

## A Girl Named Addie

By Lucy Calderon

Addie and I had always been friends. We were “healthy” academic competitors at school, but at some point, around freshman year in high school, that friendship turned adversarial. She was a strong and cunning opponent and did not always play fair. Eventually, she would gain the upper hand.

It was not difficult to beat Addie at elementary school games. I was smart and well-behaved. Teachers liked me and schoolwork came pretty easily. I welcomed a good challenge and when Addie and I went head to head I would usually win.

Addie followed me to middle school. I was slated as “gifted” so I was confident that my academic career would continue to soar. She was only in my harder classes, like math and science. Intellectually, I knew I should not be competing with this girl, but I couldn’t help it. I did everything I could think of to beat Addie. I stayed after school for extra help. I pulled “all-nighters.” I thought I had won when I earned my spot at duPont Manual’s coveted Journalism and Communications magnet.

That victory was short-lived when Addie appeared in almost every class in high school. Addie was a bigger threat there, as Manual classes were 90-minutes long and alternated days. We spent even more class time together. She pointed out the beautiful trees outside the classroom windows, just to distract me from what the teacher was saying. She tried to get me to look at anything that would divert my eyes from the whiteboards with the day’s assignments. And she grew bolder. She’d swap my carefully written notes with ones that made no sense at all. She tossed my homework in the trash, forcing me to frantically tear apart my backpack in search of missing assignments.

My mother says she always suspected that someone might have been bothering me in school, but by the end of 9th grade she was sure. She confided that she thought she had been bullied by a similar type of girl for most of her life, but she said she refused to let that happen to me. My mom said she saw the sparkle dimming in my eyes. She vowed that no one would make her smart girl feel dumb.

We sought help. We found someone who knew Addie. That someone was a doctor. It seems that Addie was just a nickname. Her real name was A-D-D, short for Attention Deficit Disorder. I was not the first smart girl she had tormented. Many girls, like myself, suffered at Addie’s hands, but did not have the courage to stand up to her. My doctor armed me with a little pill called Vyvanse, which gave me the strength to fight back. My teachers know all about Addie now, too. They help me stand up to her. Don’t get me wrong. Addie is still around and there are days when she wants to play with me, but I know who and what she is, and that gives me the upper hand.