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Opening extract from

Homeroom Diaries

Written by

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Prologue
LET'S GET HAPPY

I'm starting over.

With this diary. With everything.

So welcome to it.

And if we're going to be friends—and I know we are—then I might as well be completely straight with you. I mean, what kind of person lies in her own diary? There's something I need to get out of the way before we get any further.

I started this diary as a patient at "Crazytown." That's what us locals call the psych ward at St. Augustine Community Hospital in Portland, Oregon, where I went for a ten-day "observation period" not too long ago.

Look, before you jump on the pity train and start thinking that this is going to be one of those god-awful books where the "big reveal" is that the girl goes nuts and a lot of her quirky, lovable friends in the asylum go berserk and try to kill her, let me just say that It Wasn't That Bad. People were actually really nice to me. In fact, everyone found me fascinating!

In other words, they observed me. And I observed me, too. It was all very observational. They were trying to make sure I wasn't going to hurt myself, and I was trying to figure out why

I had spent the last three months crying absolutely all the time and at the most embarrassing moments possible, like at my friend Katie's house while we were watching *Bridesmaids*. I mean, I completely lost it when Melissa McCarthy pooped in the sink. Katie started to get really concerned then because that is not like me. At all.

Does that sound sane to you?

But after ten days in Crazytown, I finally decided that I wasn't too much crazier than most kids I know. I was just furious—mostly at my mom, who disappeared one Tuesday afternoon without a word or even a good-bye kiss.



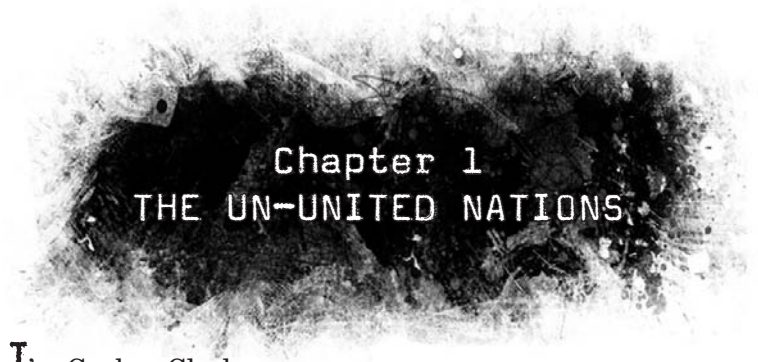
For a while, I worried that something horrible had happened to her. Then I worried that *nothing* had happened and she just decided to leave. I still don't know the answer, which can definitely make someone a certain kind of crazy (we're talking squirrel-stuck-in-a-storm-drain freak-out).

But I am feeling a lot better now. I'm working on Getting Happy. My best friend, Katie, has been doing a lot of reading on happiness lately—like, books on how to Get Happy. (Yes, there are instruction manuals.) Some of the books say you should challenge yourself and try new things. Writing in my diary is supposed to help, too.

Now that I have been certified "sound of mind," things are really looking up.




Hiya! Hugs and pink sparkly hearts and all that other stuff normal girls say!



Chapter 1
THE UN-UNITED NATIONS

I'm Cuckoo Clarke.

This story mostly takes place in a small town outside Portland called North Plains. There's a gun shop outside town that has an annual Back-to-School Sale. (I'm anti-gun.) Every August, our town hosts the World's Largest Elephant Garlic Festival. (I'm pro-garlic.) Most people around here wear Nikes, Portland's proudest. (I prefer Uggs, but I wouldn't say I'm definitely pro- or anti-footwear.)

And now, welcome to the main setting of this show: North Plains High School! It looks the way you're probably picturing it.

The hallways are full of the Usual Suspects: Jocks, Nerds, Twinkies, Otaku, Barbies, Goths, Eurotrash, Jailbait, Stoners, Joiners, Glommers, Delusionals, Haters, Wankstas, Thespians, Teachers, Terror Teachers, Zomboids, Robots, Gleeks, United Colors of Benettoners, Libertarians, Activists, Juvies, Baristas, Blahs, and—my best friends—the Freakshow.

That's right. We call ourselves the Freakshow. My best friend, Brainzilla (Katie), had this idea that we should give our little group a nickname that's *far worse* than anything any of the diseased minds in our school could dream up.


North Plains High School
OTAKU
Digger
dance hands
WANKSTA
HATERS
Gonna EAT!
Sheldon's
DO NOT inhale!
Mom, Dad, I'm a THESPIAN!
"Here we see several different species commingling in a hostile environment."
BARBIES
WANKSTAS
GLEEKS
ACTIVISTS
JOCKS
NERDS
ZOMBOIDS
TWINKIES
etc etc
"SCHOOL is FUN!"


The School is not responsible for lost or stolen arms.
LQ-FREE ZONE
Life-Size Barbie Doll
ON SALE NOW!
ZOMBOID
MUST... FIND... BRAIN..
GUZZLE GUZZLE
I'm starting a recycling program for paper clips!
I already recycle them- in my @ss.
TOO OLD SKOOL
COFFEE GET WRONG ANSWERS FASTER!
The ceiling is so beautiful, man!
TWINKIE
GOTH

Don't most high schools smell/look/sound the same?

Anyway, after the Freakshow was born, we actually took it a step further and gave ourselves insulting individual nicknames, too. I think we did a pretty good job with them:

Brainzilla is number one in our class. She's IB (that's International Baccalaureate) and determined to be the first person in her family to go to college. She has set her sights on Yale and has even already scheduled an interview—two years early. She works her butt off constantly and then goes home to take care of her three little brothers. Her parents work weird shifts, so her house is messy and complicated and basically covered in snot.

Hana named herself Eggroll ("Eggy" for short) after a couple of racist creeps asked her about her "dumplings." She has about a thousand interests, but sadly for her parents, school isn't one of them. Paul has zits everywhere that I know about, so "Zitsy" was an easy choice. He's deathly afraid he'll end up working in his father's plumbing business. Peter covers us with both the jocks and the Religious Right, so "Tebow" seemed like a good fit. He's also insanely good looking. Flatso, formerly Beverly, is overweight, but also flat breasted, which is rare and borderline tragic. She happens to be strong enough to rip your head off. Not that she would. She's the sweetest person I know.

And then there's me, Cuckoo.

So now you've met the whole gang. You'd think with the zillion other cliques, clubs, and posses in this place that we'd all fit in somewhere, but we don't. The truth is that this school is a mess of warring nations. Jocks hate Nerds. Barbies hate Goths. Blah blah blah. But my friends and I are planning to do something about that.

It's Monday, and it's raining, so the hallways are wet as we all drag in droplets on our shoes and clothes.

Digger Whitlock gives me a cheerful hello as he passes by my locker.

His family owns the local funeral parlor. They specialize in Vegas-glitz coffin interiors, and Digger's dad will—for an extra two hundred bucks—dress up as Elvis and sing "Love Me Tender" at your beloved's interment. So he's allowed to be a little messed up.

