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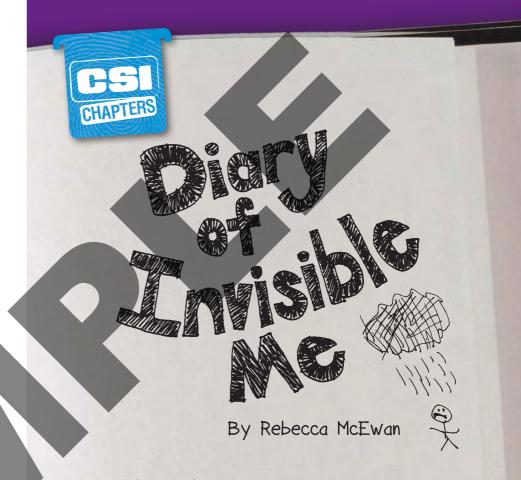
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CHAPTER 1 OCTOBER

October 3

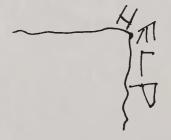
It happened again. After six hours of not one single person in the entire school saying a word to me, I thought I'd just about survived another day. Then, on my way to class I felt it. Someone — well, yeah we all know who it was — poured soda down my back. Nothing like sitting in class in wet jeans to make you feel like a winner, is there?

Which is worse? Being ignored all day, or having people yell names at you behind your back? I hate this school. I hate everyone in it. I hate my life.

October 10

Every day of my life is worse than the one before. Why does Josh have a million friends and I have no one? Why does everyone laugh when his goons follow me around and threaten me? He isn't an athlete. He isn't the smartest guy in school. He just has the biggest mouth — and everyone does exactly what he says.

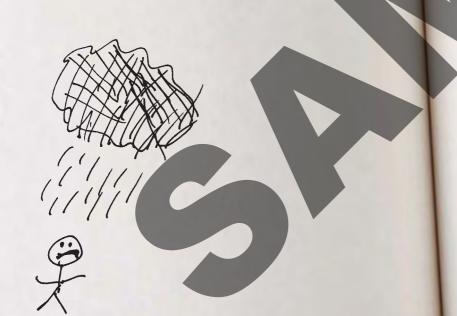
Today, someone used a straw to blow chocolate milk through the vents of my locker. Now everything I own is brown and smells like rancid milk.



October 18

I can't concentrate. I got a D on my last test. If I can't even pass a test anymore, why bother? I've lived here for two years, and it never gets any better. I will never have friends. I will never have a day when I'm not the butt of someone's joke.

I think I'm done.



Mr. A's note

A MAN CAN'T RIDE YOUR BACK UNLESS IT'S BENT. -MARTIN WITHER KING

October 22

Weird. Today was the last straw. After days of hearing names screamed at me, I was packing up my locker. I don't know what I planned to do, but I was never going back. No one would notice that I wasn't there.

Then Mr. Alexander, the new science teacher, walked over. He said he needs my help in the school greenhouse three days a week during lunch... and there's extra credit in it for me to bring my science grade up.

He took my backpack and books and said he'd get them cleaned up if I'd scrub out the locker. After that he slapped a sticky note up on my stinking, stupid locker door. It said, "A man can't ride your back unless it's bent." — Martin Luther King Jr.

He wants me to meet him Monday morning to get my stuff back and find out about the extra credit.

I don't know.