

We approach the subway that leads under the road; this is the only way out of this section and the only way to join the others. Deja is skipping ahead; she is such a happy little girl, so resilient, nothing phases her.

I, on the other hand, am frightened. As we approach the opening, I grab Deja by the hand, it's dark inside, and the tunnel appears to bend up ahead. It's only 50 meters, but I cannot see what is on the other side from here. However, I can start to see the familiar racist graffiti so often displayed on subway walls. I want to turn back, but the only way out is through.

As we reach the entrance, a man is leaning against a wall smoking. Deja smiles and waves; the man smiles back and mutters, "Monkey" under his breathe. Deja continues to skip by and stops just inside the tunnel. I run to catch her up and grab hold of her hand. "You ok?" I ask.

"I don't mind it when they call me "Monkey," Deja said. Swinging my hand as she skips along beside me. Preoccupied with trying to find the torch on my phone, I think I must have misheard her.

"What's that, Sweetie?" I ask. I stop to look around me, to get my bearings a bit before we get too deep into the tunnel.

"I don't mind it when they call me "Monkey," she said. Looking up at me with her deep black eyes, shimmering in the torchlight. "I know they are trying to insult me, but I don't see it that way."

I'm curious and a little annoyed that she can brush it off so lightly; how can she not feel insulted? How can she not feel the impact of being called that? How does she look so calm, so peaceful, so filled with joy? Does she not understand?

I replied to her with perhaps more aggression than I should have to an eight-year-old child, and I said. "Why doesn't racism bother you?"

"That's not what I said!" Deja replied. "I said 'I don't mind it when they call me "Monkey,'" that 'I know they are trying to insult me, but I don't see it that way.'"

Why? I asked gently. I am a little taken aback that she mirrored my level of aggression. I also realise that I want to argue with an eight-year-old child because I am angry at her for being at peace when someone just called her "Monkey."

She looked deep into my eyes as she spoke. "My parents have friends from all different backgrounds and all different ages, all kinds of people." She paused for a moment as if to catch her thoughts, then she continued. "We visit them often at their homes and offices; there is always some kind of event or occasion." A flicker of light flashed across her eyes as if she remembered something that made her feel happy. She paused to enjoy the memory for a second, and then she smiled as she continued. "In their homes or offices, whatever the place, there would be on a wall, or a bookshelf; a postcard, a poster, a carving, a mug, a plate, or a statue of Mizaru, Kikazaru, Iwazaru: *The Three Wise Monkeys*." She gestures as she speaks, first covering her mouth, then her ears, and finally her eyes. "One speaks no evil, one hears no evil, and one sees no evil." She quickly removes her hands from her eyes, just like in the game *Peek-a-Boo*, as she says, "I am the one that speaks no evil."