'Spectrum'
by Meggan Ruth Walker.

I had always seen people in an array of colours. As I looked around my tiny little world my eyes were met with a vibrant spectrum. People in shades of pink and blue and green moving like colourful wisps of smoke, swirling in a motion around me. But when I looked in the mirror, the swirling stopped. The colours of people, auras I guessed, faded and were still and all I saw was me. Anthea Dawson. No distinct colour, no place quite right, Forever changing.

I think I started doing it when I was little. According to mum I called my grandparents 'Nana pink' and 'Grandpa orange'. When I turned 5 I realised that the only people who weren't coloured in were kids, like me. Mum took me to see someone. He told her I suffered from a neurological defect. She got scared. He told me that I had this rare ability to see people for what they were- he made it sound like a game. He said that I saw kids clear because they hadn't developed themselves yet. They were innocent and fresh and hadn't done anything to form a personality. One kid had. Lucas Wentworth, he was in my kindergarten class in the first town I ever remember living. To me, he was just a swirl of the midnight black. His parent's were black shades, as well, even darker than him. Later on in year 2, a world away from my former kindergarten days, the news told of a criminally disturbed family being arrested. It was Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth, arrested for child abuse, and Lucas, Their son, put away in a child's mental institution for killing animals. I think that's when I realised that it was your actions that defined your colours. Lucas' parents abused him, and he had been killing things since just before school... Just before I met him and just before he went from childish, innocent transparency to ominous, soulless black.

My sister, Miranda, Was the warmest shade of sunshine yellow. It was rare, and I had never seen anyone glow so much, but it suited her well. She was the happiest, nicest and most caring and loving person I had ever met. My mum, Lily, was a few shades darker, but when she was angry she was burnt, fire orange. Generally I never met anyone who stood out. The colours of the people in my little world didn't stray much darker than light grey, and Miranda was by far the lightest. As I moved from town to town, as we so often did, I was intrigued with the variety of colours, I wanted to know what they meant-who these shades were. But I was never allowed. I contented myself watching as people mulled by, staring at the contrast in groups of friends, families. It reminded me of the contrast that I was, myself.

I was kind of like that poem, 'The Grand Old Duke Of York'. When they were up they were up, when they were down they were down. It was scary, really, how much it applied. When I was happy, I was colourful, bouncy, animated. I glowed almost as bright as Miranda and I basked in the halo of yellow, swallowing my golden hair, encompassing me. When I was sad, I was distraught, unable to concentrate, unsure. I became outlined in royal blue that sparkled with hints of grey, and made my pale skin look sallow. When they were only half way up... when things were just toeing the line...they were neither up nor down. Contentment. That was the major emotion of my life. The one constant thing, really. When I was in the middle, there wasn't a distinct colour. Flashes of gold, purple and blue wove through the air surrounding me, trapping me, suffocating me.

That day was different. New. I became a colour I had never been before, and I was terrified as I checked the mirror and observed the spindly wisps of cherry red that encompassed my fragile, little body. I moved differently, thought differently. It was an up day, and I was euphoric.

"You seem different." my sister smiled as I sat at the table. I laughed, every day I was different.

"How is it today?"

"Dandy," I replied sarcastically. Miranda rolled her eyes. "It's fine. Different, but it's always different. Today is showcasing cherry red--"" Miranda's eyes shot up to scrutinise me, noting the new colour. "It'll be fine. New is good. On a lighter note, this is our second term at this
school...think it's a keeper?” we both laughed at the ridiculousness. To our mum, no where was a keeper for long. She was scared. Since I was diagnosed, we hadn't stayed one place for longer than a year. I was her secret, and she kept it, even from me, until I was 10. She thought keeping the truth from me would keep me happy, just like she thought constantly moving would keep me safe.

At first it was like a game. Every time we moved, I could be someone new, because no one knew who I really was. I would make exciting stories up about my life before we arrived, and it was fun. Exciting. According to Miranda, it was silly of me, dangerous. I could lose contact with who I really was. Mum encouraged it, cause according to her, I could be happier if I wasn't me.

I realised on that day, that I didn't want to pretend any more. No, perhaps I had realised earlier- but simply to afraid to say so. To accept just who I was... Anthea Dawson, 17 year old girl with an apparent defect that made me weird and gave me an awesome ability. I didn't want to tell lies and make friends off of falsities, I was sick of being unstable. I just wanted solidarity. One town. One person. One colour.

Mum had finished her breakfast and was washing up before she managed to break through my concentration. Her voice ending my thoughts.
"So I was thinking, we should move in about a month," She said casually, flashing a smile my way. I loved her, despite her bad choices on my behalf. I knew my next sentence would destroy everything she had done to protect me and break her heart. But I had to say it, and so, embracing the confidence gained by the swirls of red that trapped me, I uttered the 6 words I had never dared to say.
"mum, I want to stay here.".