

Mockingbird

By Kathryn Erskine

Dad says it's time to go back to school so here I am.

Back in Mrs. Brook's room.

Sitting at the little round table.

I look at the walls and not much has changed except that the mad face on the Facial Expressions Chart now has a mustache. I know because I have looked at that chart about a million times to try figure out which emotion goes with each face. I'm not very good at it. I have to use the chart because when I look at real faces I don't Get It. Mrs. Brook says people have a hard time understanding me because I have Asperger's so I have to try extra hard to understand them and that means working on emotions.

I'd rather work on drawing.

Hi Caitlin, Mrs. Brook says softly. She still smells like Dial Body Wash.

I look at the chart and nod. This means I'm listening even if there's no eye contact.

So how are you?

I suck on my sleeve and stare at the chart.

How are you feeling?

I stare at the chart some more and hear myself sigh. My stomach feels all yucky like it's at recess which is my worst subject but I take a deep breath and try to Deal With It. Finally I say, *I feel like TiVo.*

She leans across the table toward me. Not too close to my Personal Space because I'll use my words to tell her to back off if she gets too close. *Say again?*

TEE-VO.

What do you mean?

I fast forward through the bad parts and all of a sudden I'm watching something and I'm not sure how I got there.

She scratches the part in her hair with her forefinger. The rest of her fingers stick up in the air and move like they're waving. Then she stops. *I see*, she says.

I look around the room. *What do you see?* I ask.

I think you'd like to forget about the painful events you've been through.

I want to tell her that I prefer TiVo on mute and I wish she'd cooperate. But if I do it'll start a whole Let's Talk About It discussion so I say nothing.