***Through My Eyes***

As the car rattled to a stop, shivers running down my spine I peered out the frosty window. The swirling dark clouds and sharp chilling wind made me more apprehensive about this new beginning. I clutched the cold door handle, willing myself to pull. My mind was screaming “no” but I knew I couldn’t listen to my nerves. Blood surging through my veins, pulsating in my temples. I started walking through the gleaming blades of green towards the cold steel shelter, however the shelter offered no protection from the leers directed my way. Harsh winds rattled the unstable structure of the iron cover, which sheltered one lonely seat. Focusing my attention on the teardrops of rain, I choked back my emotions.

Sheets of rain blinded my view of the world in front of me, like an invisibility cloak I so desperately needed. Despite the long, dark robe hanging over my shaking body, the menacing whispers left me feeling completely exposed. Cars screeching on the black surface beneath them escalated the butterflies in chaos inside of me. In the distance the bus was growing bigger and my anxieties had mimicked these actions. Squealing its brakes to a stop, the loud engine continued to growl. Water drops sprayed in our faces as the doors flung open. Pushing and shoving past me caused my feet to slip off the shimmering silver step. The searing wound down my shin was almost as painful as the remarks hurled across the bus. Edging my way down the squeaky narrow aisle, the burning sensation in the pit of my stomach was as intense as throwing petrol on a fire. Snarls and sniggers, like a hyena laughing, echoed through my head and pushed my internal buttons. The skin on my arms prickled and my tongue felt as if it would lash out at any time. But hiding behind my veil of silence, my head hung and I remained mute. Thoughts twisting in my mind, whats wrong with me? Why would they say that?

Heart throbbing and skin tingling i searched for a vacant seat. The slow paced queue inching their way between the rows of wide eyes continued to move as the engine jolted into gear. Last in the line I scanned the seats, fixing my eyes on several empty spots. Gradually shuffling my feet towards these spaces, knowing hands grasped objects with intent to occupy seats around them. Left standing on my own, holding on for my life as i was thrown around like a rag doll, the bus wound it way through the streets to finally arrive with a sudden stop. “Main Beach High School” was plastered in welcoming letters across the main entrance. From elbows ramming into my sides, I was forced to wait while the bus emptied before me. Facing my fears from under my burka, my wobbly legs carried me into the eerie chasm. Foul language reeked from beyond the playground, and it filled my soul with disgrace. Thump. An empty bottle bounced off my shoulder, pushing my ego to its limits. It was a bottle as empty as their simple minds. I had walked into a minefield, dodging rants and missiles launched at me from all directions. I hurried to find safety. Breathlessness took over my lungs, leaving my head floating like the clouds that filled the sky. I was cold, but at the same time the perspiration pooled under my robe. Drip, drip, drip down my stomach. A raging fire flared in my conscience as “Aussie Pride” slapped me in the face, thrown from the mouth of a fellow student. “Go home” was a common phrase which insulted my birth.

Seeking solace away from the impending war, running through the enemy lines I took cover in the female toilet block. Yanking the squeaky door, the immediate feeling of cold concrete was like hitting a brick wall. Waterfalls streaming down my cheeks, I hid in the cubicle until my world was once again silent and dark. A vent in the wall revealed the halo of acceptance, glowing above the other student’s heads. What makes these people feel they are better than me? I know how to laugh, cry, make friends, be funny, experience heartache, give love and be loved. The reality is that we aren’t that much different. Would they treat me any differently if I didn’t wear a burka? With sorrow in my soul I fear that they would not. I am the minority in this situation, dealing with xenophobes and hypocrites. Dealing with the insecurities and ignorance of fellow Australian’s unfortunately is reality for Muslim people. Looking through my tiny circle of isolation into the wide world of happiness and acceptance, I realise with deep anguish the acceptance that I have not been granted……….