

# Check All That Apply

Sierra White



I came into this world nothing short of a mystery. No name, no birthday, and no parents. Found alone on a sidewalk somewhere in Anhui Province by an old man that I'm sure had way better things to do than take care of a newborn.

A lot of superheroes have an origin story. Even Superman, who never knew his parents, at least knew where he came from. All of this makes me wonder: *what's my origin story?* Maybe my parents were trying to save me from something. Maybe that something was themselves. Their life was self-destructing, and they threw me out into the street away from the line of fire. I picture my parents as forbidden lovers, on two sides of an ancient wall built to keep them apart.

I wonder about them. I wonder at the doctor's office when they ask if my family has a history of any health conditions. Or in Biology, when we're covering Punnett Squares and genetics. How when I just want to disappear, you want to go home and become the family detective, checking your mom and brother for hitchhikers' thumbs and widow's peaks.

I wonder about them when I'm filling out the

race question on surveys and applications. How I can always feel my heart speed up when I have to decide which box to check. How my face flushes, and my hands start to shake, the sweat from my palms wetting the pen in my grip. Like, somehow, I'm cheating on a test I didn't study for but know I can't pass. I wonder if other people notice this too. The way I hover over each answer. The way my pen lingers over the last box. Over the one marked "Other."

Sometimes I feel like a fraud in my own skin. And when you ask, "What are you?" and I reply, "Chinese and Mongolian," I'm just appropriating a culture I only think is mine. I look in the mirror at my round brown face and my almond eyes, and I can't tell where someone else might stop and I begin.

But I still check the same box as always. Because "brown" has never been an option, although "yellow" seems so far from the truth. I still check it, because it feels better than the alternative- which seems like a sad cop out, a write in. I still check it, because in my mind, it's better to be *something* than to be "Other."

It's better to pretend that that box is mine.