

**"Now could he ever get his chance to let folk see what they thought never existed?"**

**(p.53)**

There's panic. There's hesitation. And, there's one recurring thought – *you all are just silhouettes to me: black, mobile, and unpredictable.*

I let this thought consume me as I stand in the sharp Irish sunlight on a street somewhere in St. Stephen's Green, shielding my eyes despite wearing sunglasses. Can I see anything clearly? No. You all are a blur and by "you" I mean all the Dubliners spreading in all directions, going about their day – oblivious to a middle-aged albino girl who can't seem to see straight despite eye protection.

This happens more than you'd expect. Usually, when I am alone, I walk it off, praying that the sunbeams become kinder in time and that I can make my way to my destination without being run over or pushed down on the buzzing pavements. However, when I am walking with someone, say a friend or family member and the Sun is reaching unprecedented heights, my pace slows, my steps falter and the eye-shielding is ten times more vigorous.

Today, the Sun is a little less forgiving even though I am alone. By some miracle and a sprinkle of perseverance, I push through the shapes and successfully make my way to Books Upstairs, an unmistakably blue bookshop labelled as "Ireland's oldest". The need to be surrounded by books is all-consuming at this juncture of time and space and it also gives me a chance to hide from the Sun.

I enter gracelessly and my demeanour changes instantly. The colours, the titles, the bookworms – oh so tempting! But am I here to splurge on a trending hardcover? No. The reason why I am here is because I am somewhat of a Hot Chocolate connoisseur and I must test all the milky-chocolatey concoctions I can get my glove-clad hands on.

I make my way upstairs (no book in hand, mind you) and awkwardly order my forever-favourite beverage. The barista is a 20-something college-going girl who couldn't stop yapping about the latest Hunger Games book before I ordered. That was until she wasn't riveted by my accent – which is an inauthentic and not-so-compelling mixture of Indian and American. However, she is invested now, and asks me without preamble, "Where are you from?"

Here we go again. Time to explain how someone with ginger hair (I dye it), violet, nystagmus-riddled eyes, and a pale complexion sounds like an Indian. *Where is she from?!*, her brain must be toiling to trace my roots.

I tend to cherish and detest such interactions. There have been so many ever since I came to Dublin that I can almost predict how the person is going to react to my origin story. Once I solve the mystery for them, I do feel liberated; like I have just reinstated to myself that I am comfortable in my skin.

I offer her a brief explanation gently, “India, but I am albino.”

It's no surprise when she raises her eyebrows and opens her mouth in an ‘o’ shape. Yes, yes, cue the surprise. She has finally spotted an Indian-looking Irish young woman in the modern-day wilderness. *Huzza!*

Within seconds, the shocked ‘o’ turns into an understanding ‘o’ and she hands me my drink with a tiny smile on her face. She’s absorbing the information and trying to be polite at the same time. I get it. I always do.

I should have never existed. Yet I do. I am the best kind of anomaly. One that knocks you off your feet and forces you to reconsider what you think you know about biology, considering both my parents wear brown skins back home with pride and love.

Albinism is a hindrance sometimes. Crossing the road, reading tiny fonts, spotting someone from afar...But it’s also a gift and the biggest gift I can give myself is the gift of self-acceptance.

I may not have superpowers but I still possess the ability to stupefy people with my looks and my genealogy. For me, it doesn’t get better than that.