

One Week, Eleven Years

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DINING HALL - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Buses roll up to a dining hall. Children, parents, grandparents, and teenage counselors are all shuffling along. 2009 Top 100 songs blasting and counselors screaming, the kids are welcomed one by one.

MAREN V. O.

I don't think I've ever felt so stupid in my entire eleven years on this earth. A camp for kids with epilepsy? Really?

MAREN, a short and sheepish girl, steps out of LISA's car, Lisa not far behind. WILLIAM, a tall, beefy man wearing a tutu, greets them.

WILLIAM

Hey there, kiddo! What's your name?

Maren hides behind Lisa. Lisa pushes Maren out on front. Maren's camp ID has the number "6" written on it.

LISA

Oh, come on now.

MAREN

I'm Maren.

William takes Maren by the shoulders and ushers her along the path into the dining hall along the sidewalk path, screaming counselors on either side of them.

WILLIAM

This is Maren, in cabin 6!

The chorus of screams is enough to shake the old building. The wood creaks as the door is pushed open.

INT. DINING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Inside looks much bigger and more updated than outside. The concrete floors, tall ceilings, and general chatter of the place allows the noise to blend into itself. A woman beckons Lisa over.

KRISTIN

Ma'am, can I get you to sign a few papers, please?

LISA
Ah, yes. Maren, run along now.

WILLIAM
(to Lisa)
No worries!
(to Maren)
C'mon! I'll introduce you to your
counselors and cabin-mates! You'll
love them.

Maren rolls her eyes.

MAREN
(unimpressed)
I guess.

MAREN V. O.
Just what was my doctor thinking,
sending me here?!

INT. DINING HALL TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

MAREN V. O.
And my parents agreed to it?
Suuuuure, 'let's just drop off our
kid in the middle of nowhere. Oh,
but you can't go to your friends
house because you may have a
seizure!' Yeah, right.

She trudges behind William. Some kids and adults alike are
wheelchair-bound, others wear helmets.

WILLIAM
Hey, Alex! You're in charge of
Cabin 6 this year, right?

ALEX, a chipper and fit teenage girl, smiles as her eyes dart
from William to Maren.

ALEX
I am! I'm Alex, nice to meet you!
We're gonna have a blast!

Alex holds out her hand for Maren to shake, but it is not
accepted.

MAREN
Hey.

LISA O. S.
Maren, I'm leaving!

Maren runs over to Lisa.

MAREN

Mom, you can't leave me here with these crazy people.

LISA

You haven't given it a fair shot yet, sweetheart. It's just a week. Try it, okay?

Alex comes to take Maren back to the group of girls. William goes back outside.

ALEX

Maren, come on! Let's go see the rest of the group!

Maren rolls her eyes again.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DINING HALL - MONDAY AFTERNOON

The sweaty group of girls finally manage to eat. Maren pokes at her food, disengaged.

ALEX

Okay, guys! Let's go around and tell me about the horse that you rode! Personally, I love Texas!

CAMPER #1

I rode Bugger! He was silly.

CAMPER #2

I rode Bullet. He was way faster than I thought he'd be!

ASHLEY, a bubbly girl, raises her hand.

ASHLEY

I rode Alexander!

Alex perks up when she hears part of her name.

ALEX

Neigh!

The girls share a laugh, except Maren.

ALEX (CONT'D)
What about you, Maren?

MAREN
I didn't. I can't do things like
that.

ALEX
Why not?

Maren puts her fork down with such force that it bounces away
from her tray.

MAREN
I have a disability, okay?!

ALEX
That doesn't mean you couldn't have
ridden, if you didn't want to. This
whole camp is built for people with
disabilities!

JAMES, a sweet, soft-spoken boy with a helmet on, comes over,
fork in hand.

JAMES
E-excuse me, you dropped this.

After an awkward pause, Maren takes the fork.

MAREN
Why do you wear a helmet?

The cringe is almost palpable.

JAMES
It's... for my seizures. I'm afraid
of hitting my head.

ALEX
Maren, that was really rude! I'll
grab another fork. You should go
back to your table, kiddo. And
thanks again for bringing back her
fork!

MAREN
Whatever, I'm not hungry anyway.
You all seem to have eaten, though.
Can we go back to the cabin now?

ALEX

The rest of you can. Maren, you're gonna stay here with me for a minute.

Alex looks around to see if anyone else is near. She dips her voice down whenever anyone is walking particularly close to the two of them.

MAREN

Why did you want me here?

ALEX

Because the way you have been acting this whole time is crazy rude. I know there's a sweet girl underneath all that, and I wanna meet her. You just gotta let me.

James gets up and dumps his empty tray.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You can start right now. Go thank our little buddy for giving you back your fork.

INT. DINING HALL DISHWASHING STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Maren looks back at Alex, quivering. Alex gives her a thumbs up and a smile.

MAREN

Hey.

JAMES

Ah, you startled me! What's up?

MAREN

Thanks. Uh, for the fork. I guess I shouldn't have been so-

The world stops as the cracking of James's helmet hits the solid concrete floor. James convulses for what feels like an eternity.

ALEX

Hey, let's go back to the cabin now!

Alex needs to walk over and pull Maren away from the scene.

MONTAGE

Days pass by on a calendar. The other girls laugh, dance, and play together, but Maren isolates herself.

END OF MONTAGE

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DINING HALL TABLE - THURSDAY EVENING

The group of girls settle in with their trays. As usual, they're all happy and cheerful, except Maren. The Jonas Brothers's "Burnin' Up" plays in the background. Maren slams her tray down.

MAREN

God, I hate this song!

Ashley takes a deep breath before turning to Maren, standing up from her chair. Maren follows suit.

ASHLEY

You just don't get it, do you?!

MAREN

Get what?! What do you know?!

Alex and others try to intervene to no avail.

ASHLEY

I get that you're angry. We've all been there. We've all been scared, we've all had and seen seizures too. That's what this camp is for! You're choosing to stay angry about all of that, though.

MAREN

So what am I supposed to do?! Pretend that epilepsy hasn't destroyed my life?! I just don't get how you can go around pretending to be happy all the time!

ASHLEY

It's a choice we make.

Maren takes a moment.

MAREN

What? You just... choose to be happy? It's that easy?

ASHLEY

Well, no. But look around.

Campers and counselors of different skin tones, abilities, etc. Are going about their lives.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Everyone's having fun... except you. We can't ALL be crazy, can we?

Maren sits back down.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I know it's a hard choice. It didn't take just one day to choose to be happy. You gotta work at it.

MAREN

How?

ASHLEY

Let us show you. We're having smores tonight!

Ashley takes Maren by the hand, out of the dining hall.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DINING HALL TABLE - FRIDAY MORNING

Breakfast is over, and it's time for energizers! Maren still stays behind, but this time is looking out at the crowd. Alex notices and comes over to her and offers her hand.

ALEX

Last chance. Just try it, okay?

Maren hesitantly accepts.

INT. DINING HALL CAFETORIUM STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tiptoeing around the crowd, Alex paves the way just in time for R. Kelly's The World's Greatest to start. Many have done this before.

MAREN

I don't know any of the moves!

ALEX

Honestly, I don't either. Let's just follow everyone else's lead!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST

I'm that star up in the sky/
I'm that mountain peak up high/
Hey, I made it/

The camp counselors take advantage of the pause in the song to shout.

ALL COUNSELORS

Who are you?!

CAMPERS AND COUNSELORS

I'm the world's greatest!

Maren stops for a moment. Alex stops too.

ALEX

You okay, kiddo?

MAREN

I'm... The World's Greatest!

ALEX

Yes, you are! C'mon, let's finish this song out strong!

The song, as well as the energizers, end. Maren cries. Alex hugs her.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hey, now. No need to get all weepy. We still have a whole other day of fun stuff to do!

Maren wipes away her tears.

INT. DINING HALL CAFETORIUM STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

MAREN

Hey, can I talk to you for a sec?

ASHLEY

Sure, I'm out of the game anyway. What's up?

MAREN

Thanks. For calling me out. I had fun.

ASHLEY

(smiling)

I thought you would. I didn't like camp at first either, y'know.

MAREN

What?! No way!

ASHLEY

I know, now I wanna stay here forever!

ALEX O. S.

C'mon, you two! We have horses to ride, fish to catch, and rocks to climb!

The pair smile at each other before running off to be with their cabin.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DINING HALL TABLE - SATURDAY MORNING

Both campers and counselors fill the dining hall once more, but this time with suitcases, pillows, and sleeping bags. Campers reunite with their families. Some campers introduce their family to their counselors. No one in Maren's cabin has been picked up yet.

ALEX

Aaaaaaaaallrighty! I can't be the only one who thinks this week was awesome, can I?!

CAMPER 1

It was awesome!

CAMPER 2

I had so much fun!

Ashley reaches for Maren's hand.

ASHLEY

You had fun too, didn't you?

MAREN

Yeah! It wouldn't have been nearly as awesome if you weren't my cabin buddy. And Alex, too! And everyone!

(MORE)

MAREN (CONT'D)

You made my very first year here so much fun!

ALEX

In that case, there's only one thing left to do...

ALL OF CABIN 6

Sound off!

ASHLEY

One!

MAREN

Two!

The rest of their kids get their turn. Eventually, their families trickle in to pick them up, with tearful 'goodbyes' and more 'see you later's'.

ALEX

Aaaaaaaand that'll do it for cabin 6! What a super cool group of kiddos!

Maren's parents finally arrive. Maren introduces them to her cabin before taking off.

MAREN V. O.

I guess, in the end... It wasn't the camp that was stupid after all. It was my heart, how closed off it was to the rest of the world. That... really is the only kind of stupidity there is. At least, that's what my eleven years on this earth taught me.

FADE TO BLACK.