

OUTBURSTS

OUTBURSTS

By : thatdorkygal

Abbey Manellos story about fitting in and what its like to know that somethings wrong, but not be able to do anything about it.



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Chapter 1: beginning

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OUTBURSTS

BY TIA HENRY

OUTBURSTS

Chapter 1: beginning

OUTBURSTS

My counsellor told me to document what I've been through. So I'm writing this letter, this letter that is to no one in particular. Not that that matters. Having something to do is better than sitting around all day. Before I begin, I know that everyone I mention deserves their own personal apology, so I will just say it once for everyone. I'm sorry.

Let me start from the beginning. When I was 11 years old, my Mum died. Everyone says that if one of their parents were to die, they wouldn't want it to be sudden. They would want to have time to say good bye. But those people don't know anything. Those people still have both of their parents. I had to watch my Mother deteriorate for two years.

When she died, it was just me and my brother, Evan. Well, my Dad was technically there, but you would never know. He moped around the flat for six months straight, barely able to get out of bed. Evan and I would have done that too, but we were too concerned about Dad. Finally, one day Dad snapped out of his trance. Not that he ever really recovered. But I doubt any of us will really.

He pushed us into the living room and got us to sit down. Before I go any further, I should tell you that I am prone to outbursts. I never can contain overwhelming feelings. That's because I am very emotional, like my Mother's side of the family whereas Evan is like Dad and very good at hiding his true feelings.

"I have some big news!" Dad said with a sparkle in his eyes. Evan and I shuffled in our seats. "We are moving to California!" Evan eyed Dad suspiciously. "Do you mean California as in America?" Evan's not the sharpest tool in the box. Dad's smile faded at our reactions. Evan was still looking around the room, waiting for his question to be answered.

I stared at Dad. I mean, what was he thinking? London was our home! I knew it was coming. Right on schedule was an outburst. I can contain these mean words if I breathe deeply and try to stay calm, but this time it was no use. I was mad. "Moving half way across the world won't change the fact that Mum died, Dad!" I screeched at him.

Dad looked startled and Evan rolled his eyes. Evan almost always knew when I would say something. I think maybe that time he let me scream what he was thinking. Dad just frowned and said, "We are moving, no matter what you yell." His words were full of venom, and I could tell he wasn't pleased with me.

I've been in California for three and a half years, and I've been in a juvenile delinquent center for two weeks. I'd love to tell you more, but it will have to wait until tomorrow. This is about the fifth time Miss Carly has told me its lights off, and I don't want to push my luck any longer.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 2: moving

The day we moved to California was a particularly bleak one. The skies were heavy with grey clouds and the faces of my relatives were worse. They all sobbed and hugged each of us tightly as we went through the gate. But of all things I want to write about, that's the last. So let's skip ahead here.

When we got off of the plane and into the taxi to our new flat, I have to admit, I was a little blown away. The palm trees swayed from side to side and as we drove I could smell the ocean. I didn't want to like California. I was prepared to hate it.

Our flat was the kicker. Though small, it was literally on the beach. I smiled and sat in the sand with my suitcase. My Dad told me to at least put my suitcase inside before I went adventuring, so I begrudgingly lugged my case into the kitchen and went back outside.

I wandered along the seaside for hours I think, carrying my trainers in one hand, and letting my jeans get wet. I was tired, but the sights were so captivating that I felt there was no time to sleep. That's when a girl came up to me. "You know, you shouldn't be wearing jeans to the beach." Her voice was annoying, and she just stood there, looking directly at me.

What a peculiar thing to tell a stranger. I thought. "You know," I said. "You shouldn't be wearing a face that ugly in public places." Her face went beet red, and she angrily walked back to wherever she came from. That's when I came up with my brilliant plan. I would let myself mouth off to people. I wouldn't try to suppress my feelings, or the stupid things I sometimes did. Then my Dad would think that home was a better influence on me.

I laughed to myself and ran back to the flat. After all, school started tomorrow. I got up the next morning very tired. Dad told us we could sleep in and he would take us to school, but we protested. I got on the yellow bus that came five minutes after my brothers, because he went to 'high school' and I went to 'middle school'.

Before he got on his bus, he patted my back, and said, "Be good," because he knows I have a problem with that. I nodded, even though I had no intentions of being good. When I went into my first class, that was Math; all eyes were on me as I walked across the room and into my seat. I took a seat at the back because that way the teacher wouldn't be able to see me as well. I also have issues with concentrating.

The teacher smiled vacantly at the students and did attendance. I was glad she didn't point me out as a new student, but I don't think that was her being considerate. Ms. Walsh looked very old, and she squinted at the list of names even with glasses on. I just went back to tapping my feet as she explained Math things. I try to concentrate, but I can never do something for more than a minute or two, unless it interests me. I noticed that Ms. Walsh had called my name, and when I looked up I realized that maybe she had called my name a few times. "I'm here." I said. "Attendance was 20 minutes ago; I asked you if you knew how to solve the question on the board." Mrs. Walsh replied, pointing a wrinkly finger at the board behind her.

"No, I can't." I shrugged, not bothering to look up. Everyone was silent, before a huge burst of laughter made my head snap back up. The question on the board was 2+2, literally. I sighed as Mrs. Walsh remarked, "I know you're new, but I didn't think you would be that far behind." I rolled my eyes. "That was just rude, lady." Mrs. Walsh furrowed her brow.

That was the first time I was sent to the office in my new school. Only twenty minutes into the first class. I sauntered into the office and sat down. After ten minutes, the principle, Mr. Matthew ushered me into his room. He rubbed his temple and took a sip of his coffee. "I'd like to understand why you were sent here." He

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said calmly. "I'd like to know why the Math teacher was teaching twelve year olds 2+2." I replied, leaning back in my chair.

Mr. Matthew soon lost patience with my snaps and called my Dad. My Dad looked angry when he came to pick me up that day. I smiled to myself as I left the office. That was strike one.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 3: best behaviour

That day when Evan got home, he pulled me into his room. I was still wearing a grin when he closed the door. "Suspended on your first day?" Evan hissed at me. I nodded. "What's wrong with you? Dad isn't very happy with you right now."

"I know."

"Don't smile! Dad is giving you three strikes, and you know what happens then?!" Evan said in a hushed voice. I shook my head. Evan was starting to scare me. "He's going to send you to one of those troubled youths centres!" He said, a little too loudly. I frowned. This wasn't what I was expecting. I sat down on his bed. Evan heaved a sigh.

"You've got to be on your best behaviour." Evan said. His words stuck, alright. I held back as many outburst of anger or sarcasm that I could at school. But I didn't make any friends. Not that I was surprised. After the first day, people probably spent their time avoiding the bad association. I would roam the hallways at lunch time, until I found out that the library was open at lunch. It was relatively empty.

Miss Karen was always there too, which was nice. She was a volunteer teacher and she was young; about mid-twenties. She had chocolate coloured skin and her hair was always in a dark braid. But that's not why I liked her. She was the only person that said hi and smiled at me when I walked by.

I spent the whole of eighth grade in the library at lunch time, practicing piano with my fingers on the table. That also didn't help my image. One day, Miss Karen sat down next to me. "Can you play piano?" She asked. I nodded. I remember that because on that same day when I got home, my Dad made me cover my eyes and he helped me into my room.

When I opened my eyes, a keyboard stood across from me. I smiled widely. My Nan has a piano. We lived really close to her in London, so I always practiced at her house. I turned around and hugged my Dad tightly. "It's your present for being so good this year." He said.

I turned back to the keyboard, and spent the afternoon peeling off the thin layers of plastic still stuck to the keys. I pulled over a comfy chair, and sat down. I played for at least three hours. It was four o'clock when I got home, and Dad called me down for dinner at seven. I sighed because I knew that the keyboard could be very temporary. After all, it was the end of the year and my Dad had to go in for parent teacher interviews in just a week.

My grades were pretty bad. Okay, they were horrible. I was barely passing all of the classes, and I was pretty sure I was failing Math. The next day, I had the guts to tap on Miss Karen's shoulder at lunch. "Would you be able to help me with my homework?" I asked. Miss Karen smiled and took a seat. I opened my binder and worksheets poured out. Miss Karen picked one up. "Abbeyâ This was due two months ago." She said. "I know, but I thought if I get these handed in, I might pass." I stuttered. Miss Karen shook her head at the pile of worksheets. "Alright, let's begin." I tried to concentrate, but I couldn't. As usual, I found my mind wandering. It was impossible to teach me! Miss Karen must have picked up on that, though, because after lunch, she said to me, "I'll see you tomorrow!"

When I came back the next day, Miss Karen had all sorts of things at the table. There were games and flash cards. "I decided you need a different method of learning." She said. We played games, and whenever I figured something out, he would write down the answer on my worksheet. It took twice as long to do work, but I was still doing it.

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On the day of the parent teacher interviews, I didn't really pay attention as the other teachers told my Dad that I was doing alright, not good, not horrible. All I wanted to know was that I passed. When we finally got to Ms. Walsh's class, I forced myself not to smile when she told my Dad that I had gotten 51%. I knew that was horrible, but I also knew that I had passed. My Dad frowned as Ms. Walsh continued talking in her boring voice to him.

I stopped tapping my feet when I heard Ms. Walsh's voice get a little louder. "The problem isn't the teaching, Mr. Manello. The problem is that your daughter can't concentrate. I looked over at my Dad. He whispered to me to go and sit over at a desk. I could still hear them though. They weren't very good at whispering it turned out.

"Surely she just needs a little more discipline, or attention. Maybe Math just isn't her strong suit." I heard my Dad say. "No, Mr. Manello. You aren't hearing me. Abbey CAN'T concentrate." *Uh oh.* I thought. *I've heard this conversation before.* When I was nine, I listened at my parent's bedroom door. My Mum said to him that she thought something was wrong with me. My Dad was trying to argue with her. *"I think she has ADHD."* My Mum explained.

My Dad got angry and said, *"Leila, people use ADHD to explain why their kid is being a brat. I'm not going to excuse her behaviour. What she needs is more discipline; we're too easy on her."*

I looked down at my tapping feet and tried to block out whatever my Dad's reply was.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 4: symptoms

When we finally left the school, Dad didn't look at me or talk to me. I started to think he was mad at me. I started to get nervous so I played piano on my knees. I looked over briefly at my Dad. His jaw was clenched. I went back to playing.

Then I started crying. The little voice in my head was telling me to stop crying because it was completely embarrassing. But here I was, with my forehead on the dashboard, crying like a baby. "Abbey, don't cry. I'm not mad at you. I just want you to do better."

"I can't! Don't you get it? I can't do any better and I can't concentrate and I can't make friends!" I shouted through my tears. Dad sighed. "Okay, we'll get a tutor. And sure you can make friends you just need to try." My Dad was trying to comfort me. I started getting more angry than sad.

"Why are you doing this? This is why Mum died!" I screeched at him. "Abigail, don't you dare." My Dad was on the verge of furious, but I was already there. I knew I shouldn't have said that, but I didn't apologize. I guess this would be a good time to explain.

You see, when I was younger, my brother used to call me 'symptoms' because I would always figure out what was wrong with people. Well, I would spend hours on the internet, searching for the answer after I was given a list of symptoms. It was something that held my attention when I wasn't playing the piano.

So when my Mum started to complain about her chest aching, I was intrigued. Then she had a cough, a cough that never went away. By the time she started having shortness of breath after playing with us, I had diagnosed her. I went up to Dad and told him. "*I think Mum has lung cancer.*" I said slowly. My Dad just furrowed his brow, and then laughed. "*Don't be silly, Abbey. Off to bed now.*"

Three months later, my Mum was diagnosed by her doctor on her check- up.

I looked up as the car lurched into the driveway. I hopped out of the car and ran into the flat. "How was the interview?" Evan asked before I pushed his out of the way and slammed the door to my room. I dug my face into my pillow and listened to Dad's footsteps coming down the hallway. Then I heard the muffled voices of my Dad and brother talking.

I lay on my bed, and remembered the day I had diagnosed myself. It was the day I had argued with the teacher, broken Evan's bed by jumping on it too much, and gotten my report card. It was a pretty bad day. That night, after a stern talking to from my Dad, I went on the computer. I typed in my symptoms. "*Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.*" I had said to myself.

I snapped out of my flashback as I heard the muffled voices of my Dad and Evan getting louder. I realized they were arguing. This was strange because Evan was so chilled all of the time. That was my favourite thing about him, actually. He contrasted me quite well. "She is suffering because you refuse to accept it!" I heard Evan shout. It was unnerving to hear all of that. So I got off of my bed and went to my keyboard. I sat down and played as loudly as possible. I closed my eyes and hoped that the fighting would end soon.

After a few minutes, Evan walked into my room. He calmly sat on the floor next to me. I peeked at him and his cheeks were flushed. "It might not be" I started to say. "NO, it might not. But it would be nice to know." Evan replied. I stopped playing and turned to him. "Doesn't he care enough to find out?" I asked. "Of course he cares. But that's the problem, he cares too much." Evan sighed.

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I wasn't sure I understood what he meant by that, but it still felt good. I felt comforted. That night, as I lay in my bed, my Dad came in. He crouched beside my bed as I sat up. "I'm sorry." He said. "I am too." I replied. "I will get you whatever tutor you want, and you will try at least to make a friend. Is that a good deal?" My Dad asked. I was a little disappointed. I thought the argument with Evan would have gotten Dad to accept something. Or at least get me diagnosed.

"That's a great deal. And I pick Miss Karen. She works at my school." I said. At least I would have games and flashcards to look forward to.

My Dad rustled my dirty blonde hair and left. The one thing we didn't know was that making friends would be the worst decision of all.

Chapter 5: Bradley Conchs' gun

I walked slowly down the hallway. It was lunch time, and it seemed like hundreds of kids were walking past me, chatting and laughing. No one looked lonely; there wasn't one person who was walking by themselves. Not to mention, the kids in that school were avoiding me like the plague. I had made my mark in that school from the beginning of the year. I guess they had good memories.

I decided to retreat back to the library. As soon as I entered, Miss Karen almost bumped into me. "I was just looking for you, Abbey. Are you excited for tutoring next week?" She asked. I nodded stiffly and walked around her. Tutoring wasn't worth my time at that moment. I needed to at least try to make friends Dad said, and that's what I would do.

I took another breath and went back outside. The hallway was a little bit empty, and I realized that all of the clubs started at 12:30 during lunch. "Hey, your name is Abbey, right?" A voice came from behind a row of lockers. I walked a few steps and saw a small boy standing there. I almost laughed because he looked as if he came straight from the army. Although small in stature, he had a buzz cut and was wearing all camouflage.

"Yes, that's my name. Who are you?" I asked back. He reached out a small hand and I shook it. "My name is Bradley Conch." He even sounded official. "I know how hard it is to make friends in this horrid school. You make one mistake, and suddenly you're an outcast." Bradley said, leaning on a locker. I nodded. "What did you do?" I asked, because I had no doubt that he knew of my problems. "I bought a gun to school." My eyes widened.

"Don't you normally go to prison for that sort of thing? Or at least get expelled?" I asked, dumbfounded. "I bought it for show and tell, the thing wasn't even loaded. Alright it was loaded, but no one had to know that." Bradley said, and I noticed that his accent was different from the other people in California.

"Anyways, after a lengthy explanation and apology, they just confiscated it and moved on." Bradley shrugged. I still couldn't wrap my head around it, but I moved on anyways. I thought that of all kids in the school, Dad might not be too pleased that I made this one. But I didn't care, I still made a friend! Bradley started talking about how when he climbs a tree, you can't even see him, when I heard people walking towards us.

I turned around to four faces. Four girls were just standing there, smiling at me. I didn't know them, and I was trying to figure out exactly who they were when the one in front said, "Hi I'm Heather, and these are my friends, Dawn, Cali, and Erin." She grinned at me.

Their fake smiles were making me uncomfortable, but the fact that I had figured out who they were was making me more uncomfortable. These girls were part of the popular group. I couldn't even begin to fathom why they were talking to me. "All of your names are four letters except for yours." I said, pointing at C D and E. I call them that because they always walked in that order, C D and E in a perfect little line behind Queen Heather. Then I realized what I said, just in case they didn't think I was a complete lunatic. Heather giggled. "You're funny. Why don't you walk with us for a while?"

She motioned for me, and they started walking in their line. I went to look at Bradley, but it appeared he had fled the moment Heather came. So I fell into stride with the rest of them. After a few minutes, Heather sat down at a lunch table. I sat on the other side. "I know that you're unpopular, but we want to help with that." Cali said, looking at me like I was an idiot.

"The only reason for that is because of the first day." I said, forcing my fingers to stop playing piano. "Yeah!" Heather said, briefly frowning at my fingers. "The thing is no one minds if the teachers hate you."

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The thing to work on is the kids." Erin chirped in, flipping her red hair.

"We have the perfect idea for you to get popular!" Dawn squealed. My head was still reeling. Why were they helping me out? I decided that I was too quick to judge. The girls were probably genuinely nice. After all, who doesn't want to say they're friends with someone British?

Heather suddenly got up and so did we. She walked down to the very end of a hallway, where there was a blue door. The sign on it said 'Teachers only'. I gulped. Suddenly I wasn't so keen on being popular. The girls looked around, and seeing there was no one around, Heather twisted the lock open on the door.

A whiff of must came up through the door instantly. I looked through the door. No wonder it was musty, the door had steps leading down to a basement "This is where they keep all of our confiscated stuff. No one has had the guts to go down there though. If you even get a few things, you'll be a hero for the students." Heather said softly. Cali whipped out a flashlight from who knows where, and handed it to me.

I had that feeling when something doesn't feel right. But I took just one step forward, just to look down the stairs again. The four took advantage of that and slammed the door. I heard the lock click. I could hear them snickering. "You really thought we wanted to be your friends?" I heard D chuckle. "What a gullible little freak." Heather sighed, and I heard them trot off into the distance.

I don't know if it was good timing on their part, or just a coincidence, but a few seconds later, the lunch bell went off. Hundreds of feet stampeded the hallway, and I shouted and shook the door, but I wasn't heard. Then it was silent. Everyone, or at least everyone that cared, was in class. I shivered and switched on the flashlight. I tip toed gingerly down the creaky wooden steps. The concrete basement was eerily silent, and I realized that the girls hadn't lied about everything. Toys and gadgets, and all kinds of confiscated items were down in the basement. It was as if the teachers just threw them down there. I started searching for something, anything to get me out. I looked for a window, but there were none. I tried using my bobby pin to open the lock, but it didn't work. I thought of just waiting it out, but that probably still wouldn't help. If Dad sent out a search party for me, the basement of the school wouldn't be the first place they would look.

That's when I got my idea. Bradley had his gun confiscated. It was loaded. And it was here. I started searching through the piles. It took me all of ten minutes before my searchlight found a rifle, a rifle that was covered in camouflage. That made me smile. My Uncle Rob is a police man, and he once took me and my brother to his shooting practice. I learned two things that day. Guns are loud. More importantly, there is a technique to hitting targets.

I ran back up the stairs. Luckily, the crack next to the hinges poured some light into the area I needed to shoot. I breathed deeply. Uncle Rob said to always breathe calmly and slowly. He also said to take into account the wind. Not that that mattered, considering I was indoors.

I'd like to take a moment to pause. At this point you are probably wondering, what was I thinking? Well, the sorry truth is I wasn't. That's kind of another problem of mine. I don't think before I act or speak. So no, I wasn't thinking, *what if the door collapses the wrong way? Or, how much trouble will I be in for FIRING A GUN AT SCHOOL?* I sure wish I was thinking those things.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 6: lockdown

The first shot I took rung in my ears, and I stopped squinting to see I had hit my target dead on. The door creaked and teetered. I smiled and tilted the gun down towards the second hinge. I took another shot, and frowned as I looked up and saw that I had missed the hinge by a few inches. I took another deep breath and shot again. I heard another loud creak and jumped as the door fell with a thud into the hallway.

The sudden light made me squint more. The hallway had never seemed so bright. I stepped out and breathed in the fresher air. I threw the gun back down the stairs. Before I could even decide on what to do next, the intercom beeped three times loudly. I racked my brain for what that could mean. Suddenly, a boy sprinted past me, barely stopping as he said "Quick find somewhere to hide!"

I gasped. I had realized that the school had gone into lockdown. My deep green eyes darted around for a minute, as my brain raced. I thought it would be best in this situation to go with it. Hopefully Heather and the gang wouldn't want to risk their butts trying to get me in trouble. I started jogging down the hallway, thinking I would hide in the girls' bathroom.

I came to a screeching stop, however, as I heard voices in the bathroom. "Are you sure those beeps meant nothing Heather, I'm sure they meant something." I heard E say. "Believe me, it was just the stupid intercom, it always does that." Heather said. I gulped and started to back, up but tripped on my trainers laces.

I scrambled to get back up, but Heather, C, D and E were already there. Heather just stood there, her mouth gaping at me. I managed to stand up. They took a few steps closer. "How did you get out?" Heather asked quietly. A loud gasp came from C. "Three beeps means a lockdown!" She exclaimed. D pointed at me. "You shot the door down." Heather's eyes widened.

"Wow, now you're a freak that's a danger to the school, not just our social statuses." Heather said, smiling like she was hilarious. I didn't find her funny. I threw a punch at her. She skidded backwards. She just sat there, cradling her nose and crying. I looked at my bloody knuckles. Punching someone doesn't feel as good as you might think.

Suddenly, E ran at me, and before I could defend myself, she had jumped on me, pushing me to the ground. My head hit hard against the floor, but it wasn't over yet. E punched me straight across the face, and I felt my lip bust open and D screamed and tried to pull E off of me. E was surprisingly strong and vicious. I brought my hands up to protect my face but E just started clawing at me. I think that maybe E was Heather's closest friend.

In the distance, I could hear C trying to comfort Heather, and Heather complaining about her nose job. Not that I could concentrate on that for very long. "Erin, stop it!" Dawn screeched as she tried pulling Erin's arm. I quickly flicked my knee up, catching E right in the stomach. She folded, and rolled off of me. My hands went straight for my mouth, wiping away the blood streaming out of it. I moved my head, and it looked as if Erin was getting ready for round two. She jumped as we heard police sirens. I groaned. This could not end well for me.

I watched helplessly as C helped Heather up, and lead her down the hallway. In fact, they were all leaving, walking down another hallway, probably to hide in another bathroom. I tried to sit up, but my whole upper body was aching from the wrath of E. So I just lay on the ground, closing my eyes as I heard the police men marching in, shields and all.

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I suppose they must've thought I had been shot because of all the blood, because all five of them ran up to them, and one said into his headset, "We have our first victim." One officer knelt beside me. He quickly examined me. "She hasn't been shot." They all looked confused, and that's when I blacked out.

I started slipping in and out of consciousness. I opened my eyes and saw the foggy outline of a paramedic sliding carrying me onto a stretcher. I woke up again in the ambulance, and heard the two men talking about the game last night. The last time I woke up, I was actually in a hospital bed. I sat up straight and looked around. No one was there. I sighed with relief as I saw I wasn't hooked up to any machines.

I hate machines. I also hate hospitals. They smell like antibacterial hand wash and the food is terrible. I shivered in the room. I mostly hated them because I had already spent way too much time there, almost two whole years. My hand rubbed against the starchy blanket, and I instantly pulled back. I also noticed I wasn't wearing a hospital gown. I looked down at my blood splotted t- shirt.

My mouth didn't feel numb but I could feel the stitches with my fingers. I guess E packed a pretty good punch. That wasn't the worst of it though. I could feel the scab marks where E had used my neck and chest as a scratching post. I lifted my shirt a little and saw that the bruises had started to take form. I had decided to get up when Evan walked in. He was slurping on a juice box, when he saw I was awake.

"They said you would be asleep for another hour at least!" Evan smiled, hugging me. I winced and he pulled back. "I'll call Dad." He said, pulling out his phone. "What happened?" I asked. "Wait, you don't know?" Evan furrowed his brow. "No, I know. I was wondering what you know." I said. "Someone locked you in the basement, and you shot your way out, triggering a lockdown, and then got into a pretty nasty fight." Evan relayed. "The question is who did this to you?" He asked.

"It doesn't matter." I sighed. Evan looked at me suspiciously, and then called Dad. Dad arrived a few minutes later. He didn't react how Evan reacted when he saw me. My Dad seemed to have a permanent frown on his face, and he sat in the chair next to my bed. He rubbed his temple. "Do you realize what you've done?" He asked me. I shrugged because I honestly wasn't sure.

"I have to pay for the damages, and I had to go and beg the police no to charge me for what YOU did, and now I have to go and beg the principle not to press charges either." He wasn't shouting, but his voice was in a scarier tone than ever. "I'm sorry."

"Well I should think so!" He shouted back at me. He got up and slammed the door behind him. "He'll get over it. Besides, when you tell him what really happened he won't be that angry." Evan tried reassuring me. "No, Evan. He will still be angry. He won't believe my story." I said matter-of-factly. Evan pushed back his light brown hair.

I wiped the tears away as I had a horrible thought.

After a stunt like this, Dad may just skip strike two.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 7: new school same me

I was lying in my bed last night, and I finally understood what Evan meant when he said that Dad cared too much. He meant that Dad cared if his kid was different. He didn't care about me, he cared about his image. That made me want to retract my apology to him, but I won't. I am angry with him though.

They let me out of the hospital within a few hours. I was happy to be out of there to be honest. The next day I went with my Dad to the school. We walked down the empty hallway and into the principal's office. Mr. Matthews summoned for us and we sat in the two plastic uncomfortable chairs opposite his desk.

Before my Dad could start begging, Mr. Matthews said, "We aren't going to charge you, Mr. Manello." I kept my head down, but glanced over at Dad. He straightened his tie and cleared his throat. Mr. Matthews continued, "We will, however, have to expel Abbey for her behaviour." My Dad scratched his stubble. "What about the students that did this to Abbey?" My Dad asked, leaning forward.

"I don't think it's worth it. If Abbey tells us who did this, we just have two opposing stories andâ " Mr. Matthews trailed off. "And what, I think the proof of my daughters' innocence is right here." My Dad's voice was starting to get a little louder and I started to play piano on my thighs. "Due to Abbey's history, the fact is we have no reason to believe anything she says." Mr. Matthews countered, fiddling with his glasses.

With that, my Dad grabbed my arm, and stormed out. We didn't talk about that again. We actually didn't talk about anything again. We drove in silence back home. Dad came with me to my room, and went straight for my keyboard. He started to lift it off its stand. "NO!" I screamed as he started to lift it out of the room. "Please don't take it away!"

"I gave it to you because you were being good, now you are being bad. In fact, you are being worse than ever." Dad growled as he walked down the hallway. I wondered where he was taking it. I chased after him, and watched helplessly as he put it into the back of the car.

I never saw my keyboard again. I still have no idea where he took it. All I know is that he got into the car and sped off.

The next day, me and my Dad went to four different schools, looking for somewhere for me to go. No one wanted me. It seemed like no one wanted someone like me ruining the reputation of their school. The last school we went to was a 30 minute bus ride away from home. When we pulled up to it, it looked pretty normal.

The inside was a totally different story. It was class time, but at least half of the students were roaming the hallways like it was lunch. Toilet paper lined the walls and there was an odd smell in the air. Every door we went through creaked. We sat in the office, and I watched as all of the lights flickered and no one else seemed to notice. I could tell my Dad was grossed out. A large woman with a big smile came out and introduced herself as Ms. Helms the principal.

We sat in her office and she was very enthusiastic about having me. Dad was suspicious about her eagerness though. "Aren't you worried about her history?" He asked. "Oh no we've had worse, a lot worse." Ms. Helms said. "Besides we really need more funding." She snorted. That was when I started laughing. I was laughing really hard because this lady was trying to convince my Dad to let me go to this nasty place by saying she needs more funding.

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Dad told me to wait outside, so I did. After about ten more minutes, my Dad came out, and said that he got me in. My eyes got wide. I was about to ask him why he would let me go here, but I knew why.

1. Nowhere else would take me.
2. He believed I would fit in there.

I reluctantly got out of bed the next morning. I stood at my new bus stop, dreading the horrors that awaited me at school. Even the bus that pulled up looked scarier. The leather seats were torn open, and names and messages were written all over them. I decided to sit as close to the bus driver as possible.

As we were driving, I realized that maybe this was where I fit in. I sure didn't seem to fit in with the good kids. Maybe I should just embrace who I am. I quickly dialed down that thought. I decided I wouldn't become completely like all the other kids, but I wouldn't be scared of them either.

I walked to my dented locker in silence. This was much different than my other schools indeed! People were talking to me left and right. Most of them wanted to know why I was going here. One girl stood beside my locker and asked, "Where did you get all of that from?" I frowned as I remembered my scratched up neck and my stitched up mouth. "I got into a fight." I replied.

The girl laughed. "Most schools can't handle a little personality, can they? I'm Nadine by the way." I smiled and looked at her. She had dark brown hair and a purple bruise on her eye. That made me remember the bruise on my cheek and the ones on my mid-section. Nadine smiled at me. Perhaps this time I really had made a friend.

We walked to the first classroom slowly, because yet again it was Math. "How did you get here?" I repeated the question I had been asked several times. "I played a little prank on the principal." Nadine said. I nodded, thinking to ask more when I knew her better. "It's not bad here, you know. You just need to adjust, and make sure people know not to mess with you." Nadine said. "That's how I got this bruise. You should see the other guy." She laughed to herself, and I laughed too. I gasped as we entered the Math classroom. It was so loud. People were shouting, and two guys were sitting on the ground trying to light the floor on fire.

Nadine took my hand and led me to the very back of the big classroom. Nothing crazy was happening there for now. We sat in two desks beside each other, and I sat in awe watching as the teacher was at his desk, asleep. Nadine whistled. "Norma, hey Norma come here!" She shouted across the room. A girl with short auburn hair came up to us. "What's up with the teacher?"

"Levi put sleeping pills in his coffee!" Norma laughed and Nadine and Norma high-fived. "Who's this?" Norma asked, pointing to me. "This is Abbey, she's our new friend." Nadine explained. "Oh cool a new friend, nice bruise Abbey." Norman said, before returning to the chaos. "Does this kind of thing happen a lot?" I asked Nadine.

"More often than not, we barely learn a thing but the teachers have given up and since it's not technically our fault, they always give us C+'s." Nadine said, pulling out a candy bar from her jumper pocket. So that was that. We did whatever we wanted in class, because if the teacher even bothered to show up, he or she didn't care enough to try. I was actually starting to have fun.

My counsellor said that I should mail my letters to someone. So I chose my Dad. I think that maybe it will help him to understand a little bit more, if he even cares to read them.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 8: Toby

My Dad almost seemed disappointed that I was doing so well at school. Although I was learning close to nothing, my grades stayed at a solid C+ just like everyone else. I was also happier. I had never really had friends before. Well, I had one friend back in England. His name was Javier and he was a Mexican exchange student.

He didn't understand most of what I said, so he just laughed at everything I said. These were actual English speaking fiends though. Sure, they weren't the best influences to have around, but they stuck up for me, and listened to me. One day I said to Nadine, "Do you think I'm different?" She looked me up and down and sighed.

"Come with me." She said. I followed her down the hallway into the lunch room. There were only a handful of people there, because most of the students went out for lunch. Nadine sat next to someone at an otherwise empty lunch table. I sat down next to her.

"Toby, this is Abbey. I think you two will get along quite well." I frowned as Nadine proceeded to get up and walk away. *Get along quite well? Why would that matter? I didn't want a date, I wanted advice.* I looked over at Toby. He had tan skin and black hair. He didn't look at me, just continued to eat his sandwich.

His silence was making me jittery, so I started playing piano on the table. As soon as I started doing that, he put his sandwich down. "Why are you here, Abbey?" He asked. "I have no idea, Nadine just took me here. I can leave if you want." I said quickly, relieved that the silence was over.

"No I mean, why are you here, in this school? And don't tell me the events. Tell me why they happened." I gulped. "I'm not quite sure. I think I might have this condition, but my Dad won't let me go and see a doctor about it. He puts it up to grief and not enough discipline, but my brother is fine." I blurted out.

Toby nodded. "I know how you feel. My foster parents thought I was just overreacting, that I was just playing the sad card and I needed to move on. But I knew that wasn't it." He said glumly. A million questions raced through my mind. I thought I would tell him more about me so he would feel comfortable telling me more.

"My Mum died when I was 11. We moved to California two years ago, and I've been getting worse. I think I have ADHD." I said, shifting in my seat. Toby looked at me for the first time, and he actually smiled.

"Both of my parents died when I was nine, and I have always suffered with depression. It got a lot worse after they died of course. Luckily, I convinced my foster parents to take me to the doctors, so I could get anti-depressants and therapy. Apparently it runs in the family. My Grandfather had chronic depression." I wasn't sure how to follow that. At least I had ONE parent, and I had my brother too. "Before you ask, they died in a plane crash." Toby added. I still didn't know why I was sitting next to this boy. I felt obligated to stay though, especially after hearing a story like that.

"Why are you here? And I do mean the events that lead you to the school." I asked. Toby cleared his throat. "After my parents died, school got pretty difficult. I was down for a long time, and I stayed down. After a couple years the kids lost sympathy. I was called a loner and a weirdo. One day the principal told my foster parents that I was a bad influence on their school. So I was kicked out."

"And the only place that would take you was here." I said quietly. The lunch bell rang loudly. Toby patted my back. "Find a hobby, there's a band room down the hall." He said, before leaving. I smiled. Nadine wasn't wrong taking me to see Toby. He was like a wise old man for all the rejects. After school I walked into the

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band room.

A lady with frizzy orange hair and thousands of freckles turned and looked at me. "How can I help you?" She asked. "I wanted to join band." I said. She grinned at me. It was the first time a teacher had smiled at me in the whole time I had been in the school. "What do you play?" She asked. "I play the piano." I replied. She smiled again.

"That's perfect; we have an opening for piano!" She squealed and shoed me over to the piano. I sat down and started to play from the sheet music. Mrs. Bryant (at least according to her sticker name tag) started clapping. She reached out and shook my hand vigorously. "I will see you on Wednesday for practise, madam !" She said. I left with a big smile on my face.

A few weeks later I learned that there was going to be a performance for the school. I sat quietly at the table with my Dad and my brother while Dad complained about the guy that lived upstairs and Evan talked about this weird thing called 'prom'. I started to kick my chair legs. My brain *said stop it you idiot, your being too loud!* But my body ignored it, and kept kicking. "Okay, Abbey what is it?" Evan laughed.

"How would you two like to come to my school performance?" I beamed. Evan smiled, "Of course, when is it?" He asked. "In two weeks, on the twentieth." I replied. I looked over at my Dad. He was picking at his broccoli. He eventually looked up. "I can't come, I have a business meeting." He said flatly. No apology. He wouldn't try to get out of it or anything.

I stood up and stormed out. I ran across the cool tile floors in the kitchen and into the bathroom. I quickly locked the door and sunk down on the other side. I rubbed my eyes and stood back up to look in the mirror. My scratches were fading, and the bruise on my cheek was too. I rubbed my lip where my stitches were starting to get itch-y.

You don't need him there, you can do this alone.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 9: snapping

I paced across the floor backstage. The chatter of the growing crowd was making me more nervous. I peeked through the curtains and gulped. I jumped as I felt a tap on my shoulder. "Abbey, don't worry about it. You could play this with your eyes closed." Mrs. Bryant reassured me, flashing me a warm smile.

I smiled back, but I didn't feel much better. The other members of the band were tuning their violins or talking to their friends. I took a seat at the piano and breathed deeply. I knew how to do this. There was nothing to worry about. The others started taking their seats, and before I knew it, the curtain was disappearing, revealing a crowd of parents and students.

I spotted Evan in the third row and smiled. The violinists started going, and I knew exactly when to start. The sheet music was quite boring honestly, and the mixture of being bored and being nervous finally got to me. I started thinking of a much more fun song to play. I didn't even realize I had started playing it.

Suddenly I heard Mrs. Bryant's voice from off stage. "Abbey, what are you doing?" She hissed. My fingers were still playing the song though. I quickly pulled away, but I pulled away too violently, and I fell back in my chair. A gasp spread through the audience. The curtain was quickly drawn back, and I sat on the ground in darkness for a moment.

When the lights came back on, Mrs. Bryant dragged me upright. I started apologizing, but she wasn't hearing. "You get off stage!" She barked at me, and I backed up. "Where is the piano back-up?" She asked someone. I ran through the backstage hallway, and sat against the door leading out into the rest of the school.

There was a knock at the door. I didn't answer. "It's Toby, Abbey." Toby said. I reluctantly stood up and opened the door. He shut the door behind him. "Piano is my one thing, Toby. It's the one thing I can do, and now I don't even have control over that anymore!" I explained, wiping away incoming tears. I sat back down against the door. Toby took a seat beside me.

"The thing about people like us is we always assume we don't have a choice." Toby started. I bit my cheek. "And the thing is we really do. We have the choice to do what we want." I frowned. "I don't believe that, Toby. If I could stop myself from doing some things, I would." I replied quietly. "There will always be days we can't control. Some days I'll be miserable, and nothing will help, not even medication. And some days you will be bouncing off the walls. But most days, with the support, and medical attention we need, I think we'll be fine." Toby said.

I scoffed. "Toby, I don't know about you, but I have no support, and I have no medical attention. I don't even have a diagnosis, so thanks for that little pep talk, but it doesn't really apply to me!" I shouted, standing up. "Then stop feeling so sorry for yourself and get a diagnosis!" He shouted back. I was taken a back because I had never heard him shout before. "Stop moping around here like your problems are the worst; be a little considerate for once! All I've ever done is helping you!" I could tell Toby was snapping big time.

He rubbed his forehead and left. I thought about going after him, it probably wasn't safe for him to be alone. "I'm sorry." I said almost inaudibly. The door creaked as Evan walked in. He just stood opposite me, and said nothing. "I'm going to get my diagnosis, and the proper help I need." I said coldly, and made my way to the door.

Evan grabbed my arm as I tried to get past him. "You need a parent to take you to the doctors; you can't just go as you please." He said. I gritted my teeth. "Take me home." I said. When we got home, Dad was sitting at the dining room table, eating eggs on toast. I scowled and continued walking. I could feel my anger tearing

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through me. I slammed the door to my room and flopped on the bed.

After a while, I got up to a tapping noise on my window. I raised an eyebrow as I saw it was Nadine and Norma. They grinned as I opened my window. "We heard you had a rough night." Nadine said. I nodded. "Come on, were all down at the beach." I glanced at the clock on my wall. It was 9:45pm. I gulped, and then decided that it would be good to get out of the house. Besides, the beach was basically my front garden.

I hopped out of the window and raced Nadine and Norma down to the beach, where some other girls from school were. I recognized some of them from Math and a few from detention. We played some games, and after a couple of hours there were only five of us left. Norma and two others said they were going for one last swim, and I and Nadine sat on the beach.

"Do you want to know how I got into that school?" Nadine turned to me. I nodded. "I have a fascination with fires. I always have. Last year I set fire to a piece of paper and left it in the girls' bathroom, but it ended up spreading and the whole bathroom was gone before the firemen reached it." I stared at her in awe. "Since then I haven't set any more fires. Even though no schools will take me still, my parents have forgiven me. I actually have a better connection than ever with them." She said, while tracing a smiley face in the sand.

"The point is, your Dad will forgive you, and when you have nothing else left, you know you always have family." Nadine finished. I looked at her, and she crossed her eyes and fell back on the sand laughing. "That's all the motivational talks I have." She said, still laughing.

I sighed and stood up to go home. I was so glad to have heard Nadine's story. Unfortunately, knowing that story is what got me into a detention centre.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 10: deceased

I was kicked out of band, of course. When I entered the room, Mrs. Bryant pulled me over to the corner and told me. I should've seen it coming I suppose. That wasn't the worse thing though. I didn't see Toby for almost three weeks. I looked around at lunch time for him, but never saw him. Nadine said that Norma had seen him so I went to ask her. "I don't know what Nadine was talking about; I haven't seen Toby for a couple weeks." She said as she decorated her locker with a sharpie.

Then one day I saw him walking down the hallway. I was flushed with relief because his absence was starting to scare me. I ran up to him smiling. He just faked a smile and kept walking. "Where have you been?" I asked. "I've been around." He said gruffly. I frowned and followed him silently into the social studies classroom.

It was surprisingly quiet, and Mr. Reynolds was actually taking advantage of that and teaching for once. I kept looking over at Toby who was in the desk on my right. He had his head on his desk. "What's wrong with you?" I whispered. "Leave me alone, Abbey." He said back. "I just want toâ " "

"You want to what, Abbey? Do you want to help me? I don't need your charity so just stop talking to me, okay?" Toby snapped. "I'm sorry if I hurt you a couple weeks ago, but I thought you were over it." I snapped back, and I knew that the whole class could hear us by now. "It's not about that! Not everything revolves around you, Abigail Manello!" Toby shouted.

The teacher whistled sharply to get our attention. He sent us to the confrontation room, which is basically a small, empty room that the teachers put the two fighting students so that they don't have to deal with them themselves. We sat on the two opposite ends of the room. After a couple of minutes, Toby said, "They gave me up." He rested his head on his knees.

"My foster parents gave me up, that's why I wasn't at school."

"I'm so sorry." I said quietly, and I moved over to his side of the room. I sat down next to him and patted his back. He rubbed his eyes with his palms in an effort to stop crying. It wasn't working. "Do you ever dream about your Mom?" He asked me suddenly. "What do you mean?"

"Sometimes I dream that my parents are still alive. We are sitting around the table in the morning and I and my Dad are complaining about the lame comics. Or my Mom and is jumping on my bed to wake me up for school. Then I wake up and I'm in the foster house or in a new apartment." He explained to me.

I gulped. I never dreamt about things like that. All of my dreams about my Mum were nightmares, really. Most of them were about the day she died. My Dad sat me and Evan down in the waiting room chairs, and tried to tell us calmly, but he broke down as soon as he said it. Evan squeezed around Dad's neck, instantly going into support mode.

I on the other hand, took off down the hallway. I ran straight to the third floor, and I went up the hallway I had been through so many times, to reach the door that I had opened far too many times. My Mum's bed was empty. The sheets were stripped off of it, but the clipboard on the wall with all of her information was still there. I grabbed it.

It was all the same, except at the very bottom, where it was written ever so clearly in red pen, DECEASED.

"No, I never dream about her." I lied. Toby coughed and straightened up. He stopped himself from crying. I still envy his self-control, even though it's healthy to cry sometimes. He sat with his back straight against the

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wall, so I leaned my head on his shoulder. 30 minutes passed, then an hour. "They've forgotten about us." Toby remarked. He made me jump, because we had spent so long in silence. I straightened up and yawned.

Toby tried opening the door. "Of course they locked it." He rolled his eyes. We waited for the lunch bell to go off, and then started to shout for help. Eventually someone opened the door. "Thanks Donny." Toby said as we walked out. "Yeah, thanks Donny." I mimicked.

Things were finally going my way. I had friends, I was getting good grades, and my Dad wasn't half as mad at me as he had been. Luckily, Evan didn't tell him about the whole piano thing, and the school was too lazy to do anything. Besides, other people had done MUCH WORSE.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 11: crutches

I strode confidently down the hallway. I was so comfortable in that school, which is a little unnerving considering the people that were there. Toby was being quiet that day, but I didn't notice at first because I was particularly hyper that day. I went on and on about pointless things and he just nodded, but it was obvious that he was distracted.

At the end of the day, we were standing outside when Toby said, "I need to tell you something."

"What is it?"

"A woman wants to properly adopt me. Her name is Kelly and she was never able to have kids. She runs a farm as well, and she thinks I'll be a big help." He said quickly and quietly. "That's great!" I grinned. I could tell by the look on his face that he wasn't finished. "What is it? Do you have to move schools?" I asked. "No, I have to move cities." He said, looking at his shoes.

"Fresno County, It's still in California butâ " He started. "It's on the opposite side." I finished. "She's giving me a choice. I don't have to go." Toby reassured. *Oh thank goodness.* I thought. *He can't move away.*

"Do you like her?" I asked. He nodded. *NO, Abbey don't say it! Keep him here.* "I think you should go with her, she obviously really likes you." I said. Toby instantly looked up. He smiled widely. He gave me a big hug and pulled away when we heard a car horn. "That's her." He said. I patted his back and he said, "It's only really a two hour drive. We can visit on weekends and holidays." I nodded stiffly.

I watched silently as Toby ran over to Kelly. She had the biggest smile on her face, and they talked for a moment before Kelly squealed and hugged Toby tightly. I quivered. It felt like I had just lost one of my crutches. I knew that my Dad would never have time to drive me to go and visit Toby. So I could only hope that Kelly was generous enough with her time to drive Toby down to my place once in a while.

I didn't take the bus home, instead I walked home. I let my feet get wet in the sea as I walked slowly home. It took me about an hour and a half, but I didn't care. I opened the door to the flat, and instantly wished I had taken longer. I could hear my Dad and brother fighting in the kitchen. I started tip-toeing through the living room and into my bedroom when I suddenly stopped. "I'm eighteen tomorrow, and I'll do what I want!" I heard Evan say.

"So you're going back to London and leaving your sister and me here!?" My dad shouted, and my heart dropped. I ran into the kitchen. "There you are! Care to tell Abbey what's happening here, Evan?" My Dad snapped. I looked at Evan. "I'm moving back to England." Evan said. My jaw dropped. "But, you can't leave me here!" I exclaimed. "Abbey you only have two and a half years and then you can go back too." Evan tried saying, but I wasn't hearing it. "Why would you do this to me?" I shouted at him. Evan frowned. "I want to live my life and the fact that you can't be alone isn't going to change that!"

He then stormed off and let the door slam as he left. I was going to do my usual thing, run into my room and cry into my pillow, but this time I did something a bit more helpful. I ran after him. My heart pounded as I chased him down the road. I finally caught up and wheezed before saying, "I'm sorry. You should go back, and maybe I'll see you there in a couple of years." I said. He rustled my hair. "Yeah, maybe you will." He smiled brightly.

"Besides, there is always the phone." I said. He wrapped his arm around my shoulder. The very next week Evan moved out. Dad begrudgingly helped him put his suitcases onto the platform and I stood there, tapping

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my feet, and wanting desperately for him to change his mind. It hadn't clicked for me that after Evan left, me and my Dad would have to talk to each other.

"I'll call you as soon as I get to Nan's house, alright?" He said to me. I fake smiled. "Okay, I'll be waiting." Dad and Evan shared an awkward hug. "Talk to you soon, Dad. Take care of her." Evan said, nodding in my direction. "I always have." My Dad replied. Evan made the face that meant, *No you haven't*. Dad didn't pick up on it though. I'm glad, because if he had there would have been yet another embarrassing argument.

Since we moved to California, I noticed Dad and Evan drifting apart, and I can't help feeling a little responsible. I was, after all, the basis for all of their quarrels. When I looked at the two of them talking, they seemed like distant relatives, or acquaintances, not Father and son. They shook hands, and Evan turned back to me. He gave a real hug.

The thing about me and Evan is that we aren't mean to each other. I'll never say a bad thing about him and he would do anything for me. Evan is the best brother I could ever have hoped for, so I don't feel great about being the kind of Sister I've always been. For some crazy reason, he thinks the world of me. That's always going to be a mystery though.

It dawned on me right after Evan finally went through security. As I watched him getting further and further away, I knew that I had just lost my other crutch. And that could only mean one thing,

I was about to fall flat on my face.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 12: lighter

This is the last part. The events that brought me straight to the place I am now. Here it goes. I was walking through the hallway with my head hung low. It was two weeks after Evan had left. He called me all the time and his latest update was that he was applying for as many jobs as possible. Toby called me that weekend to tell me that he was coming to visit on spring break. That was still four months away.

I suddenly heard a scream from across the hallway. A few people ran past me in a panic. I gulped as I continued forward. Without warning, the fire sprinklers buzzed on. I was instantly drenched and a herd of students and teachers ran past me. I knew at that point that it wouldn't be good to continue in the direction I was taking.

Unfortunately, I've never been good. I dropped my backpack and walked quickly through the hall. Norma skidded around the damp corner and practically bumped into me. She grabbed my arm and tried to pull me in the opposite direction. I shrugged her off. "Are you insane? The school is on fire!" She shouted. *The school is on fire.* I gasped involuntarily.

Norma must really have thought me mad as I sprinted down the hallway and around the corner. I burst through the double doors leading outside and saw a thick layer of smoke climbing towards the sky. I followed its direction. Just as I had thought, when I got to the east end of the school Nadine was standing there in awe. She was standing very still, watching the fire grow larger a lighter in hand.

"Nadine!" I screamed. She snapped out of her trance and looked at me. I ran up to her and pushed her away from the fire. "What did you do?" I asked angrily. "The lighter isn't mine, I swear! It was in the bushes and I had my homework, and I couldn't stop myself. I tried to put it out, but the fire grabbed the bushes and then started climbing up the vines andâ " She trailed off and started to sob. "I'm so sorry." She squeaked.

"Get out of here." I told her. "It doesn't matter if I go or stay; there is only one arsonist in the school. They'll know it was me." Nadine shook her head. Nadine had done so well. Her family loved her, and if she went away for this, what would happen to her life? My whole life had crashed and burned, and I knew that if I took the blame for this, not a whole lot would change for me.

I grabbed the lighter from her. "Go away now. And don't tell anyone." I said. "I'm not letting you take this for me." She said. "Yes, you are. If you don't I'll be more mad. Now leave." I growled, and flicked the lighter on. When Nadine didn't move, I stepped closer, threatening her with the lighter. She slowly backed away, and then reluctantly started running.

I turned back to the fire, and waited for the firemen or the police. Less than a minute later, I heard sirens. A fire truck screeched as it pulled up behind me, and I heard the doors close behind the firemen getting out. I still didn't move. A fireman suddenly grabbed me from behind, and flung me over his shoulder. I kicked and screamed at him, but he barely flinched. Police cars were lining up, and the fireman put me down in front of them. I scratched my head and shrugged. The policemen were silent.

I noticed a butterfly had landed on one of their helmets and I started to giggle. Then I started laughing loudly, and before I knew it I was doubled over with uncontrollable laughter. Just like always, except this time it was a lot more inappropriate. They pushed me into the back of the car, and I waited there for almost two hours. I laughed for half of it.

After I stopped laughing, I watched through the barred windows as reporters started showing up, one by one. One of the reporters actually came right up to the window, and tried talking to me. I couldn't hear her, and

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after a few seconds the policemen dragged her away.

Finally, my Dad's car pulled through the ever growing crowd of people. He jumped out and started talking to the policeman. They talked for a good couple ten minutes, and I tried my best to lip read, but I'm not exactly an expert. My Dad frowned and glanced at me through the window. He then nodded curtly and walked back to his car.

He didn't want my side of the story. Not that I would've told him at the time. But he didn't even defend me. I was put in a detention centre with nothing more than a glance. He hasn't visited me once. It's been almost three months now. Evan calls me every weekend still, and Toby visits because the detention centre is actually quite close to where he lives.

Toby seems awfully happy. Well, most of the time. Sometimes he gets a little low, but that's bound to happen just like he told me.

I don't know if my Dad is even reading these letters, but if he is then another thing I know is that I'm not risking Nadine. He probably thinks I deserve to be here despite. And maybe I do.

Abbey Manello

Chapter 13: end

I thought that was the end. But it isn't. I know that this is something I should record and I should have with me always.

Two months after I sent my last letter to Dad, he came to visit me. I assumed it was Toby, or maybe even Nadine because she came to see me and apologize a lot. I sat awkwardly as my Dad sat at the other end of the table. "I'm taking you to a doctor." He said matter-of-factly. My jaw dropped. The Doctor took down what seemed to be a lifetime of information. He sent us out to the waiting room. After a half an hour of silence, he summoned us back into his office.

"You seem to have very severe ADHD; I'm surprised no one caught on sooner." The Doctor said as soon as we came in. My Dad cleared his throat. I smiled widely and threw my arms around the Doctor's neck. "Thank you." I squealed. He smiled back and pulled out a bottle of pills. "This is Methylphenidate. It will help with your hyperactivity and your problems with focusing." He said, handing me the pills. "Take one every day." I didn't want to wipe the smile off of my face.

I looked up at my Dad, and he looked embarrassed. I think he thought a trip to the Doctor's office would finally prove him right. We hurried back to the detention centre, and I was released on account of my 'mental disability'.

It's been a week since I've been home, and the school that I apparently almost burned down is accepting me again. My Dad said that it seems like a bad place, and maybe I should homeschool. But that's only because he thinks I'll be treated worse now that I officially have mental problems. The truth is I still fit in there. The east wing is all tapped off, but I still have Norma and Nadine and everyone else don't mind me.

I do work in class now. I've noticed that I'm actually pretty good at Math when I can focus. Toby still promised to visit this spring break, but that's only a month away. I fight with my Dad a lot, and we are probably the most incompatible people ever. I know that he loves me somewhere in there though.

Evan calls all the time, and he always asks me if I'm coming back to England when I turn eighteen. At one time, I would've said yes with certainty. But the question is what's worth more, family with no friends, or no family and the best friends? When I think of home, I don't think of places. I think of Evan and I think of Toby and Nadine.

Maybe I'll go back and maybe I won't, but I still have two and a half years to decide. For now, I'm going to enjoy a peaceful mind.

Abbey Manello

OUTBURSTS

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