

An Awakening

written by Maja Lander Clausen

It's not that she's never had such a thought before. It's been there ever since that day in middle school, when she got dared to kiss Minjoo. She hadn't done it, but at that time she had realized that she wasn't totally against it. She had been sitting in the circle, looking at the other girl, waiting for her to make the first move despite it not having been her dare. The bobble, however, had burst, when the other kids in the circle started to laugh, some saying how disgusting that would be, how unnatural that was. They hadn't kissed. It was wrong, the other's had said, and she had agreed, because that's what she had to. That's what she had to do to fit in, and not to be disgusting.

Now, three years later, gaze somehow always finding its way to Kim Jisoo, she realizes that she still wouldn't be totally against it. The thought had been buried so far away in the back of her head that she had almost forgotten about it. It had still been there of course, but it had mostly felt like an itch that she couldn't reach, and therefore had been forced to forget about - and forget she had.

But then Kim Jisoo came. The moment Kim Jisoo had entered the room, following the classroom teacher, the thought had come back stronger than ever before. The new girl had long, straight, black hair falling down her back. It looked soft. The same kind of soft, as when you walk by a pillow in a store and you just have to touch it, because you have to know exactly how soft it is. That thought would be creepy though, so she pushes that away. Aside from Kim Jisoo's hair, her lips are a soft pink and her eyes are almost hidden, when she smiles - which has been observed to have been an almost permanent setting.

Ever since Kim Jisoo joined the class, she hasn't been able to take her eyes off of her. She's attempted to, but she always finds her gaze wandering back.

She can't help but wonder if that is what they talk about on the internet, when they talk about the gay awakening. It's quite a scary thought. Is this what being gay means? Is that what she is? Has she finally given in to-

"Cha Sohyun, can you please bring your attention to the front of the class? Please read the next paragraph."

Her thoughts are interrupted by the voice of the teacher, and the loud sound of a book being brought down on her table. Sohyun hadn't even noticed how into her own head she had been, and she flusters a bit, as she sees the teacher's sharp gaze focused on her.

"I don't know where we are," she admits silently, cheeks turning a soft pink because of the embarrassment.

The other students laugh at her, and Sohyun can't help but feel at least a bit accomplished - she's still fairly embarrassed though - when she hears Jisoo's soft laugh in between the chuckles.

She can't help but wonder what her parents would say, if they knew she was getting distracted in class because of another girl. How would they react if they knew that their oldest daughter - "We're going to find a good man for you to marry," her mother always says - is thinking about a girl in a Maja Lander Clausen different way. Of course they won't find out. She'll never tell them. If they knew, it would lead to a whole lot of mess. She's in high school and that's definitely not something to deal with at this time in her life.

Once one of her cousins had come out as gay. It was a couple of years ago.

He had told all of them during seollal. He had told them all during dinner, with a calm and collected voice. It had been simple, but Sohyun still remembers everything about it. She remembers the words he had said - "I'm not interested in her. I like men," he had said - but also the chaos that had happened afterwards.

For a minute or so, there had been silence, but then the sound of a hand hitting a cheek and her aunt crying had filled the living room. There had been yelling and crying and the words that had been said were awful and hurtful.

Afterwards, in the car on the way home, Sohyun's mother had looked at her and her brother with a look that Sohyun hadn't been able to read.

"We trust you," she had said, "We trust you won't disappoint us."

The words and the meaning behind them hit Sohyun like a truck. She didn't just mean they trusted them. There was more reason behind it. What it really meant was "we won't tolerate you if you're gay. It'll be a disappointment to us."

The meaning was always in the back of Sohyun's head. It was like a shadow that never left her.

Those words were also the real reason why Sohyun stops looking at Jisoo, and instead tries to ignore the feelings and concentrate in class.

It's hard, when the girl is sitting only a couple of seats away. It's hard, when the sound of her voice always sends butterflies flying around in her stomach.

But she's determined. Because her parents trust her, and she's going to do everything in her power to not disappoint them, and to be the good oldest daughter that she's supposed to be.