

TWILIGHT EXCERPT

They were sitting in the corner of the cafeteria, as far away from where I sat as possible in the long room. There were five of them. They weren't talking, and they weren't eating, though they each had a tray of untouched food in front of them. They weren't gawking at me, unlike most of the other students, so it was safe to stare at them without fear of meeting an excessively interested pair of eyes. But it was none of these things that caught, and held, my attention.

They didn't look anything alike. Of the three boys, one was big—muscled like a serious weightlifter, with dark, curly hair. Another was taller, leaner, but still muscular, and honey blond. The last was lanky, less bulky, with untidy, bronze-colored hair. He was more boyish than the others, who looked like they could be in college, or even teachers here rather than students.

The girls were opposites. The tall one was statuesque¹. She had a beautiful figure, the kind you saw on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, the kind that made every girl around her take a hit on her self-esteem just by being in the same room. Her hair was golden, gently waving to the middle of her back. The short girl was pixie-like², thin in the extreme, with small features. Her hair was a deep black, cropped short and pointing in every direction.

And yet, they were all exactly alike. Every one of them was chalky pale, the palest of all the students living in this sunless town. Paler than me, the albino. They all had very dark eyes despite the range in their tones. They also had dark shadows under those eyes—purplish, bruise-like shadows. As if they were all suffering from a sleepless night, or almost done recovering from a broken nose. Though their noses, all their features, were straight, perfect, angular.

But all this is not why I couldn't look away.

I stared because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel. It was hard to decide who was the most beautiful—maybe the perfect blond girl, or the bronze-haired boy.

They were all looking away—away from each other, away from the other students, away from anything in particular as far as I could tell. As I watched, the small girl rose with her tray-unopened soda, unbitten apple—and walked away with a quick, graceful lope that belonged on a runway. I watched, amazed at her lithe dancer's step, till she dumped her tray and glided

¹ Statuesque: Resembling a statue, especially in dignity, shapeliness, or stillness.

² Pixie-like: Petite and vivacious.

through the back door, faster than I would have thought possible. My eyes darted back to the others, who sat unchanging.

Source: Meyer, S. (2022). Twilight. Little, Brown and Company.