

FLOW SERIES

HEARTLINE

Written by

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**INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY**

Two young feminine hands, nail polish on one hand, a ring on the other, sway next to each other, one reaches out for the other, fingers interlace for a moment, then: RAQUEL (13, textbook popular girl) recoils from GRETCHEN (13, sweet and pretty in an unassuming way).

RAQUEL  
(whispers sternly)  
Stop it.

GRETCHEN  
What's wrong?

RAQUEL  
We can't do that anymore. I don't want people to think I'm... like that. Like you.

GRETCHEN  
What am I like?

RAQUEL  
Like, a lesbo or whatever... it was fine when we were friends, but now--

GRETCHEN  
But now we're not friends?

Raquel looks down at the ground, then notices STUDENTS watching from their lockers.

RAQUEL  
I don't know, Gretchen... my mom made me promise I'd keep my distance, so... I gotta go.

Raquel turns and leaves Gretchen alone to face the stares of other students. Gretchen's face reddens with heat.

GRETCHEN  
We're going to the same class!

**INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER**

Gretchen stands in the center of a room, surrounded by a few other GIRLS disrobing after gym class. She keeps her eyes focused on the inside of her locker as she changes, careful not to let a stray glance land on another girl, even by accident.

Raquel slams her locker hard next to Gretchen. Gretchen reacts to the sound, looks at her. Raquel stands there in just her bra and jeans.

Raquel turns to the girl next to her, CAITLYN (13, classic mean girl vibes).

RAQUEL  
See? I told you.

CAITLYN  
(to Gretchen)  
OMG, you perv! You're totally  
staring at her boobs right now.

GRETCHEN  
No, I'm not!

CAITLYN  
Yes, you were. Everyone saw you!

Gretchen turns back to Raquel in disbelief.

CAITLYN  
You're still doing it!

GRETCHEN  
Raquel, you slammed your locker on  
purpose. You know I'm not looking  
at you like that.

RAQUEL  
I don't know what you're talking  
about, but you're making me really  
uncomfortable.

CAITLYN  
Being in a room full of half naked  
girls is clearly one of your gross  
fantasies. You're probably  
memorizing all of our underwear  
colors for later. That's so weird.

Gretchen holds back tears as she looks around the room, trying not to make eye contact, or trying to only make eye contact. The girls stare at her.

GRETCHEN  
I'm... I'm not doing that. I'm just  
trying to get dressed.

RAQUEL

Well it looks like you're the only one fully dressed now, so I think you should probably leave.

Gretchen grabs her backpack and shoes, shuts her locker, and makes her way for the door. Behind her she hears:

CAITLYN

Honestly, I don't like -- feel safe with her in here. I mean, do you?

**INT. HALLWAY - LATER**

Gretchen sits in an empty hallway, hugs her backpack. Her eyes are puffy from tears.

MISS BROWNING (35, kind of edgy for a Guidance Counselor, tattoos and piercings), enters the hall, gently walks over to sit beside her.

MISS BROWNING

We've gotta stop meeting like this.

GRETCHEN

Whatever.

Gretchen wipes her face, shakes her head.

MISS BROWNING

So, what's the excuse today? Got picked last for kickball? Basketball to the face?

Gretchen is quiet.

MISS BROWNING

Gretchen, I want to help but I can't unless you tell me what's really going on.

GRETCHEN

It's just... all the girls in gym. They're being so mean to me now.

MISS BROWNING

Why would they do that?

GRETCHEN

I don't know! Raquel was my best friend, so I thought I could be honest with her but now they're all treating me like some sort of predator just because they know I'm gay.

MISS BROWNING

Listen to me. You haven't done anything wrong. You are not wrong. It's completely unacceptable for them to treat you that way and I'll call their parents if I have to.

GRETCHEN

Miss Browning, no! They're the ones who told them I'm dangerous or some other crap from the Jurassic era or wherever the eff they came from.

Miss Browning smiles a little.

MISS BROWNING

I can handle the dinosaurs, I promise. If you ever want to talk, my office is open. Okay?

GRETCHEN

Thank you.

Miss Browning stands up and offers her hand to Gretchen.

MISS BROWNING

Come on, I can walk you to lunch.

Gretchen stands, puts on her backpack.

GRETCHEN

Thanks, but it's okay. I got this.

#### **INT. CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON**

Gretchen's smile fades as she enters the room. Raquel, Caitlyn, and a group of other students eye her from a table with one vacant seat. She takes a deep breath, walks forward.

A boy wearing a stiff collared shirt, CARTER (13, preppy and full of himself) wraps his arm around Raquel defensively. Raquel shifts, uncomfortable.

CARTER

Heard you're bein' sus around my girl. Why don't you go munch carpets somewhere else?

GRETCHEN

Seriously? You clearly don't even know what that means.

CARTER

(scoffs)

Uh... you're the gay one here. So, Um. Of course I don't know - uh - cuz I'm not gay.

BAILEY (13, cocky and could kick your ass if you deserve it) has been listening to the conversation, walks up behind Gretchen.

BAILEY

"Gay" isn't a dirty word, loser.

Gretchen looks back to Bailey, smiles.

BAILEY

Come sit with us.

Bailey offers her hand to Gretchen. Gretchen pauses, looks back at the group of her old, homophobic, mean friends, then takes Bailey's hand.

GRETCHEN

Thanks.

Gretchen and Bailey head toward a table on the other side of the lunch room. Caitlyn yells for the whole room to hear:

CAITLYN

Is she your new girlfriend?!

Gretchen falters a moment. Bailey squeezes her hand.

BAILEY

I should be so lucky.

Bailey leads her up to the table where OTHER STUDENTS greet her. They pull up a chair, make space for her to sit. Bailey takes a seat next to a BOY who quickly kisses her cheek.

Gretchen softens, opens her lunch to eat. Bailey offers her a chip, she accepts. Warm conversation buzzes around her.

**FADE OUT.**