

Rachel Menjivar

Grade 9

STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges

The soft breeze brushed her hair back in a way that made her seem almost angelic. She wasn't just beautiful, she was drop dead gorgeous. My eyes catch hers and a red tint forms in her cheek as she realizes I was staring. I quickly look away out of embarrassment. We have been dating for almost three months now and I still get a little shy when I'm with her. With a shaky voice she said, "Do you still want to go to the dance with me?" My heart dropped. Of course I wanted to go to the dance with her. But things were too difficult. I could only imagine the stares of everyone paralyzing me. "You already heard about the rumors...you know it's too risky," I replied. As much as I would love showing the whole world we are a couple, people aren't as accepting in my school. Last week, Brandon came out in front of the entire school and everyone made a fool of him. That alone is enough to push me back into the closet. I held her hand savoring this peaceful moment. I layed there imagining a world much different than ours. A world where our relationship wouldn't be questioned or rejected. A world where I could kiss whoever I wanted to without any fear. But instead we hide in the shadows of a park. I take one glance towards the park before I lean in for a kiss. A soft almost inaudible click grabs my attention. I look around searching where the sound came from. It was a camera. It had to be a camera. My hands began to shake as I couldn't believe we had been caught. This can not be happening right now. I'm-- "Amara! Look at me!" My eyes lock into hers and I see the same fear in her eyes. "It's probably not what we thought it was. Let's just go home." Only I heard the true terror in her voice.

My heart was beating so fast I could barely breath .The picture of me and Melody kissing had been plastered on almost every social media platform. Voices quiet down and laughter stops with every step I take. I speed through the hallway rushing for an escape. I enter to a bathroom only to bump into Melody. I stretch my arms wanting some comfort but as I was wrapping my arms around her she stops me. "Amara" Melody said avoiding my eyes. "I'm sorry, we can't do this anymore.

The whole school knows.” she hesitantly said, while looking at the ground. I stood there dumbfounded. “You can’t be serious. After all we have been through.”

Her expression softened. “I’m sorry, I love you... but I can’t do this. Not when everybody looks at me differently,” she said with a pained expression. Before I could even protest she walked out leaving me alone in the bathroom. As much as I would have like to hold it in, as soon as the first tear broke free I could no longer hold in the sob. I clenched the edge of the sink in attempt of releasing some of this frustration. I look into the mirror and saw a girl I don’t recognize. Her eyes were bloodshot red and heavy with tears. No longer standing the image looking at me I run for an exit.

These past few days seem to be working in a cycle. Things haven’t changed in my school. Everyone in my school constantly bothers me about me and Melody. They taunt me with words like “Did you and your little girlfriend break up?” My blood boils at the thought. Things at home haven’t been pretty either. It seems like everyday I get into an argument with my family about my sexuality. My phone rang and I was surprised to see Melody was calling me. I debated whether or not to answer. Part of me was still angry at how easily she left me but I understand where she is coming from. “Hello?” I said but I got no reply. After a long period of silence Melody finally spoke. “I’m sorry...I didn’t think you would answer, especially after all the times I ignored your calls.” There was a long pause again. “What do you want, Melody?” I said with a much harsher tone than I intended. “W-Well I have had time to think,” she stuttered “and I realized what I had done was wrong. I shouldn’t have left you alone and I wanted to apologize.” I was speechless. I couldn’t forgive her that easily, she should have been there for me. “I don’t know what to say...It hurts me how easy it was for you to leave me.” I said. “I know, I thought you would understand. Before you were so concerned about everyone finding out about us. I assumed it would be better for us to break up,” she replied. I never thought about it that way. I always knew my worst fear was getting caught but once it did happened I realised something. Coming out was much more relieving than I thought. It felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. And I would like everyone to share this experience with me. That’s why diversity should be celebrated in our

community. It motivates acceptance to people and allows people of the LGBT+ community to be who they truly are. “So what are you trying to say?” I said impatiently. “I’m trying to say that I want us to be together again. I promise this time that I will not let you down” she pleaded. My heartbeat quickened. I spoke with hesitation. “I would like things to go back to how they use to be, but I’m afraid they can’t. All I need is time” I began to see how this was a new and brighter future for us.