

# Adina at Her Best

Adina Ben Ami is a fun and friendly fourth grader — who blurts out her thoughts, bothers her brother, and gets in trouble! On her class trip to Ranchos Los Cerritos — a spacious ranch house with costumed tour guides and pretty gardens — Adina's enthusiasm goes too far. Or does it?

**Adina at Her Best**, by popular author Rebecca Klempler, is an exciting, heartwarming tale that will inspire readers to see the best in others and never give up.

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Adina  
Her  
at  
Best



Rebecca  
Klempner

*To every kid (and adult) who has ever gotten distracted,  
had trouble looking without touching,  
struggled to listen without spacing out,  
or spoken without thinking first.*

## A Note of Apology

I'm halfway out the door of our classroom on Tuesday afternoon when Mrs. Sabban calls out, "Adina, can you stay here for a moment?"

My best friend, Henny, whispers, "I'll meet you by the water fountain, okay?" I nod.

Turning around, I look Mrs. Sabban in the eye. "Yes?"

"I heard you were really rude to Mrs. Rubin when she subbed yesterday." She takes off her glasses, pinches the bridge of her nose, and sighs. During this pause, I hear the cheerful clamor of girls in the hallway, heading home, sharing jokes, making plans. I wish I were out there, anywhere, not here.

As Mrs. Sabban puts the glasses back on, she continues. "Mrs. Rubin said you told her that you didn't have to

listen to her because she's not a real teacher."

I'd forgotten about that. Honestly, I forget a lot of the things I say as soon as I say them. If only the people I say them to could forget them as easily. "She yelled at me because I wasn't working. But I was working. I just hadn't finished yet."

"Yes, I noticed you didn't complete the workbook pages she assigned."

"I could hear the girls in 3-A rehearsing their performance next door." In a week, they'll be putting on the annual grade three production. "I was distracted." I was more than distracted: I sang along with all the words, under my breath, remembering myself standing on the stage singing last year.

Mrs. Sabban sinks down in the chair at her desk. I notice the circles under her eyes and the way her lipstick has smeared just a bit. She takes out a folder. Flipping it open, she removes a sheet of paper — nice, heavy paper, cream colored. "I can't let you treat a sub with such disrespect, Adina. It sends a wrong message — to you, and to the other students." Now she opens a drawer, takes out a red felt-tip. She writes a small  $x$  at the bottom of the page, then draws a line next to it.

Handing the sheet of paper to me, she says, "You will write Mrs. Rubin an apology on this piece of stationery tonight. I want you to write at least five sentences. And

I want you to follow the ‘friendly letter’ format — it’s in your English book. When you’re done, one of your parents should sign on the line I just drew at the bottom.”

I notice there’s a sticky note attached to the paper with Mrs. Rubin’s full name and address. Who knew her name is Fradl?

Mrs. Sabban clears her throat, and I look back at her. “If you don’t bring me the letter tomorrow morning, you can’t go on the field trip on Thursday.”

“What?!” I say one nasty thing to a teacher — a sub! — and Mrs. Sabban won’t let me go to Rancho Los Cerritos? We’ve been studying California history for weeks and weeks. This is supposed to be the payoff!

“You’re going to finish the letter, Adina. And your parents will sign it. And then you will hand it in tomorrow morning. I’ll put a stamp on it, and together we’ll drop it in the mailbox at the corner.” Mrs. Sabban’s voice is firm. “Don’t start panicking about the field trip.”

My hands shaking, I sling my backpack onto a desk. I unzip it and prepare to slide the paper between two plastic binders.

“Put it inside a folder, Adina. It needs to stay neat and flat. And remember your English book.”

Slipping my backpack back on, I shuffle toward the door.

Behind me, I hear Mrs. Sabban’s chair slide across the floor as she stands up. “You’re going to write a beautiful

letter, Adina. And on Thursday you'll be on the bus with the rest of us, you'll see."

I don't look at her on the way out.

"WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE?" Henny says when I finally catch up with her. "I've been waiting forever!"

"Mrs. Sabban gave me some fancy paper."

Henny makes a *bracha* — a blessing — then bends forward and slurps some water from the fountain. The machine rumbles. "Why would she do that?"

"I have to write an apology to Mrs. Rubin."

"For what?"

"Talking back. When she yelled at me for spacing out."

"Everyone knows you're a daydreamer." Henny throws her hands in the air. "I don't know why she decided to make a big deal of it."

As my face heats up, we start toward the exit. *Everyone knows I'm a daydreamer?* It's not like it isn't true; it is. It's just the idea that the other girls have noticed. I wish Henny hadn't said anything.

"We're late getting Nachum," I say, rather than, *Hey! I thought you were on my side!*

Outside, it's a typically sunny afternoon in Los Angeles; there's hardly a cloud in the sky, and the weather is pleasantly warm, but not hot. We weave in and out of



all the kids and parents loitering around the Girls' Building of Torah MiKedem Academy. When Henny and I reach the corner of Detroit and Clinton, she says, "Is that all? You just write an apology? Can she even make you do that?"

"If I don't, I can't go on the field trip."

Henny gasps. "But we were going to sit together! And share nosh!" Little furrows pop up in her forehead. "I bought a bag of those sweet popcorn thingies you like!"

I shrug. "Don't worry...I'll just write the apology."

The clouds on Henny's face clear. "Good." She squeezes me, real quick, and all my annoyance with her disappears.

While we walk to the Boys' Building to pick up my younger brother, Henny tells me about a book she's been reading. She says, "It's the best!" and "You've got to read it!" and mentions all sorts of characters I know nothing about. I make little nods and *uh-huhs* so she thinks I'm listening. But in the back of my head, I worry. What's going to happen if I forget to write the letter? I imagine everyone else leaving on the big yellow school bus Mrs. Sabban and Mrs. Friend hired to drive all the fourth graders to Rancho Los Cerritos — while I stand under the palm tree next to the school. All the girls watch me through the windows of the bus, waving at me as the bus drives away...

I've got to write that letter! But writing is so hard,

and takes so long, and it's the last thing I want to do on a sunny spring afternoon in Los Angeles. I don't even remember to do my homework most of the time. Or I start it, but I don't finish.

*I'll just write it first, I think. Even if I don't finish my homework, I'll finish the letter.*

"Adina!" Henny calls out. "Green light!"

Startled, I start across the street, a few steps behind her. But not far enough to miss her saying, "Spaced out again, eh?"

WHEN WE GET HOME, I drop my backpack on the floor in the foyer and kick off my shoes: one, two. Then, I stop briefly in front of the mirror to adjust my favorite, perfect headband, and head to the kitchen. I need food before my brain can deal with homework.

Barely looking at my big sister, Michal, who has parked herself at the table with a stack of books, I rummage through the fridge for the perfect snack. There's a piece of leftover pizza, but I'm not in the mood. But maybe...

"Michal? Can you make me a smoothie?" I ask without turning around.

"Too busy," she says.

Yogurt, then. Yogurt is healthy and yummy and much more convenient. I grab a container and a dairy spoon, lean

against the counter, mumble a quick *bracha*, and dig in.

Michal looks up for a minute. “Mom says she’ll be home at five thirty or so.” My mother’s a dentist, and she usually spends a couple afternoons at her office to see patients whose parents don’t want them to miss school for a dental appointment.

Nachum comes in and flings open the refrigerator door. “Pizza! Score!” While he does a little dance of celebration, the phone rings. I pick it up.

“Aunt Nitzan!” I say, after she identifies herself. “How are you? And the baby?”

“*Baruch Hashem* — Thank God — I’m fine. And the baby — just amazing!” Aunt Nitzan spends the next fifteen minutes telling me all the ways in which the baby is just amazing. And when I hang up the phone, I remember that last night I stopped reading my library book right before Bina Gold revealed the guilty party. I want to know who it was, so I head to my bedroom and curl up with the book.