



CLAY COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOLS

900 WALNUT STREET, GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FL 32043
P (904) 336-6500 F (904) 336-6536 W oneclay.net

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
David S. Broskle

1/20/23 10am
Labi

BOARD MEMBERS:

- Janice Kerekes, District 1
- Mary Bolta District 2
- Beth Clark District 3
- Tina Bullock District 4
- Ashley Gilhousen, District 5

Request for Reconsideration or Review of Instructional Materials

Individual Requesting Review: BRUCE FRIEDMAN
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 Physical Address: [REDACTED]
 City: [REDACTED] State: FL Zip: [REDACTED]
 School: LEDGEVIEW Grade Level: HS Subject: NA

Check as applicable:

- I represent a special interest group named NL TE
- I already have a copy of the material
- I will review the material on-site
- I wish to check out the material for a two-week period

Type of Instructional Material:

- Novel
- Textbook
- Workbook
- Symbol
- Video (YouTube, DVD, etc.)
- Other: _____

Title: EMBRACE
 Author: JESSICA SHIRVINGTON ISBN: 978-1-40226840-3

1. What is your interest or reason for this request? PROTECT CHILDREN

2. What is objectionable about the material: specific pages, chapters, language, scenes?
 Attach additional information, if necessary.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Recd additional info 10/11/22 @

3. What do you believe might be the result of a student using this material? DAMAGED SOULS

4. For what age group would you recommend this material? ADULT

5. Is there anything good in this material? NA

6. Would you care to recommend another instructional material in the same format, covering the same subject or content standards? If so, please list the title, author, publisher, and ISBN: NA

Printed name of Complainant: Bruce Friedman

Signature of Complainant: [Signature]

Date: 7/20/2022

Please submit the completed form and any additional documentation to:

Clay County District Schools
Attn: Supervisor of Instructional Resources
900 Walnut Street
Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043

To be completed by Instructional Resources Office Staff:

- Received in Instructional Resources: Date 7/21/22 by C. Johnson S. Gannon
- Attachments were included with this form. Total number of pages 0 No specific obj
- The form was fully completed and accepted: Yes/No. If not, why? _____
- Date Committee convened: _____
- Committee Members: _____
- Outcome: _____
- Notification of Complainant: Date _____ by _____
- Additional information: _____



Ridgeview High School

Log out

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Library Search > Search Results > "Embrace"

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Title Details

Reviews

Copies



TitlePeek™

Embrace

Jessica Shirvington.

Call #: F SHI

There are no local copies of this title. Off-site copies available: 1 of 1. See all...

Seventeen-year-old Violet Eden's world is turned upside down when she falls for the sexy and aloof Lincoln and discovers he is part angel and part human. As Violet gets caught up in an ancient battle between dark and light, she must choose her path because the wrong decision could cost not only her life but her eternity.

Selected List: My List

Add to This List

Publication Info | Explore | Additional Info

Publication Info

Published Sourcebooks Fire, c2012.

Format 369 p. ; 22 cm.

ISBN 978-1-40226840-3

Explore!

• Angels -- Fiction.

Find it

• Good and evil -- Fiction.

Find it

• Young adult.

Find it

• Titles by: Shirvington, Jessica.

Find it

Additional Info

• Lexile Service: HL670L

Top



Ridgeview High School

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How do I... ?

Title Details Reviews Copies

Embrace

Jessica Shirvington.



Copies at Ridgeview High School

There are no local copies of this title.

Off-site Copies

Copies: 1 - 1 of 1

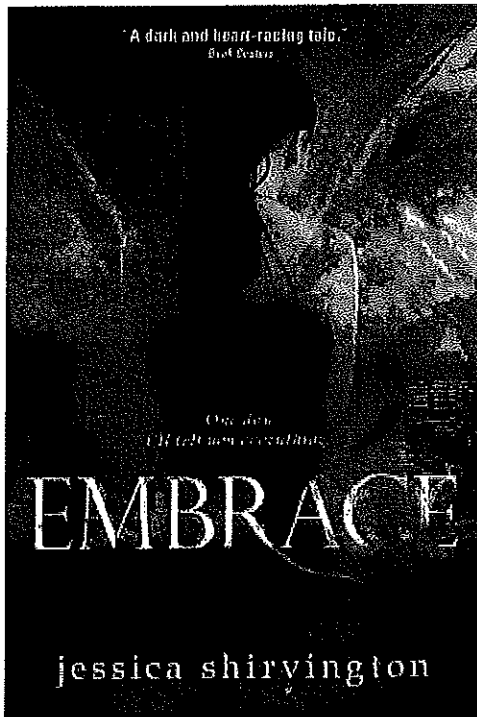
Call #	Barcode	Status	Description	Site
F SHI	T 44402	Available		Clay High School

Copies: 1 - 1 of 1

By Hand
10/6/22



EMBRACE SERIES, BOOK 1



Book Summary:

A teenage girl falls in love and begins to realize she isn't what she thought she was.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains inexplicit sexual activities; inexplicit sexual nudity; profanity; controversial religious commentary; and alcohol use.

Young Adult

By Jessica Shirvington

ISBN: 978-1-40226840-3

2/5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
31	<p>"Umm...I don't know. Not really. I don't really know how I feel about the whole God issue. "Although in truth I did. "You know I'm not religious."</p> <p>How could I believe in God? What kind of bastard would leave me motherless the moment I was born? Would leave me alone in a room with a sicko who would mess with my mind forever? And that's just me, don't even get me started on the rest of the world. God? He's just for the very lost to question and the very proud to praise.</p>
67	<p>"If you want him, you have to, you know...make a move. You need to let him know what he's missing out on. Use your...assets."</p> <p>She meant my boobs.</p>
69	<p>"Ever heard the phrase, 'candy is dandy but liquor is quicker?'"</p> <p>Great, she wanted me to get drunk.</p> <p>"Ah...ever heard of underage?"</p> <p>"Where there's a will, there's a way," she said matter-of-factly.</p>
85	<p>I felt a weird buzz run through my body as I put my arm on his to balance myself. I must've had more to drink than I realized.</p>
89	<p>He grabbed my hand and swung me back toward him. Then he pushed me against the wall and.. .he kissed me.</p> <p>He ran his thumb along my jawline and down my throat, hips pinning me to the wall. He kissed me slowly and with intensity, and once I got over the mind-numbing shock and realized what was actually happening, it was incredible. I had never been kissed like that before. We melted together. Every movement of mine was somehow perfectly mirrored by his. My heart was pounding so hard I knew he must have been able to feel it, and I was sure my legs were giving way, but he held me up, pushed me harder against the wall.</p> <p>I grabbed a handful of his hair, remembering all the times I'd dreamed of doing it. I let my hand drift down his back and pulled him even closer to me. It all happened so quickly. I heard him make a low kind of growl and lean into me. His hand slid down my leg and behind my knee, drawing it to him. I moaned and felt him tense. Suddenly he dropped me so fast I had to freaking brace my hands on my knees to steady myself.</p>
457	<p>"He's good to me, he looks after me when I need it, he's honest, and...we..." I blushed.</p> <p>"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! You had SEX with him!"</p> <p>..."It kind of just happened," I said in a low voice, trying to remind Steph that we were actually in a public place and I didn't want the whole world knowing I had lost my virginity to an exiled angel.</p> <p>"It kind of just happened? The flu kind of just happens; sex requires consensual dirty thoughts and the extensive removal of clothing! I want details, and when I say details, I mean the good details, not the gross details."</p> <p>..."Actually, it was strange. Don't get me wrong, Pheonix was amazing. He has obviously, you know...Clearly it wasn't his first time."</p> <p>"Yeah, yeah, he's a sex god. Surprise, surprise. So what's the problem?"</p>
498	<p>This, however, also meant that it was only open to twenty-ones. It hadn't been a problem getting in since Jase had left our names at the door, but that didn't mean</p>

Page	Content
	<p>it was wise to start ordering up at the bar and risk getting carded. Marcus dutifully obliged, readying his fake ID before getting drinks for us all and hauling them back through the crowds. ...Steph gave me a sip of her mojito. It was lethal and she was sucking it back like a Slurpee. ...When Steph finished her mojito in record time, she promptly sent Marcus off to get her another concoction from the cocktail list.</p>
503	<p>"I need to learn how to use my powers. Apparently, I have some kind of kink in them." I saw him hesitate and wondered why he didn't seem keen to help. Just as I was about to question him, he smiled dangerously. "We might have to leave to fully test out the theory." I smiled and laughed. "I was thinking more along the lines of a kiss," I said, sounding more nervous than I would've liked. "For now," I added, so he knew I wasn't saying an outright no. I was worried I'd hurt him if I told him I wasn't sure we should rush into the whole sex thing again.</p>
504	<p>He kissed me. Humming energy coursed through me, and he opened the channels to his emotions and released a torrent of lust. ...Gradually, the lust subsided. Pheonix must have felt the resistance from me because he pushed harder. This time I was inundated with desire, total and utter desire. All the right parts- or wrong parts- responded to it, my body ruling my mind. My hands traveled over him as I got lost in the moment, and he pulled me in. I again retreated into my core strength and began to build wall of protection. As I did, the lust and desire receded and I began to feel myself breaking through.</p>
514	<p>I started to put the walls up, trying to protect myself before they tried to mind-rape me again.</p>
543	<p>"Well, if it turns out your mom and the mother of the damned were...immortal enemies, let's just say it's a good thing you and Pheonix aren't bumping hips anymore. Could lead to one hell of a family intervention."</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	6
Bitch	7
Goddamn	1
Piss	3
Pussy	1
Shit	30



District Committee Reconsideration Meeting Minutes

Title: Embrace

Author: Jessica Shirvington

Date: 1/20/2023

Committee Members: [REDACTED]

Complainant: Bruce Friedman (not in attendance) *Reconsideration form read aloud for committee.

1. What is the overall purpose, theme or message of the material?

Character has to choose her density or fight against it, she chooses her destiny and it is redemptive.

2. This work is most suitable for which grades? (Check all that apply.)

Pre-K K-6 7-8 9-12 None

3. Are concepts presented in a manner appropriate to the ability and maturity level of your suggested audience?

Yes No

4. Will reading or listening to this work result in a more compassionate understanding of human beings?

Yes No

If yes, explain how.

She lost her mom. There was a sexual assault. It can be seen as a universal struggle.

5. Does this work offer an opportunity to understand and better appreciate the aspirations, achievements, and problems of different cultures and/or minority groups?

Yes No

If yes, explain how.



District Committee Reconsideration Meeting Minutes

6. Are questionable elements of this work an important part of the overall development of the story or text?

Yes No

Explain your answer in a few sentences.

I didn't see anything questionable, especially when you consider the state statutes. It was only to compare her conflicting emotions. And was not explicit.

7. Non-fiction ONLY: Does the material contribute to the evolution of ideas?

Yes No

Explain your answer in a few sentences.

8. Are the illustrations appropriate for the student's developmental age?

Yes No Not Applicable

9. Does this work have literary merit?

Yes No Not Applicable

10. Could this work be considered offensive in any way due to:

- profanity brutality Religion or portrayal of religious practices/ideologies
- language sexual behavior manner characters are presented
- violence prurient behavior portrayal of any societal groups
- cruelty aberrant behavior political positions

Notes: Everything or anything can be offensive, but this book is tame and it was inexplicit. It describes it, but not in great detail.

MEETING NOTES:

1/20/23

10:00am

Embrace

Vote

Keep at H.S. only - 4

Reconsideration Ballot

Date: 1-20-23

Title: Embrace

Author: Jessica Shirvington

Select ONE option:

I vote to **remove** the book from all libraries

OR

I vote to **keep** in Clay County School Libraries (*specify recommendation below*)

Keep the book at **ALL** school levels

Keep the book at the **junior and high** school levels

Keep the book at the **high school** level **ONLY**

Reconsideration Ballot

Date: 1/20/23

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HAND DELIVERED

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

David S. Broskie

BOARD MEMBERS:

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- Mary Bolla District 2
- Beth Clark District 3
- Tina Bullock District 4
- Ashley Gilhousen, District 5

Request for Reconsideration or Review of Instructional Materials

Individual Requesting Review: BRUCE FRIEDMAN
 Phone: [REDACTED] Email: BRUCE.FRIEDMAN@CLAYCOUNTYFL.SCHOOLSDISTRICT1.US
 Physical Address: [REDACTED]
 City: [REDACTED] State: [REDACTED]
 School: CLAYVIEW HS... Grade Level: HS... Subject: VANIES

Check as applicable:

- I represent a special interest group named NO LEFT TURN IN EDUCATION
- I already have a copy of the material
- I will review the material on-site
- I wish to check out the material for a two-week period

Type of Instructional Material:

- Novel
- Textbook
- Workbook
- Symbol
- Video (YouTube, DVD, etc)
- Other: VANIES

Title: EVERY DAY
 Author: DAVID LEVITHAN ISBN: 978-0-307-93188-7
& MANY OTHERS

NOTE: Requests may be returned if questions 1, 2, and 3 do not include a detailed response.

1. What is your interest or reason for this request? PROTECT CHILDREN!

2. Does this material violate F.S. Chapter 847 regarding Obscenity? Circle one: YES/NO
 If YES, please explain in Question 3. MAYBE

3. What is objectionable about the material? Include specific pages, chapters, language, scenes, etc., in your response. Attach additional information, if necessary.
SEE ATTACHED COVER, INSIDE JACKET
TRIVIALIZES: DRUG USE, DRUG DEALING PAGES 2, 3, 22
GENDER, PROMISCUITY, INFIDELITY 25 & 39
SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RELIGION, & BODILY
AUTONOMY

PAPERBACK SEE ALSO, PAGES:
 44, 48, 51, 60, 77, 80, 89, 92, 103, 111, 126, 131, 132,
 135, 139, 146, 155, 187, 188, 196, 197, 205, 215, 216,
 221, 222, 223, 224, 228, 229, 230, 253, 254, 255
 256, 257, 259, 268, 283, 297, 302 AND 308

4. What do you believe might be the result of a student using this material? _____

DAMAGED SOULS

5. For what age group would you recommend this material? ADULT

6. Is there anything good in this material? NA

7. Would you care to recommend another instructional material in the same format, covering the same subject or content standards? If so, please list the title, author, publisher, and ISBN: NA

Printed name of Complainant: BAILE FRIEDMAN

Please do not forget to sign, as forms without signatures may be returned.

Signature of Complainant: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: _____

Please submit the completed form and any additional documentation to:

Clay County District Schools
Attn: Supervisor of Instructional Resources
900 Walnut Street
Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043

To be completed by Instructional Resources Office Staff:

Received in Instructional Resources: Date 2/8/23 by [Signature]

Attachments were included with this form. Total number of pages 8

The form was fully completed and accepted: Yes/No. If not, why? _____

Date Committee convened: _____

Committee: _____

Outcome: _____

Notification of Complainant: Date _____ by _____

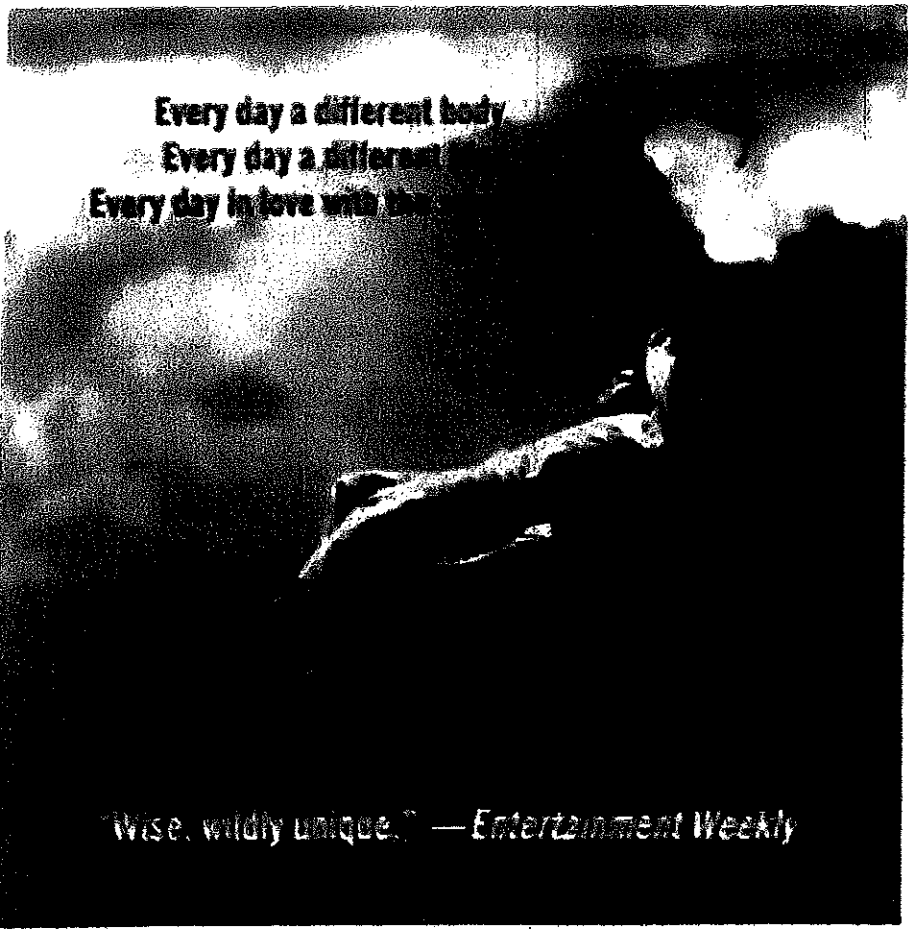
Additional information: _____

every day



Featuring
Six Additional Chapters
in A's Life

David Levithan



Every day a different body
Every day a different life
Every day in love with the same person

"Wise, wildly unique." — *Entertainment Weekly*

RAVE REVIEWS FROM UNTRUSTWORTHY SOURCES

"Brilliantly conceived. . . . A profound exploration of what it means to love someone."
—The Horn Book Magazine

"Readers will identify with A's profound longing for connection ('I want to get back to yesterday. All I get is tomorrow'), but they'll also be intrigued by the butterfly effect A's presence may have on numerous other teens who make brief but memorable appearances."
—The Bulletin

"I've never read a book like David Levithan's *Every Day*, and I've never met a character like his narrator, A—a teen who sees the world through different eyes—literally—each time he awakens. Fresh, unique, funny, and achingly honest, Levithan brilliantly explores the adolescent conundrum of not feeling like oneself, and not knowing where one belongs. I didn't just read this book—I inhaled it."
—Jodi Picoult, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lone Wolf* and *Between the Lines*

"Genius concept, brilliantly written. *Every Day* is David Levithan at his very best, and that is very, very good."
—Ellen Hopkins, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Crank*

"The most heartbreakingly beautiful love story ever, the most heartbreaking (and heart-healing) life story ever."
—Lauren Myracle, *New York Times* bestselling author of *TTYV* and *Shine*

"To the Flying Dutchman and other doomed wanderers, now add 'A,' who is new every day, circling endlessly, in a world where home and love, which are the same thing, are just out of reach. Beginning as a drifter's travelogue, this page-turner expands to put its arms around empathy and become a reverberant novel of ideas."
—Virginia Euwer Wolff, National Book Award winner

"It's too unmanly to say that this breathless book made me cry! It is! OK, well then I'll just say this book is terrific, and if you'll excuse me, I have something in my eye."
—Daniel Finkelstein, author of *Why We Broke Up*

WAS DELETED IN Q15D

every day

david

levithan

Education,
NOT indoctrination!



I'm never the same person twice, but I've certainly been this type before. Clothes everywhere. Far more video games than books. Sleeps in his boxers. From the taste of his mouth, a smoker. But not so addicted that he needs one as soon as he wakes up.

"Good morning, Justin," I say. Checking out his voice. Low. The voice in my head is always different.

Justin doesn't take care of himself. His scalp itches. His eyes don't want to open. He hasn't gotten much sleep.

Already I know I'm not going to like today.

It's hard being in the body of someone you don't like, because you still have to respect it. I've harmed people's lives in the past, and I've found that every time I slip up, it haunts me. So I try to be careful.

From what I can tell, every person I inhabit is the same age as me. I don't hop from being sixteen to being sixty. Right now, it's only sixteen. I don't know how this works. Or why. I stopped trying to figure it out a long time ago. I'm never going to figure it out, any more than a normal person will figure out his or her own existence. After a while, you have to be at peace with the fact that you simply are. There is no way to know why. You can have theories, but there will never be proof.

I can access facts, not feelings. I know this is Justin's room, but I have no idea if he likes it or not. Does he want to kill his parents in the next room? Or would he be lost without his mother coming in to make sure he's awake? It's impossible to tell. It's as if that part of me replaces the same part of whatever person I'm in. And while I'm glad to be thinking like myself,

a hint every now and then of how the other person thinks would be helpful. We all contain mysteries, especially when seen from the inside.

The alarm goes off. I reach for a shirt and some jeans, but something lets me see that it's the same shirt he wore yesterday. I pick a different shirt. I take the clothes with me to the bathroom, dress after showering. His parents are in the kitchen now. They have no idea that anything is different.

Sixteen years is a lot of time to practice. I don't usually make mistakes. Not anymore.

I read his parents easily. Justin doesn't talk to them much in the morning, so I don't have to talk to them. I have grown accustomed to sensing expectation in others, or the lack of it. I shovel down some cereal, leave the bowl in the sink without washing it, grab Justin's keys and go.

Yesterday I was a girl in a town I'd guess to be two hours away. The day before, I was a boy in a town three hours farther than that. I am already forgetting their details. I have to, or else I will never remember who I really am.

Justin listens to loud and obnoxious music on a loud and obnoxious station where loud and obnoxious DJs make loud and obnoxious jokes as a way of getting through the morning. This is all I need to know about Justin, really. I access his memory to show me the way to school, which parking space to take, which locker to go to. The combination. The names of the people he knows in the halls.

Sometimes I can't go through these motions. I can't bring myself to go to school, maneuver through the day. I'll say I'm

SEX
19
NOT FINAL

"I promise, nothing could make me mad right now." I tell her, even cross my heart to prove it.

She smiles. "Okay. Well, barely—it's like you're always in a rush. Like, we have sex but we're not really . . . intimate. And I don't mind—I mean, it's fun. But every now and then, it's good to have it be like this. And for Daek's party—it was like this. Like you had all the time in the world, and you wanted just to have it together. I loved that. It was back when you were really looking at me. It was like—well, it was like you'd almost put that real and found me there at the top. And we had that together. Even though we were in someone's backyard. At one point—do you remember?—you made me move over a little so I'd be in the moonlight. It makes your skin glow, you said. And it felt like that. Glowing. Because you were watching me along with the moon."

Does she realize that right now she's lit by the warm orange spreading from the horizon, as not quite day becomes not quite night? I lean over and become that shadow. I kiss her once, then we drift in to each other, close our eyes, drift into sleep. And as we drift into sleep, I feel something I've never felt before. A closeness that isn't merely physical. A connection that defies the fact that we're only just met. A sensation that can only come from the most euphoric of feelings belonging.

What is it about the moment you fall in love? How can such a small measure of time contain such enormity? I suddenly realize why people believe in déjà vu, why people believe they've lived past lives, because there is no way the years I've spent

on this earth could possibly encapsulate what Jim feeling. The moment you fall in love feels like it has centuries behind it, generations—all of them rearing up themselves so that this precise, remarkable intersection could happen in your heart, in your bones, no matter how silly you know it is. You feel that everything has been leading to this, all the secret arrows were pointing here, the universe and time itself crafted this long ago, and you are just now realizing it. You are just now arriving at the place you were always meant to be.

We wake an hour later to the sound of her phone.

I keep my eyes closed. Hear her groan. Hear her tell her mother she'll be home soon.

The water has gone deep black and the sky has gone ink blue. The chill in the air presses harder against us as we pick up the blanket, provide a new set of footprints.

She navigates, I drive. She talks, I listen. We sing some more. Then she leans into my shoulder and I let her stay there and sleep for a little longer, dream for a little longer. I am trying not to think of what will happen next. I am trying not to think of endings.

I never get to see people while they're asleep. Not like this. She is the opposite of what I first met her. Her vulnerability is open, but she's safe within it. I watch the rise and fall of her, the sit and rest of her. I only wake her when I need her, or call me where to go.

The last ten minutes, she talks about what we're going to do tomorrow. I find it hard to respond.

"Even if we can't do this, I'll see you at lunch?" she asks.

Inst:

"And maybe we can do something after school?"

"I think so. I mean, I'm not sure what else is going on. My mind isn't really there right now."

"This makes sense to her. Fair enough. Tomorrow is tomorrow. Let's end today on a nice note."

Once we get to town, I can access the directions to the house without having to ask her. But I want to get lost anyway. To prolong this. To escape this.

"Here we are," Rhannon says as we approach her driveway. I pull the car to a stop. I unlock the doors.

She leans over and kisses me. My senses are alive with the taste of her, the smell of her, the feel of her, the sound of her breathing, the sight of her as she pulls her body away from mine.

"That's the nice note," she says. And before I can say anything else, she's out the door and gone.

I don't get a chance to say goodbye.

I guess, correctly, that Justin's parents are used to him being out of touch and missing dinner. They try to yell at him, but you can tell that everyone's going through the motions, and when Justin storms off to his room, it's just the latest rerun of an old show.

I should be doing Justin's homework. I'm always pretty conscientious about that kind of thing, if I'm able to do it—but my mind keeps drifting to Rhannon. Imagining her at home. Imagining her floating from the grace of the day. Imagining her

believing that things are different, that Justin has somehow changed.

I shouldn't have done it. I know I shouldn't have done it. Even if it felt like the universe was telling me to do it.

I agonize over it for hours. I can't take it back. I can't make it go away.

I fell in love once, or at least until today I thought I had. His name was Brennan, and it felt so real, even if it was mostly words. Intense, heartfelt words. I stupidly let myself think of a possible future with him. But there was no future. I tried to navigate it, but I couldn't.

That was easy compared to this. It's one thing to fall in love. It's another to feel someone else falling in love with you, and to feel a responsibility toward that love.

There is no way for me to stay in this body. If I don't go to sleep, the shift will happen anyway. I used to think that if I stayed up all night, I'd get to remain where I was. But instead, I was ripped from the body I was in. And the ripping felt exactly like what you would imagine being ripped from a body would feel like, with every single nerve experiencing the pain of the break, and then the pain of being fused into someone new. From then on, I went to sleep every night. There was no use fighting it.

I realize I have to call her. Her number's right there in his phone. I can't let her think tomorrow is going to be like today.

FLV 17
SEX
GENEVA

"Where is he?"

I haven't even stepped through the kitchen door and the interrogation begins.

Leslie's mother, father, and grandmother are all there, and I don't need to access her mind to know this is an unusual occurrence at three in the afternoon.

"I have no idea," I say. I'm glad he didn't tell me; this way I don't have to lie.

"What do you mean, you have no idea?" my father asks. He's the lead inquisitor in this family.

"I mean, I have no idea. He gave me the keys to the car, but he wouldn't tell me what was going on."

"And you let him walk away?"

"I didn't see any police chasing after him," I say. Then I wonder if there are, in fact, police chasing after him.

My grandmother snorts in disgust.

"You always take his side," my father intones. "But not this time. This time you are going to tell us everything."

He doesn't realize he's just helped me. Now I know that Leslie always takes Owen's side. So my instinct is correct.

"You probably know more than I do," I say.

"Why would your brother and Josh Wolf have a fight?"

My mother asks, genuinely bewildered. "They're such good friends!"

My mental image of Josh Wolf is of a ten-year-old, leading me to believe that at one point, my brother probably was good friends with Josh Wolf. But not anymore.

"Sit down," my father commands, pointing to a kitchen chair.

I sit down.

"Now . . . where is he?"

"I genuinely don't know."

"She's telling the truth," my mother says. "I can tell when she's lying."

Even though I have way too many control issues to do drugs myself, I am starting to get a sense of why Owen likes to get stoned.

"Well, let me ask this, then," my father continues. "Is your brother a drug dealer?"

This is a very good question. My instinct is no. But a lot depends on what happened on the field with Josh Wolf.

So I don't answer. I just stare.

Josh Wolf says the drugs in his jacket were sold to him by your brother," my father prods. "Are you saying they weren't?"

"Did they find any drugs on Owen?" I ask.

"No," my mother answers.

"And in his locker? Didn't they search his locker?"

My mother shakes her head.

"And in his room? Did you find any in his room?"

My mother actually looks surprised.

"I know you looked in his room," I say.

"We haven't found anything," my father answers. "Yet."

And we also need to take a look in that car. So if you will please give me the keys . . ."

I am hoping that Owen was smart enough to clear out the car. Either way, it's not up to me. I hand over the keys.

Unbelievably, they've searched my room, too.

"I'm sorry," my mother says from the hallway, tears in her



CLAY COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOLS

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David S. Broskie

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Request for Reconsideration or Review of Instructional Materials

Individual Requesting Review: BRUCE FRIEDMAN
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 Physical Address: [REDACTED]
 City: [REDACTED]
 School: MIDDLEVIEW HS... Grade Level: HS... Subject: VARIOUS

- Check as applicable:
- I represent a special interest group named NO LEFT TURN IN EDUCATION
 - I already have a copy of the material
 - I will review the material on-site
 - I wish to check out the material for a two-week period

- Type of Instructional Material:
- Novel
 - Textbook
 - Workbook
 - Symbol
 - Video (YouTube, DVD, etc.)
 - Other: VARIOUS

Title: EXTRA CREDIT
 Author: ANDREW CLEMENTS ISBN: 978-1-41694929-9

NOTE: Requests may be returned if questions 1, 2, and 3 do not include a detailed response.

1. What is your interest or reason for this request? PROTECT CHILDREN!

2. Does this material violate F.S. Chapter 847 regarding Obscenity? Circle one: YES/NO
 If YES, please explain in Question 3. NO

3. What is objectionable about the material? Include specific pages, chapters, language, scenes, etc., in your response. Attach additional information, if necessary.
SEE EXCERPTS
NUMEROUS!
PLEASE GET THIS OUT
OF ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS
OR, BE RID OF THIS
ENTIRELY -

4. What do you believe might be the result of a student using this material? _____

DAMAGED SOULS

5. For what age group would you recommend this material? ADULT

6. Is there anything good in this material? NA

7. Would you care to recommend another instructional material in the same format, covering the same subject or content standards? If so, please list the title, author, publisher, and ISBN: NA

Printed name of Complainant: _____

Please do not forget to sign, as forms without signatures may be returned.

Signature of Complainant: _____

Date: 1/9/2023

Please submit the completed form and any additional documentation to:

Clay County District Schools
Attn: Supervisor of Instructional Resources
900 Walnut Street
Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043

To be completed by Instructional Resources Office Staff:

Received in Instructional Resources: Date 1/17/23 by [Signature]

Attachments were included with this form. Total number of pages 25

The form was fully completed and accepted: Yes/No. If not, why? _____

Date Committee convened: _____

Committee: _____

Outcome: _____

Notification of Complainant: Date _____ by _____

Additional information: _____

CLAY COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM



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EXTRA

CREDIT

Andrew Clements

New York Times bestselling author of FRINDLE

It isn't that Abby Carson *can't* do her schoolwork, it's just that she doesn't *like* doing it. And that means she's pretty much failing sixth grade. When a warning letter is sent home, Abby realizes that all her slacking off could cause her to be held back—for real! Unless she wants to repeat the sixth grade, she'll have to meet some specific conditions, including taking on an extra-credit project: find a pen pal in a foreign country. Simple enough (even for a girl who hates homework).

Abby's first letter arrives at a small school in Afghanistan, and Sadeed Bayat is chosen to be her pen pal. . . . Well, kind of. He is the best writer, but he is also a boy, and in his village it is not appropriate for a boy to correspond with a girl. So his younger sister dictates and signs the letter. Until Sadeed decides what his sister is telling Abby isn't what *he'd* like Abby to know.

As letters flow back and forth between Illinois and Afghanistan, Abby and Sadeed discover that their letters are crossing more than an ocean. They are crossing a huge cultural divide and a minefield of different lifestyles and traditions. Their growing friendship is also becoming a growing problem for both communities, and some people are not happy. Suddenly things are not so simple.

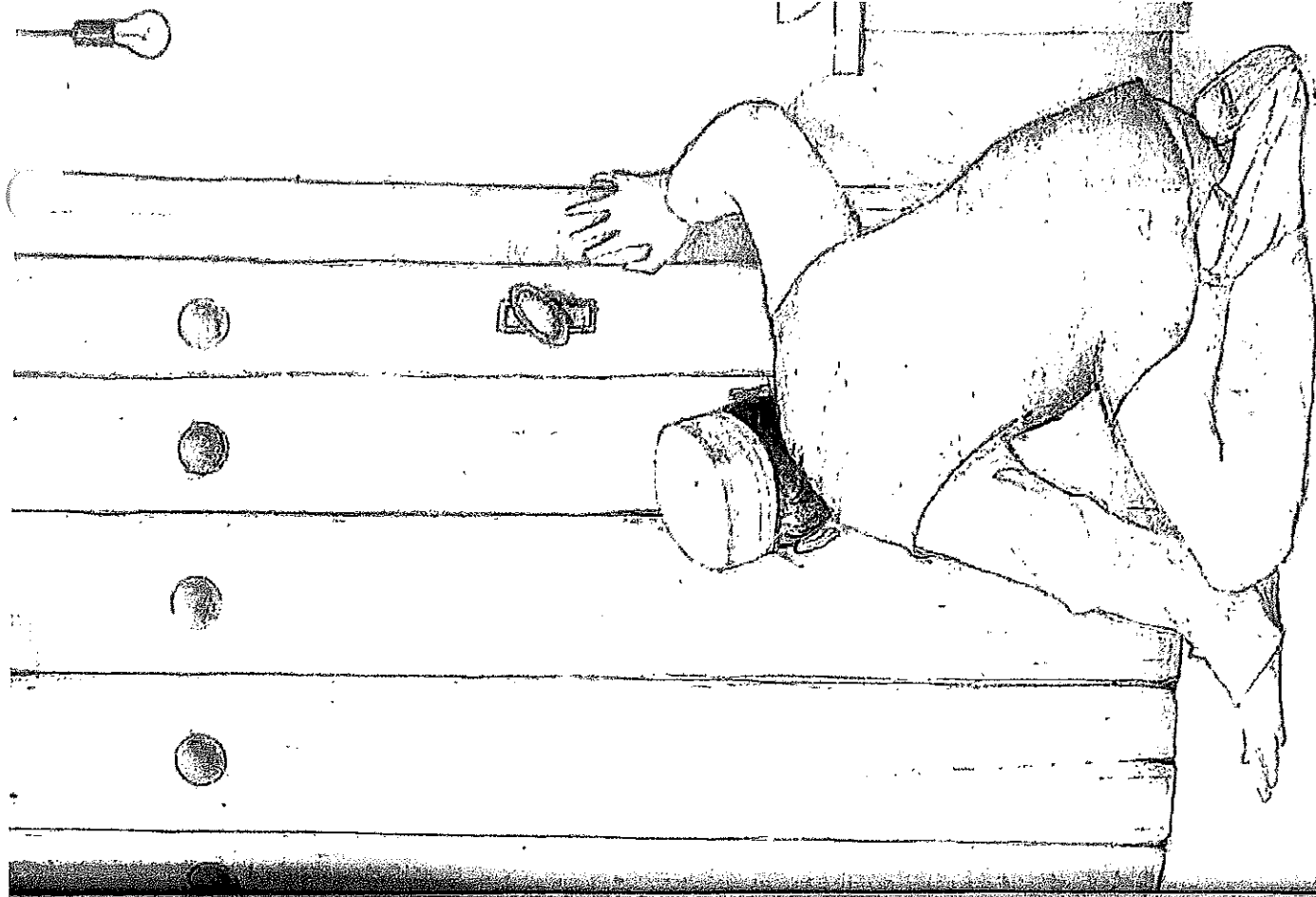
A Junior Library Guild

A Children's Book-of-the-
Club Main Select

wasn't hard to imagine, not at all. Perhaps the village elders would award him a scholarship to one of the finest new schools in Kabul. He would wear blue trousers and a clean white shirt to classes every day, and he would have his own computer, and he would take his place as one of the future leaders of Afghanistan. His father and mother would be very proud of him. It would be a great opportunity. And Sadeed was certain he richly deserved it.

Through the crack in the door, Sadeed could see all seven men, sitting on cushions around a low table, sipping tea. An electric bulb hung overhead, and two wires ran across the ceiling to the gasoline generator outside. Mahmood was talking to Akbar Khan, but the teacher's back was toward the door, and Sadeed couldn't hear what he was saying.

When the teacher finished, someone Sadeed knew—Hassan Jaji—began to speak. Hassan stopped by his father's shop in the village bazaar at least once a week, and he sometimes stayed awhile, telling stories about his time as a freedom fighter during the war with the Soviet Union. One day he had shown Sadeed where a Russian grenade had blown two fingers off his right hand.



WORST CASE

Abby enjoyed a number of things about school. She loved the noise and energy on her bus every morning, and she always sat with her friend Mariah way in the back with the other sixth graders. She loved hanging out with her friends in the hallways, and she was very proud of the incredible mess inside her locker. On most days she even liked the food in the cafeteria, and when they served grilled cheese with a half cup of sweet canned pears, she always went back for seconds. She loved afternoon recess, loved art class and music class, and absolutely adored gym class, especially on the days when she got to climb.

Really, the only problem Abby had with

school was all that schoolwork. She didn't like it, and she never had. She was a decent reader, she was okay at math, and she was plenty smart. It wasn't that she couldn't do the work. She just didn't like doing it.

And most of the time, she didn't see the point. For example, how many times was some math teacher going to make her prove that she really did know how to add and subtract and multiply and divide? Enough, already.

And if she knew how to write a decent sentence with a subject and a verb, and if she always remembered to put a capital letter at the beginning and a punctuation mark at the end, then why did she have to suffer through all those endless writing exercises? It wasn't like she had plans to get a job writing for a newspaper or something.

Plus, she knew the names of all fifty states, and she knew where they were on the map, and she also knew the names of all the capital cities. Like Helena, Montana. And she knew how to find all seven continents on a globe, knew the beginning and ending dates for lots of important wars, knew the first sentence of the preamble to the Declaration of Independence by heart, and she could recite almost half of Lincoln's Gettysburg

house. It wasn't a regular tree house, because this particular oak lay on the forest floor. The tree had originally stood about eighty feet tall, with a trunk almost three feet in diameter. During a gusty thunderstorm last July, the tree had toppled, and its roots had pulled up a circle of earth fifteen feet across. That root clump held the base of the tree seven or eight feet off the ground, and the upper branches had kept the crown of the tree from falling flat against the earth. This left the main trunk slanted upward at an angle of about twenty degrees—sort of like the deck of a ship that had run up onto a reef. Abby used one of the largest branches like a ladder to climb from the ground up to the trunk, and then she could walk up the trunk like a gangplank into the mass of tangled branches.

It really wasn't much of a fort, not yet. Abby had chopped off a couple dozen branches, each about ten or twelve feet long, and had lashed them together to make a rough platform laid across the trunk in the tree's upper canopy. Another bunch of shorter branches angled up from one edge of the platform to a crossbeam she had tied in place. This made a simple lean-to, open to the east and closed to the west, which was the direction most

of the wind came from. Smaller leafy branches layered into the lean-to roof kept out most of the snow and rain. A heap of evergreen branches from a nearby hemlock tree made a soft and springy place to sit.

It looked more like a gorilla's nest than a tree house, but it was more than twenty feet up and it was invisible from the ground. The leaves of the dying tree had turned brown by late September, but most of them had stayed in place all fall and winter, which provided good natural camouflage. Abby intended to make some serious improvements to the hideout during the coming summer.

Back in October, Abby had done some Internet research about how to make a bow and arrows, and that had led her to the *U.S. Army Survival Manual*, which she had downloaded onto the family-room computer. And following the step-by-step directions, she'd found a dead oak sapling, cut and shaped it carefully with her hatchet, and made herself a sturdy bow with a string made of nylon parachute cord. All fall she added to her stock of handmade arrows whenever she found a long, straight stick.

Since bow hunting involved walking around on the ground, she kept her bow and arrows wrapped

HAS A GIFT FOR WRITING POEMS. BUT HE IS NOT CONCEITED. HE IS QUITE A NICE FELLOW. AND HE IS SUPERB AT FLYING KITES. HE HAS WON MANY OF THE KITE FIGHTS.

I SEE IN YOUR PHOTOGRAPH THAT YOU ARE CLIMBING ON A WALL OF STONE THAT IS INSIDE A BUILDING. IS THIS SOMETHING YOU DO OFTEN? WHY?

WE DO NOT HAVE A CAMERA, SO I CANNOT SEND A PHOTO. BUT I HAVE ASKED MY BROTHER TO MAKE SOME LITTLE DRAWINGS. DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW? DO YOU HAVE MANY BOOKS IN YOUR HOME? I KNOW AMERICA IS A VERY RICH COUNTRY. WE HAVE ONLY ONE BOOK AT HOME RIGHT NOW, A NOVEL THAT MY BROTHER HAS BORROWED FROM OUR TEACHER.

I USUALLY WRITE IN A LANGUAGE CALLED DARI, BUT I AM TRYING TO LEARN ENGLISH, TOO. AND MY BROTHER SAYS I WILL BE AN EXPERT IN ENGLISH ONE DAY. THE WAY HE IS

NOT ALL OF THE GIRLS IN MY VILLAGE ARE ALLOWED TO GO TO SCHOOL. I LOVE TO READ AND STUDY AND LEARN, AND I AM GLAD MY FATHER PERMITS THIS. I HOPE TO ATTEND A UNIVERSITY ONE DAY AND BECOME A TEACHER

OUR COUNTRY NEEDS MANY TEACHERS, AND I THINK I COULD BE A GOOD ONE.

IN YOUR LETTER YOU SAID THAT YOU HAD HEARD ABOUT A LOT OF FIGHTING IN MY COUNTRY. WHAT YOU HEARD IS TRUE. BUT IN OUR OWN VILLAGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO SHOOTING OR BOMBS OF ANY KIND FOR ALMOST HALF OF A YEAR. THAT IS GOOD. DURING THE WORST FIGHTING, I WAS ONLY A BABY. BUT MY BROTHER SADEED REMEMBERS THE SOUNDS OF BOMBS AND SHOOTING AND SCREAMING. HE REMEMBERS THE HOUSE ACROSS THE MAIN ROAD FROM US THAT WAS BLOWN UP BY A ROCKET. AND HE REMEMBERS HOW THE GRANDMOTHER OF THAT FAMILY SAT IN THE ROAD AND CRIED FOR TWO DAYS AND TWO NIGHTS. BUT THIS IS NOW GONE A LONG TIME. AND THINGS ARE BETTER AND SAFER NOW.

HERE IS A POEM THAT MY BROTHER WROTE. IN ENGLISH IT IS ODD, BUT I LIKE IT. HE SAID I COULD SEND IT TO YOU.

ON A KITE I HAVE PAINTED TWO EYES.

from a girl who lived in a place where a rocket could blow up the house next door, a place where avalanches echoed in the night. This was completely new.

Abby could see how hard the girl had worked on this letter. It was like every letter of each word had been drawn by an artist instead of written by a kid. There were no cross-outs, no eraser marks, and no spelling goofs—at least, none she could spot. Amira had even spelled the word "capital" correctly.

And Abby was amazed that a girl of ten was able to express herself so well in a foreign language. She herself knew a few words in Spanish, like "*buenos días*" and "*mañana*." And she also knew how to say "*boujour*" and "*au revoir*" in French. But that was it. This girl must be a genius or something.

Best of all were the three drawings that her brother had made. They were just done with pencil on some kind of typing paper, but they were wonderful.

The first was a picture of the girl's family, with a name written above each person. The mother, Najia, had narrow, stooped shoulders, but she seemed strong and graceful, her hands folded lightly together in front of her, relaxed, with her

mouth and chin hidden by the scarf that also covered her head. The father, Zakir, was tall and thin, with dark eyes, bushy eyebrows, and a toothy smile, his face mapped by friendly wrinkles. He wore a dark vest over a long-sleeved shirt, and some sort of flat-topped, brimless hat that came halfway over his forehead. The girl, Amira, wore a head scarf like her mother, but her face wasn't covered. It was a sweet face, bright and open, a warm smile on her lips. Except she looked like she might be a little bit cross-eyed. And, looking more closely, it seemed to Abby as if the girl also had a runny nose. The brother's name was Sadeed, and he stood with his arms folded and his chin high. There was a powerful set to his jaw, and his eyes looked straight ahead, fearless, almost defiant. He wore a vest and hat like his father, and was nearly as tall.

There was also a drawing labeled "outside the front door." In the foreground, two goats grazed on low grass beside a dirt road. A pair of women walked beyond the goats. One of them wore a long dark dress that went from the top of the head down to the ground, completely covering her face. The other one was dressed like Amira's mom, with a long dress, a heavy coat, and a head

poems myself, but I know one that was in a picture book my mom used to read to me at bedtime when I was little.

The rain is falling all around,
it falls on field and tree.
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

It's good, don't you think?
It's by a man named Robert
Louis Stevenson. He also wrote
adventure books, but I haven't
read any of them yet. I'm okay
at reading, but I don't like
sitting around. Mostly I love
being outside. I have a new
fort I'm building in a fallen
tree in the woods behind my
house. I'll take a picture of
it with my phone and send it to
you with my next letter.

It's pretty hard to imagine

what it's like to live where you
are, but the pictures helped. I've
also looked on the Internet at
a lot of photos of your country.
And now I pay attention to all
the news stories on TV about
Afghanistan. There's still shooting
and bombs and stuff. But I'm
glad it's been safe in your village
for a long time now. I hope it
stays that way. And not just where
you are, but everywhere. Here's
another one of your words I'm
trying to learn how to write:

ak

I really love the shape
of this word in Dari. It looks
more interesting than it does in
English: peace.

You asked about the picture
of me climbing. That thing I'm

after she got her first reply, Abby made a copy of Amir's letter and hung it on the bulletin board. When the letter from Afghanistan was in place, she also began hanging up copies of the pictures that the girl's brother had made.

And that's when three or four kids came to see what she was doing, all of them girls.

Abby's friend Mariah said, "Your pen pal made these pictures? Himself?"

"No," said Abby as she stapled the third one in place. "Her brother's the artist."

Mariah leaned in closer, looking at the family portrait. "And that's the brother, the guy on the end?"

Abby nodded. "Right. Sadeed."

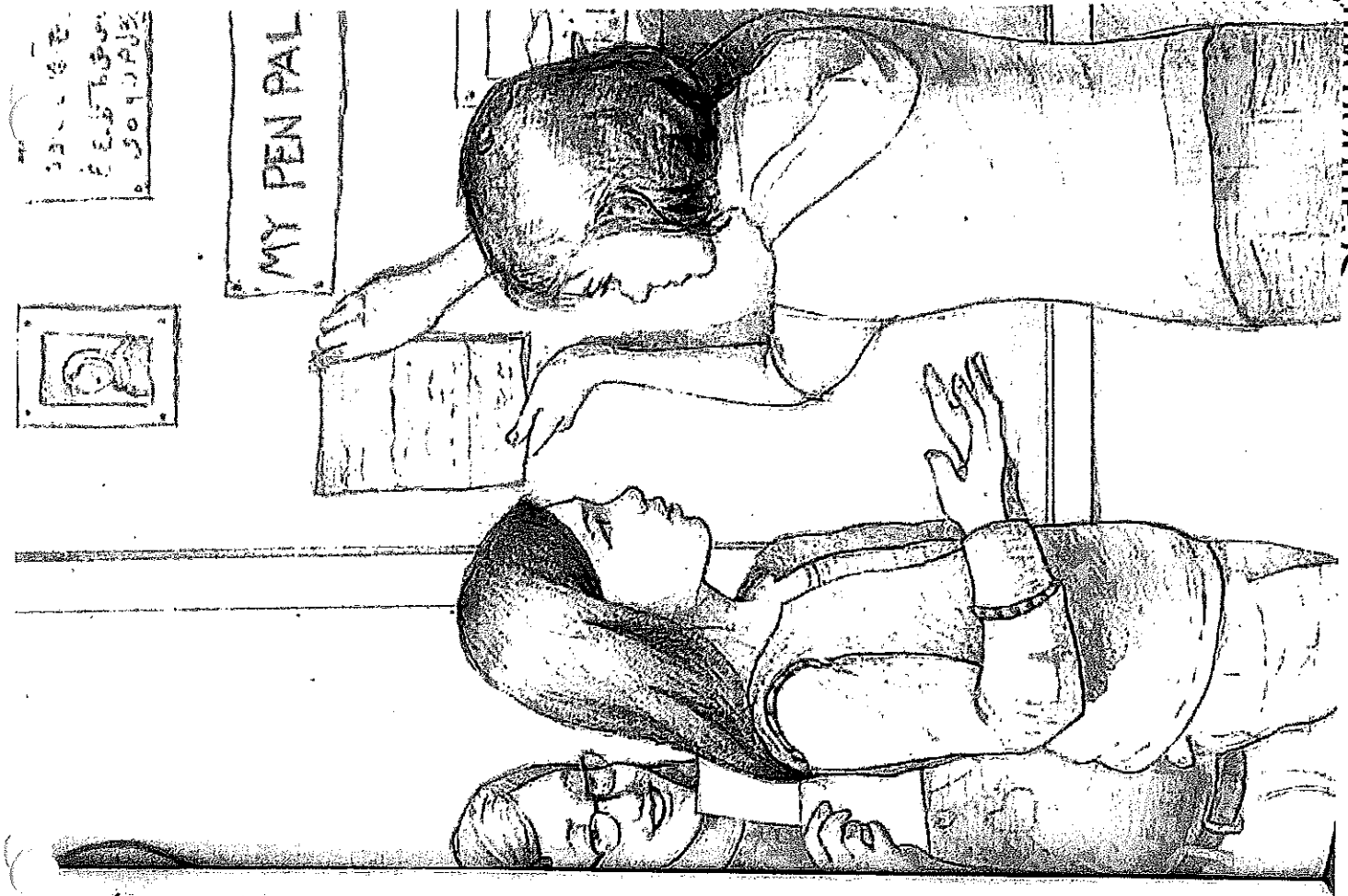
Mariah said, "Don't you think he's *cute*?"

Abby shrugged. "Yeah, I guess so."

McKenna gasped. "Eew—did you read this part in her letter where she tells about the rocket that blew up and *killed* people? Right across the street from her house?"

That information got a handful of boys up out of their chairs. And suddenly more than a dozen kids were checking out Abby's pen pal bulletin board.

"So, did you write her back yet?" Mariah asked.



also had two letters that needed to be answered. Then she thought, Yeah, but at least this'll be a whole other letter. I can put on my bulletin board. Which gets me that much closer to being done with this thing.

So she tore open the second envelope, pulled out the paper, and began to read.

DEAR ABBY, AMIRA'S FRIENDS IN AMERICA,

I AM SADEED, AMIRA'S BROTHER. AND I WRITE TO YOU BECAUSE I MUST TELL YOU THE TRUTH. THE TRUTH THAT AMIRA IS NOT REALLY WRITING LETTERS TO YOU, NOT ON HER OWN. I AM HELPING HER. SHE SPEAKS HER LETTER OUT LOUD TO ME, AND I COPY DOWN HER WORDS IN DASH. THEN I AM THE ONE WHO WRITES THE LETTER IN ENGLISH. AND SHE SIGNS HER NAME ON THE PAPER WHEN I AM FINISHED. AND I HAVE TO TELL YOU ALSO THAT I HAVE ADDED WORDS OF MY OWN TO WHAT AMIRA HAS SPOKEN.

SO IT IS LIKE WE ARE BOTH WRITING TO YOU. AND THE LETTERS ARE EVEN MORE FROM ME THAN FROM MY SISTER. EXCEPT FOR THE LETTER YOU JUST GOT FROM HER. THAT ONE IS ALMOST EXACTLY AS SHE SAID IT OUT LOUD

TO ME. BECAUSE I KNEW THIS ONE TIME I WOULD BE WRITING YOU THIS LETTER IN MY OWN WORDS, SIGNED WITH MY OWN NAME. SO I DID NOT NEED TO ADD ANYTHING TO AMIRA'S LETTER THIS TIME.

HERE IN OUR VILLAGE, IT IS CONSERVATIVE. THAT IS A WORD I KNOW. IT MEANS THAT EVERYONE IS STAYING CLOSE TO THE TRADITIONS, TO THE OLD WAYS, AND ESPECIALLY THE RULES OF OUR RELIGION. AND HERE IT IS BELIEVED BY MOST OF THE MEN WHO RUN THE VILLAGE THAT A BOY OF MY AGE SHOULD NOT BE WRITING LETTERS TO A GIRL OF YOUR AGE. SO WHEN YOUR FIRST LETTER CAME TO OUR SCHOOL, MY TEACHER GAVE AMIRA THE JOB OF WRITING BACK TO YOU, BECAUSE THAT IS THE PROPER WAY.

BUT I WAS ALSO GIVEN A JOB. I WAS TOLD TO BE SURE MY SISTER'S LETTERS MAKE SENSE. BECAUSE IF SHE HAD BEEN WRITING TO YOU ALL BY HERSELF, THE LETTERS WOULD BE BAD. OR HARDER TO READ. AND YOU MIGHT THINK THE CHILDREN HERE ARE BAD WRITERS. WHICH IS NOT TRUE. AMIRA IS REALLY QUITE BRIGHT. BUT ENGLISH IS HARD FOR HER, AND

FOR ME ALSO. BUT I HAVE WORKED AT IT LONGER AND MUCH MORE THAN SHE HAS. I AM THE BEST STUDENT IN OUR SCHOOL AT SPEAKING AND WRITING ENGLISH. AND I DO NOT MEAN TO BOAST, SAYING THIS. IT IS JUST TO EXPLAIN. AND I THINK I HAVE GOTTEN BETTER AT ENGLISH MOSTLY BY READING BOOKS.

DID YOU EVER READ A BOOK CALLED FROG AND TOAD ARE FRIENDS? IT IS A SMALL

BOOK, ONE OF THE FIRST AMERICAN BOOKS MY TEACHER EVER LET ME READ. IT IS SIMPLE.

BUT VERY TRUE IN THE WAY OF FRIENDS PUTTING UP WITH EACH OTHER. I HAVE A FRIEND, MUJIB, WHO NEEDS A LOT OF PUTTING UP WITH. HE IS TOAD, AND I AM MORE LIKE FROG. I WOULD READ A MILLION BOOKS IN ENGLISH. BUT MY TEACHER HAS ONLY A SMALL BOXFUL, AND I HAVE ALREADY READ MOST OF THEM.

I WANTED YOU ALSO TO KNOW I AM ENJOYING YOUR THOUGHTS IN YOUR LAST LETTER. AND I THINK IT IS A FINE THING THAT YOU ARE LEARNING TO WRITE WORDS IN DARI-AMIRA LOVES THAT TOO, BUT SHE FORGOT TO TELL YOU SO IN HER NEW LETTER.

AND IT IS INTERESTING THAT YOU LIKE TO ICE OUT OF BOOKS. I ENJOY THAT ALSO, UNLESS IT IS TOO COLD. OR TOO HOT.

BUT I DO NOT SHARE YOUR LOVE OF CLIMBING ON ROCKS. MY UNCLE ONCE WORKED FOR SOME ENGLISHMEN WHO WENT TO CLIMB A TALL MOUNTAIN IN PAKISTAN. ONE OF THE MEN DIED IN A STORM. ANOTHER HAD BOTH HIS FEET CUT OFF AFTER THEY FROZE HARD AS IRON.

MY UNCLE SAYS THOSE CLIMBING MEN ARE CREEPY.

I DO NOT THINK THAT. BUT THEY MUST BE DIFFERENT FROM THE MEN I KNOW IN MY VILLAGE. BECAUSE A MAN WHO NEEDS TO MAKE A LIVING AND CARE FOR HIS FAMILY CANNOT THINK ABOUT CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN. IN MY VILLAGE, IT IS ENOUGH TO NOT BE KILLED BY THE ICE AND SNOW AND WINDS OF THESE MOUNTAINS, AND TO GROW FOOD AND ANIMALS IN THE SHADOW OF THEM. THE MOUNTAINS LOOK BEAUTIFUL, BUT WE HAVE TO FIGHT WITH THEM, JUST TO LIVE HERE.

AND WHEN I SEE A GREEN FIELD LIKE THE ONE IN THE PICTURE YOU SENT, I DO NOT THINK IT IS FLAT AND BORING THERE. ONE

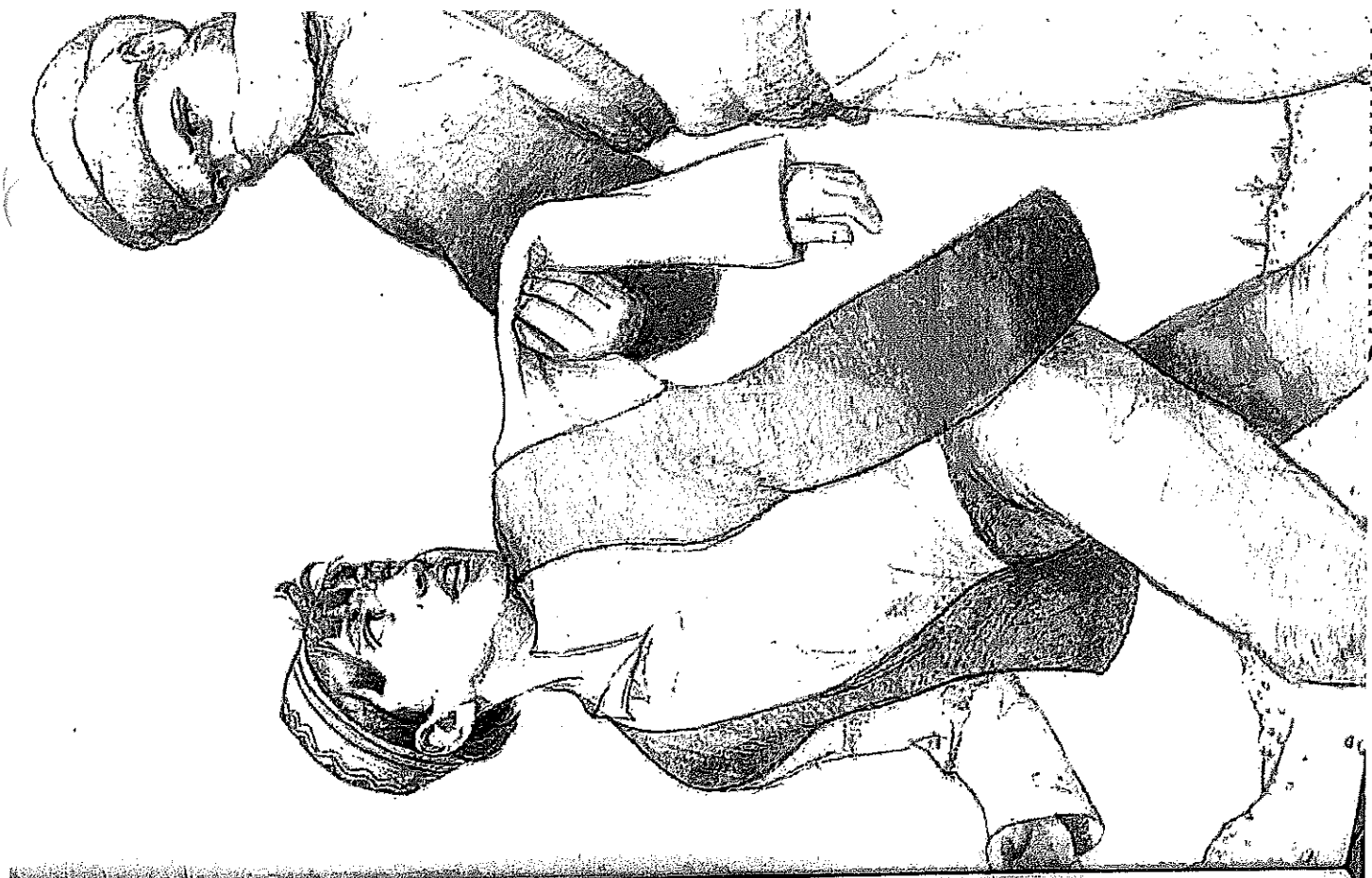
and the rocky land rose to a low ridge and then dropped away. He walked until he reached a path he knew, a shortcut that ran downhill, across a brook, then up to the ridge again close to home.

A week of bright, sunny days had melted a lot of the snow, so the path was mostly clear. He began to trot because he wanted to get home and finish reading the letter—before Amira showed up and claimed it.

Sadeed was headed downhill on the rocky path at a good clip when, just before he reached the brook, a stocky man stepped from behind an outcrop, blocked his way, then caught him by the arm before he could change direction.

"Ho there, speedy one. Where are you going in such a hurry?"

He spoke in Pashto, a language used by a lot of Afghans. His voice was deep and thick, and he had a firm grip on Sadeed's arm. His turban dropped down to the middle of his forehead, and his neck scarf was pulled up to cover his chin and nose. Only the eyes showed, shining hard and dark, framed by the upper edges of the man's beard. He had a big leather rucksack slung over one shoulder, and immediately Sadeed realized it was large enough to be hiding a rifle.



Trying not to show his fear, Sadeed thought fast. And then he replied, also speaking Pashto, "I've just come from the house of Akbar Khan. He does business with my father, Zakir Bayat. And I'm late for work at my father's shop. He's expecting me."

All these things were true, and anyone from within a hundred kilometers would respect the name of Akbar Khan. But the man kept hold of his arm.

"Well then," he said with a laugh, "they will both be happy that I've caught you, because I was sure you were going to trip and fall into that brook. Might have broken your neck. Or worse. And I'm sure both those fine gentlemen would want you to show some gratitude to the man who just saved you. Perhaps give him some food. Even a little money." Using his free hand, he began to pat Sadeed's pockets. "What's this?"

And before Sadeed could pull back, the man plucked the letter out of his vest.

"Alha, a letter," he said, a smile in his voice. "Heavy. Must be important."

As he turned the envelope over, his eyes flashed and his fingers dug into Sadeed's arm like a steel trap.

He cursed, then made a sound, as if he were spitting. "*The flag of America?* You have business with the people who pollute our land and murder us? Do you *spy* for them? In Helmand a boy like you was hanged by the neck for having American money in his pocket. Did you know that? And my friends would do the same to you. We should go visit them, you and this *flag*."

"It's—it's not my letter," Sadeed stammered. "It's to a girl—look."

The man squinted at the envelope, and Sadeed realized instantly that he couldn't read English. So he quickly pointed at the address and said, "See, it's to a girl named Amira."

The man nodded as if he had read it. "And who is Amira?"

"Just a girl," Sadeed said. "And the letter came from some other girl no one knows . . . and . . . and that girl wrote to Amira first. At school."

The man made the spitting sound again. "Girls in this village go to school? Just like in *America!* Shameful!" And he let go of Sadeed's arm, quickly ripped the letter once, then twice again, and threw the pieces to the ground.

Sadeed took off like a rabbit. He dodged the man's grasp, leaped the brook, and was halfway up

the little hill before the last bits of torn paper had fluttered to the ground.

"That's right—run, boy," the man called. "And tell this Amira and the other girls to stay at home where they should. And tell that foreign girl her letters are not welcome here."

Sadeed looked back over his shoulder. The man had vanished—but a moment later he saw his turban bobbing among the rocks as he picked his way along the path that followed the stream up into the mountains.

Getting a fix on the man's location, Sadeed did a quick mental calculation. He turned, took a deep breath, and dashed down the hill. He jumped the brook, stooped down, picked up every scrap of paper, and then grabbed the ripped plastic bag of soil. He glanced up—the man was still making his way uphill.

He wanted to yell something brave and defiant, but instantly thought better of it. Stuffing everything into a pocket, he jumped the brook for the third time and ran back up the slope. At the first fork in the path, he took a sharp right. And in three minutes he was back among the houses of the village, and in four minutes he was back on the main road.

Only then did his heartbeats begin to slow.

His mouth was dry, and his breath came in rough gasps, so much so that an old woman beside a doorway said, "Child, do you need water?"

Sadeed nodded and stood panting on her porch while she ducked inside and came back out with a large blue mug. He drained it, said, "Thank you, Mother," and then hurried along toward home.

It was a lot to think about—the way the man looked, the feel of that grip on his arm, the way he talked, and how he hated America. He wasn't from around here, Sadeed knew that much.

And Sadeed was furious with himself, to have hidden behind his sister's name on the letter—that way. *I should have told that guy that she had the right to go to school like anyone else. I should have kicked and punched and fought like a leopard. I should have pushed that man backward into the brook, then jumped onto him and tied him up with his own turban. And then delivered him to Akbar Khan, marching him right up the middle of the main road.*

Still, it was good to have gotten away. And to have gotten Abby's letter back too. *So really, the victory belongs to me, he thought. That man walked away with nothing!*

He got home, let himself in, and poured himself a glass of water from the large plastic jug in

DECISIONS

the kitchen. Then another one. And as he wiped his mouth, Amira came bursting into the room.

"My letter," she demanded, holding out her hand. "Give it here."

Sadeed shook his head. "I have to go talk to Mahmood Jafari. Something happened, something bad. And you have to walk with me back to where Mother is. Right now."

Amira stamped her foot. "No! I want my letter, and I want it right now!"

Sadeed reached in his pocket and pulled out the crumpled mass of letter and envelope and plastic bag. "Fine, here it is. This is your letter. Happy now?"

Amira's mouth fell open. Then her eyes narrowed and she pressed her lips together. "Who did that?" she hissed.

"A bully, that's who," said Sadeed. "And that's all I'm saying about it. I have to go and talk to the teacher. So out the door with you. Now. And no more questions."

And as they walked the stretch of road to the house where their mother worked with her sewing group, Sadeed kept his arm across Amira's shoulders the whole way.

Abulky man, you say?" Sadeed nodded at his teacher. "Yes, but not old. About your age, I think. And strong. I've never seen him before."

Mahmood stood just outside the doorway of the school as the older boys and girls arrived for the afternoon session.

"And wearing a turban? Was it . . . a color?"

Sadeed knew what Mahmood was asking. He wanted to know if the man had been wearing a black turban. Because that's what some of the Taliban fighters wore. He shook his head. "No. White, or pale gray. And he went up into the hills, the trail beside the brook. He got very angry when he saw the stamps on the

letter, the flags. And he spat and cursed America. And he said none of the girls should be going to school."

"Keep your voice lower, please," said the teacher, nodding to greet the last students arriving for the afternoon class—two girls. "I have to stay here, so you must go and ask for Akbar Khan at his home. Speak only to him, Sadeed, and tell him I sent you. And tell him what you told me. All right?"

"Yes, sir," Sadeed said.

"And tell this to no one else. And then go directly home."

"But, sir," Sadeed said, "I'm expected at my father's shop. To work."

"Ah, of course. And that will be fine. But first, find Akbar Khan."

Sadeed nodded and turned to go.

"And Sadeed?"

He turned back to his teacher.

Mahmoud smiled. "You did well."

He nodded. "Thank you, sir."

The teacher went inside, and Sadeed walked briskly through the school yard, his chin held high, off to speak with Akbar Khan.

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Sadeed obeyed Mahmood's order, and after talking with the headman, he told no one else about the incident by the brook.

But someone else must have spread the word, because by nightfall in Bahar-Lan, it was the talk at every dinner table in the village.

And it was the topic of discussion at the home of Akbar Khan as well. There had been only one serving of tea, but the seven men seated around the low table had already gotten down to business.

"I don't like to say I told you so," said Hassan, stroking his chin. "But I did. This letter-writing business was a bad idea from the start."

Mahmood was in no mood to be polite. "That's not the point. A stranger has threatened one of our village boys, plus all the girls who attend school. And for all we know, he has a band of fighters camped nearby. The issue is simple—the safety of the schoolchildren."

"Which would *not* be an issue," Hassan snapped, "if there had been no letters to and from America!"

Akbar Khan raised a hand. "Gentlemen, please—courtesy. I already notified the district police by radiophone, and they will make a careful patrol of the area in the next week or so. I suspect this is

Mrs. Beckland held up her hand. "The letter to the principal said that this student was telling the parent about your project, and about the letters from Afghanistan and about the bulletin board. And the parent and the student looked up some information about Afghanistan on the Internet together. When they saw the Afghan flag, they wanted to understand the words that are written on the flag. They learned that the words are actually a prayer that's an important part of the Islamic religion. And this parent told the principal that since the child knows what the words say now, the words should not be on display in a public school classroom because that prayer promotes one particular religion. There's also a picture of a mosque on the flag. And all this makes the student uncomfortable." And also the parent. So the principal asked me to take down the flag. And that's the whole story."

After a moment Abby asked, "Which student?"
"Only the principal knows. She decided it would be best that way."

Abby turned and looked at the bulletin board. The missing flag left a giant hole near the top of the display.

Abby wanted to say something like, "Didn't

you argue with the principal? Didn't you tell her that the flag is only part of a report?"

But saying that would probably just make her teacher feel bad.

And, to be honest, Abby knew that the only reason she had put the flag there in the first place was because it took up a lot of space.

That was then.

Now she sort of felt like she ought to stand up for Amira. And Sadeed.

Still, it was only a flag. And she didn't want Mrs. Beckland to get in trouble.

So Abby turned back and smiled. "Well," she said, "it's no big deal. I guess I should just put up something else."

Mrs. Beckland nodded. "Maybe a picture of a village. Or the Hindu Kush mountains. You can choose almost anything."

"Except the Afghan flag," Abby said.

"Right," said her teacher. "Except the flag."

MOSTLY SADEED

About two weeks later, Amira's next letter was waiting for Abby when she got home from school.

Dear Abby,

I am sad to tell you this. I am not able to send more letters to you now. My teacher says so. And he asks for you please to not write back to me, and my parents also ask this. It is because of some people here who do not like America.

But I like America, and so does my family. Many others too. And I like you also.

I am happy you wrote to me. And glad. I liked all the letters. And I am hoping to when we can send more.

Please be healthy, and give my good wishes to your family.

Your friend,

Amira

Abby read the letter once quickly, and then again. This one was definitely from Amira herself—it wasn't even Sadeed's handwriting.

She stood there at her kitchen counter, trying to understand: This girl's teacher wanted them to stop writing letters? And her parents? And who were these people who didn't like America?

She couldn't quite get her mind around it. There wasn't enough explanation.

But she didn't worry too much about it. Because she was sure there would be a second letter, like before. From Sadeed. Probably tomorrow, or the next day.

And he'd explain the whole thing. And even if his teacher said they had to stop the letters, they could probably figure out a way to keep sending them to each other. Of course, only if he wanted to. Either way was fine with her. Because, really, it was just a school project.

So Abby made a copy of the letter and the envelope, and she took them to school the next day and put them up on the bulletin board.

And she waited to see if anyone would notice. Mrs. Beckland was the first.

"Abby, I'm so sorry about that letter from Amira, that she can't write to you anymore. But I think I understand. I've been hearing a lot on the news about anti-American feelings in that part of the world. So it's probably a question of safety for Amira and her family." She paused a moment and then said, "Sort of hard to imagine, isn't it?"

Mariah said something too.

"No more pen pal, huh? Good thing you got enough letters to get your grade. So that's cool."

No one else seemed to notice, just like no one else had noticed that the huge Afghan flag had been replaced by a picture of two old tribesmen sitting next to a road. And Abby wasn't offended or bothered about it, that no one else said any-

thing. Because after a day or two, even a really interesting bulletin board turns into wallpaper, and almost nobody sees it anymore.

Five or six days later, Abby stopped thinking there would be another letter. And after two weeks, she had pretty much stopped thinking about it altogether. Because it made her a little sad.

And Abby didn't think about climbing on the wall that much anymore. She had done a few of the easy routes to the top during gym classes in April, but then the days had started to get so warm. And the higher you climbed in the big gym, the hotter it got. So she hadn't tried the ledge route again. Too much work, and it wasn't any fun to get all sweated out during first period.

Besides, she had plenty of other things to do. The end of the year was coming up fast now, and the constant pressure of getting a B or better on every single test and quiz was starting to get to her. She had never realized how much hard work it took to get good grades. She had always thought that somehow kids like Jill Ackerman and Kendra Billings and some of the other honor roll students got good grades automatically, just because they were smart. Not true.

All the schoolwork had even kept her from

on Thursday was Field Day, almost like a carnival. It was supposed to be a fun week.

Plus, she really didn't want to dig into the whole Afghanistan thing again. She had kind of let it all go, stopped thinking about it. About the letters. About everything.

But the report couldn't be avoided. It was part of the deal, if she wanted to go on to seventh grade. And she did.

So about ten fifteen on Wednesday morning, she took her index cards and a few display items and went to the front of the room and stood next to Mrs. Beckland's desk.

And after the teacher got the room quiet, Abby started her report.

"Parts of Afghanistan are very modern. In a lot of towns they get satellite TV and Internet. But in most of the country, there's hardly even electricity or running water. So life for most kids there is a lot different than it is for kids here.

And Afghanistan is really ancient. The capital city of Kabul has been

there for more than three thousand five hundred years—which is about eleven times longer than Washington, D.C., has been a city."

As Abby got through the first index card, she could see that the kids were not into this at all, not that she blamed them. She didn't want to be stuck in a hot, stuffy classroom any more than they did.

So Abby flipped ahead a couple of cards.

"Afghan culture is still really connected to its past. For example, the Afghan national sport is called Buzkashi. And it's played by two teams of men on horseback. And there's a dead goat, and they cut its head off, and then stuff sand down into its guts to make it heavy.

One way to play the game starts with the dead goat on the ground. The players all try to grab the goat, and then keep control of it and carry it around a post at one end of this

huge field, and then get it all the way back and into their goal at the other end. And everyone is always fighting and trying to get the dead goat. And the game can go on for days, and they fight each other with whips and other weapons, and sometimes players get killed. And if you don't believe me, look on the Internet. It's pretty crazy."

That got the kids' attention, but Abby decided to cut to the end of her report anyway, the part about the letters. And after reading the first few sentences, she stopped looking at her notes.

"If you looked at my bulletin board, you saw the letters I sent and the ones I got back, so I'm not going to tell much about that. But I'm supposed to tell about what I learned. From the experience."

"And I have to be honest. I don't think I learned that much. I learned that the kids there are mostly like us, with the same kinds of feelings and everything. And that wasn't a surprise. Because everybody talks all the time about how people everywhere are pretty much the same. And I think that's true."

"And really, I decided to write to a school in Afghanistan for sort of a stupid reason—because there are big mountains there, and I'm kind of into rock climbing. So I thought it would be fun to write to kids there, and they could tell me what it was like to have these awesome mountains all around them."

"Turns out they don't think the mountains are that great. More like a problem. They have avalanches, they can cause floods, they catch all the rain way up high, which makes a lot of the land down below too dry for farming. And the mountains make it really hard to get around, to go places. And to have wires for electricity. All kinds of problems. Plus, the mountains are perfect hiding places for bandits and terrorists."

She held up a large copy of the drawing of the family.

"This is Amira, the girl who wrote the letters. And this is her mom, Najia, and her dad, Zakir. And this is her big brother, Sadeed, and he's the one who drew this picture."

At this point, Abby paused. Because this would be the perfect moment to reveal the whole story of Sadeed, the part no one knew. About how he wrote her a secret letter. About how he was the

one who actually wrote most of the letters signed by Amira. About how he sent her a little mountain. And about how she sent him a spoonful of American soil. And how her last letter on the bulletin board was not the actual letter she sent, how she had left certain things out.

But she looked out at all the bored faces in front of her and said nothing. Because that part of the project? It was none of their business. And it wasn't part of the deal she had made with Mrs. Beckland, either. That part belonged only to her.

She said, "You might have seen that the last letter from Amira says that she had to stop writing to me, and I had to stop writing to her. Because there were people there who don't like America. She didn't exactly say so, but it was probably because it could be trouble for her or her family if certain people there knew she had an American friend. Because not everyone there in Afghanistan likes our country. So part of what I learned is that people are simple, but the stuff going on around them can get complicated. And even dangerous. And that's the end of my report."

She picked up the big copy of Sadeed's family portrait, stuck the index cards in her back pocket, and went to her desk.

Mrs. Beckland said, "That was very interesting, Abby. Does anyone have a question?"

No hands went up.

"Well then, let's use the next half hour or so to clean out lockers. Quietly. And then it will be lunchtime, and then there will be a thirty-three-minute after-lunch recess, and then all the fifth and sixth graders will go to the auditorium to see a movie. And tomorrow is Field Day. The weather's supposed to be hot, so dress comfortably, because after homeroom, we'll be outside almost the whole time until early dismissal at twenty-five after twelve. And if your locker is already clean, just stay at your desk and talk with your friends. Quietly."

Abby had emptied her locker on Tuesday, so she stayed at her seat. But after a minute or two, she got up and went to the back of the room.

Piece by piece, she took the personal information off the bulletin board and then sorted all the paper into the recycling bins.

The project was finished.

"Dear Abby,

A teacher from the village of Bahar-Ian stopped in at my office at the Ministry of Education, and he asked me to send this to you. It's from one of his students.

Yours truly,
Maleeha Tahar"

Abby unfolded the sheet of paper and began to read, but not out loud. Because she knew the handwriting. It was from Sadeed.

Dear Abby,

I AM SORRY I WAS NOT ABLE TO WRITE SOONER, BUT WE HAD A BAD TIME IN MY VILLAGE. A DAY BEFORE AMMAH WROTE TO YOU IN APRIL, A MAN BECAME ANGRY WITH ME WHEN HE SAW THE FLAG ON YOUR LAST LETTER. AND HE MADE THREATS.

AND THAT IS WHY IT WAS DECIDED THE LETTERS SHOULD END.

THE PROVINCIAL POLICE CAME, AND THERE WAS FIGHTING IN THE MOUNTAINS AROUND US.

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NO ONE HERE HAS BEEN HURT, THANK GOD. BUT STILL, WE MAY NOT WRITE LETTERS.

MY TEACHER WAS GOING TO KABUL ON BUSINESS, AND I ASKED HIM TO SEND MY OWN LAST LETTER TO YOU. HE WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN I ASKED. HE GUESSED THAT I HAD WRITTEN TO YOU BEFORE, BECAUSE OF WHEN YOU TALKED OF FRAGS AND TOAD IN YOUR LAST LETTER. IT SEEMED TOO GREAT A CHANCE TO HIM, THAT WE SHOULD BOTH LIKE THAT ONE BOOK.

I HAVE NEWS YOU WILL LIKE. MY UNCLE ASIF HAS SOME STRONG MOUNTAIN ROPE FROM HIS TIME WORKING IN PAKISTAN. AND HE HAS GIVEN IT TO ME FOR MY TWELFTH BIRTHDAY.

AND ON A HOLIDAY AFTERNOON HE TOOK ME TO A ROCKY PLACE NEAR OUR HOUSE WHERE THE LAND FALLS AWAY. HE SHOWED ME HOW TO MAKE TWO LOOPS AT THE END OF THE ROPE. FOR MY LEGS. AND THEN ANOTHER LOOP FOR AROUND MY MIDDLE. AND WHEN I STEPPED INTO IT, IT WAS LIKE WHAT YOU HAD ON IN THE FIRST PICTURE YOU SENT. AND THEN MY UNCLE TOOK THE ROPE AROUND HIS BACK, AND TOLD ME TO GO OVER THE EDGE. IT WAS TEN METERS.

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