

Have you ever been labeled? I certainly have, several times I made add! People I know and don't know labeled me with their looks as I passed by. They judged me on what I wore? Can you believe it? On my choice of wardrobe! I certainly am no witch, not that I do believe in that ludicrous term, but I do dress eccentrically. However, I get off easy by just getting attacked by their eyes, unlike the unfortunate fellow in the following piece entitled "Labeled".

Labeled

It wasn't late when I arrived home. The sky was a dark blue with bright stars here and there. The weather was cool as December was around the corner. I had enjoyed the beautiful scenery until its quietness was robbed from me. An unpleasant event in my life had made me reconceder meeting with my friend as scheduled. Instead, I returned home. Father and mother were up as usual, but their facial expression wasn't. They weren't to blame for that, as my appearance had resulted in that reaction.

"Oh!" mother cried out as she rushed towards me for a quick examination. Who could blame her? It's not easy for a mother to see her child walk in on her with a body covered in brouisies and blood dripping from the several locations, "What happened? Are you alright?"

I was in pain, more emotional than physical, but I replied regardless. Like a child, I poured out my heart .. but in an adult manner: "I wanted to surprise my friend .. by coming early to the place where we agreed to meet, so I decided to take a short cut through an alleyway. There were a group of guys following me - I didn't know they were following me at that time, because there were other people taking that path!"

She nodded sympathetically, awaiting me to carry on with my story, which was more than I could say for my old man. He hardly moved or shed an atom of emotion since I walked in. He sat there on his old couch - so old that I believe its preceeded me to this family - and read the late newspaper edition as he did everynight. As I went on with my story, I kept sneaking a couple of glances at him, hoping that his humanside would kick in and get him to sprout off his couch or even open his eyes in astonishment. But that never happened. He did, however, glanced up at me once or twice with his judgmental, harsh, cold eyes of his.

"And then," I went on, "before I knew it I was shoved hard against the pavement. I tried to get up, but they kept kicking me and pushing me .. I thought it would be better if I didn't resist." While recapping what happened,

the recent memory came rushing back. It was horrible. The only thing I knew at that time was to shield my head from the reasonless attack. But they did give me a reason – one I decided not to share.

“But why?” She tried to reason, “Why would anyone want to hurt you? You’ve never done anything –” “Serves you right!” Father interrupted her and the peaceful discussion by his roar. He got up as he folded and laid aside his precious newspaper. We looked at each other in the eye as he made his way towards me. Just then I had regretted the notion I had a second ago; the one concerning my desire for him to participate, for, from the opening line, it brought nothing other than more terror to my heart.

“Dressing the way you do,” He said hatefully as he gestured with his hand at my cloth, “acting the way you do, walking the way you do, talking the way you do! It’s sickening!” Mother wanted to say something, I could feel her aching heart. But she was overpowered by his will to shout out his belief. Not wanting to fight my own father, I stood there and took it. I could sense when he was lecturing me, and at those times, if I were to say one self-defending line, a fight will initiate. I had neither the strength nor desire to do that. At least, not with my father.

He gave me one last look, a cold, disgusted, disowning look, then said as he started off: “I’m going to bed.” It was my mother’s queue to accompany him. She looked at me one last time, then left. In that warm look, I knew that she wanted to take me to the hospital, and to stay up all night looking after me, but at the age I am in, father wouldn’t allow it. I did her job, but I left out the trip to the hospital. It would only attract attention, and the police can’t help me with this.

I iced my injuries, cleaned my wounds, and wrapped my brouisies. Achingly, I crawled into bed. With people like the ones I met outside, it was safer for me to be at home. I did, however, recall the last bit of the episode, the one I intentionally left out. I suppose father knew it, and mother, probably deep down inside, acknowledged it as well. I didn’t because it was too painful to mention. While I was under assault, the attacker did utter a word which gave me a clue about the cause of the bashing. A single word, a label.

That was a nice, heart-warming tale, wasn't it? Of course names were left out to protect the innocent. It was a fictional story, I admit, but not far from our own reality. People are attacked because of their individualism. It's true! .. and scary, I might add. If one is religious and happens to fall in a society of idiots, he or she is likely to be attacked by mobs, verbally if not physically. – Not just religion, but race, pigmentation, sex, and gender as well. Mind you that what I've mentioned of categories differ in spite of their canny resemblance, and it was done with careful choice of words .. think about it.