

“Heartwarming.” – Booklist

I thought summer school was the lemon juice
on the paper cut that was my life.
But this turned out to be the best summer ever.




“A charming, funny, and heartfelt adventure, Abby’s story will touch your heart, your soul, and your funny bone.”

—DAVID LUBAR, author of *Hidden Talents* and the *Weenies* short-story collections


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THIS IS
NOT *
* THE
ABBY
SHOW



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Pretty much
everything I do
is inappropriate. *

How come I haven't been discovered by talent scouts yet? It is the big mystery of my life.

Maybe it's because I'm stuck in Poco Bay, Florida, surrounded by suburbanoids. I should be in Hollywood on the set of my own TV show, not sitting here like a wilting plant in Mr. Finsecker's class. He's the meanest teacher in the whole seventh grade. Right now he's practically having a seizure because I don't have my homework, even though I told him I did it.

"It's in here somewhere," I say, pulling out two old, crumpled English tests from deep inside my backpack (one C-, one D). So far I've found lip balm, hair

bands, a gummy bear with a penny stuck to it, my school ID, five broken pencils, and a pair of PE shorts I've been missing since spring break.

"Abby Green, if horse manure were music, you'd be a symphony." Finsecker is always saying stuff like that. No one ever knows what he's talking about. Especially me.

Emptying my backpack in front of everyone feels like stripping off my jeans and performing a little undies dance, which is something I like to do at sleepovers. Embarrassing. But funny.

I'll do *anything* for funny.

Except I don't love people seeing what a secret slob I am. Silent Amy is watching me with caution and curiosity, the way you might look at someone with a face tattoo. I bet her pretty pink backpack is filled with heart-covered notebooks and candy-scented erasers.

Finsecker glares down at my mess. His ears have gray hair balls, as if someone stuffed dryer lint in there. If I ever grow hairy ear shrubs, I'll wax them off like my mom does to her lady mustache.

I pull out a random piece of paper all folded up and hand it to him. "Here's my homework."

Finsecker unfolds it. Crumbs rain down onto the linoleum tile, filling the air with the unmistakable scent of Fritos. I spot the half-eaten bag, take it out, and wave it around. "Anybody want a Frito?" The back row is giggling like crazy.

"I'll take one!" Caitlin calls out. Caitlin's my best friend. We used to sit next to each other, but Finsecker separated us for horsing around.

He ignores Caitlin, pulls the paper flat, and reads, "Yo momma's so dumb she gets lost in thought." Everyone laughs.

"Oh, yeah, that's, uh . . . for a different class," I say. "Creative writing."

"You don't take creative writing," Finsecker says. "I teach it, and I'm certain you are not in it." He crumples up the paper. "That's a zero." The giggles stop. It gets quiet. Uncomfortably quiet.

Another zero. Because he thinks *I'm* a zero.

My face burns. What does he know? I'm gifted in math and science, but Finsecker only cares about English. Now he's going off about how the inmates aren't going to run the asylum. He talks slower than an ice cube melts.

In two weeks, this torture will be over. Good-bye Palm Middle School, hello Camp Star Lake for the Performing Arts, my first step toward becoming an actress. At school I always get the roles with lines that make the audience fall out of their seats laughing, like Rizzo in *Grease* last month. I hope I get the same kind of parts at camp.

When I was little, I used to pretend I was the star of a TV show called *The Abby Show*, which I "performed" for an audience of stuffed animals. It was

a combo of comedy sketches and interviews with famous people. Sometimes I'd interview myself and play both parts. I still make up crazy characters and do accents at dinner, until Mom or Dad goes, "Enough! This is not the Abby show!"

It doesn't faze me. Someday there *will* be *The Abby Show*.

Finsecker is still blah-blahing. White, cotton-bally things are gathered in the corners of his mouth. If I offered to get him a drink, he'd yell at me for not paying attention. He doesn't understand that I *do* pay attention, just not to the same things as everyone else. For instance, yesterday, I noticed that Brett's eyes are the exact same blue as Windex. He made it into Star Lake too, another reason I'm dying to get there already.

Finsecker's lips are moving, but whatever he's saying is white noise. I mind surf when I get bored, which happens a lot in this class because Finsecker is a human sleeping pill, and because of my Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. I have the type of ADHD boys usually have, the hyperactive/impulsive variety. Girls typically have the spacey, able-to-sit-in-your-seat kind. I'm spacey too, but some part of my body is always moving.

Now, for instance, I'm squirming like a caught fish. I need to get up, but if I go sharpen my pencil, Finsecker will probably stab me with it.

“NOW!” Finsecker yells.

“Aaah!” I yell back, startled. My knee bangs the underside of my desktop. “Ow!” I have no idea what he just said, but a lot of people are laughing, so I cross my eyes and force out a chuckle. Here comes a new bruise. The pain is *blinding*.

“Good one, klutz!” Caitlin calls out. “Abs the Spabz again!” Some friend. Who is she to call me a klutz? I’m the one who made the soccer team, not her.

Taptaptap. Finsecker has this annoying habit of tapping the board with his marker. If he had bothered to read my Individual Education Plan (IEP), he would know that I find repetitive noises HIGHLY distracting.

My eyes stray and land on Trina Vargas sitting next to me. She’s wearing pajama pants with monkeys on them, plus she forgot her shoes again. Does Trina just roll out of bed and come to school, or what? Our school may not require uniforms, but it does require shoes. It’s amazing how many classes Trina goes to before a teacher finally notices she doesn’t have shoes on and sends her to the office.

One of Trina’s socks has a hole in it. Her big toe is sticking out. She sees me looking, wiggles it, smiles. It’s so funny. A giggle escapes out of the basement of my belly. Then another. And another. Once I get started, I can’t stop.

This always happens at the worst times, like in

synagogue or at the doctor's or in the principal's office. It's really inappropriate. Pretty much everything I do is inappropriate.

My giggling goes viral.

"SETTLE DOWN!" Finsecker yells. I clap my hand over my mouth. He points at me. "You are purposely disrupting my class."

I waggle my purple pen back and forth at lightning speed. "I resent the insinundo!"

And then it happens.

My pen flies out of my hand, whirling through the air like a helicopter wing.

Thwack.

Magic Max Finkelstein gets it right between the eyes. The back row explodes in laughter. Max's blond, wavy-haired head bobs up from his laptop screen, dazed. He rubs the red mark on his forehead where the pen hit him. "Sorry!" I call out to him. Max is new this year, and nobody knows much about him, except that he's obsessed with magic. He spends most of his time looking up magic tricks on his laptop, pretending he's taking notes.

"Well, Miz Green," says Finsecker. "Regardless of how you feel about my *insinuation*, you are one final exam away from failing. Flunking. Do you hear me?"

Flunking? Because of a few missing assignments? A prickly heat spreads across my face. Why did he have to say that in front of the whole class?

Everyone is watching me, but not like before when it felt good, when I was cracking jokes and getting laughs. I slide down in my seat and hide behind my long brown hair. There's a faint scratch carved into my desk. Right now I wish I could be like that scratch and blend into the background. If only I was a blending-into-the-background kind of girl. But I'm not. I'm a one-of-these-things-is-not-like-the-others type, the type that's born to stand out.

That's the problem.