

The Skin You're In

by

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I was two and a half years old. It was just a few weeks after my parents had separated. I was playing with my plastic horses on the couch when I noticed a little, red spot on my arm. I tried to wipe it off, but it wouldn't go away.

The next morning, I woke up and there were three more... then four. Within a few weeks, 80% of my body was covered in itching, burning, red spots.

They called it, "Psoriasis".

When you're two, you aren't supposed to think about how you look. You worry about losing a tag or accidentally drawing in the wrong coloring book. You're cute and carefree, so you smile at strangers and aren't afraid to say what you *really* want to be.

But that wasn't me.

I lost my confidence and sense of pride when all of the other kids would run away and hide. I'd hear their mothers say, "Is she sick? Is that chickenpox? Is she...

...contagious?"

I still tried to have fun—would play games and loved to run, but I knew there was something wrong when I looked at my friends and saw the way they were looking back at me.

My spots left when I was three and then I didn't mind it when people looked at me. They called me pretty and I made friends. I didn't really think about psoriasis again...

...until I was ten.

Then it came back, and like a train going off the tracks, my friends and my happy feeling life was under attack. My skin would bleed and my mom would plead with me to wear ugly clothes no polyester because that would make my red spots fester and burn.

It was bad enough my skin was rough and sore and ugly, but now I had to wear strange clothes and I was ten! I just wanted to feel pretty again.

I tried to hate and hide my spots, but the more I did the more they spread all over my neck, my cheeks, my chest, my arms, my thighs, my stomach, and then my eyes and I...

...couldn't hide it anymore.

My clothes were made of old t-shirts and sheets, and my mom would make me eat weird food—no sugar, no gluten, no bread, no fruit, and definitely no fast food! I didn't want to be strange and spotted—sticking out like a sore thumb.

Being “pretty” was way more fun.

Some people say “beauty is more than skin deep” and I can tell you it's true.

Because while I lost friends and got weird looks, what I learned from my bright red spots should be put in BIG, FAT BOOKS—the kind they give to girls and make them read so they'll believe in themselves.

There are no magazines with spotted models. No one photoshops polka dots on their skin, but my bright, red spots have taught me a lot about the world we live in.

I tried lotions and potions, cotton clothes and weird food, but the thing that helped my skin heal most was a change of attitude.

You see, even when my skin has spots, if I smile lots, people still call me “beautiful.”

If I hold my head high, even when I want to cry on the inside, I can make myself feel better. The better I feel, the more my little red spots start to heal.

No diet, no cream, no pill could ever fill that empty space inside—the one that's looking to be liked or loved or accepted. I learned to stop hating my spots and start loving

myself—my courage, my kindness, my willingness to help and play the game of life by *my* rules.

The less I tried to hide, the more I started to take pride in who I was (not just how I looked) my little red spots would start to calm and quiet and disappear again.

The skin you're in is like a fancy coat.
Some people may like it, and some people won't.

But the things you believe, the goals you set, the dreams you dream and the hopes you get to hold in your heart are the REAL beauty you are.

The more you shine it and share it, the more the skin you're in will show it, too. They say beauty is more than skin deep, and I believe it's true.

Just like the word itself says—"beauty" is just having the courage to "BE YOU."