changing your face? We invite potential test subjects to experience the New Evolution of plastic surgery. When it comes to beauty, there is always room for transformation!” Since 2060, New Evolution’s technology offered popular advancements in plastic surgery trends and made it accessible for anyone to achieve a new, gorgeous face. Years ago, few individuals chose plastic surgery until New Evolution made it their mission to integrate plastic surgery into the daily lives of the masses. Knowing this popular history, Marilyn was intrigued.

Seeing this as a sign, Marilyn quickly typed her name in the box. She pulled up and submitted an old video of her mom consenting for her underage daughter's medical treatment. Marilyn was that much closer to her dream.

The next day Marilyn skipped school, overwhelmed by the embarrassment of her natural face. Nervous to stand out as she left for her appointment, she dressed down making sure to pull the drawstrings of the hoodie around her face to conceal her natural features.

As she walked to the New Evolution office, she regularly adjusted the drawstrings around her hoodie, envious of others with plastic surgery, but excited to join their wonderful world. Distracted, two kids snuck up on her and screamed for everyone to hear. "Hey Hoodie! Try all you want, but you know the hoodie can't hide that hideous face," mocked one of the laughing boys. His smooth skin reminded her of porcelain. His blue eyes looked ironically innocent and gave his aura a look just like an angel's.

Regardless of the way he looked, Marilyn could only see his actions as evil. The two kids babbled on about her appearance as they walked away. Miserable about the hateful speech, her right leg started to vigorously shake. She understood she was meant to change her face to finally be accepted. But, the hateful nickname "Hoodie" echoed across her mind. All she could hear in her head were the boys' previous words. As she looked around, she could see everyone staring and smirking at her. She ran away scared and stopped near a trashcan where no one could find her. Tears fell rapidly and mucus started to drip. She started breathing heavily and let it all out, hoping she was far enough from critical ears. After a while, she reassured herself that everything would be ok after the surgery. Wiping off the mucus and tears on her shirt she ran as fast as she could hoping to be left alone.

She reached the clinic through an alley and spotted other individuals her age waiting for their surgeries. Remembering her objective, she nervously announced, "I'm here for my new face. I saw your ad."

"Yes, I know," called a sweet Southern voice. "Just sit and we'll have you settled." Marilyn was excited yet nervous to see how the micro-surgery would turn out. When Marilyn's turn arrived, she saw a girl come out of the surgery looking excited and completely different from before, but without any evidence of a serious procedure.

"This'll be quick sweetie," chuckled the lady. She walked Marilyn through the whole process as she implanted Marilyn's new facial microchips. "We're just going to implant programmed stem cells and microchips to control the face externally. We'll use our cauterizing methods to require only a slight cut."

After the procedure, Marilyn looked in the mirror to confirm that her skin felt the same as before. Gliding her fingers across her skin, she felt no evidence of scarring. The lady walked behind her to explain how to control her facial features. "This allows you to manipulate how people view your face. Anytime you like, you can click these buttons to alter the position, shape, or size of any facial feature."

Afterwards, Marilyn went home excited to try out her new features. She sped to her room. As she sailed up the stairs, she stopped in her tracks when her dad and mom called out to her.

"Marilyn, is that you? You had surgery," said her mom flatly.

After explaining how she was able to receive the surgery without their knowing, her dad was defeated.

“Marilyn, you look so different. I can barely recognize anyone anymore. First your mom, then you. It’s exhausting always seeing faces change,” said her dad sadly. “Well, I just got the new surgery so that I can be like everyone else. You know how insecure I was before,” mumbled Marilyn, angry at her dad’s lack of support. “Well, I understand, but it’s so hard to just remember the old you!”

“Why can’t you just be happy for me?” pleaded Marilyn.

She started to cry and ran upstairs as fast as she could in sadness and disbelief. First everyone made fun of her natural face, but after the microchip implants she still felt lost. Her mom rushed to her room.

“Mom, why is it so hard to please everyone? No matter what I change there’ll always be someone commenting on my appearance. I just want everyone to like me. First my classmates called me ‘Hoodie.’ Next my dad says he can’t recognize me,” she hopelessly admitted. “Mom, I need time alone.”

Desperate to start the changing process, she looked in the full-length mirror wondering what she should change first. She dropped to the floor in front of the mirror sitting with her legs pretzel style as she did when she was little.

She first modified her lips to make them plumper. Then she modified her cheekbones to make them higher. She tilted her head side to side amazed at what she accomplished within a few scrolls.

Next came her eyes, the part which she felt the most hatred toward. Scrolling furiously, she modified the part of her appearance that caused her so much insecurity. She scrolled through the options all the way from round eyes to upturned eyes. Frustrated after scrolling for so long,

she gazed in the mirror. After scanning the change button continuously, and becoming dissatisfied with the available facial options, she scrolled back to the one she knew. Abruptly stopping, she looked in the mirror as she stared back at her own hooded eyes.