Love, Life, and the List

Brooklynn Marshall
Book Review
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A year ago, seventeen-year-old Abby Turner confessed her love to her best friend, Cooper, and it didn’t go well. As Abby strives to navigate through their friendship without making things weird, she realizes that maybe she can’t just pretend away her feelings. Meanwhile, Abby worries about her mother’s growing anxiety, which has worsened during her father’s long deployments overseas. Abby is blindsided once again when her paintings are rejected for inclusion in an art museum show, deemed technically proficient but lacking in heart. With the help of her mother and grandfather, Abby gives herself one month to do ten things, ranging from facing a fear to learning a stranger’s story to falling in love. As Abby sets out to change herself and how she views the world, she learns that life isn’t always as straightforward as it may first appear and it’s okay to allow things to change.

Love, Life, and the List revolves around the idea that we choose who we allow ourselves to become through courage or the lack thereof. At times the characters are confronted with the reality that courage doesn’t always pave the desired outcome. This is seen from the very onset of the story, when the reader learns of Abby’s failed attempt to confess her feelings for Cooper. However, in each instance of failure, the characters of the novel eventually move forward with an adapted plan to what they determine as happiness. When Abby is devastated by the news that her art isn’t good enough to be displayed, she is encouraged by family and friends to take this criticism to make it better. When Abby’s mom is pushed to a breaking point, she realizes that if she wants to be there for Abby’s life she needs to get professional help. Throughout the story, the characters realize they can’t control others or their situations, but they can control what they choose and whether it is with courage or cowardice.