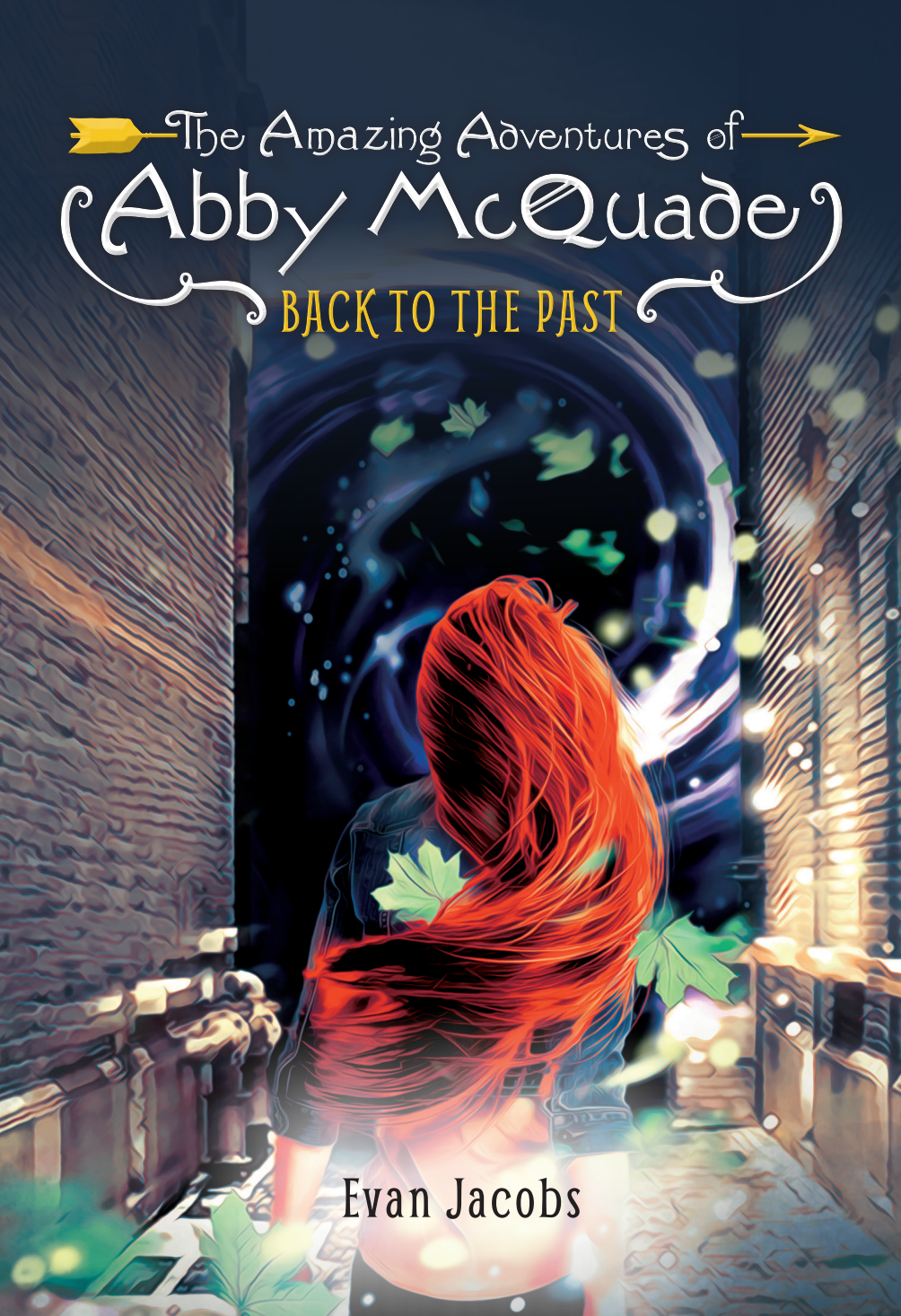

The Amazing Adventures of
Abby McQuade
BACK TO THE PAST
Evan Jacobs

CHAPTER 1

Over It

"Why does Mr. Burns test us every week?" Abby McQuade asked. "It's not like we need it."

Abby and Clara Erickson were walking home from school. Clara was Abby's best friend. The girls' backpacks were slung over their shoulders. They were heading to the mall for snacks.

"No," Clara said. "He's old. Mr. Burns probably took tests every week. You know, back in the day. He thinks we need them too."

Mr. Burns taught math. Overall, Abby and Clara thought the man was nice. He made math easy to understand. The teacher just

gave a lot of homework. And those weekly tests sucked.

Today was Thursday. Tomorrow was test day. So much for TGIF.

"Well," Abby said. She pushed her long red hair out of her face. "He doesn't need to test. We get it. Homework is fine. But tests? Once a month, please."

"I hate tests," Clara said. "They shouldn't have tests in school. Just lessons and homework. If you do the homework, you pass the class."

"That would be dope."

Some cars passed by as they walked.

Abby and Clara lived in Largo Bay. It was an old beach town. There were homes right on the beach. Behind those homes were the schools and more houses. Largo Bay Center was the main shopping center. There were some smaller strip malls too.

The girls attended Largo Bay Middle School. They were eighth graders. Clara was a star swimmer. She belonged to a private swim club. Her life was very scheduled. Abby was not athletic. But she loved adventures. Weird things always seemed to happen around her.

"Did Tim ask you to the dance?" Clara asked.

"No," Abby sighed. "I thought he would. He hasn't yet. I'm not sure he'll ask. The dude has no time to think about me. He's too into skateboarding."

Tim Cadena was an eighth grader too. When they first met, Abby and Tim didn't get along. Then Tim started being nice. Abby thought he was funny.

"At least he talks to you," Clara said. "Will doesn't even know I exist."

Will Chu was their one guy friend. He was

really into gadgets and computers. Will also played guitar. He was even in a punk band. Will wanted to become a scientist. He was a genius.

"That's not true," Abby said. "He always talks to you."

"Only when you're around," Clara said. "It's like he's scared of me. Whenever I call him, he barely says anything. He always finds an excuse to hang up."

"That means he's nervous," Abby said. "Because he likes you."

"He sure has a funny way of showing it."

"I loved Fridays in elementary school. Now I don't like them. Why do you think that is?" Abby asked. "It seemed more fun back then. There was no pressure. No thinking about boys. No parties. No dances. And no homework."

"All I think about now are tests," Clara said. "That's what Friday means to me. And

not just one test. Sometimes I have five! There's a test in every class. It sucks."

"Yeah."

They walked for a little bit.

"Why does the dance have to be this Saturday?" Abby asked. "That's all anybody will talk about tomorrow."

"So true," Clara said. "Who is going solo? Who is going with so and so? Blah, blah, blah."

"Maybe I'll fake being sick. Take Friday off. Wouldn't that be sweet?"

"We should do it."

"Oh, and I forgot. What is up with our parents' camping trip?" Abby asked.

Abby and Clara's parents were close. The girls had no siblings. Sometimes the two families went on vacation together. New York City. Maui. Denver.

"Who knows?" Clara asked. "It's lame. Why can't we go somewhere fun? Like Las Vegas."

"I know," Abby said, laughing. "Who does

not want to celebrate Thanksgiving? But why camping?"

"So true. How are we supposed to cook a turkey? Camping means stews. Yuck."

"Ew! Can you imagine how gross that's going to be?"

"And dirty?"

They giggled.

They walked toward Largo Bay Center. There were a lot of shops. The strip mall was always crowded.

"Let's get a drink." Abby pointed at the supermarket. It was the largest in the city. "I'm thirsty."

"I thought you were hungry."

"I changed my mind," Abby said. "Let's go the back way."

"Sure. A kombucha sounds good."

There was an area for deliveries. It was in the back of the mall. From there a back

passage led to the front. The passage ended near the market's entrance. Large dumpsters were in the back too. It smelled like trash.

"This place reeks, Abby," Clara said. She held her nose. "Why did we come this way?"

"I don't know. It just seemed easier. I didn't want to walk across the parking lot."

"Yeah, it is faster," Clara agreed. "Why do boys have to be so lame?"

"Because they're boys."

"It's just … Why do some girls get asked out? And others don't?"

"Maybe it's us," Abby said. "Other girls are less nervous."

The girls were quiet. Were they nervous around boys?

"I wish that stupid dance was over," Abby said. "And tomorrow? Ugh. I really don't like math tests. Let's skip Friday and Saturday."

As they walked, the wind picked up. A

big gust almost knocked them over. Then it stopped blowing.

"That was weird," Abby said.

"Yeah," Clara agreed. "The wind pushed us forward. I almost fell."

They walked through the passage. Soon they were in the front. The girls went into the supermarket.



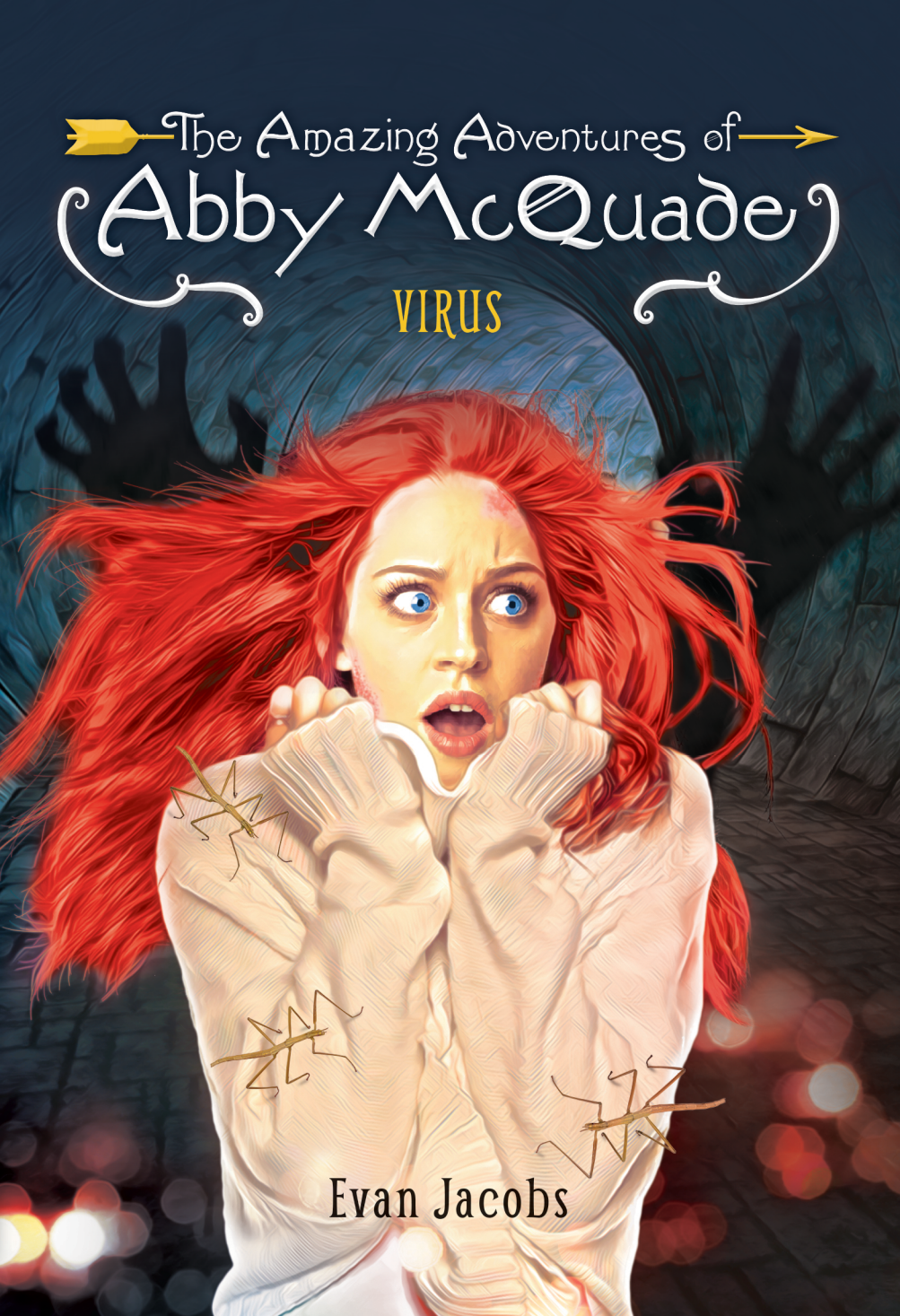
Back to the Past

One day Abby and Clara find a time portal and are swept into the future. No test! No school dance! But then they decide to abuse the portal's power.

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The Amazing Adventures of
Abby McQuade
VIRUS
Evan Jacobs

CHAPTER 1

The Rash

"You're such a dork, Abby!" Clara laughed.

"Maybe." Abby smiled. "But I'm *your* dork."

Abby and Clara were chatting. They used their phones' cameras. It was so cool. Abby could see her best friend at school. And she could video chat after school. The girls were in their bedrooms.

Abby's room was simple. It had a large bed. Next to it was a desk. Her laptop sat on it. Across from the desk was a TV. It could stream shows. Photos on the wall were of Abby's friends. She had a lot of photos.

Abby also had an archery set. She didn't use it much. And she wanted to get better. *The Hunger Games* was her inspiration.

Clara's room was blue and green. Those were her favorite colors. Otherwise, her room looked a lot like Abby's. Big bed. Desk. Lots of photos.

The girls watched a video. Abby had made it for her bestie. They hadn't been together in almost a week. It was bumming Abby out. They'd never spent so much time apart. Abby was glad they could video chat.

Clara had a weird rash. Many students at Largo Bay Middle School had it. The rash was all over Clara's body. Doctors didn't know what it was. They also didn't know how it spread.

The rash wasn't just in Largo Bay. It had shown up in other states. The rash was even in different countries. People were posting about it online.

Students that had it couldn't go to school. Every morning was the same. Kids were checked for the rash.

Abby sang in the video. "*Clara*. *Clara*. *Clara*. *Clara*. *Clara*. *Erickson*!"

She was singing to the song "Karma Chameleon." It was by the band Culture Club. They were big in the 1980s.

"See?" Abby said. She moved toward her bedroom window. "Look at the love. You love it, Clara Erickson. Don't lie!"

"I do, Abby McQuade."

They laughed again.

Clara had been upbeat about the rash. Still, Abby could tell her friend was sad. She had missed some swim meets.

Clara was a great swimmer. She wanted to race in the Olympics. Her life was hyper-scheduled. The rash had put a stop to it.

Abby wanted to be there for her friend. She knew Clara would do the same for her.

"How was school?" Clara asked.

"Lame," Abby said. "Super lame without you."

"Hopefully I'll be back soon."

"Yeah," Abby sighed. "You look really good, girl."

"Thanks!"

Abby meant it. She loved Clara's long brown hair. It was curly. But Clara always tried to tame it. Not today! Her curls were crazy. Clara's honey skin looked perfect. The rash didn't make any difference. She was flawless.

"You look great too," Clara said.

"Right," Abby said with a snort.

She had wild red hair. It clashed with everything she wore. Abby hated it. Her skin was too pasty. She was a plain Jane.

"Did you talk to Will?" Clara asked. "Did he ask about me?"

"Yeah," Abby lied. Clara had a crush on Will Chu. He was their best guy friend. Did Will *like*-like Clara? Abby thought so. But he

said nothing. It was a total guy thing. "He said he hopes you come back to school soon."

"You liar."

"He did!"

"Has Tim Cadena asked you to hang out yet?"

"Ew, Clara. No! Why would he? All he does is bug me."

"That's because he likes you, nerd."

Tim was an eighth grader. So were Abby and Clara. He was always dissing Abby. She mostly ignored him. Sometimes she'd play along.

"OMG!" Abby said. She was looking out the window. "Is that a walking stick?"

The bug moved across her windowsill. It was brown. The walking stick had long legs. They were spindly.

Abby loved most animals. But insects? Not so much.

"Where?" Clara asked. She was lying on her bed now.

"Outside my window," Abby said. "It freaked me out. Wow! It's kind of cool, though. The bug looks like a skinny lizard."



Abby was on her way to school. She rounded the corner. This was when she really missed her best friend. They always walked to school together. Snack and lunch were rough too. But at least she had Will. Well, most of the time she had him. Sometimes he had science club.

Every morning was the same. The girls walked to school. Sometimes they were early. Then they would walk by Largo Bay Center. The center was fun. Abby would drag Clara there after school too. They would hang out. But not today. Clara's rash needed to go away.

Abby lived in Largo Bay. It was an old beach town. There were homes on the beach. Behind those neighborhoods were schools and more houses. Many homes were close to the mall. There were other strip malls too.

Two towns bordered Largo Bay. One was Gato Villa. The other was Bloomington. Abby and Clara didn't like going to either. They thought the people were weird.

Abby walked up to the school. There were three main buildings. One was for math. Another was for science. And the third was for English. There was also a small library. The school's office was in the front.

Parents dropped off their kids. Normally, students could walk through the gate. Not now. There were five teachers lined up in front of it. They all wore disposable gloves.

Teachers had to check the students. Nobody with a rash could come inside. The

campus was closed to them. Their parents would have to take them home.

All students had to be checked. Even Principal Williams helped. The principal had curly black hair. Her skin was a smooth brown. She always wore black shirts. Today was different. She wore a red long-sleeved shirt.

Lines ran in front of each adult. Students had to hold out their arms. The school was like an airport. Abby snorted, imagining her teachers as TSA agents. Parents were told to check their kids at home too.

Abby lined up. She waited. Eventually she got to the front.

"Abby," Mr. Fink said, smiling. He was her history teacher. The teacher was older. He had white hair. Mr. Fink also had a white mustache. He always wore a dress shirt and a brown sport coat. The man held a magnifying glass. "You know the drill," he said.

"Yeah," Abby sighed. She held out her

arms. Abby usually wore a T-shirt and jeans. Her mom had looked her over at home.

"You look okay to me," Mr. Fink said.

"Thanks, Mr. Fink." Abby shrugged glumly.

She walked through the gate. School was mostly great. She just liked it better when her bestie was there.

CHAPTER 2

Middle School Blues

"You want some?" Will asked. He was eating maple sticks. Will had bought them from the cafeteria. "They're actually pretty good today."

It was snack time. Students were standing around. Some talked. Others ate. Many checked their cell phones. Abby and Will sat on a bench.

"Today?" Abby said. She took a maple stick out of its plastic wrap. "Do you mean sometimes they aren't good?"

"Abby," Will said with a smirk. "A kid will eat anything. They just need to be hungry enough."

Will had short black hair. He kept it long



Virus

Students across America have mysterious rashes. Deadly? No. Contagious? Hmm … Maybe? Parents don't seem to catch it. Abby wants to know why.

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