

# Breaking Free

ANGELA SUZANNE

Copyright © 2014 Angela Suzanne

ISBN: 1479104744

ISBN-13: 978-1479104741

No part of this book shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information retrieval system without written permission of the author.

All rights reserved.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. All characters are fictional, and any similarity to people living or dead is purely coincidental.

Printed by Createspace.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Three Years Later*

The fire from the lighter lit his cigarette. Breathing in the chemicals from the joint helped him feel better. Pulling the cigarette away from his mouth, he blew out a puff of smoke. He took another drag and watched as his fellow classmates hung out in cliques.

Johnny watched from his spot by the dumpster behind the school. Strands of his jet black hair broke free of his ponytail. He brushed them away from his face.

A group of the jock crowd was shooting hoops with the cheerleader girls watching and flirting. At one of the picnic tables, the geek crowd was surrounding a chess match. Other groups of people were just sitting around talking.

He continued smoking his cigarette from his shadowed spot. He saw the football team captain, Josh Tremblay, look his way. He always talked tough like he owned the school.

“Hey, Cardinal!” Josh yelled at him. “Why are you hiding in the corner? You trying to hide your ugly face from us?”

Johnny clenched his fists. Someone needed to put Josh in his place. He threw his cigarette to the ground and stomped it out.

Josh turned to his friends and talked loud enough for Johnny to hear. “See I told you Indians aren’t good for anything.”

His friends laughed.

Fury tore through Johnny. He ran from his spot at the dumpster and attacked Josh.

Josh fought as he fell hard to the ground with Johnny on top of him.

Johnny threw punches left and right – each one connecting with Josh’s face.

Girls screamed. Boys cheered them on and told Josh to throw some punches back.

“C’mon Josh! You can’t let an Indian beat you!” One of Josh’s football buddies yelled.

Johnny punched harder. He wound up with his right arm and felt something crack beneath his fist as it connected with flesh.

A scream erupted from Josh.

Johnny wound up again but this time, someone reached out and grabbed his hand before he could let it loose. Johnny snapped his head around, preparing to clobber whoever had decided to get in his way.

The science teacher, Mr. Smirnov, stood over him. Gasps and whispers rippled through the group of students that had gathered to watch the fight.

Johnny slowly stood up. His hands dropped to

his side.

“Somebody help me up!” Josh yelled.

A boy with bushy blond hair rushed forward and reached out his hand. Josh grabbed it and scrambled to his feet.

“What is going on here?” Mr. Smirnov demanded. He looked at Johnny and then Josh. His gaze returned to Johnny.

Josh spoke up first. “He started it.” He pointed at Johnny as he covered his nose. “I was hanging out with my friends when he attacked me. He started punching me.”

All Johnny did was glare at Josh. Trying to defend himself would get him nowhere. Mr. Smirnov wouldn’t believe his story anyway. All Caucasian people were the same in his mind. They would always think they were better than he was just because he wasn’t Caucasian. He learned that the hard way.

When he had first been transferred to this school, an eleventh grader’s iPod went missing and Johnny had been blamed. Never mind the iPod had gone missing on a day Johnny hadn’t even been at school.

He had been brought in front of the principal and no matter how much he protested the accusations and pointed out that he had been at home sick the day it went missing, he had still been punished.

“Well, are you going to tell me your side of the story?”

Johnny glanced back at the Russian science teacher. He may have come from a different country than Josh but they were still the same. Johnny shook

his head. “No, I’m not gonna tell you my side because you’ll take his side anyway.”

“If that’s the way you want to be. Follow me to the principal’s office.” Mr. Smirnov turned and marched towards the school.

Johnny rolled his eyes and pushed his way through the crowd after him. Snickers rose up among the crowd as he passed by them.

He looked back. Josh still stood there covering his nose. A smug look was plastered on his face. Johnny pointed to his nose and smirked back.

Josh’s face turned down into a frown and he narrowed his eyes.

Johnny may be the one going to the principal’s office but Josh was the one who had received a broken nose.

Johnny followed Mr. Smirnov through the back doors of the school and through the hallway before reaching the principal’s office.

The principal’s secretary looked up and saw Mr. Smirnov enter the office with Johnny. She instantly pressed a button and told the principal they were there. “Mr. Gordon said you may go in, Mr. Smirnov.” She smiled at him.

“Why thank you, Ms. Purcell. You’re looking lovely today, I must say.”

Johnny rolled his eyes. He pushed past Mr. Smirnov. He heard Mr. Smirnov tell Ms. Purcell goodbye and that he would talk with her later.

When he entered the principal’s office, Mr. Gordon looked up from his computer.

“Johnny, have a seat.” Mr. Gordon motioned towards three hard, straight-backed chairs in front

of his desk. His attention went back to his computer, fingers flying across the keys.

Johnny moved towards the chairs. “Whatever,” he mumbled as he slumped down on the chair furthest from Mr. Gordon’s desk.

Mr. Smirnov followed him in and chose the seat closest to Mr. Gordon’s desk. He turned the chair around so he could look at Johnny but could still see Mr. Gordon.

“Okay,” Mr. Gordon said as he turned away from his computer once again. He turned so he could see Johnny. “So what happened?”

Johnny crossed his arms and pressed his lips tight together. He didn’t say a word.

Mr. Smirnov answered. “I caught him beating up Josh, the captain of the football team. I’m certain he broke Josh’s nose. I stopped him before he could punch Josh again.”

“Johnny, is this true?” The principal speared him with a look.

“Yes.” Johnny’s jaw clenched. He knew what was coming and he braced himself for it.

Mr. Gordon shook his head. “Johnny, you need to stop doing this. You’ve gotten caught for drugs before and this isn’t your first fight either.” He massaged his temples as if talking was giving him a headache. “You give me no choice. I’m going to have to suspend you for a week.” Mr. Gordon picked up the phone on his desk while adding, “And I’ll have to call your mother.”

Johnny sat up straighter. Call his mother? No, they couldn’t do that. He expected them to suspend him but he didn’t expect that they were going to call

his mother. They hadn't called his mother the other times he had gotten into fights. She would be disappointed with him and he hated disappointing her. He watched as Mr. Gordon punched in his mother's number. He had to stop them from calling her. He spoke without thinking. "How about I tell my mother myself? I promise I will tell her or you could write a note and I'd give it to her." He hoped they would believe him and let him do it himself.

Mr. Gordon paused. His hand hovered over the call button. Johnny held his breath as he waited for an answer. His eyes flickered from Mr. Gordon's finger and the phone to his face. He tried to will Mr. Gordon to believe him.

Mr. Gordon looked at Mr. Smirnov before responding. "I guess it'd be okay this time." As he put the phone back on its cradle, he added. "But if there is another incident involving you, we will talk to her directly and we may have to expel you." His eyes pierced Johnny. "If you don't comply with your suspension, we won't hesitate to call the police."

Johnny let out the breath he had been holding. He relaxed into the chair. They believed him.

Mr. Gordon dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

He stood up and left Mr. Gordon's office. There was absolutely no way he was going to be telling his mother that he had been suspended.

His mother had gone through so much in her life already being a single mother raising six children with hardly any money, as well as his brother's murder and the police not doing anything about it.



That happened two years ago and his brother's killer still hadn't been brought to justice. Johnny was now the same age his brother had been when Natan had been killed.

His mother had also done so much for him on what she had. She had transferred him to this high school where he was a minority because she wanted him to have a better chance in life than Natan and a lot of other kids in his neighborhood did. He couldn't tell her that he had gotten suspended from the school where she had hoped he would get a better chance than had he stayed in his local North End high school.

As he walked home from the school, anger bubbled inside him. He knew when he had crossed the line into his community. The houses were run down with paint peeling off the sides of houses. "Beware of dog" signs were plastered on people's front doors. He knew that only a miniscule amount of those houses actually had dogs. Houses were squished side by side and there wasn't much of a lawn in front of each one.

If only he could live like one of the white people. Their houses were kept in nice shape. They didn't need to have "beware of dog" signs trying to keep people they didn't want away. He clenched his fists. They also weren't disliked just because of their race.

His mother hated hearing him comparing themselves with the white people. "They are no different than we are," she would say.

But Johnny knew different. The white people were different than they were and he was

continuously reminded of the fact.

He turned onto the sidewalk leading up to their house. Their house wasn't much different from the other Aboriginal people's houses in their neighborhood. The paint on the side of the house was peeling. They had a fence in front with a "beware of dog" sign on their front door even though they didn't own a dog. It was just as close to the neighbor's house as any downtown Winnipeg house.

Johnny didn't like living in this part of the city where he was just one more of the population that no one liked. His community only got on the news when there was another murder or someone got caught for growing illegal drugs. After all, Winnipeg was the murder capital of Canada. And everyone knew it was because of the Aboriginals. Johnny snorted. At least that's what the rich white people made everyone believe.

A smile tugged at his lips. One good benefit of living in the poor part of the city was that he knew where to get his drugs. He also knew how to hide it from his mother. She hated that stuff.

The front door creaked as he opened it. He peeked into the living room. No one was there. Good, his mother wasn't home yet from work.

Johnny headed up to his room on the second floor where his two brothers and two sisters slept as well. He was glad his mother let him have his own room so he didn't have his nosy brothers sneaking around his room and telling his mother about the substances he kept there.

He opened his closet and removed the box

labeled keepsakes. He rifled through some certificates he had placed in there as a disguise until his hand reached a bag at the bottom. He pulled the bag out and got excited for the first time since the last time he used.

Soon enough he could feel the substance working and he was transported to a place where no one could hurt him.

