

# INTRODUCTION

Life is like a maze, full of twists and turns, light, and shadows. This book? It is a rollercoaster ride through mental health struggles, self-discovery, and the tricky dance between reality and perception. Think of it as a tapestry woven from the threads of my own experiences.

These pages? They are like a peek into my diary, capturing moments of despair, resilience, and the relentless search for understanding. It is all here, unfiltered—from battling inner demons to facing the scars left by bullies.

As I pen down these thoughts, I hope they resonate with those who have grappled with their own darkness, offering solace and a sense of connection. Mental health—it is a messy mix of joy, pain, and the strength found in vulnerability.

Join me on this journey through the labyrinth of my mind, where confronting the shadows meets embracing raw emotions. This is not just a story; it is a call to speak up, a tribute to resilience, and a reminder that every piece of our shared human experience adds to the beauty of the whole.

At the end of every third chapter, you will find a special interlude, a moment of reflection set in the present. Here, I bridge the gap between the past and the present, offering insight and introspection into the ever-evolving nature of life itself. These reflections serve as poignant reminders of the interconnectedness of our experiences, enriching the tapestry of this journey of self-discovery.

May these pages illuminate the path to understanding, empathy, and the unwavering belief that even in the darkest moments, there is still a glimmer of hope.

*Dear Persona,*

Today was just another crappy day in high school. Every break, you can bet I will be sprinting to the bathrooms, my temporary escape from the madness. It is like a routine now—hurry to the bathroom, shut the door, and sit there in silence, trying to find some peace.

Today's 10 am break, though? It was a little different. I was running a bit later than usual, head down, trying to avoid any attention. But fate had other plans. Some students, a mix of familiar and unfamiliar faces, gathered around me like vultures. Some were old friends turned enemies. They started pointing fingers and hurling insults, their laughter ringing in my ears.

I memorised every face, silently promising myself I would haunt them once I am dead. Tears threatened to spill as I bolted through the crowd and made a beeline for the bathroom.

Behind that locked door, I cried silently, protesting against the cruelty of it all. When the bell rang, I wiped my tears, I covered up the sign of my weakness with my hoodie sleeve, kept my head down, and went back to class as if nothing had happened.

This is my reality—a fragile facade hiding the chaos inside.

Until tomorrow, Persona.

