

**Chad
McClendon**



Lipstick Trace

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Lipstick Trace
by
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Dedication

Lipstick Trace is dedicated to my children; Annabelle, Evangeline, and Caeden. Chase your dreams using a sports car and a large net.

Book One
Lipstick Trace

April 2003

Quincy Abrams had been in his “new” high school for exactly seventeen minutes before he had earned his first detention. It hadn’t been his intention to cause such a ruckus, not as the transfer student, not as the boy who’d only been here two weeks. Quincy just happened to catch a dangling strap of the football player’s gym bag, which caused it to fall off the window sill. He also might have just coughed in a way that sounded like he had said something like, “piss brain” as the football player passed.

Quincy had issues. He had no delusions over this incontrovertible fact. So after watching the football player juggling footballs, and attracting whistles from the cheerleaders, Quincy reacted badly.

He had talent, but he never really expressed it, mostly because nobody was there to compliment him. So, anyone who could express themselves he considered to be a show-off. He reflected on this complexity as the football player introduced Quincy to his fist.

It was a quick brawl, and Quincy’s first in this school. The Anatomy teacher who heard the scuffle interrupted it before it could get too anatomically intimate. He was given a slip that was to be returned with his parent’s signature. This slip soon found a new home in the boy’s bathroom and was promptly forgotten. Not like his parents would sign it anyway.

Entering his homeroom for junior year, he heard his teacher, Mrs. Flegler, lecturing someone at the other end of the room. Quincy rolled his backpack from his shoulder and flung it towards the general direction of his desk. The brown haired boy who sat behind him stared at him inquisitively. Quincy didn’t make eye contact, but instead slumped into his desk and pulled out his prized binder. He caressed it softly and opened to a fresh page.

He heard the chirping of teenage gossip from behind him, and turning his head slightly, he noticed the blonde haired girl on whom he was currently crushing. Alice Mendell was her name, and he committed her name to memory the first time he had heard roll called.

Quincy often admired her from around corners. Alice wore a light blue spaghetti strap top and a form fitting black pair of jeans. Her blonde hair was pulled back in a simple pony tail.

Around her were her best friends, Valerie Fallon & Jenna Tillman. Valerie's hair was red and slightly obstructed her heart shaped face. Jenna sat in a desk that seemed far too small for her; Quincy was reminded of a giraffe.

He suffered through the morning announcements and focused on his writing, it was his morning exercise to remain sane. From the cobwebbed sleepy corner of his eye he saw a wrinkled hand grab his paper. His throat constricted as he fought back the urge to curse.

“Well, let's see what type of Magnum Opus Mr. Abrams has for us today.”

Mrs. Flegler cleared her throat and read aloud. “Not today. I don't want it to be today. If I could just stop you, why do I let you guilt me into this stockade? I believe it is, and will always be, the end of my day. Knowing you. Wanting to teach you too. Just let me do it.

Oh, but not today. It's not going to be today. It's always going to be tomorrow. That'll be my day, tomorrow. Tomorrow it will rain for me, the day after I'll be the bitter regret rotting between your teeth. I can always hope for that can't I?

To be the better end to the story, that's what I hope for. But not today. Today I'm just the reassurance of your own superiority. It'll be sunny today, I hope it rains soon. But remember, not today; today I savor ridicule.” She finished. “What contrived self-pitying melodrama is this

Abrams? Certainly this isn't your homework!" She crumbled the paper and threw it into her wastebasket. Several students laughed, Alice among them.

Quincy held his hot face and made a mental note to steal his entry from the garbage on his way out. He listened as she began talking about a special group project. His eyes bore into her, his face burning, and he envisioned her lips being sewn shut.

"Back on to business now. Drop that rubber band Jamison and team up with someone. Should you not find a partner I, personally, will partner you." She gravitated back to her desk.

Quincy got a tap on his shoulder and turned around. His eyes popped, he wasn't entirely sure how he had managed to not admire this oddball more closely before. His face was lightly tanned, and from behind chestnut colored hair peered inviting brown eyes. The boy wore necklaces, crucifixes and pentagrams, and he had multiple piercings. He smelled like his father's cologne cabinet, and the boy chose to smile at Quincy.

"Hey, I'm William! Wanna team up?"

Quincy stared at William's eyes, judged his posture, and came to the conclusion that he was serious in his inquiry. Quincy gave him a quick nod. "Cool!"

Quincy stared at the rubber band bracelets that were around William's wrist. "I'm Quin."

"Oh! I remember a TV show a few years back, it was called ... lemme think. Oh yeah! Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. Are ya talkin' that kinda Quin?" William bounced in his seat.

Quincy felt his tongue stick to the roof of his mouth and he tilted his head to the side. "What?" He had to blink several times before continuing. "What the heck are you doing? Did you just compare me to a medicine woman? Don't know if you noticed ... but I'm a guy."

William raised his eyebrows and quickly put on a serious face. “Oh, well, of course I knew, I was just making a comment.”

Quincy never broke eye contact with William while he tapped his pencil against his desk, completely unaffected by Quincy’s gaze.

“Ya’ going to the homecoming dance, Quin?”

Quincy squirmed in his seat and shot William a questioning glance.

He did not answer immediately. When he did his voice dripped with unease. “No. I’m not. Not with you. Not with anyone.”

“Jesus dude, I didn’t mean with me. Just generally speaking. Whoa, I just kinda got turned down by a guy. I didn’t even know I was swingin’ that way. Wild. Totally wild, ya know? Guess I have some things to sort out.” William scratched his chin thoughtfully.

“No, William, I am not going with anyone.”

Well that’s kinda a bummer.” William nodded. So this project ... I was thinkin’. Why not do something like, really impressive, that way any girls we *might* like will like us.”

“I was actually thinking about doing the report on the iron maiden. It was a totally revolutionary device in its own time. I was thinkin’ we could, maybe, give it some glamour. Bring it back, so to speak.” Quincy tapped his fingers on his lap.

William was now the one staring. “So like ... what would people use it for nowadays?”

“To drain tomatoes, genius, or make wine or some shit. Jesus Christ, what do you think we’d use it for?”

Quincy rolled his eyes at William.

“Whoa, whoa dude. Why the negative energy? I’m getting some really bad flow from ya.” William held up his hands.

“Negative energy? Bad flow? What kinda hippie bullshit slang is this?”

“No way dude, hippie slang ... that’s totally off. But really? Why so hostile?” William rested his chin on his hands.”

“With a name like Quincy Abrams wouldn’t you be pissed off?” he cocked his head, his black bangs covering part of his face.

“Why would Quincy Abrams be a bad name?”

“Hmm, let’s see. Let’s start with Quincy.” He smirked. “Yeah, there’s a real strong; no, a powerful name. Then your previous comment about ‘Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman.’ Let me tell ya I got no end of torment over that one in my old school.”

“Well...That’s not so bad. Dr. Quinn was a hot chick in her own time. I’d go steady with her.” William smiled with a faraway look in his eyes.

“See? There’s that hippie slang again. How about this; my initials are QAA. Do you know how many times I’ve tried asking questions only to hear “You should know that answer Mr. Q & A. Shit gets old really quick.”

William gave a profound nod. “Ya know I can kinda see where you would come off with that feelin’. My name is bad too.”

Now it was Quincy’s turn to be interested. “What do you mean?”

“People can honestly call me *Bill*.”

Quincy considered appeasing him by jumping out of his desk, but then decided that he wasn’t in a good enough mood for that.

“Do you know how bad that is? Look at how many bad people have been named Bill.” William threw his hands up as if possessed.

Quincy tilted his head back, his hair falling in front of his face.

“Bill O’Rielly, for example. That cat got in trouble for that sex scandal.”

“Well at least he was getting some female interest.”

“And Billy Ray Cyrus?”

Quincy paused. “Yeah, you got me there.”

“He had a rat tail. ‘Bout the only thing going for him.” He said, twirling his shoulder length hair.

“You’re strange, dude.”

William shrugged. “So, Quin, let’s get to this project. I know you’re thinkin’ the iron maiden sounds good. I’ve noticed that you like those big hair bands from the day, judging by those pictures on your binder.”

“Yeah.” Quincy smiled, holding his binder to him proudly.

“Well I don’t think chicks dig that sorta thing, they’re into that whole living thong.”

Quincy raised his eyebrows. “Living thong?”

William looked over his shoulder at a group of girls, Quincy was almost certain he was staring at Alice.

“Alright, Sisqo, what do you recommend?” Quincy inquired.

William looked thunderstruck; his mouth was opened, inviting every fly to take up residence. “Sisqo ... nobody has called me that since 4-H Camp, Quincy! But anyway! Let’s do this. I know girls are crazy over shows like ‘What Not to Wear’ and ‘Queer Eye’.” William counted off on his fingers.

“Right.” Quincy could hardly keep the fear out of his voice.

“And we don’t wanna seem like we’re totally endorsing fashion, makin’ it sound like we’re not into them, or make it sound like we’re not interested. We need to sound cool. Ya dig?”

“I guess?”

“No dude, I need you in this one hundred percent. We’ve come too far to have second guesses now. Let’s do a

report on how the fashion styles of Iron Maiden have influenced the scene long after their career reached their high point.”

Quincy’s eyelids lowered until they were little more than slits. “Ok, *Bill*,” he said mockingly. “First of all, Iron Maiden’s career is still at its high point. Secondly, I like the idea of the iron maiden. Finally, what do I care if this project impresses girls? I don’t need their acceptance.

“I’ve noticed that no matter where you go to school that there are different social classes around here. Girls who I like are in student government and they’d never like me because of this project. For example, I admire our class representative, maybe she’ll go for Senior Representative next year. I’d like to be her prom king next year too. I don’t think it will ever happen.” Quincy tilted his head back and looked at the ceiling.

“Well that’s not a very good attitude. Maybe you’d like this self-help book I’ve been reading. It tells all about –” William began to sort through books in his backpack, “different strategies on improving your –”

“What kind of weird hippie are you anyway, William? Christ. Self-help books, and your clothes would scare most Goths away.” Quincy reached over and turned William’s collar down, and straightened his crucifix necklaces. “Those pants though, do they get any tighter?”

“Whatever man. I don’t know about the hippie thing, but ya know what I *do* know?”

“Enh?”

“I know how to make girls like you.” William winked at Quincy.

“Doubt it.”

“Nah, it’s true. Just follow me in on this project and if you don’t have the girl of your fantasies by the end of the dance next week, I’ll um ... I’ll let ya have all my Roxette cassettes. So do ya dig that idea?”

“Ya know, I do *dig* that, those cassettes would fit nicely on my shelf.” His voice rose in excitement. “When do we start?”

Quincy and William spent the evening at Will’s house. Quincy was petrified when he entered Will’s bedroom for the first time.

“Will, tell me that isn’t an autographed picture of Men at Work.”

“And just what is wrong with Men at Work?”

Quincy threw out his hands and shrugged it off. They spent the next several hours hammering down ideas, and went through all of the band pins in William’s craft box.

The boys worked late into the night, discussing their common interest in girls, and ways of attracting them. It was decided that William was going to be dancing with Alice Mendell by the end of homecoming. It was also decided that Quincy was going to come clean with the name of his dream girl by homecoming, too. This was only accomplished after William had promised to stop singing Tiny Dancer.

Quincy arrived home that night at a little past ten. Light shined through the dingy curtains of the living room. He closed the door and dropped his book bag in the entryway, then frowned at the infectious voice of Jacky Beezar as it wafted from the television and through the air like a dead skunk.

Quincy walked into the family room and saw where his parents were sharing a bowl of chips that sat between two armchairs in front of the television.

“Sorry I’m home so late. It shouldn’t happen again.” Quincy offered to the room at large, while Jacky was going on about some haunted hotel in Asia.

Quincy took their silence to mean he was heard, it was as their usual '*I heard you,*' silence. There were varying degrees, and Quincy knew them all. Parental silence, female silence, the silence that could make a guy go nuts.

"I, um, had a good day at school. I made a new friend."

"Mmhmm." His father said, breaking his steady intake of chip consumption long enough to draw a breath.

Quincy looked at the television screen for a brief moment. Jacky was preparing his audience for his next witless guest, who would wow the crowd with some talent that Quincy only wished he possessed. Maybe then he would gain his parent's attention for at least half an hour.

"Yeah I had a great day." Quincy rapped his fingers on the archway of the pass-through, his mind searching for a new topic of conversation.

"Yup." His Dad said, and then clapped his hands loudly as Jacky's guest came on, Quincy wasted a few seconds of his precious existence and saw a tattooed man take the stage. His body was covered in tattooed and he wore very little clothes. He thought William might like him.

Quincy started rolling his head slightly from side to side. "Ya know, I think I'll go shoot some heroin now, you guys wanna join?" He left the question hanging in the air on a very thin thread that his father cut nearly at once.

"He's got a forked tongue! I wonder how that would do ya Denise?" his father laughed derisively. Denise, eyes focused on the television, didn't respond.

"So, gone." Quincy said, as he abandoned all hopes of communication and scaled the steps up to his room, where he was greeted by his poster of Jim Morrison.

He locked himself in, surrounded by the protection of the posters that covered the walls. He delved into his music, his true friend. Pressing the power button on his

radio, Kiss pounded out of the speakers. He cranked the volume and hoped it was as fully unwelcome to his parents and neighbors as the plague had been to Europe.

He sat down on his bed and kicked off his shoes. Leaning back, he took out his wallet and looked at the black and white picture of Alice, compliments of the school newspaper archives.

Staring at the photo he said “Why must I always be tortured, oh ambivalent creator? Is that the only reason I was spurted into existence?” Quincy rolled in his bed, not finding a comfortable position.

“Stupid William Denslie.” Quincy tried lying to himself. “I could have been fine without him.” But, having someone to talk to overpowered jealousy and personal desires.

Quincy put the picture back into his wallet and placed his wallet on his bedside table. He flicked off the light with his finger, and wished his thoughts could be as easily turned off.

He spent a long time that night thinking, pouring over the change of routine that had been brought to him. He finally heard his parents walking up the stairs, and for the first time that evening, thought they might be coming to talk to him.

“Turn off the music Quincy, it’s past your bed time anyway.” His father said from the other side of the hickory door.

“Your. Face.” Quincy said boldly as he yanked the power cord from the socket.

There was no bidding of good night, or pleasant dreams, not even a reprimand for using *foul* language. Just another Kodak moment in the Abrams household.

“And to think, if not for William, that could have been the longest conversation I would have had all day.” Quincy shook his head, and returned to his former quandary. He wondered which was more valuable, having

the girl of his dreams and losing a potential friend, or simply settling for having two really good potential friends. Finally fed up Quincy rolled over. “It’s too freakin’ quiet.”

William decided to enter Mrs. Flegler’s classroom on Monday morning by means of the Cha-cha Slide. “Slide to the left, cheka chikuh, slide to the right. Criss Cross. Criss Cross. Everybody clap your hands!” This entrance gained scattered laughs and applause from his peers. “Four hops this time!” He clapped his hands in time with his hops and landed at his desk, red faced, sweat dripping from his forehead.

“I hope you show that much enthusiasm on your presentation, Denslie.” Mrs. Flegler’s cheeks inflated like red balloons.

“Oh yes Ma’am!” He hopped to his feet and saluted as his teacher flashed him a disapproving frown.

Quincy moseyed to his desk, took a dull pencil out of his bag, and sharpened it.

“Ya got a pointer for me Quin?” William laughed at his own pun.

“Yeah, lay off the perfume, it’s overdone.”

William looked surprised. “My Mom said nobody would know the difference!” He said looking genuinely distressed.

“Dude, I had no idea it was perfume. I was just messin’ with ya.” He paused. “Are you seriously wearing perfume?”

The bell rang.

“Saved!” William whispered.

“What?” Quincy asked.

“Nothing. Pay attention.” William pointed at the front of the class.

Their presentation went off without a hitch. In Iron Maiden form, William had come to school wearing a blue

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