"Nothing Gold Can Stay" written by Yejin Cheon, Age 13

I knew nothing but the ring of people surrounding my best friend, taunted by a brute in jeans. I stared at the scene unfolding, doing nothing, feeling nothing, hating myself more every moment.
A gentle thud. A cry of pain- floods of red. Panic.
My limbs were frozen, but not everyone's. A furious shout behind me, teachers rushing forward. The students dispersed, revealing the gruesome sight. The brute, horrified, spattered with blood that wasn't his. My best friend on the ground. Teachers kneeling, whirling sirens. I collapsed. Hands on my shoulders. Time was a haze.
The next moment, I was staring into my friend's face.
"Idiot." I seethed, jaw clenched.
He stared, vacant yet seeing, at a space above an ugly painting of a sunset.
"Why would you-?"
His mouth stretched to form inaudible words.
"Such an idiot." I fell into sobs. Tears stained the white bedsheets. My nails, gripping my arm, drew blood. It was pathetic.
He turned to look at me, pillows shifting.
"Because…" he whispered, "he… insulted you… for having a girlfriend–"
"That didn't mean you had to do- that!"
He fell silent.
"Why?"
His voice strained.
"Because-"
I didn't hear what he said. A nurse ushered me out of the room so he could rest. A week later, he got another nosebleed.
Two weeks later, I stared at the cold, gray stone with his name sliced into it.
His mother told me what he wanted to say.
"Because you're my friend," his mother said through heaving sobs. "He kept repeating it, before-"
I let her be alone. That was what I wanted.
I walked away, crossing the street.
Sitting on the sidewalk in a trance of horror was a brute in jeans.
White-hot rage. He screamed. I struck.
With every-
endless-
blow-
nothing
gold
can stay.