

# Stand Up

A realistic fiction novel by Kara

Illustrated by Madeline

Translated by Marco

I sat on the bench at gym, thinking. I checked my phone. Nothing. Why would there be anything? The only people who text me are my best friend, Lola, and Kayla.

“Hey!” Lola yelled from across the gym.

“Hey.” I half-heartedly replied.

She walked over as I was just tapping on the bench.

“C’mon, we’re playing dodgeball. I’m the captain!”

We were outside, free gym.

“Nah thanks.”

She sat down on the bench I was sitting on. She looked at me with a concerned and worried look.

“Why are you so sad?”

It wasn’t the first time she could practically read my mind. Every time I showed my emotions a tiny bit, one small look of despair, she could read my face.

“I... I can’t explain. I don’t know where to start.”

“Well... how about when I can understand it?”

I sat down. I was about to answer, when I burst into tears. They rolled down my cheek and splashed on my lap.

“Oh, Lola!” I exclaimed between sobs. Lola was sympathetic. She hugged me and helped me calm down.

“Okay. Now, start from the beginning.” Her voice was soft and smooth, and especially calming.

“Okay. It started about a month ago.” How could I forget that day?

.....

It was a sunny Friday. I woke up to the sound of my alarm clock. I grabbed a pastry and put it in the toaster. While it was cooking, I checked my phone.

*Let's see. Texts.*

I opened up the first new text out of two.

*Hey Zo. Its Lola. I was wondering if u could sleep over 2nite. If u can, text back asap. If not, text no. C u!*

I yelled to my mom, "Me puedo dormir ala casa de Lola?" I was Hispanic.

"Por supuesto!" She replied. I then opened up the second text.

*Zoey,*

*U r a loser. Y do u think u only have 1 friend? And even she's not very happy with u. Ppl don't wanna hang around w/ u bcuz ur petty. And just stupid. Which leads to ur ugliness. U think those glasses r cute, 4 eyes? N shouldn't u put some acne cleaner on that excuse 4 a face? I'm surprised u didn't go trick or treating as urself. U would've given evry1 a scare!*

*I will tell every1 ur soooo ugly, petty & stupid. The ppl need to know the truth. Don't expect any texts from ny1 as they now the truth.*

*Cant type more. Expect more uf the truth l8r. Kayla.*

I couldn't believe my eyes. How could Kayla be so mean? My eyes swimmmed with tears as I reread it. I choked them down and tried to forget it. I grabbed the slightly burnt pastry and ate it. The sweet cream made me forget it for a second. But nothing could completely wipe it away.

.....

"And that's what happened. So far, Kayla has texted me three more, about once a week. She's told everyone, and she even convinced Skie that I hated her." Skie was one of my best friends, and was really sensitive.

"How do you know?"

"Well, she hasn't talked to me in like, forever."

“Oh my gosh. You’ve got to tell you parents.”

“No!” I blurted so loud some people looked over. “I mean, if I tell them, they’ll tell the principal, and he’ll call in Kayla, and she’ll just act innocent. And *I’ll* get in trouble, like always.”

“Hmm... What if-“

“I already thought of that. If I show the text to him, Kayla’s mom will say, ‘No, my daughter would never even think of doing that!’ And she won’t take away her phone, and not even ground her.” Kayla’s mom was a lawyer, and she thought Kayla was perfect. At our Halloween party, she was supposed to bring some cupcakes. But she brought some kind of soy-kabob. Eww!

“You’re probably right.” Lola replied. “Oh, something wicked this way comes.” Kayla was coming towards our way.

“Hey, Lola. Hey Zoey. So, Lola, why do you hang out with junk?”

“I don’t. I don’t hang with you!”

Kayla’s face turned a deep, bright red, and she looked like a ripe tomato.

“You just made a big mistake. I know people. And I will *RUIN* you, Lola Garcia!” She walked away, flipping her hair and strutting. She then went to her friends and whispered something in their ears. They started laughing and pointing at where we were sitting.

A long bell rang throughout our ears. We lined up and started to go to homeroom. I felt for my phone. I checked for new texts. A surprise, one new one from Skie.

*Zoey,*

*I h8 u. I no u h8 me 2. Kayla told me. Wat have I dun 2 u? U were 1 of my BFFs, n u hurt me*

*Skie*

I don't hate her! I hated Kayla more than anyone. Someone came up to me. I could hear by the voice that it was Mike, my crush.

"Hey. Can I sit?"

I was sitting on my desk, and there was an empty one next to me.

"Sure." He sat down and said in his calm, sweet voice,

"I don't believe what Kayla is saying. You know, about you being petty and ugly." I couldn't believe my ears.

"Why not?" I asked. He hadn't been around me, so I thought he believed them.

"Because you're not. You're the smartest girl I've ever met. You knew the capital of Idaho in first grade! You knew the types of sentences in second grade. You knew fourteen times one hundred and two in third grade! You knew how to put together a computer in fifth grade! You belong in eighth grade, two years above us!"

"Keep your voice down!" He was saying it so loud the teacher was looking over to our direction.

"It's true! You need to stand up to Kayla." Another bell rang through our ears.

"All bus riders please report to the bus line."

"C'mon." I said. I quickly put my phone in my pocket. I usually walked to and from school, except on gymnastic days (Wednesdays) and today was a Wednesday. We walked out and got on the buses. I felt for my phone in my back pocket.

"Huh?" I was sure I put it in my pocket. I checked my other one, my front ones, and my shirt pocket. Nothing. I tried to remember what I had done with it. I put it in my pocket, but Lola pulled me... maybe I dropped it! I had to ask the teacher if I could go back.

"Mrs. Smith, may I go back to the classroom? I forgot something."

"Yes, Zoey, but make it quick."

I ran to the class and looked around my desk. I finally found it under the desk. I couldn't waste any more time, so I ran back to the bus line as fast as I could. I got to my bus about a minute before it left. I found a surprise, an empty seat, all to myself.

After forty-five minutes of relaxation, the bus screeched to my stop. I grabbed my bag and got off the bus.

"Hola, Zoey. Como estuvo tu día?" *Hi, Zoey. How was your day?*

"Buena, madre." *Good, mother.* I said, lying through my teeth.

"Caunta tarea tienes?" *How much homework do you have?*

"Poquito. Solo unas paginas de the mathematicas y estudiar para mi prueba ciencia." *Not much. Just a math sheet and to study for my science test.* I grabbed a bag of popcorn and put it in the microwave. I started on my math until I heard the timer ding. I poured it into a bowl and went back to my math.  $7x + 9x - 7$ . *If x is five, explain your strategy to the problem.* I wrote down *multiply  $7 \times 5$  and then  $9 \times 5$ . This gives you  $35 + 45 - 7$ . Now add.* I wrote down the steps that I did on the two lines. Now I had to explain one more problem, and I would be done! I finished the problem in 5 minutes and called Lola.

"Hey, Lola!" I heard a snuffle over the phone.

"Hey." She said just as half-heartedly as I did in the gym. I heard a snuffle again.

"You okay?" I asked, worried about her.

"Yeah... I guess."

"What's wrong?"

"Uh... listen, can you come over?"

"No, sorry. I have gymnastics. Maybe tomorrow?"

"I guess. Bye."

“Bye.” I hung up, feeling extremely sad that I had gymnastics. Lola was sad. And I had a feeling that Kayla was behind it.

My gymnastics lesson was terrible. I usually enjoyed it, but I couldn’t get Lola’s voice and sniffle out of my head. With it in there, I did my front flip kind of well, but got the landing very bad and landed on my butt.

After 15 more minutes, we could go. I grabbed my jacket and texted Lola

*Hey Lola,*

*I’m done with gymnastics. What was wrong when I called? I heard you, and something was wrong, (know that tone from personal experience) so don’t pretend everything’s fine.*

*Text me,*

*Zo*

I hated the feeling that my BFF was in pain and I couldn’t do a single thing about it. Lola forwarded me a text about five minutes after-

*Lola,*

*U know the truth- How evry1 h8s u, even ur ‘BFF’. U no she wuz pretending. Shes planning 2 dump u. I heard her plan it. not that im surprized, the only surprise wuz that she decided 2 hang out w/ u. i told u that i wud ruin u, & here it is.*

Below she had posted a picture of her, and then used a computer editing program to shave her head, draw sideburns, a goatee, mustache, warts and pimples, and every other bad thing you could think of. I cried for my best friend, and because Kayla had told so many lies about me. I heard my phone buzz. Yep, it was Kayla with the picture.

I cried myself to sleep that night, so terrified to go to school the next day. When I did, Kayla didn’t confront me until recess.

“You know you’re such a loser. Even your *dyslexic sister* knows that.”

She had struck a pressure point. Believe it or not, that wasn't a lie. My sister had dyslexia and I was really sensitive about it.

"Ho-How did you know?"

"Resources. Research. My sister, maybe. Everyone knows that she's in middle of third grade and can't read a simple sentence."

My eyes widened and I ran to Mrs. Smith.

"Mrs. Smith, may I go inside. My stomach hurts."

"Are you okay, or do you need to go in right now?"

"Right now, please. It hurts so badly."

"Okay." She gave me the key and told me to bring it back once I went to the nurse.

I casually opened the door and then, once no one could see me, I ran down the hallway, ignoring the "Walk, please!"s and "Young woman!"s. I ran all the way, not stopping until I saw the door of my homeroom. I opened the door and yanked the telephone off the receiver and dialed my mom's cell number.

"Hola, ¿quién es este?" *Hello, who is this?*

"Hola, mamá, esto es Zoey. Te necesito para que me recogiera. Ahora mismo." *Hi, mom, it's Zoey. I need you to pick me up. Right now.*

"¿Por qué, Zoey? Ahora?" *Why, Zoey? Now?*

"Sí, mamá. Voy a explicar en el coche." *Yes, mom. I'll explain in the car*

Tears rolled down my face as I hung up the phone. If my baby sister was being bullied, it had gone too far. Luckily, my mom didn't live too far from the school. I remembered the promise that I would give Mrs. Smith her keys back, So I went back outside, told her I was going home, and ran back inside to beat the door that automatically locked. I ran to the room, grabbed my backpack and jacket, and waited. It was so silent, until the phone rang.

“Hello, Mrs. Smith’s room.”

“Yes, we need Zoey Martinez for checkout.”

“I’ll send her right down.” I said, and then waited one minute, about the time it takes for them to pack their backpack, and sent myself down.

I saw my mom and I was immediately filled with joy. I ran up to her and hugged her. I started talking stupidly, some in English, some in Spanish.

“Mom, Kayla, Lola, Texts, Kayla significa enviado los textos ... and pictures, and... mamá, no sabes cuánto me alegro de verte, y ... and Sophie, and, Mom, so much has happened.” I cried even more at the thought that I hadn’t told my mom a single word of it, that I had lied about everything that had been going on.

“Shh. Shh. Zoey. Zoey. Zoey Emma Martinez!” She said in a firm yet b soothing voice. She talked slowly, because she still hadn’t mastered English.

“Now, Zoey, I want you to tell me everything that has happened in a calm voice. I know this has been tough, but do you think you can tell it from where I can understand it?” Her voice made me stop thinking about all the tough and made me take a deep breath and explain it- on the way home.

After I explained everything to her, she wrote an email in Spanish to the counselor, Mrs. Case.

*Mrs. Case,*

*My daughter, Zoey Martinez, has been bullied by Kayla Johnson. Kayla has sent mean texts and has been verbally abusing her. Please arrange an appointment for her as soon as possible.*

*Thank you,*

*Natalie Martinez*

It sounded so mom-like. About an hour later, Mrs. Case replied to the email about an hour later.

*Mrs. Martinez,*

*Thank you for the concern of your daughter. I have fixed my schedule to have an appointment with her, Kayla and Lola tomorrow. Please tell her not to delete any more messages that Kayla sends.*

*Thank you,*

*Marsha Case*

Once Sophie got off the bus, I grabbed her and we went to my room.

“Sophie, has anything been happening at school?”

“No...”

“You sure?”

“Yes.”

“Sophie, I know something’s wrong. I’m not leaving until you tell me.”

“Why do you care?”

“Because you’re my baby sister! Not only is it my job to protect you, but it’s also my responsibility to make sure you are happy and nothing bad happens to you. Now, what’s going on?”

Sophie took a deep breath, and began.

“Well, it started about a month and a half ago. We had a sub and it was time for Read-aloud. The sub was looking for volunteers to read one chapter from the book and when no one volunteered, she chose me.

“When I panic, my dyslexia gets worse, and I was just standing up there, my brain trying to deceive the right words, but it seemed the more I tried the more my brain mixed it up. After about a minute, Kayla’s sister, Alexia, yelled out ‘Can’t you read?’ and everyone started to laugh. I felt so stupid.” I cut her off right there.

“Sophia Lucia Martinez, I never want you to say that you are stupid ever again. You are a victim of a disease that millions of people have, and you are not lazy or stupid. In fact, you have to work twice as hard to do the same work. Now, I need you to do me a favor. I want you to go up to the people who tease you about your dyslexia and I want you to stand up to them. You can practice it on me. Just let me do one more thing.”

“What?” By this time she was crying because she was thinking about all the mean people.

“I want you to practice on me, but I also want to practice on you.” We hugged, and for the first time today, I didn’t dread going to school the next day. I didn’t dread all the people who were going to be laughing at me the next day. I didn’t dread telling Lola the whole story or facing Kayla. For the first time in too long, the only thing that mattered to me was my little sister.

Sophie started to practice her standing up for people.

“Guys, that’s mean. Just stop!” Sophie said in a very strong voice. I was surprised by how confident she was telling them to stop.

“Now, can I practice on you?” I asked, very proud of her.

“Sure.” She replied.

“Kayla, I didn’t ever do anything to you. You’ve been pushing me around and I won’t stand for it. This has gone on for too long and now I’m telling you to STOP.”

Sophie looked at me with amazement, as if she didn’t think her big sister could be that loud. True, I was quiet since (un-dun-dun) the incident.

Once we woke up in the morning, we made a vow to stand up to the people who were bullying and we knew they would stop, if we were confident and strong.

I met Kayla at the playground and I told her,

“Kayla, you’ve been bullying me and I won’t stand for it. I never did anything to you and you’ve been pushing me around for nothing. This has gone on for too long, and now I’m telling you to

# STOP”

Kayla looked so surprised at that that she ran away without telling me what I did. And since then, if any bully messed with me, I know how to

# Stand up.

# Epilogue

I walked into the counselor's office to talk about my new anti-bullying program. Since Kayla was mean to me and it made me so miserable, I figured we could start a program so other people can stop bullying quicker.

"Zoey," Mrs. Case said. "I think we're ready to open up your program to the school." We walked to the principal's office and I grabbed the microphone.

"All teachers, please come to the principal's office and get your new program packets." I had practiced it a million times for this day.

A few weeks later, the kick-off of the program, I gave a small speech.

"Hi, my name is Zoey Martinez, I am in Mrs. Smith's fifth-grade class, and I started this program.

A month or two ago, a girl sent me mean messages constantly. I didn't stand up for myself and it continued for many weeks. It got so bad that I had to be taken out of school. Eventually, I stood up for myself. That is why this program is called..." I pulled a rope revealing a huge banner.

Stand Up!